

June 2013
Ordinary Meeting Minutes
Date: 27 June 2013
Time: 7:10 pm
Where: Rockdale City Council



1. Welcome to Country

Councillor Najjar acknowledged the traditional custodians of the land and the Gadigal and Bidjigal clans as people with a close recent history in the areas as well as the people of the Darug and Tharawal nations and paid respects to traditional owners past and present.

2. Introductions and Apologies

Councillor Najjar welcomed everyone to the meeting and sought introductions from attendees and apologies. Rockdale City Council was thanked for hosting the meeting and the attendance of the Deputy Mayor, Liz Barlow was noted.

Name	Position
Cr Naji Najjar	GRCCC Chairperson - Bankstown City Council
Cr Peter Scaysbrook	GRCCC Vic Chairperson - Sutherland Shire Council
Cr Peter Ristevski	GRCCC Treasurer - Liverpool City Council
Cr Tom Croucher	Sutherland Shire Council
Cr Philip Sansom	Hurstville City Council
Cr Michelle Stevens	Hurstville City Council
Cr Joe Awada	Rockdale City Council
Cr Liz Barlow	Rockdale City Council
Rebecca Bell	Bankstown City Council
Brian Shaw	Botany Bay Catchment Alliance
Sharyn Cullis	GREA
Erin Sellers	Fairfield City Council
John Dahlenburg	Hawkesbury – Nepean CMA
David Dekel	Rockdale City Council

Svetlana Kotevska	GRCCC Programs Manager
Renee Winsor	Campbelltown City Council
Alison Hanlon	Hurstville City Council
James Carey	Bankstown Council
Peter Tralagan	GREA
Tony Wales	GRCCC Riverkeeper Co-ordinator
Claire Evans	GRCCC River Health Co-ordinator
David Kuhn	GRCCC Community Engagement Co-ordinator
Glen Moody	Kogarah City Council
Beth Noel	Sutherland Shire Council
Peter Scanes	Office of Environment and Heritage
Anne Wagstaff	Friends of Oatley Inc.
Joel Daniels	Liverpool City Council

Apologies:

Cr Dai Le	Fairfield City Council
Cr Nick Katris	Kogarah City Council
Cr George Griess	Campbelltown City Council
Cr Kastanais	Hurstville City Council
Cr Tarek Ibrahim	Rockdale City Council
Lew Solberg	Gandangara LALC
Alexandra Stengl	Wollondilly Council
Emily Forrest	Bankstown City Council
Chris Ingrey	La Perouse Local Aboriginal Land Council
Melina Amerasinghe	LGRSI Community Representative
Brad Staggs	Wollondilly
Maruf Hossain	Liverpool City Council

Gwyn Cleeves	Sutherland Shire Council
Simon Rowe	Oceanwatch
Andrew Spooner	Campbelltown City Council
Pat & Barry Durman	Macarthur NPA
Michael Banasik	Wollondilly Shire council
Danny Wiecek	Office of Environment and Heritage
Signe Westerberg	CoConvenor & Secretary, Fairfield Liverpool Greens

3. Disclosures of Interest: None

4. **Presentations** – Dr Peter Scanes – Senior Team Leader, Office of Environment and Heritage. *Topic: communication of results/actions/management required from existing sampling and advances in estuarine health assessment*

Summary of key points:

- Managing estuary health involves monitoring key indicators through time and also understanding/interpreting these.
- In monitoring waterways, we must consider how we utilise information collected and develop this into a format acceptable to broader community to inform them of environmental conditions.
- Monitoring has a limited ability to make predictions thus we use models. The CMA & universities work to develop models to validate data collected and make predictions.

Indicators

- Indicators are things you can measure. They operate at different time scales and different levels of an ecosystem thus the need to monitor things across scales.
- Discussion of the different types of estuarine indicators used in state wide programs including turbidity and Chlorophyll *a*; seagrasses; zooplankton and fish. These can be monitored over different time scales and trophic levels.
- These indicators give a good picture of estuarine health, respond predictably to disturbances, have low variability, are easily measured and are ecologically significant.
- The indicator has to be predictable - a yardstick to measure against and know how it will respond to disturbance. You will see patterns that are not variable which means we can measure the indicator and interpret the data with confidence.
- With seagrass, their depth of growth and range depends on the available light and turbidity. Turbidity is important for plants and in murky waters they cannot grow as light is impeded. We can see patterns in turbidity data and have lots of confidence that it means something when we measure turbidity.

- Zooplankton was highlighted as an example of a good new indicator to monitor. It is also cost-effective. These microscopic animals eat the plankton & seagrass which are in turn eaten by larger animals such as fish. Their presence is influenced by the number of animals and animal size and the relationship may be off balance for instance either too many medium sized animals or too few small animals, thus they are a good indicator of estuarine health.
- Plankton (measured using chlorophyll a) can be monitored frequently, cheaply and easily. They form the base of the food chain and are very significant. Seagrass are monitored over months/years.

Report Cards

- Report cards play an important role and enable a comparison across years to determine estuary improvement/degradation. They are a very useful tool despite criticism as being too simplistic. They tell a story and get people interested –they are a communication tool firmly rooted in science.
- Report cards also connect to management actions and help to build a sense of ownership and accountability.
- The OEH prepared report cards including grades for a number of other Councils. This included Great Lakes Council (2 years); Warringah Council, Wyong Council (past & last 2 years); Lake Macquarie (2 years) and others including Shoalhaven Council, Hornsby Council, Northern Rivers CMA.
- Community feedback through resources on the web, fact sheets and report cards keeps the community interested and focussed on the estuary's condition and needs.
- Report cards represent a good way to analyse data and if we use common criteria for scaling it enables inter comparability across the state.
- Management actions are directly related to problems arising from the data and scores can be related to the pressures causing the problems. E.g. Chl A shows too many nutrients coming into the system- a cause and effect relationship.
- The OEH is helping the CMA, government and others to provide tools and mechanisms and manage estuaries for ecosystem health, reduce the stresses that degrade the system.
- We need the monitoring side to enable the tracking of the condition.
- Report cards give the community feedback on estuarine conditions and improve understanding. They also provide good information to inform management actions

Management, monitoring, modelling

- Managing estuaries for ecosystem health means reducing or eliminating factors which degrade the ecosystem (inputs, manipulations).
- Monitoring allows the constant tracking of success and priority needs.
- Modelling allows the assimilation of complex knowledge and scenario testing.

Questions raised by the GRCCC following the presentation by Dr Peter Scanes included:

- a) How many monitoring sites in each lake and how do you select them?
- b) Can the monitoring be broadened and related to where people can swim/fish and how people interact with the estuary and community concerns over pathogen levels, such as a Swim-ability indicator?
- c) What is your opinion on score cards?
- d) Was there community participating in the sampling?
- e) What sort of impact does he see these report cards having?

5. **Confirmation of minutes from** the last meeting 28 February 2013 at Campbelltown City Council. **(Cr Najjar/Ristevski).**
6. **Matters arising from the minutes:** Noted that the HN-CMA boundaries had changed. New maps were distributed by John Dahlenburg of the HN-CMA and a related discussion ensued on LLS appointments, elections etc.
7. **GRCCC Treasurers Report –Cr Peter Ristevski.**

The report was received as follows:

This report presents the GRCCC financial position (actuals) as at month end 31 May 2013.

We are nearing the end of the financial year and we are on track with expenditure which is within budget.

Income

Income since the last meeting includes interest on GRCCC funds which now sits at \$14,212 Year to Date and a federal Grant for Voluntary Environment, Sustainability and Heritage Organisations program of \$4000 towards administrative overheads for the GRCCC.

Total Income across Main Project, Riverkeeper and Communications Program YTD is **\$352,397.**

Expenditure

Since the last meeting expenditure has been limited to materials for the Riverkeeper Program and salary and related expenditure. All programs are on track to remain within budget.

Total Year to Date operational expenditure as at month end 31 May 2013 across the three programs is **\$ 312,843.**

Which leaves a total operational surplus of **\$39,554** as at 31 May 2013.

However, the final end of year position won't be known until the end of July as the finance department at Hurstville Council will continue to process 12/13 invoices until mid July. Any surplus can be put towards the cost of a consultant in reviewing the River Health program.

Grants

Expenditure on the River Health program was limited to salaries, analytical lab analysis, equipment and vehicle costs.

The River health program, Caring for Country grant ends on the 30th June, 2013 and no expenditure of grant funds can be incurred after this date.

Liverpool Council made a once off payment of \$25,000 for regional water quality projects which has to be used in the 12/13 financial year for pre-agreed outcomes which included purchase of new field sampling equipment for River Health, purchase of new statistical software to aid analysis of regional data we collect and lab analysis of water quality samples.

The H-N CMA are also working with the GRCCC to provide a \$48,000 grant to continue to support the maintenance and servicing of the real-time monitoring buoys for the Botany Bay Water Quality Improvement Program for the next 12 months.

There is one item which the Committee needs to consider in relation to our finances.

1. A decision needs to be made on the ongoing funding of the Communications and Engagement Program in the 2013/14 financial year. In April 2013, the program was reviewed and the majority of staff support the use of reserve funding to continue this program into the new financial year. A summary table dated 25 April 2013 outlining staff recommendations was circulated prior to the meeting. We will make a decision on this issue tonight after the annual program presentations.

8. GRCCC program report presentations

- a. Questions from the floor on reports.

Questions and comments: Erin Sellers commended all GRCCC Program Co-ordinator's and made special note of David Kuhn, GRCCC Communications Co-ordinator and the work he has done supporting the communications program. Erin noted that the communications program is important to engage with people and reiterated that the barriers to change are not technical. Philip Sansom thanked staff for their work and for making a big difference to the Georges River Catchment.

9. Update on River Health program

Cr Najjar advised that there was good news that all Council's were on board and committed to providing funding to support the River Health Program.. At the last GRCCC meeting in February it was agreed to engage a consultant to review the program and a cluster meeting has been arranged within the coming week to discuss the development of a consultants brief. It was noted that the Cooks River Alliance have agreed to contribute funds towards the consultants review and the continuation of the monitoring by the program in the Cooks River Catchment for the next 12 months.

Alison Hanlon outlined the importance of working towards stringent time frames to undertake the consultants review and still be able to undertake the Spring sampling event..

Sharyn Cullis outlined the importance of River health monitoring, community engagement and science engagement action. She highlighted the need to communicate and share all that we are doing. Sharyn Cullis stated that she views the communication strategy as an important part of the whole GRCCC program structure and considers the review of the River Health Program the icing on the cake that will improve this successful program further.

Erin Sellers outlined how Fairfield City Council engaged a leading consultant to undertake a short review. Bankstown City Council also noted that they engaged a university professional to do a review.

David Dekel outlined that the Cooks River Alliance board approved funding at its meeting for River health monitoring in the Cooks River and that every member council wants a review of the

River Health Program. Also it was noted that certain Councils have offered to commit more money RCC, CCC, MCC to a review including the river science program. He outlined that a scope can be drafted to get an idea of the costs.

John Dahlenburg of the CMA suggested that we consider reaching an agreement of a certain limit for the consultants review.

10. Decision on the use of reserves for the Communications Program in 2013/14

Cr Phillip Samson outlined his support for the communication program but questioned the budget allocated for the consultant's review of River health and was concerned that this was not established. Alison Hanlon noted the cost of the consultants review depends on the extent of the scope of works outlined in the brief and the quotes that are received. It was agreed that Councillors would be informed of the likely budget and their approval sought for the actual cost via an online councilor vote.

Cr Phillip Samson moved that the reserves be used to fund the communications program and have that on the table first before doing a consultants review. The motion was not seconded and further discussion followed.

Cr Joe Awada pointed out that Rockdale City Council does not support the use of reserves for the continuation of the Communications Program for the next 12 months. He said that he would not vote in favour of using the reserves as this was not supported at Rockdale.

Cr Phillip Samson said that the communications program needs more time. He also outlined that the reserves are currently high and that they should be used for the benefit of GRCCC members. The GRCCC should develop strategic uses for reserves and develop a plan. It was noted that reserve funds have been used strategically to establish an asset renewal reserve, website hosting and maintenance reserve, staff entitlements reserve for long service leave etc, It was agreed that reserves will be reviewed by the Executive Group and the relevant cluster group established to develop a longer term plan for reserve use.

David Dekel of Rockdale said that reserves should not be used for a council project wish list but rather should be used for the longer term benefit of the GRCCC and catchment.

James Carey of Bankstown City Council did not support the funding of the Communications and Engagement program from the reserves for the next 12 months.

Cr Najjar moved to fund the Communications and Engagement program from the reserves for the next 12 months. The decision was made in to fund the Communications and Engagement program from the reserves for the next 12 months in 2013/14 5 to 1.

(Cr Najjar, Cr Ristevski, Cr Scaysbrook and Cr Sanson + Cr Michelle Stevens voted in favour of the use of reserves for the communications program for the 13/14 financial year). 2 on-line votes were received in favour of the use of funds Cr Dai Le and Cr Kastanais

Cr Joe Awada noted his decision against this.

Councils only get 1 vote- as such only 1 vote from Hurstville City Council's 3 Councillors - Cr Samson, Cr Michelle Stevens and Cr Kastanais was recorded despite 3 Councillors voting in favour.

11. General Business

Cr Najjar advised that we had received a \$48,000 grant from the HN CMA. Svetlana Kotevska outlined briefly that this was from the CMA for the Botany Bay Water Quality Improvement Program and the maintenance and servicing of the buoys. John Dahlenburg added it was also to review and audit the buoys and replace 2 buoys in Botany Bay and the Lower Georges that were the damaged due to rough weather conditions. They buoys are strategically located to provide maximum benefit. It was also noted that the SMCMA and HNCMA have been amalgamated and as a result a lot of staff have been lost. John advised that he was also leaving. John advised that Karen Kennedy, Place Manager in charge of Estuaries would be the CMA contact. Cr Najjar suggested a meeting be organized to introduce Svetlana, GRCCC Program Manager to Karen. The HNCMA will be transitioning into LLS until 31.12.2.13. The new boards have no authority until 1.1.2014.

Svetlana Kotevska briefly raised a suggestion of inviting a Container Deposits Levy spokesperson to give a presentation to the GRCCC on the campaign and to allow the committee to consider supporting the campaign. It was suggested that as we have a Riverkeeper that assists with on ground clean ups of litter we need to do more to address the source. David Dekel outlined that the CRA is a supporter of the Boomerang Alliance that is behind the National Container Deposits Scheme. A poll on eastern seaboard showed that 84% of the population support it. . It was also noted that the GRCCC past treasurer was a big advocate on this matter. It was noted that the Environment Minister was concerned that it doesn't put up the cost of living.

Cr Najjar gave a special thanks to Alison Hanlon – former GRCCC Program Manager and now Manager of Environmental Sustainability at Hurstville City Council also GRCCC Host Council Manager on the GRCCC Executive. Naji thanked Alison for her support and hard work on the GRCCC over 6 years and for her advice and guidance to the GRCCC Executive.

11. NEXT MEETING: 22 August, 2013 Venue: Casula Powerhouse

Meeting ended 9.12pm