

SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS

Annual report 2023



Contact us

Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance

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Our vision:

Neighbourhoods that are empowered to live sustainably

Our actions

We take actions to:

- reduce resource consumption (energy, water and waste)
- increase community involvement in protecting and caring for environment and place
- increase our capacity to respond effectively to environmental threats
- increase community wellbeing and pride in our local areas.

We are guided by our values of participation, inclusion, collaboration, empowerment and shared responsibility.

Background

Lake Macquarie City Council established the Sustainable Neighbourhood Program in 2008 to empower residents to act on local environmental and sustainability issues.

The program supports residents to form neighbourhood groups that develop and implement their individual Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plans. The program has grown into a network of active, skilled and supported citizens who make a meaningful contribution to local community life and address local sustainability challenges.

In 2011 a group of Sustainable Neighbourhood volunteers established the Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance to support the growing number of members and groups across the city. The Alliance is an incorporated not-for-profit association that provides coordination, governance, resourcing, capacity-building, marketing and communication, and insurance and risk management for and on behalf of the Sustainable Neighbourhood groups across Lake Macquarie City.

Sustainable Neighbourhood activities are initiated and delivered by volunteers and financed through funding from grants, collaboration and community fundraising. Council supports Sustainable Neighbourhoods with administrative assistance and operational support.



A message from the Chair

This year the Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance has continued with renewed enthusiasm, ready to continue working towards our vision to foster eco-conscious neighbourhoods. I was honoured to start 2023 by representing our organisation at the official opening of our new home at Council's Landcare and Sustainable Living Centre, *umali baraki-ku*.

Throughout the year we have been engaging with our community through pop up stalls, car boot sales, newsletters, community festivals, litter clean ups, community gardens and through sustainability workshops, covering topics like energy conservation and solar, waste reduction, Boomerang Bags, wreath making, Beeswax wraps, tool maintenance, sustainable Christmas decorations and growing food.

Our greening projects were a huge success with the first Tiny Forest in Lake Mac, Blackalls Park planting, Ross Street Verge Garden, Styles Point planting and the Tree Trail at the MAC, including flourishing vegetables at Holmesville Community Garden.

Our consistent work to reduce plastics and waste is making an impact as we witness our community's increasing willingness to embrace plastic free living. Waste to Art has returned this year, engaging artists of all ages and skills to create an inspirational and varied display for our community.

I want to acknowledge the tremendous impact of our volunteers, who are the driving force behind our accomplishments. Along with not-for-profit organisations across the country, we have felt the impact of decreasing volunteer numbers in recent years. Despite this, the impact of our volunteers' efforts continues to increase. For example, our digital reach has grown by almost 200% since June 2020. We've delivered 70 events and engaged with more than 8500 people through our projects and campaigns this year. These numbers are a testament to the dedication and hard work of our volunteers.

As we continue on this sustainable eco-living journey, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to our volunteers, members and supporters. Your passion and commitment are the heart of our Alliance, and your enthusiasm continues to drive our mission forward.

Go well.

Gabrielle Clappison

Chairperson

Our people

Our volunteers are community leaders, contributing their time and expertise to improve their neighbourhood, care for their place and bring people together. Sustainable Neighbourhood volunteers are passionate about environmental issues, community participation and practical action.

As of June 2023, there are 142 Alliance members and 7546 subscribers to our major newsletters.

In the 2022–2023 financial year, we estimate our volunteers contributed more than 8095 hours, equivalent to a contribution¹ of more than \$283,000, or a replacement cost value² of more than \$304,000. The economic impact³ of Sustainable Neighbourhood activities is estimated at \$2.38 million.

Sustainable Neighbourhood Groups

There are 11 active Sustainable Neighbourhood Groups located across Lake Macquarie City:

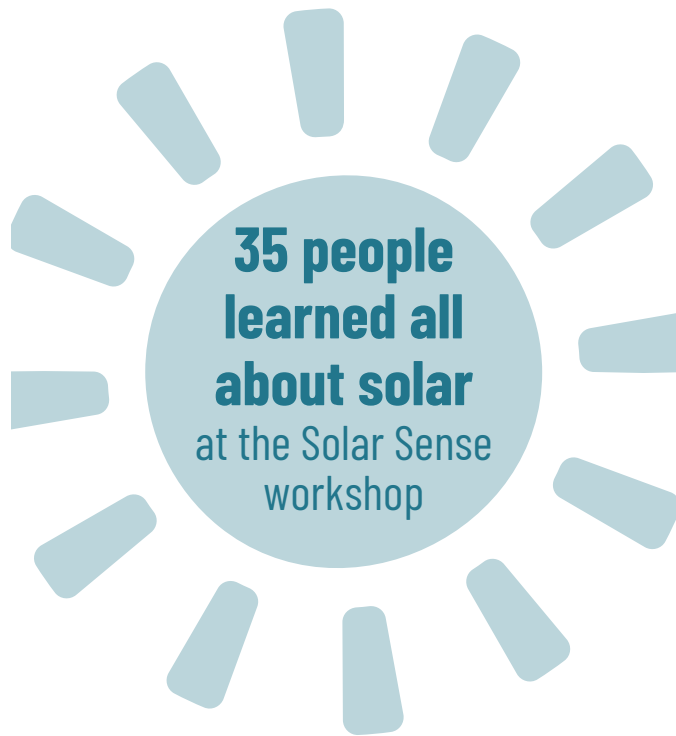
- Cardiff Area
- Dudley
- Five Bays (Teralba to Blackalls Park)
- Greater Charlestown
- Pelican Area
- Rathmines Area
- Redhead
- Sugar Valley
- Toronto Area
- Valentine
- Warners Bay Area

Board members

Gabrielle Clappison, Chairperson
Mackenzie Robson, Vice Chairperson
Stephen Dewar, Secretary
Jean McGarry, Treasurer
Mark Howells
Nico Marcar
Bruce Robertson
Bruce Tozer

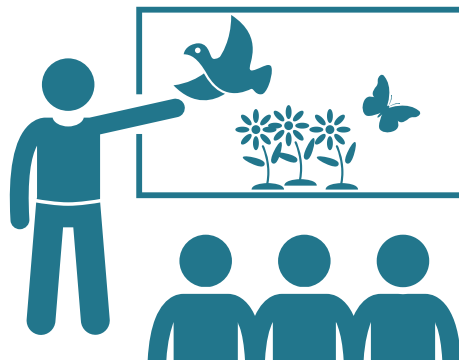
1. Equivalent contribution calculated at \$35/hour
2. Volunteer replacement cost calculator, volunteeringqld.org.au/calculator
3. REMPLAN impact report, total effect calculation. remplan.com.au/economy





Engaged with an estimated 8592
through our projects, events and campaigns

83 participants learned about sustainability
at 6 workshops



50 people attended
MAC Tree Trail

Assisted 189 people
and their families with
grocery and other essential
items through the
Pamper Care program

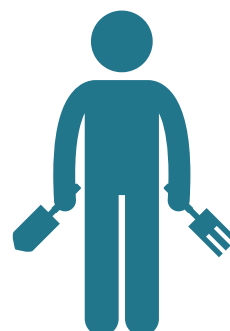
Tripled our digital reach to 83,000
since 2020



395 plants
planted
to greet
Black
Boora



618 volunteer hours in community gardens
creating local food production,
know-how and community connection



Sustainable Neighbourhoods Impact 2022-23



2 people
signs



attended the
mail launch

3 volunteers
planted 2737
native plants

en our city at sites in
Kalls Park, Belmont,
agul and Rathmines



\$2.38M
in value
delivered to
the Lake Mac
community



**200 participants at
2 car boot sale events**

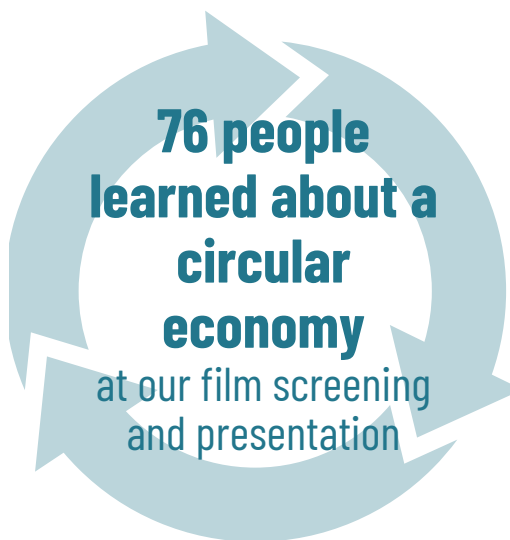
567 community members
attended
11 Repair Cafe events



408 items repaired
and diverted from
landfill by about
40 volunteers

76 people
learned about a
circular
economy

at our film screening
and presentation



8095 volunteer hours
Equivalent to
\$283,325 contribution

ReLeaf Lake Mac

The ReLeaf Lake Mac volunteer team is passionate about increasing tree canopy and native vegetation cover across Lake Macquarie.

Our work encompasses education and engagement as well as delivery of on-ground projects. Our projects aim to encourage the community and decision-makers to value and retain trees in the urban landscape and local bushland. We also deliver greening projects to increase the area and quality of tree canopy and habitat throughout the city.

Lake Mac Tiny Forest

Tiny Forests are a concept based on a methodology developed in the 1970's by Akira Miyawaki, a Japanese botanist.

A Tiny Forest consists of a dense pocket of diverse, native vegetation, about the size of a tennis court. The technique includes intensive soil remediation to incorporate nutrients and a dense planting structure. This results in accelerated growth and creates a mature forest structure about ten times faster than traditional forests.

A Tiny Forest aims to:

- capture carbon
- reduce localised urban heat
- creates habitat for wildlife, and
- support community connectedness.

ReLeaf Lake Mac created the first Tiny Forest in the Hunter Region in Teralba in May 2023.

- Volunteers planted 757 plants, consisting of 23 local native species, planted at a density of 3-4 per square metre.
- As of July 2023 more, than 99% have survived.
- The site is 340 square metres and incorporates an outdoor classroom and yarning circle.
- More than 170 community members participated in the project, including students from Teralba Public School.
- Eighteen community members have signed up as Tree Keepers to regularly maintain and promote the Tiny Forest.

Tree Trail at the MAC Sculpture Park

The Tree Trail features ten beautiful specimen trees from across Australia and beyond, dotted around the MAC yapping Sculpture Park on the shores of Lake Macquarie.

The Tree Trail engages visitors to learn about the history of tree planting at this iconic site, and to appreciate the natural values of mature trees.

Fifty community members celebrated the launch of the Tree Trail at an event in November 2022.



Blackalls Park greening project

Volunteers from the Five Bays Sustainable Neighbourhood Group established 50 plants among some sparse established trees on a large verge on Fassifern Road, Blackalls Park.

Fifty volunteers helped to prepare the site and plant a selection of local semi-mature eucalypts, native shrubs and ground cover species.

Twelve months on the plants are growing well and increasing local canopy cover and urban habitat values.



Ross Street verge garden

The Valentine Area Sustainable Neighbourhood Group created a small attractive native landscape garden to beautify a busy thoroughfare in Belmont. The garden was established by five volunteers in December 2022. The visual amenity of the site is greatly improved and littering on the site has reduced.

The group worked with Council to ensure the garden complemented Council's Urban Greening Strategy, and aligned with their draft verge gardening guidelines that were being prepared at the time. The garden is designed to be very low maintenance and allows easy access for Council's mowing crew

Styles Point greening project

Volunteers from the Rathmines Area Sustainable Neighbourhood Group raised concerns about loss of trees in Styles Point Park due to psyllid infestation. A lack of understorey in the area was identified as a key factor, and the group developed a project aimed at planting indigenous species to support native wildlife, in particular the birds that had significantly declined in the area.

More than 160 participants planted 1188 trees, shrubs and grasses, along with more than 700 salt marsh plants at three sites in Styles Point Park. OzFish contributed to the project by providing plants, promotions, volunteers and their expertise.

Repair It Lake Mac

Repair It Lake Mac creates free and fun events where people come together to repair and give their stuff a new lease on life.

Repair It Lake Mac volunteers delivered eleven Repair Cafe events this financial year, attracting 567 attendees. Volunteers repaired 408 items, keeping them in use and out of landfill.

Skilled volunteers are on hand to share their knowledge, and show attendees how to fix their items that are too good to waste. Volunteers are able to offer repairs in:

- Tool sharpening
- Electrical and other technology
- Sewing, textiles and knits / woollens
- Furniture
- Toys
- Jewellery

Some of the most valuable outcomes are the connections made between attendees and volunteers.

We see this as one of many tangible displays of community connection that we are seeking from these events that go beyond simply repairing broken stuff.



"Shout out to the sharpening man! He didn't have the tools to help me on the day but gave me some valuable "take away" knowledge. Dog clippers are sharper than when they were new."

"Thank you so much for hemming and patching some of my much-loved clothing! It's great that my clothes don't end up as unnecessary landfill and I get to enjoy them once again! I'm so grateful to all the wonderful sewing team!!"

"Thank you for repairing my treasured jumper my mother knitted for me in my teenage years!"





Plastic Free Lake Mac

A range of Sustainable Neighbourhood groups and projects are focussed on reusing resources, reducing waste, and encouraging recycling, such as:

- Car boot sales
- Boomerang Bags sewing groups
- Making Christmas decorations from waste workshop
- Wreath making workshop
- Making beeswax wraps workshop
- Litter clean ups
- Plastic Free Cafes
- Waste to Art exhibition

This year these activities collectively attracted more than 280 participants, resulting in increased community awareness and ownership of waste issues. Participants are developing new skills, creating new connections, and are helping create new social norms around how we value and use resources.

Thank you

Members, volunteers and participants

We would not exist without the hard working volunteers who make Sustainable Neighbourhoods a reality. Many volunteers regularly and selflessly give their time, skills, knowledge and effort to create innovative projects that bring our community together, educate about sustainability issues and improve our environment.

We appreciate the time and energy you contribute and look forward to supporting you to continue the excellent work you are doing.

Grants and funding

- Hunter Water
- Lake Macquarie City Council
- Origin Energy

Corporate and community partners

- Boomerang Alliance
- Children's University Australasia
- Hunter Community Environment Centre
- Lake Macquarie City Council
- Lake Macquarie Landcare
- Neighbour Day
- OzFish

Donors

- Lake Macquarie City Council
- Pamper Care donors
- Plastic Free Cafe reusable cup donors
- ReLeaf Lake Mac and Tiny Forest donors

Local partners

We rely on the generosity of our local partners to operate and increase the effectiveness of our programs. These organisations have assisted us throughout the year by providing meeting venues, collaboration opportunities and donations.

- Agility Professional Tree Service
- Blacksmiths Public School
- Bunnings Warehouse Glendale
- Cardiff North Public School
- Catalina Conference Centre, Rathmines
- Central Charlestown Leagues Club
- Clean Up Australia
- Coal Point Progress Association
- Earthwatch Australia
- Holmesville Preschool
- Lake Timber and Hardware Mitre 10
- Marks Point Sports Club
- Museum of Art and Culture, yampang
- Newcastle Wildflower Nursery
- Participating Plastic Free cafes and coffee vans
- Pelican Flat Public School
- Pelican RSL
- Rise and Shine Coffee, West Wallsend
- Street Appeal Garden Solutions
- Teralba Bowling Club
- Teralba Public School
- The Makers Place
- Toronto Action Group
- Toronto Community Centenary Hub
- Toronto Community Garden
- Towels by Tracey
- Trees In Newcastle
- Upcycle Newcastle
- Various businesses, Rathmines shops
- Wangat Lodge
- Warners Bay Girl Guides
- Women's Shed on the Lake
- Woodrising Neighbourhood Centre
- Yoga Place Cafe, Blacksmiths



Get involved

Volunteer

Volunteers are an invaluable part of our community and vital to creating a sustainable city. Join our friendly team of more than 170 volunteers. Meet new people who share your passion, gain work experience or share your knowledge.

We offer a range of roles to suit your availability and interests. You can help irregularly; for example, helping to set up at a workshop, participating in working bees, letterbox drops, fundraising barbecues, clean-up events, providing morning tea and more.

Specialist roles include media and marketing, bookkeeping, project management, event management, group leadership, advocacy, fundraising, volunteer recruitment and support.



Participate

Subscribe to our enewsletter and attend our events.

We love to see new faces and help our community to try new things.

We offer a range of events from sustainability workshops, clean ups, community gardening, repair cafes, nature play and social events. Just book in and turn up on the day.

Share

You can help us reach more people.

Share our enewsletters, social media posts and event opportunities among your friends, family and community organisations.

Donate

We welcome donations from individual and businesses to support our activities. We are a not-for-profit incorporated association and all funds we receive go directly to our operations and projects.

Individual donations can be made via direct deposit or by other arrangement. Contact us to find out more. Local businesses can sign up as a Business Supporter on our website.

Partner

Community networks are at the heart of a sustainable future. We are keen to collaborate with local businesses, community groups, government organisations, sports clubs, special interest clubs, service organisations, advocacy and other networks.

Partnering with Sustainable Neighbourhoods can align your organisation with our sustainable ethic, excellent reputation and enthusiastic and effective community network.

Financial report

Income and expenditure statement

Opening balance 1 July 2022: \$27,291.40

Income	\$
Council assistance	3434.87
Council donation	2000.00
Grants	4452.08
Payment for service	8580.00
Public donations	4341.40
Sponsorship	10,000.00
Total income	32,808.35

Expenditure	\$
Insurance	3434.87
Project delivery	38,917.93
Total expenditure	42,352.80

Closing balance 30 June 2023: \$17,746.95



Project balances 2022-2023

Project	Funding source	Balance 30 June 2022	Income 22-23	Expenditure 22-23	Balance 30 June 2023
		\$			
Accumulated funds	Various	3881	0	0	3881
Cardiff Pollinator Plan	Council Community Environment Grant	427	0	427	0
Charlestown Pool Garden	Council Community Environment Grant	116	0	0	116
Community Harmony Initiative	Council Events Grant	1190	0	1117	73
Go Circular film screening	Ticket purchases	0	260	260	0
Graffiti project	Council graffiti project	0	152	152	0
Insurance	Council assistance	0	3435	3435	0
Dudley Nature Play	Council Community Environment Grant	1051	0	0	1051
Nature Play at Living Smart Festival	Payment for service provision	22	1300	1300	22
Pamper Care Project	Public donations	1311	1105	1636	780
Plastic Free Cafes	Public donations	302	1396	1694	5
Redhead EnergyWave	Council Community Environment Grant	886	0	886	-1
Repair Cafe	Payment for service provision	793	7280	1384	6689
Solar Sense	Council Community Environment Grant	0	4300	0	4300
Styles Point Planting Project	Council Community Environment Grant	3089	0	2909	180
Tiny Forest	Hunter Water grant	10,000	0	9651	349
Tiny Forest	Sponsorship Origin Energy	0	10,000	10,000	0
Tiny Forest	Raffle and public donations	0	1580	1578	2
Tiny Forest	Council donation	0	2000	1700	300
Tree Trail	Council Community Environment Grant	4225	0	4224	0
	Totals:	27,291	32,808	42,353	17,747



Sustainable Neighbourhoods is an initiative of Lake Macquarie City Council