

# Minutes



**Bushland and Natural Heritage Advisory Committee**

**Monday 01 July 2024  
5:00-6:30 pm**

<b>Location:</b>	Council Depot, 25-27 Gibbes Street, Chatswood
<b>Chair:</b>	Councillor Anna Greco
<b>Attendees:</b>	Meredith Foley – Member Edward Coates – Member Lorraine Cairnes – Member Mark Crew – Member Ross Wellings – Member Gay Spies – Member Adrienne Kabos – Member  Alfred Bernhard – WCC Bushland Team Leader Nicholas Yu – WCC Natural Assets Officer Bushra Salam – Governance
<b>Apologies/absent:</b>	Members: Scott Graham; Kay Donovan
<b>Guests</b>	Councillor Anna Greco Councillor John Moratelli
<b>Attachments:</b>	a) Bushcare Working Group report b) End of Term Report

## Agenda items

Item	Topic / Discussion	Action
1	<b>Welcome</b>  The meeting was declared open at 5:00 pm when the quorum was reached.	
	<b>Acknowledgement of Country</b>  Governance Officer acknowledged Country on behalf of Council.	

## **Apologies**

Scott Graham and Kay Donovan sent their apologies.

## **Declaration of interest:**

No declarations of interest were made.

## **2 Appointment of Committee Chair**

In accordance with Item 5.4 of the terms of Reference, the committee appointed Councillor Anna Greco as the Chair for this meeting.

Nominations for Chair of the meeting:

- Lorraine Cairnes nominated Councillor Anna Greco
- Mark Crew seconded her nomination
- No other nominations were received
- Councillor Anna Greco accepted

The Committee unanimously appointed Councillor Anna Greco as the Chair of the meeting.

## **3 Confirmation of Minutes – 12 June 2024 Reconvened Meeting**

Moved by Lorraine Cairnes and seconded by Gay Spies, the minutes of the meeting reconvened on Wednesday 12 June 2024 were unanimously adopted by the Committee.

## **4 Business arising from the previous meeting**

### **Bushcare Working Group Update**

Moved by Lorraine Cairnes and seconded by Gay Spies, the Committee passed the following resolution:

*“Scott Graham to circulate the final draft of Bushcare Working Group report to be included in the minutes of this meeting by 8 July 2024”.*

### **Update on the Local Government Conference and Tree Legislation**

See notes below.

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## 5 Strategic Activities

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### 5.1 End of Term Report

As stated in the terms of reference, each advisory committee is required to submit a report on the achievements of the committee at the end of the term of Council. The Achievement report for the Bushland and Natural Heritage Advisory Committee is included at Attachment 1b.

Moved by Lorraine Cairnes and seconded by Gay Spies, the Committee carried to table the end of term report in the minutes of the meeting.

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### 5.2 Castlecrag Site visit report

Alfred Bernhard (Bushland Team Leader) briefed the Committee about the Castlecrag Site visit.

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### 5.3 Update on the Local Government Conference and Tree legislation

Councillor Anna Greco updated the Committee about the favourable response by Local Government NSW to the motion passed by Willoughby City Council last October, via an email prior to the meeting, which reads as follows:

<b>105 Willoughby City Council - Increased protection of trees</b>	That Local Government NSW: 1. Urgently undertakes a review of the legislative regime for tree protection and seek increased penalties and deterrents, including significantly increased fines and community service for the destruction and vandalism of trees in NSW. The review is to include the destruction and vandalism of vegetation in environmentally sensitive areas such as riparian zones, areas of high biodiversity value and foreshore protection areas. The review should identify opportunities to better coordinate tree protection across NSW, along with improved education and awareness around the importance of tree protection to build stronger community support. 2. Advocates for effective reform to improve collaboration and coordination in education and enforcement to combat tree vandalism in NSW.	<del>relevant and necessary report.</del> The NSW Government is aware of the growing number of incidents of unauthorised clearing on both private and public land. The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure is investigating the effectiveness of the current regulatory settings and how to appropriately strengthen them.  The Department will continue consultation with councils to better understand the issues and other enforcement measures when considering potential policy changes.  Suggestions from councils regarding both penalties and methods to identify offenders will also be considered.  Further, the Department intends to provide more guidance to councils to help improve their understanding and confidence in applying and enforcing the relevant provisions of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021.
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Moved by Meredith Foley and seconded by Lorraine Cairnes the Committee passed the following resolution:

*“that Council advocates to set up a working party of Council staff of the NSROC Councils to share information about methods used to prevent illegal tree removal and identify any deficiency of power or resources or support from other agencies with a view to further lobbying the NSW government to remedy such*

*deficiencies.”*

Moved by Adrienne Kabos and seconded by Meredith Foley the Committee passed the following recommendations:

**Recommendation 1:**

*“that Council collaborates with other Councils, NSW EPA and NSW Police department about prosecution and penalties.”*

**Recommendation 2:**

*“that Council develops a policy to ensure that where trees on public land have been illegally cleared with the apparent purpose of “improving” a view, a screen is erected (which could, for example, include a shipping container) and maintained to ensure that the view remains obstructed to at least the same extent as it was before the illegal clearing until such time as the bushland has recovered to its previous condition.”*

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#### **5.4 Griffin Reserves Action Plans**

The Bushland Team Leader advised the Committee that the Have Your Say community consultation was now complete. There were over 500 visits and numerous detailed comments, generally in favour of the plans. Responses to comments have been prepared for a future council report.

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#### **5.5 Tree Day activity at Muston Park**

The Bushland Team Leader informed the Committee about this event and invited members to participate at Muston Park on 28 July (10am-2pm). The Committee thanked the Bushland Team Leader for the update.

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#### **5.6 Committee governance matters**

The Committee made the following observations and suggestions, which are included in the End-of-Term Report:

- Willoughby needs Advisory Committees.
- The Advisory Committees should be re-established when the next Council is elected without the long administrative

delays which occurred at the beginning of this term (and resulted in a delay of one year before the Advisory Committees could begin meeting).

- Terms of Reference need to be more focussed on achieving the purposes of the Advisory Committees.
- Councillors to be appointed as full members of Committees.
- There should be less time spent in meetings on resolving governance issues, and more time on providing advice to Council.
- The meetings of Advisory Committees should be more frequent, or longer time allowed for meetings.

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## 6 Other Business

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***Dalrymple Avenue Entrance:*** Ross Wellings raised the issue of the boundary fence at Ferndale Park. The Bushland Team Leader responded that following damage to the old timber fence Council is intending to intensify planting along the boundaries to replace the damaged fencing.

**Appreciation:**

The Committee thanked Council officers from Governance and the Bushland Team who have assisted the BANHAC during this term of Council.

The Committee thanked Councillors who have attended meetings, particularly Councillors Greco and Moratelli who have chaired the BANHAC meetings.

The Bushland Team Leader thanked the committee for their contribution and for sharing their local knowledge and expertise.

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## 7 Meeting Conclusion

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The meeting concluded at 6:20 pm.

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## Bushcare Working Group report:

### **BUSHCARE WORKING PARTY ON IMPROVING VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT IN WCC LOCAL BUSHCARE PROGRAM DISCUSSION PAPER July 2024**

The BUSHCARE WORKING PARTY ON IMPROVING VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT (a Working Party of Council's Bushland and Natural Heritage Advisory Committee) has reviewed the issues in its Terms of Reference and produced this draft Discussion Paper, which we recommend should be reviewed by Willoughby's Bushcare Groups and the WCC Bushcare Team (WCCBT). We propose with the backing of the WCCBT to pursue a pilot program across Castlecrag bushcare sites, supported by a Council grant. We'd like also to call a meeting of the Bushcare Group Convenors to share our thinking and seek feedback.

The focus of the Working Party has been to review the issues relating to volunteer engagement in Willoughby Council's Bushcare Program, particularly effective means of increasing new volunteer participation in the Program, to ensure that existing Bushcare volunteers are fully active and are not lost to the Program, and to enhance the demographic composition of participants in the Bushcare program.

#### Purpose

##### **The Working Party's purpose in its Terms of Reference are:**

- 1.1 The Working Party will assist the BANHAC by providing advice on issues related to increasing and enhancing participation in the Willoughby Council's Bushcare Program including consideration of:
  - a) strategic opportunities related to participation in Willoughby Council Bushcare Program;
  - b) reviewing trends and opportunities relating to participation in the Bushcare Program;
  - c) identifying strategic opportunities and ideas for attracting new Bushcarers as active participants in the Bushcare Program;
  - d) enhancing the demographic composition of participants in the Bushcare program;
  - e) the success factors which have been integral to the success of Willoughby's Bushcare Program, and, where appropriate, the successful bushcare programs of other LGAs; and
  - f) strategic and policy improvements needed to increase and sustain participation in Willoughby Bushcare within the requirements of the Bushcare program.

#### Baseline data

- *Current hours/ volunteers by Bushcare site*
- *Registered volunteers by Bushcare site*
- *Year on year comparison of hours/ volunteers by Bushcare site*

#### Issues and Strategies

The strategic issues for consideration fall into three categories:

**Bushcare volunteers are highly valuable to WCC, but the volunteer body is not as engaged or growing sufficiently to address the needs of the municipality.**

Volunteers are critical to the success of our efforts in caring for our bushland:

Good professional bush-carers are hard to find/grow.

Council budgets for staff and contractors are limited and always under pressure.

Volunteers enable WCC to greatly leverage the talents of the professionals that have on their team.

Volunteers are ambassadors at large for our Bushland in the communities that neighbour the reserves.

Volunteers provide continuity in the conservation and regeneration of the bushland reserves.

At present, the volunteers are generally:

A bit thin on the ground – some sites only attract 2 or 3 volunteers per work session.

Older and aging – in some areas, the demographics are quite young, but many of the bushcarers are in the older age group. In others, the stalwarts are now having trouble getting down to the weeds.

Not growing – current efforts are recruiting enough new volunteers to replace those leaving, but the numbers are not growing.

Do not represent the ethnic diversity of the municipality, with a particular opportunity area amongst people of Asian backgrounds.

Not on the tools enough – Alfred has spoken of the large number of volunteers registered – the data shows a gap between registered and active volunteers. Its worth checking to see whether there are people on the list, who have remained inactive for say 6+months.

There are many areas that could do with more support:

Current sites with 5 or fewer volunteers per work session or with aging members, could use more members to better leverage the time and skills of the trainers

- 17 / 41 groups have 5 or fewer active members.
- Most cancellations are weather related, but occasionally there's a lack of quorum. A few more members would help avoid this.

There are many potential areas that could do with further care but where resources are not available – for example, the northern escarpment at Castlecrag has a significant exposure along its length to prevent ingress of weeds from neighbouring gardens but no volunteers to address this. The Sunnyside Brushturkeys focus on a reserve that fronts the street.

**Current recruitment practices are holding the line but will not address these issues. They are:**

Heartfelt and impactful

Council's Bushcare Team works really hard to win new volunteers and with their resourcing, they do a good job. Our desire is to understand where we can help them, not nit-pick the detail of their current practices.

Labour intensive

Requiring a lot of time and energy from the team. (Perhaps taking them away from the work??) This exercise should not lead to significant additional time of the expert bushcare trainers away from their coaching and hands on activity.

Venerable

Much of what is being done has been around for quite some time. No doubt some of it is well proven and should continue. But new ideas should be tried. This point is really the critical one. The population at large and the local resident base have changed considerably over the last twenty years. The concept of community, approach to volunteering, social values and their modes of communication are vastly different than when Council started off down this track.

**Strategies for promoting Willoughby's Bushcare groups**

Its critical to establish a statement of purpose and to communicate these as part of our efforts to engage and grow our volunteer base. It's a sense of common purpose that attracts people to community activity and which bonds them to a group. Key elements of this strategy are captured below. These are intended to be delivered by the volunteer base, with the buy-in of WCCBC team, led by the convener of each group with the support of WCC marketing department.

Each Group to document a statement of purpose including:

Its primary focus and purpose, and its significant values – e.g. rehabilitate degraded places/ conserve significant values, etc.

Identify special flora and fauna, and ecological communities and habitats

List accomplishments, and case studies with pics

Capture relevant history of the site – cracker night in the 50's and 60's at one site

Meeting time information

Catchment area of likely volunteers

A page for each Bushcare Group on Willoughby website:

Includes statement of purpose above

(see QR code below)

(see social media below)

Signage on each site:

Name of group

Imagery – iconic

QR code linking to the Group's web page

A generic page showing the bushcare groups:

Mapped by suburb to make it easy for folks to recognise the location closest to them.

Links from within the map to the page for each site

Quarterly Facebook posts for each group:

Capturing images of achievements.

Showing the group at work/play.

Providing a link to the WCC web page.

Bi-annual bushcare day across Willoughby – promote an "open day" in bushcare sites:

Perhaps leveraging off publicity surrounding Volunteer week (late May)

Organise by suburb

Meet and greet at a Bushcare site.

Trail walk covering local sites / insights.

Coffee on-site afterward.

Other 'Special events'

'Tasters' for newbies – those who might be interested but are hesitant to commit

Includes – hanging of habitat boxes; coffee discussion of rare/special fauna currently in bloom; damper and billy tea.

## **Strategies for retaining, maintaining, and activating (or re-activating) the existing bushcare volunteers.**

Formalise concept of "support" members

There are several groups where some members, unable to get down for hands on care have adopted other roles that are key to keeping the team together.

Sunnyside Brushturkeys have Joanne, who bakes monthly treats and joins to support morning tea on site each month.

Retreat group have John who provides maintenance of on-site furniture

A social media savvy member could oversee the FB posts mentioned at 3.3

Promoting this across the bushcare community could help keep some of the older members engaged and sharing their expertise which the younger carers.

Annual bushcare day - an "open day" in bushcare sites:

(See above for detail).



While this is principally about recruitment, it also showcases the accomplishments of current bushcarers

This is a validating experience, which reinforces a sense of purpose among carers who don't get much feedback from outside their direct team

## Resourcing

Looking forward, it is not anticipated that this will require much funding, since it is anticipated that the resourcing will be largely provided from within the volunteer base:

Leadership: conveners

Recruitment events: conveners

Social media: delegated team member per bushcare group

Management of web pages – within WCC's marketing team.

- That said, to pilot the proposal without the otherwise inevitable drain on the WCCBC team, we propose to apply for a Council Grant of \$7000 to support pilot activity across the Castlecrag Bushcare groups:

Design and printing of site signage

Copywriting support for web pages

Funding of QR code

## DISCUSSION

Looking forward, some questions to consider:

**Targeting: What specific comms/ actions will help is to directly engage**

target demographics – Asian community, new mums, recent retirees, and reactivate the large passive base of volunteers not currently turning up to Bushcare sessions.

**Societal trends: How to leverage broad societal trends, to help us connect with the people we are trying to win over? Trends such as:**

Concern for the environment > desire to do something to help?

Need to belong > a need to belong to a group with shared ideals <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tracybrower/2021/01/10/missing-your-people-why-belonging-is-so-important-and-how-to-create-it/?sh=21b141d37c43>

Connecting at the neighbourhood level > how do we leverage the stronger connection people feel with their neighbourhood (suburb/ localities), when WCC naturally defaults to generalised city wide thinking.

Working from home > with most people working partially from home, is it possible, that we could get working people to attend mid-week bush-care sessions?

Self-care through engagement with nature > the pandemic has Willoughby residents flooding the reserves to escape and reflect. Many have turned this into an ongoing practice. Can we leverage this to general bush care volunteers?

What's the opportunity presented by social media – love or hate them, FB and Instagram are the dominant networking platforms for most local residents. How could we leverage this to connect, recruit and retain.

Fresh thinking: If we were starting in 2024 with a clean sheet

## **WILLOUGHBY COUNCIL BUSHLAND AND NATURAL HERITAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BANHAC) END-OF-TERM REPORT FOR TERM 2023-2024**

### **BACKGROUND**

The Terms of Reference for the BANHAC were adopted by Council on 27 February 2023, and Council approved membership in March 2023 following a call for community expressions of interest. The inaugural BANHAC meeting was 26 April 2023.

Terms of Reference (see Appendix for PURPOSE section) S.17.3 require “An end of term report outlining the work and achievements of the committee during the term, [will] be submitted to Council, prior to the caretaker period.” This report has been prepared by the membership of the BANHAC, to be submitted to Council’s July 2024 meeting.

The Advisory Committees’ Terms of Reference require that Advisory Committees will be disbanded at the commencement of the caretaker period preceding the 2024 NSW Local Government elections, which is from Friday, 16 August to Friday, 13 September 2024 (inclusive). The Local Government elections are on Saturday 14 September 2024. Council enters the caretaker period on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

### **MEMBERSHIP AND MEETING CHAIRS**

Council appointed the following nine members (alphabetical) at its meeting 27 March 2023: Lorraine Cairnes, Edward Coates, Mark Crew, Kay Donovan, Meredith Foley, Scott Graham, Adrienne Kabos, Gay Spies, Ross Wellings.

Curiously, the governance rules adopted by Council for the ACs do not permit Councilors to be appointed as AC members as has been the case in the past, but they may attend meetings as observers with speaking rights. BANHAC members are grateful that one or more Councilors have attended each BANHAC meeting, and we extend our thanks to these Councilors.

### **BANHAC CHAIR**

The BANHAC agreed that it would not appoint a permanent chair for the AC’s whole term, but that community members would appoint a chair at each meeting. At each meeting, a Councillor in attendance at the meeting was voted as Chair. The Chairs have been Cllr J Moratelli, and Cllr A Greco. This is in accordance with the TOR S.5.4 “*The committee can request that a Councillor present at the meeting be the Chairperson*”. The Committee thanks these Councilors, and other Councilors who have attended meetings, for their interest.

### **ADVICE TO COUNCIL**

The sole purpose of Advisory Committees is to provide advice to Council. Recommendations (advice) to Council are sent via the BANHAC minutes, which are reported to Council following each meeting. The Purpose of the BANHAC is at Appendix 1 of this Report.

### **MEETINGS**

The TOR provides (S.9.1) that “Meetings shall be held a minimum of two and maximum of six occasions per year”.

There have been 8 formal meetings, one “informal” meeting, and 4 site inspections in the period under review (16 months):

1. Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023
2. Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023
3. Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2023
4. Wednesday 16 August 2023 (on-site at the Blue Gum Park)

5. Wednesday 20 September 2023
6. Wednesday 18 October 2023
7. Wednesday 15 November (on-site at Stoker Park)
8. Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2024
9. Wednesday 17 April 2024 (on-site, Warners Park)
10. Wednesday 15 May 2024 (Informal meeting determined by Governance to be non-quate)
11. Wednesday 12 June 2024 (Supplementary meeting to confirm the minutes of the “informal” meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2024 as Minutes of the BANHAC)
12. Wednesday 19 June 2024 (on-site, Watergate Reserve)
13. Monday 1 July 2024 (final meeting of the 2023-2024 BANHAC)

## ISSUES DISCUSSED

Issues which have been discussed, including valuable briefings from Bushland Team officers, have included the following, most of which resulted in advice to Council, and some positive actions by Council:

- Artarmon Streetscape project, its weblink and the planting palette of non-native weedy species
- Cat control
- Management of cats and cat containment
- Need for stronger cat control legislation
- Committee governance matters
- BANHAC Terms of Reference issues, and inadequate frequency of BANHAC meetings
- Chatswood Golf Course native vegetation management and public right-of-way
- Chatswood’s urban tree canopy and future tree planting
- Bushcare engagement, volunteers and bushcare training (Working Party formed to report on this issue)
- Canopy of Life Tree Festival - Council’s *Love Your Trees* campaign
- Crown Lands Aboriginal claims
- Ecological connectivity and “wildlife corridors” inclusion in Vegetation Policy
- Education of community about bushfires
- Griffin Reserves Action Plans and Griffin Reserves Plan of Management
- Keep Reserve Boundary correction and gazettal by Geographic Names Board
- Liaison with the Bicentennial Reserve and Flat Rock Gully Advisory Committee.
- Local Government conference and tree legislation
- Red Imported Fire Ants - risks and potential impacts and briefing of Councillors on need to plan for potential arrival of RIFAs in Willoughby
- Reserve Action Plans
- Tree day activity at Muston Park
- Tree removal notifications: The absence of any requirement that tree removal notices to be displayed was raised at the AC and later picked up in a motion, which was adopted by council requiring display of notices
- Tree vandalism:
- Tree vandalism incident in Willowie Road, and Council’s response
- Subsequently, Willoughby Council wrote to Local Government NSW, and the Dept of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure is now investigating strengthening the current regulatory settings, in consultation with Councils.
- Urban Bushland Plan of management
- WCC Natural Heritage Register update
- Weed management and avoidance of using weedy species in Council plantings:
- Concerns about council planting weeds listed in the Garden Escapes in Bushlands and Reserves document(<https://sydneyweeds.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Garden-escapes-2021-Revised.pdf> )
- Willoughby Council is a member of the Sydney Weeds Network and would be expected to use this key reference in its landscape plantings.
- These concerns were picked up in a motion adopted by Council requiring a report specifying and justifying the use of any listed plants for consideration by council.

## CONDUCT OF MEETINGS AND SECRETARIAT ROLE

The WCC Governance, Risk and Compliance Section fills the Committee's secretariat role. An officer of this Section attends meetings and takes minutes. When there was absence of a Governance officer, minutes were drafted by a Bushland Team Officer. Agendas are drawn up with input from BANHAC members and distributed by the Governance Section.

### **WORKING PARTIES**

- Two Working Parties have been established under provisions of TOR S.18:
- Griffin Reserves Castlecrag Plan of Management Working Party. Convenors: Mark Crew and Adrienne Kabos.
- Bushcare Working Party to review ways to increase community volunteer participation in Bushcare. Convenor: Scott Graham. This Working Party presented its final Report in July 2024.

### **TERM OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

The term of this AC has been short (16 months), because of long delays by Council in deciding whether this Council wished to appoint Advisory Committees as has been done in the past, and extended debate about the governance and "rules" for Advisory Committee operation and the Terms of Reference (generic for all ACs, and with specific TOR for each AC).

### **MINUTES APPROVAL**

A governance issue concerning the processing and acceptance of BANHAC Minutes was taken up by Cllr Moratelli (on behalf of the Advisory Committee) with the WCC Governance, Risk and Compliance Section. A new procedure was established which allows draft minutes to be approved electronically so that they could be presented to Council as approved minutes, rather than draft. For the record, the procedure now adopted, from November 2023, is:

1. Advisory Committee support officer prepares minutes
2. Subject Matter Expert reviews and confirms
3. Advisory Committee support officer distributes minutes to Chair (including the Councillor, if a Councillor was chair for that meeting)
4. Chair reviews and provides feedback/confirm
5. Advisory committee support officer amends minutes and distributes to committee (via email)
6. Committee provides feedback via 'reply all' email
7. Advisory committee support officer amends and distributes to committee for 'out of session approval'
8. Approved minutes presented to Council (approved minutes are included on agenda/minutes of the next committee meeting as formal confirmation of the minutes).

### **OBSERVATIONS AND LIMITATIONS**

It will be a matter for the new Council to decide to appoint (or re-appoint) Advisory Committees for the coming term of the new Council.

The following points are offered from our experience in this Term of Council, to assist the next Council in appointment of future Advisory Committees:

#### **11.1 REAPPOINTMENT OF ADVISORY COMMITTEES FOR NEXT COUNCIL TERM**

The BANHAC membership sees significant value to Willoughby LGA in having access to free, independent, and expert advice from the BANHAC and other Advisory Committees, and we recommend that this AC should be reappointed to advise the incoming Council.

We note that the delays that occurred with the appointment of Council's Advisory Committees for this term of Council resulted in unfortunate loss of time (over one year) to commence the operation of these Committees. The new Council was elected in December 2021, it held its first meeting in January 2022, and the Advisory Committees were not appointed until April 2023. The inaugural BANHAC meeting was 26 April 2023. We hope that such delays will not occur again when a new Council is elected in September 2024, and that there will be as smooth a transition as possible for reappointment of the BANHAC and other Advisory Committees of Council.

#### **11.2 MEMBERSHIP OF ADVISORY COMMITTEES BY COUNCILLORS**

There is great advantage in having Councillors attending Advisory Committee meetings. Councillors should be permitted to be appointed as members of future Advisory Committees, as has been the case in the past. There is no substance to the claim that this would create a conflict of interest for Councillors.

#### **11.3 SITE INSPECTIONS**

Site inspections have been important, to evaluate the outcomes of strategic actions. They provide excellent understanding of the work done by council teams, contractors and bush care volunteers, and emphasise the need for ongoing work. The assistance of the Bushland Team in site inspections is greatly appreciated.

#### 11.4 MEETING FREQUENCY AND LENGTH

The short length of meetings and the limited number of meetings permitted has not allowed members to contribute their ideas effectively. The complex governance procedures and requirements have taken up as much as 30 minutes of meeting time. Briefings from Officers, while essential to provide background information, have often been lengthy. We recommend that meetings should be more frequent, and that more time is programmed for meetings.

#### 11.5 MINUTE-TAKING

Minutes often need many corrections and additions because of lack of familiarity by the Governance minute-taker with the specialised terms, content and issues discussed at meetings. This is not a criticism of individual officers, but an anomaly in the rules for Advisory Committees. It would be more appropriate in the future if a specialist officer from the Bushland team filled the role of minute-taker. Other Secretariat roles undertaken by the Governance team have been undertaken efficiently and allowed the Advisory Committee to operate effectively.

#### 11.6 TRANSMITTING ADVICE TO COUNCIL

We have found that our advice is not effectively transmitted to Council. It is contained in the minutes of each BANHAC meeting, which are included in Council's General Meeting agendas, which can be over 600 pages in length. Generally, the Officers' recommendation is merely that the Minutes of Advisory Committees should be "noted". We suggest that the Minutes format should incorporate a dot-point section at the end of each Minutes titled "ADVICE TO COUNCIL". This would allow Councillors more easily to locate and consider the advice offered by its Advisory Committees.

#### 11.7 VIDEO-CONFERENCING ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

To facilitate meeting quorums, there should be provision made for video-conferencing attendance at BANHAC meetings. We understand that this facility is provided for some other Advisory Committees. We also suggest that Council change to Zoom rather than Microsoft Teams, which many people have trouble accessing. Council uses Zoom for other communications, so this should not be a problem.

## **APPENDIX**

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE: BUSHLAND AND NATURAL HERITAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE – PURPOSE**

Note – the full Terms of Reference can be found at [file:///C:/Users/Lorraine/Desktop/ECM\\_6884442\\_v3\\_Bushland-and-Natural-Heritage-Advisory-Committee-Terms-of-Reference-2023.pdf](file:///C:/Users/Lorraine/Desktop/ECM_6884442_v3_Bushland-and-Natural-Heritage-Advisory-Committee-Terms-of-Reference-2023.pdf))

#### **2. PURPOSE**

2.1 Advisory Committees are created for the sole purpose of providing independent, expert and impartial advice on the development and implementation of strategic priorities of Council.

2.2 This Committee will assist Council in achieving sustainability of bushland and natural heritage in Willoughby through:

2.2.1 Providing advice on strategic bushland and natural heritage issues and policy development, including:

Willoughby's Urban Bushland Plan of Management;

The natural heritage aspects of the Griffin Reserves Plan of Management;

Reserve Action Plans for all Community Land that includes bushland and / or other natural heritage features.

2.2.2 Providing advice on the implementation of key projects and initiatives.

2.2.3 Providing advice on how to raise awareness and promote behaviour change within the community or with existing organisations focused on bushland and natural heritage.

Subjects in Scope:

The sustainability of natural heritage

Development of the natural heritage register

Educational opportunities and needs, with respect to Willoughby's natural heritage

Create awareness and appreciation of Willoughby's natural heritage and bush care initiatives

Threatened Species Conservation Act; State Environmental Planning Policies, Regional Environmental Plans

Conservation of natural landscapes

Key Strategies: Urban Bushland Plan of Management; Griffin Reserves Plan of Management; Reserve Action Plans