



# HIGHLIGHTS

## 2022 - 2023

EcoNetwork Port Stephens delivered the inaugural Sustainable Futures Festival where over 1000 people attended and 94% of people surveyed had a positive experience. We also celebrated our 30th Anniversary since the launch of the organisation in 1993 with founding life member Darryl Dawson receiving the Freeman of Port Stephens award.

### Advocacy

A key approach of EcoNetwork is to campaign for environmentally responsible decision-making. In 2022-2023 we did this by writing over 11 submissions, giving 2 presentations, briefing local representatives on 2 occasions and appearing in 7 newspaper articles that influenced the final outcome in a favourable way on at least seven of these occasions. Many of these submissions were made by EcoNetwork's Special Interest Group Koala Koalition (KKEPS).

EcoNetwork has contributed to the following changes:

- advocated successfully to have the Port Stephens Council pass a motion to investigate Ramsar listing for the Mambo-Wanda wetlands
- connected local community groups and businesses with research, innovation and tourism expertise through the festival. Salamander Bay Recycling is negotiating a partnership agreement with the University of NSW for a new recycling technology. Friends of Tomaree National Park are partnering with a local tour group Escape EcoAdventures to deliver events on One Mile Beach and the national park to attract a broader age range into local landcare
- supported the progression of St Philip's Christian College and Tomaree High School towards sustainability. St Philip's strengthened their recycling program and Tomaree's sustainability and environment program was revitalised as a result of the festival.
- EcoNetwork has also been a founding and ongoing partner to the Barrington to Hawkesbury Climate Corridors Alliance. In conjunction with the Hunter Community Environment Centre, we have been active in a campaign to develop climate corridors to protect endangered species and have participated in Ministerial meetings advocating for action in this area.

### Education

EcoNetwork increased knowledge and changed behaviours in 2022-23 by delivering educational opportunities and accessing expertise and science-based research. The main educational opportunity EcoNetwork delivered was as part of the Festival. Professor Veena Sahajwalla, the 2022 NSW Australian of the Year, headed up an impressive program of presentations including experts in community power, energy efficient homes, sustainable gardening, interior design, recycled plastic, electric vehicles and much more.

70% intended to adopt sustainable practices

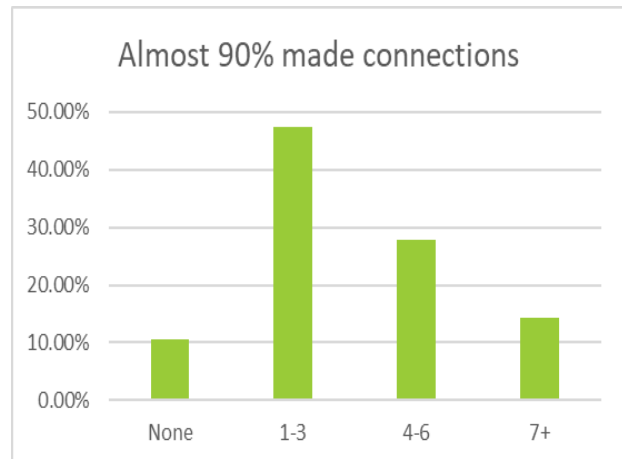


■ Agree ■ Disagree or neutral

## Support

EcoNetwork supported over 50 affiliates and members achieve their aspirations by providing networking opportunities, promoting events and increasing their profile through the website and the EcoUpdate e-publication which had an 86% increase in subscribers.

A survey question from the evaluation of the festival asked, 'How many groups or businesses did you connect with at the Sustainable Futures Festival that were previously unknown to you?' Almost half of the respondents made at least 1 new connection and over 40% made between 4 and 7 connections.



## Manage

Over the past 12 months EcoNetwork has aspired to conduct itself with integrity and transparency by engaging with affiliates in meaningful ways, being accountable, developing the diverse network, cooperating with other community-based organisation and aspiring to fairness and equity. Co-operation on events has occurred with Climate Action Port Stephens, Renew - Hunter Branch, National Park Association and Mambo-Wanda Wetland Tours. The owner of Rainbird Farm, one of EcoNetwork's newest business affiliates, said:

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***Being a part of the Eco network for the past year or so has been great! We've got to attend events and meet people we otherwise may have missed. It's awesome that such a group exists in our local area fighting for and highlighting the need to protect and preserve our ecosystem right here at home!***

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## Future aspirations

Over the next 12 months and beyond we are aspiring to improve by:

- understanding more about how we can better represent the needs of our affiliates and members
- developing partnerships to build on the momentum of the inaugural Sustainable Futures Festival
- building our internal operational systems around our membership database and technology systems
- harnessing our potential to proactively develop into a hub for environmental issues in the area