

ANNUAL REPORT

2023 - 2024



Overview

In the 2023 – 2024 reporting period EcoNetwork Port Stephens contributed towards:

- Conserving terrestrial and marine ecosystems by influencing the outcome of development applications on at least 10 occasions.
- Developing a sustainable community by delivering the 2024 Sustainable Living Festival in partnership with Homegrown markets.
- Conserving cultural heritage by supporting the publication of Walter Lamond’s book *Reflecting on Landcare* which will contribute to recognising Mambo Wetlands as a designated RAMSAR site.
- Addressing climate change by developing reference materials on windfarms and facilitating discussion by holding a community forum headlined by Dr Mark Diesendorf, renewable energy and climate policy researcher at UNSW.

Our advocacy for environmentally responsible decision-making includes over 40 submissions and letters, developing more than 6 policy position statements, representing affiliates on more than 4 advisory bodies and being quoted in the media on over 45 occasions.

EcoNetwork contributed to increasing knowledge and changing behaviour through the East Meets West Guided Bus Tour, the Birds of Woodlands, Parks and Gardens community forum and the Sustainable Living Festival. A university student enrolled in the School of Environmental Science and Development Studies at the University of Newcastle created a ‘quick access sheet’ of the common weed species prevalent across rehabilitation sites. EcoNetwork also continues to support affiliates through our electronic publication *EcoUpdate*, by holding two forums for information sharing and networking, and by promoting events and campaigns on our website.

In the 2023 – 2024 reporting period, as part of EcoNetwork’s dedication to continuous improvement, the outcomes of the committee’s strategic review meeting were combined with the results from a confidential survey of the membership base. This annual report documents how EcoNetwork is aspiring to fairness and equity and sets out our plans for the next 12 months:

- Revise the MOU with Homegrown markets to establish a partnership approach
- Analyse the membership to assess the strength of the network
- Find mechanisms to seek feedback from members on a routine basis
- Proactively determine issues for advocacy and using participatory approaches to engage membership
- Take a more systematic and professional approach to fundraising to take advantage of multiple opportunities throughout the year
- Continue to review the social media policy and processes
- Consider an affiliate liaison officer or system of direct contact to strengthen relationships
- Review the financial system to identify if additional savings can be made
- Map key strategic partners to understand our relationship to other organisations beyond affiliates
- Develop a pathway for volunteers to connect with EcoNetwork activities and the committee

What changes have EcoNetwork contributed towards?

EcoNetwork is working towards an overarching vision of ecologically sustainable communities existing in harmony with the natural environment. Reporting against the key areas where we want to see change, we have contributed towards:

Conservation of terrestrial and marine ecosystems

Of the more than 40 submissions, letters, issues papers and presentation that EcoNetwork submitted, many are still to be determined, our network influenced the outcome on at least 10 occasions.

For example, in relation to the Seaham Clarence Town Rd development application, the KKEPS and VOWW joint submission contributed to the withdrawal of the application. An additional two other quarries that were opposed by EcoNetwork and affiliates were refused expansion. Though the development applications were ultimately approved, they included consent conditions that increased the amount of revegetation, required koala crossings and additional fences to protect terrestrial ecosystems.

Another example was in response to an EcoNetwork submission to the Port Stephens Council. The Council adopted our suggestions to the DCP chapter on Tree Management and Flora and Fauna and added a new requirement to notify Council prior to major vegetation removal. Although the Monarchs Rise (Kings Hill Precinct 8) was approved, because of EcoNetwork's special interest group Koala Coalition submission, it now has a fauna crossing included in the plans. Similarly, the 509 Gan Gan Rd development was approved but with double the replacement plantings of native vegetation.

Sustainable communities

Based on a recommendation from the 2022 Sustainable Futures Festival, EcoNetwork entered a partnership with Homegrown Markets to deliver the [2024 Sustainable Living Festival](#). The festival aimed to create positive change, with innovative and practical solutions for a sustainable and regenerative world, working in partnership with local communities, business and government.

Although a severe weather event significantly impacted attendee numbers, the rescheduled festival did go ahead on Saturday 18 May 2024. Displays, workshops and a marketplace for innovative technologies that are sustainable and environmentally sound, provided opportunities for local business, schools and volunteer community groups to present their progress towards more sustainable practices and to network with community. With attendance at one entrance gate reaching 400 attendees, we estimate that at least 800 people participated in the festival. They had an opportunity to engage with 84 stalls, several performances and several workshops. Electric cars, dance and music performances, and interactive stalls ensured there was something for everyone. Participants from a wide range of community groups, conservation organisations, government agencies, art and craft businesses, food stalls and eco-businesses created a wonderful atmosphere.

Conservation of cultural heritage

EcoNetwork proudly supported the publication of Walter Lamond's book that traces the history of landcare in Solders Point and Salamander Bay. Walter Lamond has been volunteering with Landcare since he moved to Port Stephens in 1995. The book is titled [Reflecting on Landcare](#) and over 60 people attended the September 2023 book launch at Tomaree Library. The NSW landcare program is funded and co-delivered by Landcare and NSW Local Land Services. The purpose is to unlock the potential of an extensive volunteer base.

The book was officially launched by Deputy Mayor Leah Anderson. She noted in her speech, "This book will be an important document about the growth of Landcare in the area. It is also about the growth of the substantial environmental movement on the Tomaree Peninsula." Leah went on to say, "Walter and Margaret have been key figures in the environmental movement on the Tomaree Peninsula. Their work will contribute to the RAMSAR committee as they guide the Port Stephens Council and the NSW Government to recognise Mambo Wetlands as a designated RAMSAR site."

Action to address climate change

Developing written resources and facilitating opportunities for discussion about climate change was a key focus in 2023-2024.

EcoNetwork's reference materials on windfarms were reported to be a useful source of information for the Port Stephens Council, as noted by a council representative. Analysis of the website data indicates that the frequently asked questions was one of EcoNetwork's most visited webpages and had a significant number of downloads. While EcoNetwork believes a windfarm is important in addressing climate change, at this stage we are not committed until we see the research that addresses several issues, including seabirds.

A community forum headlined by Dr Mark Diesendorf, renewable energy and climate policy researcher at UNSW, called on communities to form alliances to combat the power of vested interests over government and institutions. Held in April 2024, around 80 people attended. EcoNetwork, in collaboration with Renew Hunter Branch, hosted this community forum titled, *Powerful forces threaten to undermine urgent action on the climate crisis. Can they be defeated?* The forum aimed to share information about climate change and how we can transition to a new civilisation that is ecologically sustainable, socially just, healthy and less militarised, with strategies and policies for avoiding the business-as-usual path to disaster.

Additionally, the forum included representatives from four local volunteer groups, Voice of Wallalong & Woodville, Salamander Bay Recycling Centre, Australian Marine Conservation Society and Renew Hunter Region Branch, contributed their time and expertise to their part in protecting the environment and in promoting sustainable living in Port Stephens.

Forum feedback survey respondents valued the opportunity to hear information and reported that their top social, environmental and sustainability interests included: Biodiversity conservation, renewable energy, global sustainability and stopping vested interests preventing a sustainable agenda.

To what extent has EcoNetwork effectively advocated?

EcoNetwork campaigns for environmentally responsible decision-making. This section summarises our actions across three key areas.

Development proposals

EcoNetwork wrote over 33 submissions, 8 letters, 1 issues paper and 1 presentation in the 2023/2024 reporting period. As noted above, on at least 10 occasions we influenced the outcome in a favourable way. Many of these submissions were made by EcoNetwork's Special Interest Group Koala Coalition (KKEPS). The expertise in KKEPS consistently produces high quality work in high quantities. Many of our affiliates work closely with KKEPS to seek advice and develop position statements that draw upon a variety of evidence-based sources. Writing these submissions represents a significant contribution to EcoNetwork's overall goals because although many of the development applications were approved to proceed, the submissions from EcoNetwork mean that concessions are required by the development proponents. When these concessions are accumulated over time, they can prevent the loss of a reasonable proportion of terrestrial and marine ecosystems.

Policy position statements

- EcoNetwork developed a position statement on the VOICE referendum and distributed it to all affiliates and members. This was developed into a series of articles in EcoUpdate:
<https://www.econetworkkps.org/ecoupdate16/the-voice-referendum-econetwork-update/>
<https://www.econetworkkps.org/2023/09/why-is-the-voice-to-parliament-referendum-so-important/>
<https://www.econetworkkps.org/ecoupdate15/we-say-yes-to-the-voice-referendum-2023/>

- EcoNetwork took a public position on the proposal for Hunter offshore wind farms in early September 2023. We also developed a series of articles and a publication that provided answers to frequently asked questions, to assist in ongoing public discussion.
<https://www.econetworkps.org/sustainable-living/climate-crisis/proposal-for-offshore-wind-projects-off-the-hunter/>
<https://www.econetworkps.org/sustainable-living/climate-crisis/offshore-floating-wind-farm-proposal/>
<https://www.econetworkps.org/sustainable-living/climate-crisis/environmental-assessment-processes-for-wind-farms/>
<https://www.econetworkps.org/sustainable-living/climate-crisis/don-quixote-and-the-wind-turbines/>
<https://www.econetworkps.org/2023/09/econetwork-port-stephens-official-statement-on-offshore-wind-proposal/>
<https://www.econetworkps.org/sustainable-living/climate-crisis/windfarm-questions-and-answers/>
- EcoNetwork develop a position statement that outlined why nuclear is not an option in Australia's transition away from fossil fuels
<https://www.econetworkps.org/2024/04/nuclear-is-not-an-option-in-australias-transition-away-from-fossil-fuels-an-econetwork-port-stephens-position-statement/>
- Jet skis
 Through a series of articles EcoNetwork provided information about possible avenues for advocacy on the issue of personal watercraft in Port Stephens.
<https://www.econetworkps.org/ecoupdate5/jet-skis-in-port-stephens/>
<https://www.econetworkps.org/news/our-network-in-action/noisy-dangerous-and-intrusive-should-jet-skis-be-banned-in-port-stephens/>
- Hard Rock Quarry Strategy Campaign, inclusive of Stone Ridge Quarry Campaign
 EcoNetwork was one of fifteen local community groups to join a coalition to campaign against quarry impacts and endorsed a call for strategic and conservation planning outlined in an Issue Paper. This Paper was sent to the Hon. Kate Washington MP and the NSW Government Ministers for the Environment, Planning, Roads, Regional Transport and Roads, Resources, as well as the Secretary for the Hunter.
<https://www.econetworkps.org/ecoupdate23/quarry-applications-continue-unabated/>
https://www.econetworkps.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Lower-Hunter-Hard-Rock-Quarry-Strategic-Conservation-Planning_Issue-Paper_FEB-2024.pdf
- Biodiversity corridors
 In partnership with the National Parks Association, EcoNetwork, followed up its 2021 Biodiversity Corridor submission, to advocate further for inclusion of the Fishermans Bay land at Anna Bay with specific Ministerial and State member representation ATTACHED – NOT ON WEBSITE YET. Additionally EcoNetwork submitted on concerns related to the proposed Hunter Transmission Corridor
<https://www.econetworkps.org/2023/12/hunter-transmission-project-preliminary-corridor/>

Representing affiliates on consultation and advisory bodies

EcoNetwork represents members on the Marine Advisory Committee, the National Parks and Wildlife Service Hunter Central Coast Branch Regional Advisory Committee and the [Worimi Conservation Lands Board](#). EcoNetwork, along with our affiliates Climate Action Port Stephens, Friends of Tomaree National Park, Renew Hunter, contribute to Port Stephens Council's Environmental Advisory Group (EAG). A key function of the EAG is as a conduit between Council and community for the exchange of ideas in the environmental space. EcoNetwork was also a co-host and presented at the Nature Conservation Council of NSW's annual conference held in June 2024.

EcoNetwork advocates on behalf of affiliates in the media. EcoNetwork was featured in the Port Stephens Examiner on eight occasions, in the News of the Area EcoNetwork was mentioned 32 stories, twice in the Newcastle Herald, once in The Guardian and once in the Newcastle Weekly. Refer to appendix 4 for the complete list.



To what extent has EcoNetwork increased knowledge or changed behaviour?

Through education, EcoNetwork has a role in sharing information to support environmental sustainability and cultural heritage. In 2023-2024, EcoNetwork had a stall at the Human Whale Day and participated in celebrating 40 years of Fly Point Marine Park and the NCC picnic day where we shared a variety of educational materials.

EcoNetwork also delivered these educational opportunities:

East Meets West Guided Bus Tour

EcoNetwork and the Voices of Wallalong and Woodville Community Association partnered to coordinate two full day guided bus tours on the 19th of July and 5th of August 2023. These explored the western region of Port Stephens Shire. The event took place to raise awareness and appreciation of the Port Stephens hinterland, highlighting its historical, rural and natural significance, as well as shedding light on some of the challenges encountered in this area. Fifty-three participants attended the bus tours. Based on responses provided by participants, several aspects of the tour were highlighted as particularly positive including appreciation of the diversity of places visited during the tour, providing many insights into the area, and helping participants to gain an understanding of conflicts arising from land use and development processes, in relation to environmental impacts and community concerns. Participants expressed several key take aways, including recognising the need for clearer rules to prevent development in flood prone areas, as well as the necessity of a master plan for this area with strategies to mitigate environmental impacts. The trip provided an important awareness of the ecological diversity of the area and the enthusiastic advocacy of local residents for the preservation of these environments. The tour highlighted the importance of acknowledging historical background, and the delicate balance between environmental preservation and development. The East Meets West Tours were a successful and informative experience, providing participants with insights into the environmental, social and historical significance, and the challenges of this area. Incidental conversations nearly a year later, mention unprompted how much the tour created awareness of the wonderful opportunities on offer.

'Thank you to all of those who were involved in the organisation and presentation of information throughout the day. It was a great success! I really enjoyed my day!'

'I learnt a lot about the area's environmental issues, about the people that live there and historical background.'

Birds of Woodlands, Parks and Gardens in Port Stephens

Over 70 people attended EcoNetwork's first ever Woodland Bird Forum on 20 August at Tomaree Community Centre. EcoNetwork was very grateful to the wonderful presenters who shared their knowledge, expertise and stunning bird photography. Presenters included Neil Fraser, Louise Williams and Mat Spillard. The feedback from the event was very positive.

A lovely friendly atmosphere, great speakers, excellent co-ordination and all the sound and digital technology so professional!

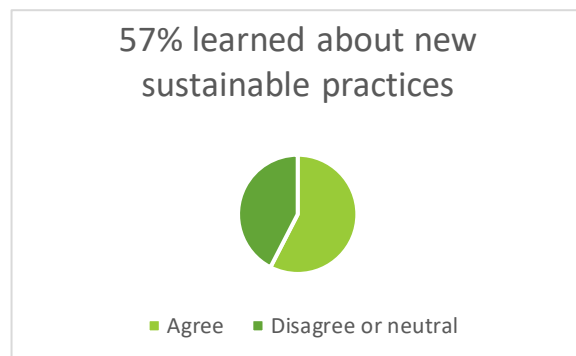
'I am very new to birdwatching and despite having a bird guide I wasn't sure if my identifications of birds just around my house/local parks etc were correct so it was nice to get a lesson on what the likely candidates are! The talk on endangered birds was fabulous too. I feel like I'll be obsessively looking for regent honeyeaters now.'

'Thank You for organising such a great event last Sunday. So much information and so well attended. I thoroughly enjoyed the whole morning and learnt a lot.'

'Wishing you all best of luck in spotting our beautiful bird life in the area.'

Sustainable Living Festival

A full evaluation report on the outcomes of the Festival is available. Focusing specifically on education, in response to the question 'I learned about new sustainable technologies or practices at the Sustainable Futures Festival', 57% of survey respondents somewhat agreed, agreed or strongly agreed.



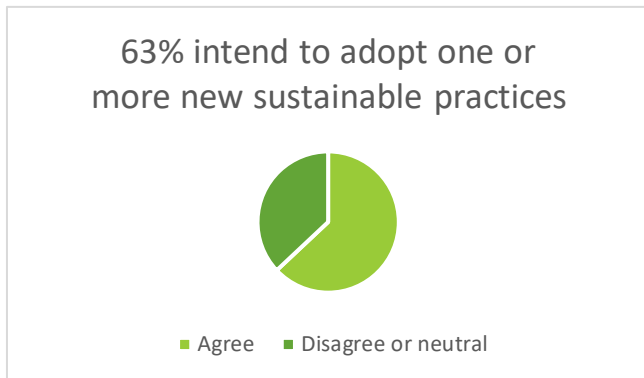
On the children's feedback form, some wrote general comments about what they had learned: 'We can all make a difference' and 'We can learn new things and change our mind'. However, most of the feedback could be grouped into four main themes:

1. Wildlife: 'I have learnt about how we need to protect our wildlife'
2. Water: 'Not to waste water'
3. Sustainability: 'Plastic can be reused and recycled'
4. Plants: 'Learnt about plants and koalas'

When survey respondents were asked ‘What new sustainable technologies or practices do you intend to adopt?’, responses included solar panels, house insulation strategies, composting, reducing plastic and recycling, reducing length of showers, reducing weeds and promoting native plants in gardens.

In response to the question, ‘I intend to adopt at least one of the new sustainable technologies or practices that I learned about at the Sustainable Futures Festival’, 63% somewhat agreed, agreed or strongly agreed.

In comparison with the 2022 evaluation results these are slightly lower and may be related to the reduced number of stalls related to sustainability which is addressed in the improvements section.



Collaboration with the University of Newcastle

In addition to sharing information and inviting people with expertise to present at the events listed above, EcoNetwork also accessed expertise and science-based research through the engagement of a university student enrolled in the School of Environmental Science and Development Studies at the University of Newcastle. [Courtney Kelly](#) accepted a position with EcoNetwork as a requirement to gain real on-the-job experience as part of the university’s Work Integrated Learning Program (WIL). Courtney created a ‘quick access sheet’ of the common weed species prevalent across rehabilitation sites involving the Friends of Tomaree National Park. She also helped create plant profiles describing the differences between common weed species and their native look-a-likes and documented common spring flowering plants in the Tomaree heathlands.

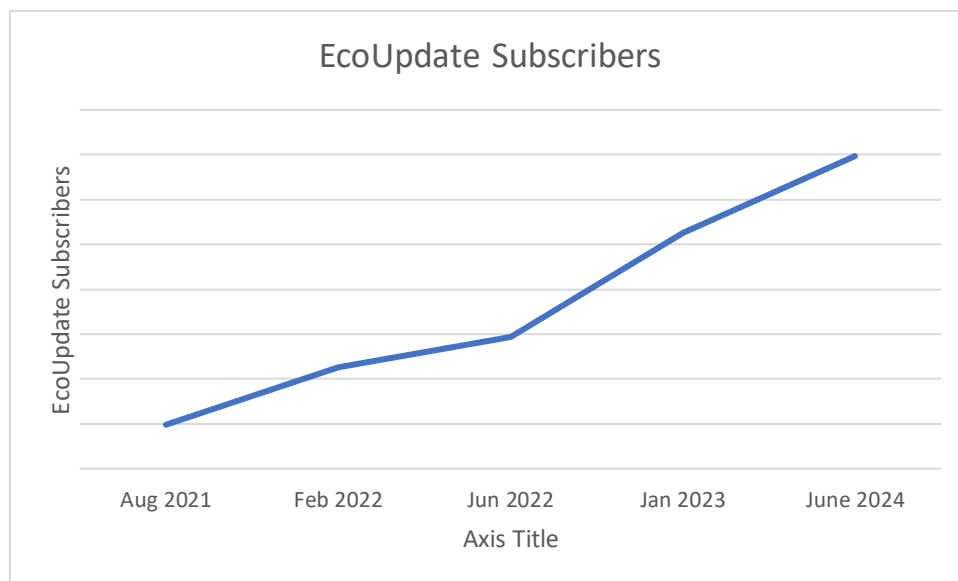
Courtney said, “Having the opportunity to engage in fieldwork through the Friends of Tomaree National Park has provided me with practical skills in weed species management, and it has been a privilege to connect with passionate members of this group who are dedicated to conserving the Tomaree National Park and who generously share their wealth of knowledge. Other activities I have participated in, including the community forum, annual general meeting and research tasks have been an excellent insight into the vital role volunteer networks play in connecting various organisations and groups with shared interests.”

To what extent has EcoNetwork supported the affiliates to achieve their objectives?

Another one of EcoNetwork’s core commitments is to support and assist our affiliates to achieve their objectives. In 2023-2024 we have attempted to do this in the following ways:

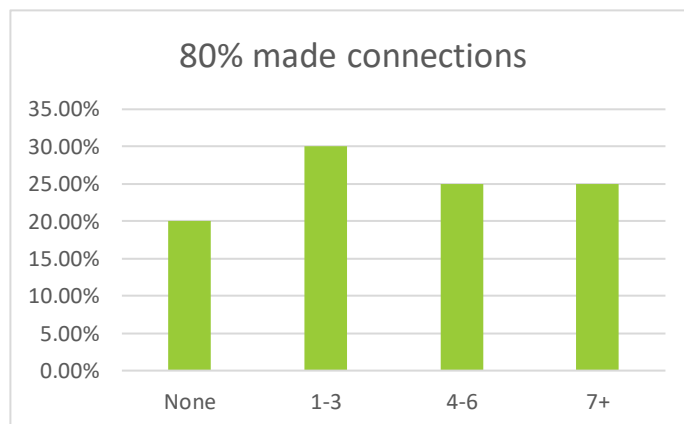
Keeping affiliates informed

EcoNetwork’s electronic publication *EcoUpdate* keeps affiliates informed about current issues, events and resources. The number of EcoUpdate subscribers has continued to increase. The events calendar has proved a popular tool and has enabled EcoNetwork and affiliates to highlight regular activities and promote special events. <https://www.econetworkps.org/events/>



Providing networking opportunities

The two forums held in 2023-2024 enabled over 4 affiliates to present on their organisations and network with other affiliates and the general public. From the feedback surveys, there was evidence that some participants were motivated to take up volunteering opportunities with these organisations. The festival also provided an opportunity for business, affiliates and the attendees to make connections. A festival survey question asked, ‘How many groups or businesses did you connect with at the Sustainable Living??? Festival that were previously unknown to you?’ One third of the respondents made at least 1 new connection and over 50% made between 4 and 7 connections. This is comparable with the 2022 survey data.



Promoting affiliates events, campaigns and on the website

In addition to EcoNetwork’s events calendar and emailing members across the network with upcoming event, several affiliates were profiled in EcoUpdate. These profiles share background information about the organisation, upcoming events and the ways they support their membership base.

- [Pindimar Bundabar Community Association](#)
- [Voice of Wallalong Woodville \(VOWW\)](#)
- [Fingal Bay Community Association](#)
- [Readers Retreat](#)
- [Hunter Region Botanic Gardens](#)

To what degree has EcoNetwork conducted the organisation with integrity and transparency?

Integrity, transparency and accountability

The committee held a strategic review meeting in January that asked key questions about what we were doing well, what could be improved and what the priorities should be for the future. The rapid review used the frameworks included in Appendix 1, 2 and 3 make an assessment about the degree to which we are achieving our ambitions. A workplan was developed and it is our intention that this will be reviewed annually.

Some of the tangible actions that resulted from this meeting included: using surveys and consultation processes to implement campaign and disseminate positions in a proactive way; reviewing Facebook policy and processes; sending out more targeted emails disseminating information of interest; conducting a survey to understand our value add; proactively share policy positions so that members can use information for their own purpose; consider an affiliate liaison officer or system of direct contact to strengthen relationships; promoting special interest groups as an entry point; and mapping key strategic partner to understand our relationship to other organisations beyond affiliates. Some of these actions have been achieved, some to a partial degree and others will become part of the 2024/2025 strategic planning process.

The committee members during 2023-2024 reporting period included:

- President Iain Watt
- Vice President Sue Olsson
- Secretary Alison Rogers
- Treasurer Nigel Dique
- Andrew Steel
- Brian Tehan
- Nigel Waters

We are grateful to Tim Meyer who continued to play a key role in further developing the website and provided technological expertise to enable tools such as the online membership form. His technological skills enabled EcoNetwork to offer a high level of professionalism not only through the website but also through effective audio-visual support at the community forums.

The committee highly appreciates the efforts of Ewa Meyer as Editor of Eco-Update as an e-publication. Feedback from members continues to be extremely positive and the number of subscribers continues to increase. The committee, affiliates, members and subscribers highly value this publication for the wide range of articles, level of detail and quality of information.

Although Kathy Brown stood down from the committee in 2023, the committee is highly thankful of her ongoing support. She provided assistance to the incoming secretary to ensure as smooth a transition as possible. Kathy also continues to support EcoNetwork by volunteering at the Whale Day, the Fly Point 40th anniversary and on the Festival committee. We look forward to continuing to work closely with Kathy.

Similarly to the 2022 Festival, thanks to financial support from sponsors in combination with fundraising efforts, the 2024 festival was financially viable. With the potential for the partnership with Homegrown to become an ongoing occurrence on an annual or 18-month cycle, EcoNetwork is in a position to realise a secure financial position into the medium term. Once again, frugal financial management overall has meant that EcoNetwork has been able to support initiatives such as investing in local projects (Walter Lamond's book) and securing resources for educational workshops (Mambo Wanda Wetlands interactive display at the festival).

Meaningful participatory engagement with affiliates

In March a confidential survey was sent to all members and affiliates. Over 10 responses were received containing positive and constructive feedback. In summary, the results of the survey were similar to the

outcomes of the committee's strategic planning meeting and have been useful for planning improvements. Here is a quick snapshot of responses:

What do you think that EcoNetwork Port Stephens does well?

Uses EcoUpdate as an effective communication tool, provides support and advice, and advocates on key issues.

I think the newsletter is great and I applauded the links to the various delivered and planned sustainability festivals.

What could we do better?

Hold more community forums with guest speakers and involving affiliates, promote the brand, clarify how committee arrives at policy positions, enhance two-way communication between committee and affiliates/members, be more proactive and strategic about which issues become a focus for advocacy, and use social media platforms for advocacy.

Bring individuals and affiliates together for forums on current environmental issues and networking.

What would you like EcoNetwork to prioritise in future?

Advocate for protecting bushland, wildlife corridors and coastal management, recruit more active volunteers, increase engagement with wider community, seek registration with ACNC, develop strategic community-based campaigns, increase consultation and be more inclusive of affiliates, members and the wider community.

More information about what EcoNetwork is doing through meetings and forums so we can get to know more about the issues and members better.

Supporting network

In the 2023-2024 reporting period we had over 50 affiliates and members. Fingal Bay Community Association joined EcoNetwork in the previous 12 months and Soldiers Point Community Association is no longer incorporated. EcoNetwork continues to support special interest groups. Groups such as KKEPS (Koala Coalition EcoNetwork Port Stephens) and EcoPollinators EcoNetwork Port Stephens further enhance the protection of our natural environment and encourage appropriate local gardening and bushland plantings.

Cooperating with other community-based organisations

Co-operation on events has occurred with the following organisations:

- Renew - Hunter Branch - Forum
- National Park Association - Bush walks held by Friends of Tomaree National Park and Port Stephens Bushwalking Group
- VOWW – East meets West Tour

Aspiring to fairness and equity

This table summarises EcoNetwork’s aspirations from the last report and our progress this year.

Aspiration from 2022-2023 report	What we did in 2023-2024
Develop a partnership with another organisation with event management expertise to capitalise on the momentum generated at the successful inaugural Festival	Established an MOU with Homegrown Markets and jointly delivered the Sustainable Living Festival in Medowie.
Review systems to enhance methods of communication with affiliates and members and enhance the membership database	Reviewed the membership database and refined the data collection system. Developed an online renewal system.
Undertake a survey of affiliates and members so we can garner confidential feedback on required improvements	Survey of members was undertaken and results compared with evidence from the committee strategic review meeting.
Further progress as an environmental hub for environmental issues in the area. We intend to expand issues on our website, enable more representation of affiliate groups on our website, and further promote opportunities for all environmental activities offered by our calendar of events.	There was an increase in uptake of the calendar of events with affiliates and organisations outside of the network using the website feature.
Develop our capacity on the executive to proactively developing policy position statements	The position paper on nuclear energy was developed in consultation with members.
Obtain the technological tools to enable electronic transfers in the field to potentially raise more money	A carbon neutral mobile phone and a square tool for collecting electronic payments was successfully trialed at three events.

EcoNetwork is continually aspiring to further develop the organisation and to find ways to improve our working relationship with affiliates. As part of the university placement, Courtney Kelly from the University of Newcastle undertook a review of similar organisations to highlight where EcoNetwork could improve. Some of the suggestions she documented, of which some have been enacted immediately and others will be considered at the next strategic review meeting.

Future aspirations

In the 2023- 2024 reporting period and beyond these are some of the areas that we would like to undertake as part of our commitment to continuous improvement:

Aspirations for 2024-2025

- Revise the MOU with Homegrown markets to establish a partnership approach
- Analyse the membership to assess the strength of the network
- Find mechanisms to seek feedback from members on a routine basis
- Proactively determine issues for advocacy and using participatory approaches to engage membership
- Take a more systematic and professional approach to fundraising to take advantage of multiple opportunities throughout the year
- Continue to review Facebook policy and processes
- Consider an affiliate liaison officer or system of direct contact to strengthen relationships
- Review the financial system to identify if additional savings can be made
- Map key strategic partners to understand our relationship to other organisations beyond affiliates
- Develop a pathway for volunteers to connect with EcoNetwork activities and the committee

Appendix 1: How we believe we influence change

Overarching vision: Ecologically sustainable communities existing in harmony with the natural environment.

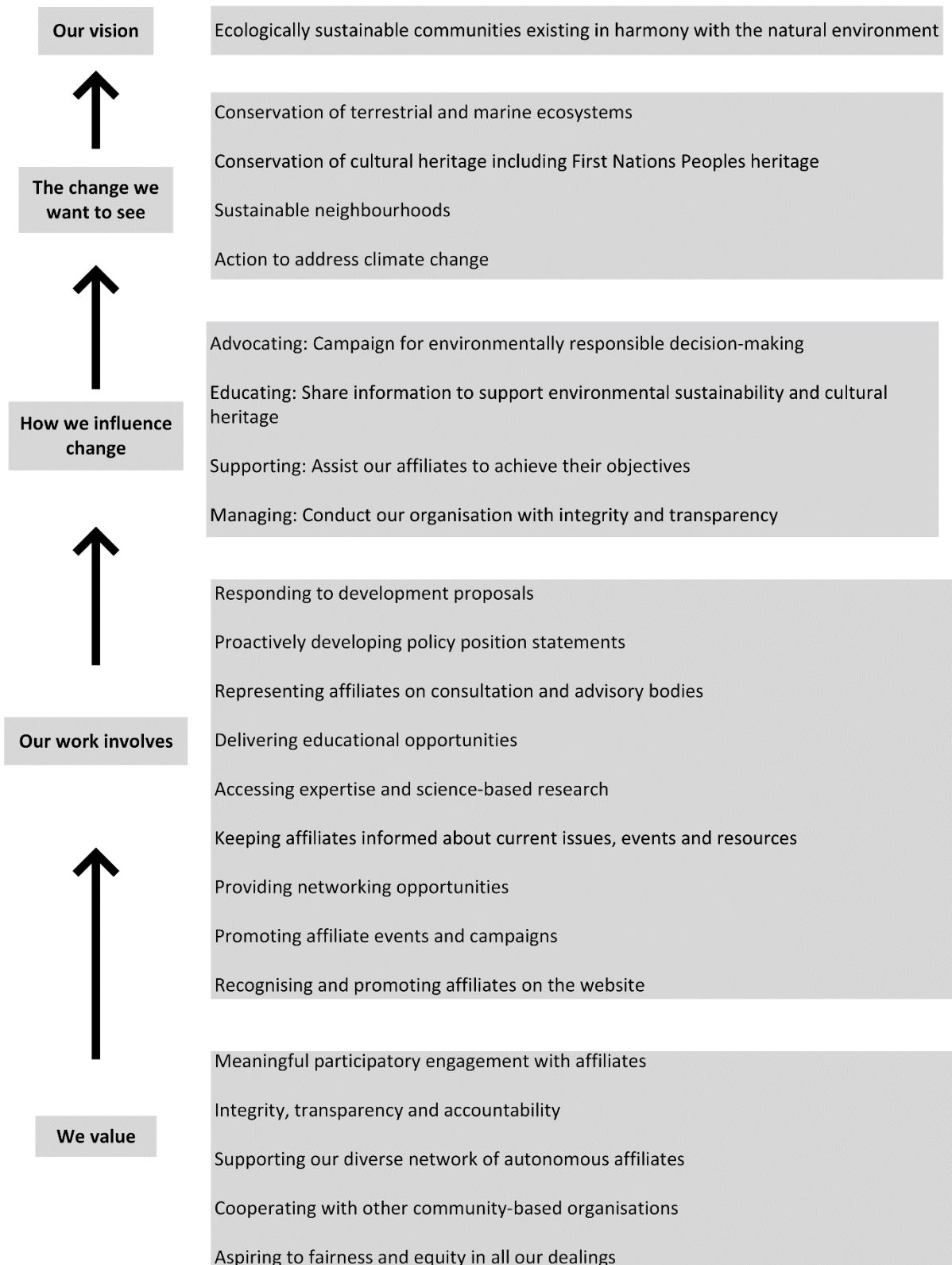
The change we want to see:

- Conservation of terrestrial and marine ecosystems
- Conservation of cultural heritage including First Nations Peoples heritage
- Sustainable communities
- Action to address climate change

How we will do this:

1. Advocate — Campaign for environmentally responsible decision-making
 - i. Responding to development proposals
 - ii. Proactively developing policy position statements
 - iii. Representing affiliates on consultation and advisory bodies
2. Educate — Share information to support environmental sustainability and cultural heritage
 - i. Delivering educational opportunities including seminars, tours, workshops, forums, stalls, newsletters and social media
 - ii. Accessing expertise and science-based research
3. Support — Assist our affiliates in achieving their objectives
 - i. Keeping affiliates informed about current issues, events and resources including monthly reports, EcoUpdate e-publication and social media
 - ii. Providing networking opportunities
 - iii. Promoting affiliates events and campaigns
 - iv. Recognising and promoting affiliates on the website
4. Manage — Conduct our organization with integrity and transparency
 - i. Meaningful participatory engagement with affiliates
 - ii. Integrity, transparency and accountability
 - iii. Supporting our diverse network of autonomous affiliates
 - iv. Cooperating with other community-based organisations
 - v. Aspiring to fairness and equity in all our dealings

Visual overview



Appendix 2: Underpinning strategy

Strategy	Objectives	Deliverables
1. Advocate: Campaign for environmentally responsible decision-making	1.1 Establish our identity and key messages	Agreed purpose and vision statement
		Agreed key messages
	1.2 Enhance our reputation as the lead network for eco advocacy in Port Stephens	Recognition of our achievements and value by the Port Stephens community
		Improved relationships with elected representatives and public servants, and the media
		High quality submissions
	1.3 Provide leadership and empowerment to the eco-community and members	Documented process for identifying, prioritising and endorsing issues
	1.4 Project a professional, consistent and recognisable brand	Agreed logo and style guide
		Core branded information and materials reflecting our identity inclusive of our objectives, history, successes and membership
2. Educate: Share information to support environmental sustainability and cultural heritage and assist members and community to thrive in a changing external environment	2.1 Create a modern and relevant member communications program to add to member value	Regular updates to members and the wider community on issues of concern and EcoNetwork activities via online/emailed e-publication, inc. use of website and Facebook, and public forums
		Sub-strategies for different target audiences
	2.2 Share relevant information between members	Digest of government policies/legislation and private initiatives impacting the local environment
		Public forums minimum -3/year
	2.3 Advocate for environmental education in schools and community	Contact list in each school using Sustainable Living Festival as a vehicle
	3. Support: Assist our members and affiliates to achieve their objectives	3.1 Identify the objectives of each of our members
Opportunities for involvement of individual members that meets their needs.		
3.2 Maximize benefits to attract and retain members		A statement of membership benefits for both affiliate and individual members
		Affiliate sub-pages on EcoNetwork website
		Sharing of affiliate Facebook posts and of their news by other means

Strategy	Objectives	Deliverables	
	3.3 Identify strategic partners and their benefits	Insurance cover understood by affiliates	
		All members' awareness of value of liaison with external groups: Nature Conservation Council; Better Planning Network, Environmental Defenders Office, Hunter Renewal, Hunter Community Environment Centre, Lock the Gate (new), NSW Environment and Heritage, etc.	
		Develop and promote synergies between affiliates	
4. Manage: Conduct our organisation with integrity and transparency	4.1 Sound organisational foundations	A modern and relevant constitution	
		Periodic reviews of Purpose, Mission and Values statement	
		Amend constitution when necessary to align with best practice or legislation	
	4.2 Implement and maintain an effective organisational structure	Clear responsibilities for office-bearers and committee members	
		Support of individual members for operational activities	
		Regular executive committee meetings, the AGM and GMs as required	
		3-yearly strategy review	
		Plan for succession	
	4.3 A sustainable business model	Annual budget process inc. reviews	
		Revenue committee to review membership categories and fees, and explore fund-raising	
		Develop a Membership recruitment strategy	
	4.4 A respectful culture of integrity	Investigate opportunities and grants to fund research and programs to grow our capability	
		Inclusive processes that encourage and welcome input from members and treats everyone fairly	
			Transparency around all decision making and activities

Appendix 3: Monitoring and evaluation plan

Evaluation questions	Indicators	Data sources	Examples of reporting
What changes have EcoNetwork contributed towards?	Evidence of progress towards our goals Evidence of the strength of the network	- Media reports - Affiliate reports - Government communiques - Network analysis	<i>EcoNetwork contributed to:</i> - Lot 666 not being sold - Mambo wetland being recognised under the DAMSAR declaration - Expansion of the X and Y national marine park - 60% of affiliates have medium to strong links with the network
To what extent has EcoNetwork effectively advocated?	- # of development proposals submitted - # of development proposals with positive outcome - # and type of position statements - # and type of consultations	- Spreadsheet of actions and outcomes	- EcoNetwork wrote X number of submissions of which X% contributed to a positive outcome - EcoNetwork distribute X number of position statements to affiliates of which X% had input from more than # affiliates - EcoNetwork represented affiliates on the X, Y and Z consultation processes
To what extent has EcoNetwork increased knowledge or changed behaviour?	- # and type of educational sessions - # and type of access to expertise - % of attendees indicating increase in knowledge / behaviour change	- Post-event attendee feedback - Spreadsheet of expertise engagement	- EcoNetwork conducted X number of sessions on topics X, Y and Z - EcoNetwork facilitated the engagement of expertise from X to assist with X, Y and Z. - X% of attendees at events reported gaining knowledge and X% reported they will change their behaviour
To what extent has EcoNetwork supported our affiliates to achieve their objectives?	- # and type of affiliates / members - # and type of information distributed - # and type of networking opportunities - # and type of affiliate promotion - % change in EcoUpdate subscribers - % change in website traffic	- Membership spreadsheet - Minutes from meetings - Spreadsheet of networking activities / promotion - EcoUpdate subscribers - Website report	- EcoNetwork has # affiliates, # businesses and # individual members - Affiliates reported an # increase in networks as a result of X activity - Subscribers to EcoUpdate has +/- by % since last year - Web traffic has +/- by % since last year
To what degree has EcoNetwork conducted our organisation with integrity and transparency?	Evidence of feedback from affiliates and key stakeholders	- Survey of affiliates - Survey of stakeholders - Post-event attendee feedback	- X% of affiliates report that the level of meaningful participatory engagement was satisfactory - X% of affiliates report that the EcoNetwork committee operates in a fair and equitable manner

Appendix 4: Advocacy in the media

EcoNetwork was quoted in the Port Stephens Examiner on several occasions:

- [July 31 – Hunter groups ask environment minister Tanya Plibersek to stop Stone Ridge Quarry project](#)
- [Sept 12 Bus pickups could boost Tomaree Coastal Track experience for tourist](#)
- [Sept 13 Climate Change Minister Chris Bowen to meet with wind turbine opponents in Nelson Bay](#)
- [Oct 1 Port Stephens nature lovers urged to join Great Aussie Bird Count](#)
- [Dec 2023 National Canberra wind farm protest set for February 6 next year](#)
- [Climate researcher Dr Mark Diesendorf to speak at Tomaree community forum – The Examiner – 20 March, 2024](#)
- [May 13 Sustainable Living Festival at Medowie offers information and plenty of fun](#)
- [May 16 Local guide: Here’s what’s on in Port Stephens and surrounds this weekend](#)

In the News of the Area, EcoNetwork was mentioned in these stories:

- [May 24 – Rotary Club Of Salamander Bay Holds Pride Of Workmanship Awards](#)
- [June 7 – Port Stephens Whale Replica Named In Honour Of Environmental Advocate Paul Watson](#)
- [June 14 – Bid To Protect Mambo Wanda Wetlands Under Ramsar Listing](#)
- [July 31 – Hunter groups ask environment minister Tanya Plibersek to stop Stone Ridge Quarry project](#)
- [June 28 – CAPS Welcomes Improvements In Council Policy And Consultation](#)
- [July 11 – Have You Seen This Parrot?](#)
- [August 1 – Human Whale Draws More Than 1200](#)
- [August 29 – OPINION: Don Quixote And The Wind Turbines](#)
- [Sept 13 OPINION: Public Transport And The Tomaree Coastal Track](#)
- [Oct 5 Hunter Valley Hydrogen Hub To Be Built On Kooragang Island](#)
- [Oct 24 Sustainable Living On Display In Medowie](#)
- [Nov 1 Amended Karuah South Quarry Development On Exhibition](#)
- [Nov 2 Environment Group Urges Community To Withhold Judgement On Offshore Wind](#)
- [Dec 2023 40 Years Of Environmental Protection At Fly Point Marine Sanctuary](#)
- [Dec 2023 Community Calls For Council To Reacquire Land At Fleet Street, Salamander Bay](#)
- [Dec 2023 Debate Over Whale Migration And Impact Of Offshore Wind](#)
- [Dec 2023 Animal Groups Push To Protect Birdlife From Poison](#)
- [Dec 2023 Cat Owners Called On To Protect Native Species](#)
- [Jan 24 Locals And Visitors Urged To Reduce Plastic Waste In The Environment by News Of The Area](#)
- [Jan 24 Highlighting Port Stephens’ Annual Award Nominees by News Of The Area](#)
- [Climate Action Hurdles To Be Discussed At Salamander Bay Community Forum](#)
- [Proposed Development On Flood Plain At Anna Bay News Of The Area March 27, 2024](#)
- [April 17 Community Forum Discusses Forces Undermining Action On Climate Change](#)
- [April 22 Letter To The Editor: Proposed Environmental Assessment Processes For Offshore Wind Farms](#)
- [April 24 Nationals Make ‘Ironclad Guarantee’ On Offshore Wind While Backing Nuclear](#)
- [May 8 Action Demanded On Shoal Bay Coastal Erosion Threats](#)
- [May 15 – Festival Program online – Paid advertisement](#)
- [May 15 Sustainable Living Festival Comes To Medowie](#)
- [May 29 Port Stephens Community Leaders Honoured For Pride In Workmanship News Of The Area](#)
- [Research Reveals Challenges To Renewable](#)
- [Council Offers Guidance On Tree Removal Rules](#)
- [Climate Action Hurdles To Be Discussed At Salamander Bay Community Forum](#)

In the Newcastle Herald:

- [Nov 2023 Cost to protect Port Stephens wetland won’t be cheap, report warns](#)
- [April 26 Residents fear lower Hunter is becoming a super quarry for Sydney](#)

In the Guardian:

- [Dec 2023 Windfarm plans in choppy waters as Coalition and One Nation whip up doubts](#)

In the Newcastle Weekly:

- [Transitioning to a just, sustainable society, Rod Thompson, The Newcastle Weekly, March 25, 2024](#)