



Bushcare Policy

Adopted October 2007

POLICY STATEMENT

The work of Mosman's Bushcare volunteers continues to be supported by Council through supervision, education, advice, and ground works and Council's Bushcare program continues to be an integral element in Council's Bushland restoration strategy through ongoing works to restore indigenous vegetation communities throughout Mosman.

1. INTRODUCTION

Bushland restoration is the planned restoration of locally indigenous vegetation types to bushland areas that suffer some degree of exotic weed invasion. It requires a level of understanding of ecological systems, plant botany and identification, the causes of and solutions to weed infestation and fauna management in order to successfully rehabilitate a site.

Mosman Council has 39 hectares of bushland made up of small, sometimes highly disturbed, fragmented remnants of indigenous vegetation communities. Council has adopted three programs which collectively are its Bushland Restoration Strategy. They are:

- Bushland restoration contracts
- Unmade roads restoration program
- Bushcare program

Restoration of remnant bushland areas is an important part of Council's overall strategy for biodiversity management. It is included in Council's strategic management plan (MOSPLAN Sub-Program 05.04.01 '*Bushcare volunteer recruit, support and recognition*') and Council's Environmental Management plan. The actions listed in Council's Environmental Management plan include to '*Coordinate and support Council's volunteer Bushcare program.*'

The Bushcare program deals specifically with the valuable volunteer resources available to Council. Bushcare complements and builds upon Bushland contract works and the Unmade Roads Restoration Program.

2. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

There are three main areas of consideration within this policy. A strategy to deal with each is outlined in this document. The three areas are:

- Recruitment
- Training / education and promotion
- On ground works

This policy applies to:

- All areas reported in the Flora and Fauna Survey 2001 and Flora and Fauna Survey 2006/2007 which are not managed under the Contract for Bushland Restoration 2001 - 2011.
- Small areas of Council-owned or managed public land which have remnant vegetation or may develop value to surrounding bushland areas.

3. OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of this policy are to:

- Ensure that the Bushcare program operates efficiently and effectively
- Ensure that reporting and record keeping mechanisms are in place
- Provide volunteers with the skills and knowledge to maintain and manage indigenous vegetation communities effectively
- Encourage a greater number of people actively to assist in the environmental management of remnant urban bushland areas
- Co-ordinate volunteer projects to ensure objectives are well defined, achievable and obtained
- Protect and enhance the quality of indigenous bushland by assisting Council volunteers undertaking bushland restoration activities.

4. STRATEGIES

4.1 Recruitment.

A Bushcare Program may involve bushland restoration works or other bushland management associated activities such as monitoring flora and fauna, creating bush friendly gardens, developing walking tracks and assisting with promotional activities etc.

There are generally two methods of recruitment for the Bushcare program. They are:

- Resident initiated: Council may be approached by residents/prospective volunteers who are concerned about an area of land within Mosman that they would like to see cleaned up and regenerated/ re-vegetated and are willing to assist in this matter.
- Council initiated: Council's Bushcare and Bushland Officers may have an area of land that would be suitable for volunteers to regenerate and maintain. This would usually occur when contractors have completed a majority of the primary regeneration work, such as initial works in Council's Unmade Roads Restoration program. In these situations Council may actively recruit Bushcare volunteers by promotion of the Bushcare program in that area. Surrounding residents may volunteer to help maintain these areas in the longer term.

Through the Bushcare program both Council and volunteers have responsibilities. Council has a responsibility to provide supervision and training for volunteers according to the 'Volunteer Rights' outlined by the Volunteer Centre of New South Wales (Appendix 1). All volunteers have a responsibility and are required to uphold Council's existing Code of Conduct. These responsibilities ensure the protection of both the volunteers on site and the bushland reserves being worked. Council will provide new Bushcare volunteers with a Bushcare Information Package..

Bushcare volunteers are required to register with Council and complete the Bushcare registration documentation (includes completing a 'Volunteer Application Form' and signing the 'Memorandum of Understanding'). When volunteers have registered with Council they will be recorded on Council's volunteer database and will be provided with a Bushcare Information Package. (Appendix 2)

No resident is authorised to undertake works on public land without the consent of Council. Once a person is registered as a volunteer with the Bushcare Program they are able to work at any supervised Bushcare meeting or undertake works in accordance with a site work plan as directed by the Bushcare Officer as an individual volunteer.

Council is committed to supporting community volunteers participating in the Bushcare Program and recognises that community involvement in bushland management is beneficial to both Council and residents.

4.2 Training Education and Promotion.

The role of the Bushcare Officer and site supervisor will be to introduce volunteers to the value of bush regeneration, the causes of weed invasion, basic plant identification and weeding techniques.

The site supervisor will ensure that volunteers receive individual attention on techniques and safety measures which comply with OH&S principles; monitor and record all work completed; and liaise with the Bushcare Officer to receive instructions, provide any necessary materials or information for future working days.

Council has held successful Bushcare training events in the past. Council will endeavor to continue to involve volunteers in additional training through interaction with other industry organisations such as TAFE NSW, Department of Conservation and Climate Change (NPWS) and other Councils.

The community awareness of the value of urban bushland and of the Bushcare Program will be raised through distribution of a volunteer newsletter, quarterly meetings featuring guest speakers and other Council programs.

A quarterly newsletter containing information and providing a forum for ideas is to be produced by Council and distributed to all volunteers. Volunteers will be invited to contribute articles relating to their projects and experiences.

4.3 On Ground Works

4.3.1 Site Selection

Persons may only undertake work which is part of the Site Assessment for that site and as instructed by the Site Supervisor and/or Bushcare Officer. Any major works can only be undertaken with the direct authorisation of the Bushcare Officer.

Sites will be selected where:

- Bushland regeneration / re-vegetation and maintenance is achievable by volunteers
- All volunteers have the common aim of bush regeneration
- The site is likely to be maintained by the volunteer group for a minimum of five years.
- Council has sufficient resources to allocate a Bushcare Supervisor to the group.

Once a Bushcare site has been established it will be marked with a Bushcare sign informing people of the Bushcare program and meeting times.

In cases where the site suggested by volunteers is considered to be unsuitable for work the Bushcare Officer shall assess other nearby areas that may be more suitable or invite the volunteers to join an existing group in another location.

4.3.2 Site Assessment and Work Plans

All Bushcare sites are required to have a site assessment completed by the Bushcare Officer in co-ordination with the volunteers and the site supervisor. This document will include the following (see Appendix 3 for an example of the Site Assessment form):

- A Risk Assessment of the site (Appendix 4 – Risk Assessment Form)
- A map of the site including allocated zones for regeneration approaches
- Outline the existing condition of the area including identifying weed species and native plant species within the site.
- Develop an appropriate set of aims and objectives for the site
- Outline the steps that will be taken to regenerate the site, including an order of works and a rough timetable.
- Outline any major works that should be completed in conjunction with volunteer works (i.e. planned tree removals, stormwater works or site stabilisation).

Work schedules should take into account volunteer numbers, the number of working hours available to the group and the potential loss of volunteers over time. Maintenance of weeded areas is to be given priority in the order of work to ensure natural regeneration is given every chance. All aims are to be in accordance with Council's Management Plan and draft Bushland Plan of Management. All site assessments are to be filed within Council's corporate document management system, Dataworks and should be updated annually noting works achieved and any changes to the plans for the future.

5. RELATED POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

Mosman Council's Bushcare Policy has been developed considering the following Council adopted documents and policies:

- Community Lands Plan of Management for Natural Areas
- Contract for Bushland Restoration 2001 - 2011
- Unmade Roads Restoration Program
- Flora and Fauna Survey 2001
- Flora and Fauna Survey 2006/2007
- Policy for Street verge and nature Strip Maintenance

6. APPENDICES

Appendices can be found bound to the policy in Council's Dataworks program.

Appendix 1 - Volunteer Centre of New South Wales – Volunteer Rights

Appendix 2 - Bushcare Information Package Checklist

Appendix 3 - Example Bushcare Site Assessment Form

Appendix 4 – Example Bushcare Risk Assessment Form