

Toronto Area Sustainable Neighbourhood Group

Five years of creating a better neighbourhood together



The Toronto Area Sustainable Neighbourhood Group (TASNG) is a group of community members who live in and identify closely with the suburbs of Toronto, Carey Bay, Kilaben Bay or Coal Point through work, volunteering, friends, family or other means of connection.

We are committed to working towards our vision:

To be proud of our neighbourhood, maintain and improve access to natural beauty and cultural heritage, promote sustainable growth and tourism, and foster a community of environmentally aware and active residents.

Since being established in 2012, we have initiated a variety of successful community projects that are improving our neighbourhood and making it a more sustainable place to live, work and play.

Tossers Can Be Binnars

Stage 1: Lead by Steve Dewar, this project aimed to minimise littering surrounding Woolworths and Aldi. With advice from Toronto Tidy Towns, and a grant from Combined Clubs via Toronto Worker's Club and Keep Australia Beautiful, we:

- worked with Council to have general waste, recycling bins and signage installed;
- removed graffiti and commissioned a colourful mural in the car park area; and
- held litter clean up and community education events.

In recognition of our integrated approach, this project won the 2014 Litter Reduction Award from NSW Tidy Towns.

Stage 2: Following the success of the first project, we then focussed on littering around fast food outlets in our neighbourhood. With Steve leading the project we worked, in partnership with Toronto Tidy Towns and received a grant from Combined Clubs NSW. We engaged with local fast food operators to raise awareness of littering and encourage recycling of their packaging.

Both of these projects are working to reject littering and enhance community pride.

Considerable media attention was created for both of these projects and attendance by local politicians.



Fire Retardant Native Demonstration Garden

This project, led by Lois Simpson, established an 80 m square garden of fire retardant plants at the Toronto Fire Station, to demonstrate a healthy native habitat, with minimal local fire hazard.

The project was funded with a grant from Council and with enthusiastic support from the firefighters! It won the Environmental Education Award from NSW Tidy Towns in 2014.

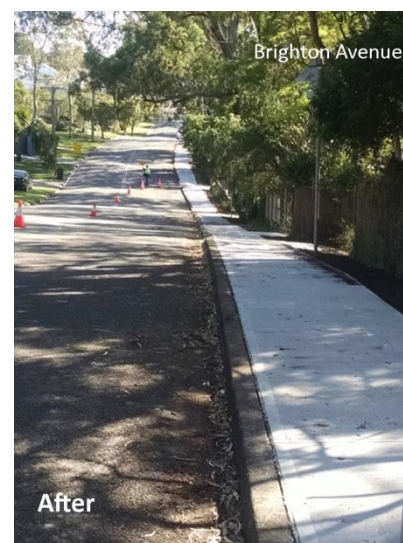
Improved Cycling and Pedestrian Infrastructure

TASNG successfully requested Council and RMS to provide:

- on-off ramps for the footpaths along Fennel Bay Bridge for cyclists;
- on-road cycle lane and cycle road markings for the upgrade of Cary Street, Toronto; and
- cycle markings and signage along Wangi Road near the Toronto Fire Station

TASNG and the Coal Point Progress Association have lobbied Council for improvements in walkability in the Toronto area. The Brighton Street footpath project has been the highlight so far. We have conducted bicycling and pedestrian surveys along Brighton, Excelsior and Ambrose Streets. We have made submissions to Council to improve walkability along Skye Point Rd, Coal Point.

In collaboration with the Rathmines Area Sustainable Neighbourhood Group, we are revitalising a proposal to construct a walking/cycling track from the end of Kilaben Bay Road to link with the Rathmines cycleway. Initially discussed with Council and the Newcastle Cycleways movement in the 1980s, this option was costed in the draft Cycleways Strategy of 2011 though as a low priority. TASNG members have met with Council staff on site and raised the idea with Mayor Fraser. Options for routing, construction materials, number and location of bridges and possible acquisition of some environmentally-sensitive foreshore land will be canvassed with stakeholders including Council, Hunter Water, landholders and the community. The benefits of this shared pathway link would be huge.



Brighton Avenue Footpath Extension

Lead by Nico Marcar, we worked with the Coal Point Progress Association to advocate for a much-needed extension to the Brighton Street footpath, between Jarrett and Ambrose Streets, Toronto.

We received a grant from the Community Building Partnership Program (NSW Government). While the original plan emphasised low cost construction options, a standard concrete path has now been built.

A launch ceremony was held with Greg Piper MP and Mat Brogan (Assets, Council) and community members in attendance. Press coverage followed in the Lakes Mail and Newcastle Herald.

This was a major milestone and the culmination of three decades of concern and lobbying by local residents!

Toronto Streetscape Master Plan

We have provided significant feedback to Council, via submissions and face to face meetings, about the proposed upgrade to the Toronto Boulevard, between 2013 and 2016.

We lobbied strongly, but unsuccessfully, for the retention of some of the fig trees. We continue to seek feedback from Council on changes in design and planting strategies.



Community consultations on Development Applications

With the Coal Point Progress Association, we have provided several submissions for DA applications in the area.

Two of the most prominent in 2016 have been the proposed multi-storey townhouse development at 2 Brighton Ave (treed ridgeline) and the proposed multi-unit development at 151 Brighton Ave (Hirecraft marina site).

We coordinated local community input through meetings, which included attendance by Cr Kay Fraser, and communications including letterbox drops.

As a result, over 130 submissions against the proposal at 2 Brighton Ave and close to 100 for 151 Brighton Avenue were tabled. Council has indicated their opposition and need for further information to both developments. Suzanne Pritchard (CPPA) has acted as contact with Council and the Environmental Defenders Office on behalf of the community after SNL builders (proponents of the 2 Brighton Ave development) took their case to the Land & Environment Court. CPPA and TASGN coordinated community engagement at the on-site L&E court conciliation hearing in May.

We have also written to and spoken with Council to map out a plan for limits to development for the ridgeline connecting Carey Bay and Toronto.



Plastic Bags

We have been a strong voice for the abolition of single-use plastic bags locally and throughout NSW, in concert with the Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance.

We have engaged vigorously with businesses in Toronto, supermarket chains and the NSW Minister for the Environment, EPA and Federal governments.

Steve Dewar has led this campaign. Under the umbrella of the Alliance, he has spearheaded a campaign to coordinate an education program to discourage the use of plastic shopping bags and other single-use plastics by organising a series of displays at town centre shopping centres, including Toronto.

We have also:

- Made submissions to the Lake Macquarie Estuary and Coastal Zone management plans and Dinghy Storage enquiry; and objected to the proposed amalgamation of Lake Macquarie City and Newcastle Councils.
- Promoted our projects and activities to the community and sought new members at Toronto Spring Fairs and other events.
- Held Clean Up Australia Day activities, through the particular efforts of Steve Dewar.
- Been involved with Robyn Charlton (Chair: LT Creek SNG) to develop the proposal for establishing the Scribbly Gum Reserve near the Myuna Colliery.

A Short History

We have now been formally in operation for almost five years. Our group covers the suburbs of Coal Point, Carey Bay, Kilaben Bay and Toronto.

We produced a formal action plan (2012-2020) in May 2012 following two community workshops and a community survey.

Six detailed objectives were formulated focussing on *living sustainably* and *protecting the natural environment*.

The single biggest social and environmental issue for Toronto area residents was deemed to be the need to improve walking and cycling infrastructure.

Our action plan was officially launched by Dr Alice Howe (Council) on the morning of 8 September 2012 at the Toronto Town Square.

A summary action plan was produced and a smaller version (mini SNAP) was produced in 2014 and a subsequent minor revision.

Meetings were initially held at Toronto Library, and subsequently at the CPPA Hall, Library and, since 2015, at the HUB, 97 The Boulevarde, Toronto.

We were joint winners of the **2015 Lake Macquarie Community Group of the Year**, along with our partners, the Coal Point Progress Association.

From the beginning, we have had a close association with the Coal Point Progress Association (President, Suzanne Pritchard) and Toronto Tidy Towns (Kelly Hoare and Lynn Pascoe). Our membership (\$2 annual per person) numbers have been boosted to about 150 during the last two years through voluntary fees collected by CPPA.

There are currently three teams operating:

1. Recycling and Waste Management (Steve Dewar leader)
2. Cycling and Pedestrian (Nico Marcar leader)
3. Landcare (Robyn Gill leader); this team is closely linked with the CPPA Landcare project.

In addition, we continue to maintain a close association with the Community Gardens project (Chris Murphy contact), which operates at The Hub (formerly the Toronto Senior Citizens Association), following the initial attempt to establish a community garden near the Carey Bay wetlands by the Community Garden team (Tricia Hunt leader).

We also remain mindful of the need to engage more with residents of Kilaben Bay and Toronto, including Toronto West. To this end, we will be looking to communicate more through letter box drops and other means.

In addition to our pursuit of new projects and community advocacy, we have also re-affirmed the need to engage more socially within our community. To this end, TASNG intends to become more involved in organising community activities, in partnership with CPPA.

Committee Members

The first committee was elected in late 2011. The first monthly committee meeting, Chaired by Steve Slott, was held in early April at Toronto Library. A sub-committee working on pedestrian and cycling issues, led by Tony Stephens, was formed in December 2011.

Nico Marcar assumed the Chair in October 2012 and continues in this role to date. John Gill was Secretary until 2015 after which Lois Simpson assumed the role. Era Wellsmore was Secretary until her untimely death in June 2013, with Tricia Hunt taking over the role from 2014. Steve Dewar has been Alliance Representative since 2012.

Current Committee, June 2017

Chair: Nico Marcar

Secretary: Lois Simpson

Treasurer: currently vacant

Assistance Chair: Steve Dewar

Assistant Secretary: currently vacant

Alliance Representative: Steve Dewar

