

A SNAPSHOT OF OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT
JULY 2020 – JANUARY 2021



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GENERAL MANAGER'S MESSAGE

Dear Councillors

The General Manager's Report is a regular summary of operational highlights and other achievements for your information and interest.

This issue covers the period from July 2020 to January 2021.

The period has been marked by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant limitations and cancellations to Council services and events.

Nonetheless essential services have been maintained throughout the ongoing pandemic and facilities have gradually reopened as lockdown restrictions ease.

Ku-ring-gai Council has risen to the challenges posed by the last six months and completed some significant projects.

Highlights include:

- ◆ Construction of the Lindfield Village Green is on target to be completed by the middle of 2021.
- ◆ The Council is continuing negotiations with interested providers for the Lindfield Village Hub.
- ◆ Several new playgrounds were built and opened to the public, including the regional playground at St Ives Showground.
- ◆ Planning got underway for the upgrade of Johns Avenue Gordon into a pedestrianised outdoor dining precinct.
- ◆ A new synthetic all-weather surface will be installed at Norman Griffiths Oval in West Pymble following a Council decision.
- ◆ The Council launched its new website in December 2020.
- ◆ The Council approved the installation of reverse vending machines in selected locations across Ku-ring-gai.
- ◆ Nearly \$120,000 in grants were distributed to community organisations through the Council's community grants scheme, an increase of 25% in funding due to COVID-19.
- ◆ The Council was awarded over \$1.7 million in state government grants for upgrades to St Ives Showground.

- ◆ A new Climate Change Policy and accompanying action plan were adopted by the Council.
- ◆ The Council opted not to proceed with a draft housing strategy after community consultation during 2020 revealed significant opposition to new housing targets proposed by the strategy.

Details of these highlights and other items of interest during the period are contained within.

I hope you enjoy reading the report; if you have any questions please get in touch with me or the Directors.

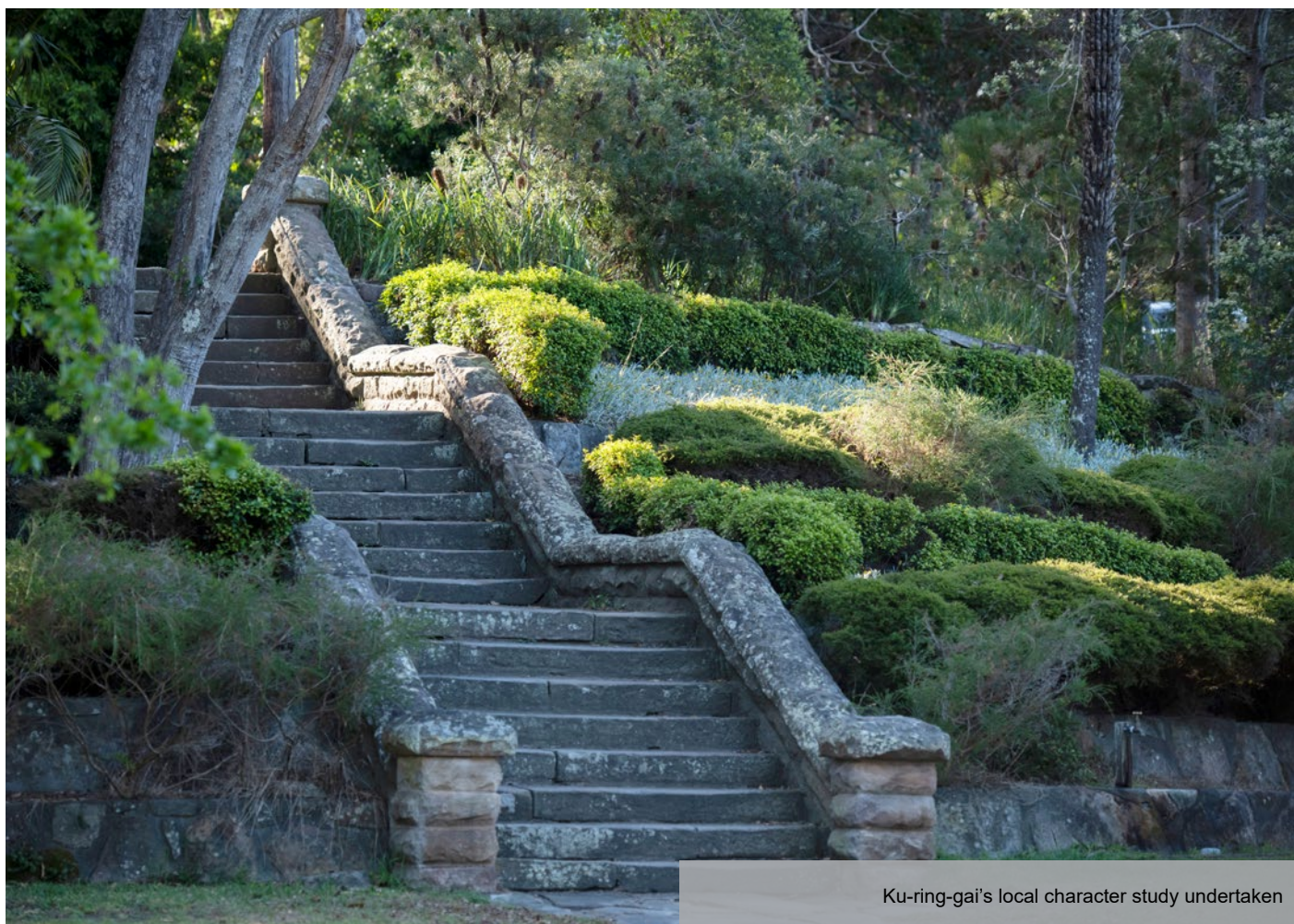
John McKee

General Manager, Ku-ring-gai Council





St Ives Showground playground



Ku-ring-gai's local character study undertaken

THEME 1 COMMUNITY, PEOPLE AND CULTURE



A healthy, safe, and diverse community that respects our history and celebrates our differences in a vibrant culture of learning



Vacation care excursion

Children

Vacation Care centres were kept busy during the October and January school holidays, with centres at St Ives, Pymble and West Lindfield all booked to near capacity. The centres offered children aged 5 to 14 a wide variety of arts, crafts, games, sports and a limited number of COVID-safe excursions.

Thomas Carlyle Children's Centre has remained open throughout the period, with strict social distancing and hygiene rules in place for children, parents and staff. During this period a promotional campaign for the Council's family day care service was conducted to attract educators and new families.

The Wildflower Garden welcomed back its educational program and vacation care activities with social distancing safeguards in place. A new 1.5 hour birthday party format has been introduced for various age groups hosted by a Garden ranger, which includes a one hour outdoor activity followed by 30 minutes for food and cake. Another new program of

activities designed to reconnect pre-schoolers with their natural surroundings was launched called the Nature Play program. Each week children explore a different nature theme through storytelling, craft, supervised encounters with native animals, bushwalks and gardening.

Council's online education programs for young children during the COVID-19 lockdown received a High Commendation through the 2020 Keep Australia Beautiful Sustainable Cities Awards. The Wildflower Garden received the commendation for its response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the creation of online education programs. At the height of the pandemic lockdown in March, all regular face-to-face education programs for children were suspended. However, Wildflower Garden and other Council staff produced a range of online DIY nature-play activities.



Youth

The Council's youth centres at Turramurra and St Ives remained closed during this period due to COVID-19. Gordon reopened for some activities, including the January school holiday program. Young people aged between 12 and 18 were offered photography workshops, excursions, BBQs, movies and games.

The Council's youth services team conducted online counselling sessions with at-risk young people during this period, with face to face contact limited due to the ongoing pandemic. During the HSC study period the youth team hosted Chat and Create sessions via Zoom in August. The Council's youth services team and youth workers from Synergy Youth chatted with young residents while they did some painting, drawing and online puzzles. AWOL Youth Hub at Gordon opened during Term 3 for after school study space with free snacks on offer.

The Council organised a RUOK Day event for parents of teenagers, particularly Year 12 students in their final year of high school. With many end of school events such as formals, graduation ceremonies and parties postponed or cancelled, young residents were feeling some COVID-related stress. The online session for parents and carers was held online in October with a senior psychologist from The Resilience Centre.

Planning for the St Ives youth precinct continued during this period. Work on the project will start in first half of 2021 following the tender process. The Village Green will be redesigned as a recreation precinct with a new children's playground and skate park. The public toilets and St Ives youth centre will also be upgraded. The design for the recreation precinct has been developed with the community's help, with young people and local residents contributing their ideas to the project as part of the consultation phase.

Seniors

Many activities for seniors during this period had to be cancelled, but the Council's aged services team organised virtual tours of some of the world's most beautiful and fascinating places with group discussions afterwards by phone or online.

A website link to each tour was provided or printed guide books, and seniors could then book into a phone or online meeting to chat about each tour. The virtual tours attracted between 10-20 attendees for each session and ran weekly for approximately four months.

Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Community Transport provided a door-to-door service for older residents to shopping centres and Ku-ring-gai Neighbourhood Centre also offered older residents assistance with shopping. Ku-ring-gai Neighbourhood Centre and Lifeline Community Aid provided a phone contact service staffed by volunteers to arrange phone calls to isolated and vulnerable residents to check on their wellbeing.

Ku-ring-gai Meals on Wheels were awarded a grant through the Council's COVID-19 assistance program to provide a meals service for disadvantaged older residents, including those experiencing homelessness.

In early January face to face excursions and activities were restarted, with events such as a Spanish cooking demonstration and visits to Hyde Park Barracks, the Australian Museum and the Ken Duncan Gallery at Copacabana offered. Planning also got underway for the Seniors Festival to be held in March and April.



Drive in movie held at St Ives

All Ability

Entries opened in November for the second Explorations exhibition hosted by the Ku-ring-gai Art Centre in December. The exhibition is a direct result of Ku-ring-gai Council's Disability & Inclusion Action Plan, which seeks to include people with a disability in local activities and events.

This year Boona, Inala, Studio Artes, Unisson Disability Services, Artful Therapy and Macquarie University partnered with the Council to put together the exhibition, which attracted 41 entries.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions the exhibition launch was hosted online, but a video and virtual tour were produced to showcase the exhibition and the artists taking part.

Visitors could still see exhibits in person with visitor numbers limited to 8 people at any one time booked in advance.

In August between AWOL Youth Hub at Gordon held a movie night for young people aged 14 to 30 with a disability. This was a free event with parents and carers also invited to attend.

The community were invited to give feedback on two accessible designs proposed for playgrounds at Robert Pymble Park and Kendall Green during this period.

Events

Several major events had to be cancelled due to COVID-19, including the St Ives Medieval Faire, the Moonlight Movie in Wahroonga Park, the Wildflower Art & Garden Festival and the annual Australia Day celebrations in Bicentennial Park at West Pymble.

In September the Council celebrated the coming of spring in Turramurra and Roseville with the Spring Flower Celebration, following a successful trial in Wahroonga last year. The celebration involved installations of colourful displays of spring flowers in planters and hanging baskets at central locations in the local area. Both displays were in place for around four weeks and attracted very positive feedback from residents and businesses.

A series of drive in movies were held in October at St Ives Showground, although some screenings had to be cancelled due to poor weather.

On Friday 20 and Saturday 21 November St Ives Showground hosted a COVID-safe festival of food and entertainment. Organisers coordinated unlimited rides for children, market stalls, food trucks, a gourmet dessert section and live music between 4pm and 10pm.



Remembrance Day Ceremony at Roseville

The Council livestreamed the Remembrance Day service on 11 November 2020 at Roseville RSL, with COVID-19 restrictions meaning guests were limited. Several local schools took part in the service, alongside a number of veterans.

Australia Day was celebrated with a citizenship ceremony at Knox Grammar, an afternoon of water-based fun at the Ku-ring-gai Fitness & Aquatic Centre and in the evening and a free drive in movie at St Ives Showground featuring the Australian film Go! The drive in movie was hosted thanks to an Australia Day grant from the NSW Government.

Christmas celebrations included a Santa at the Garden event during December, where families could be photographed with Father Christmas in an outdoor setting at the Wildflower Garden. Also in December the Garden was the venue for a Christmas wreath making workshop using native plants in Christmas colours.

A Mayoral Christmas Appeal was conducted on behalf of Lifeline, seeking donations of food and gifts for distribution in hampers to isolated residents in Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai.

The Council has planned a series of events to mark Lunar New Year during February 2021. These include cultural performances, calligraphy demonstrations and a food market at St Ives.

Apart from Australia Day, face to face citizenship ceremonies have been suspended until further notice. The Council's events team is continually reviewing its event program in the light of COVID-19 directives issued by the state and federal governments, with a view to scheduling other public events by the end of year.



Mayoral Christmas Appeal on behalf of Lifeline



Christmas Celebrations included Santa at the Garden event

Arts Centre

During this period the centre hosted online exhibitions and virtual tours of its tutors' studios. The centre reopened for classes in December with social distancing safeguards in place.

Due to COVID-19, visits to exhibitions are now by appointment only. They can also be viewed on the centre's Facebook page.

Exhibitions held during this period were the annual Tutors Show between July and August and the Sound of Silence in September, an exhibition about the human response to the suffering of others.

Between October and November Land Sea Sky explored the cultural and practical significance of the land, sea and sky in a variety of artworks.

The centre hosted the Explorations exhibition in December, featuring the work of artists with a disability. A video and virtual tour of the exhibition and artists talking about their work was also produced.

During the January school holidays Ku-ring-gai Art Centre hosted a COVID-safe program of activities and classes for school-aged children, including pottery workshops, printmaking, jewellery making, sewing, drama, writing, and gardening.



Art Centre children's class

Libraries

Libraries reopened their doors to the public in October, with pre-bookings for some services. Justice of the peace services remain suspended.

The library conducted limited 75th birthday celebrations in November, with a video outlining its history, a morning tea for library users also celebrating their 75th birthdays. On the same evening, library fan and ABC Radio personality Richard Glover presented via Zoom his latest book *Love Clancy*.

Mayor Jennifer Anderson sealed a special time capsule containing memorabilia and birthday items, including commemorative library cards and library information to mark the 75th birthday. The capsule was exhibited at branches before coming back to be placed in Gordon library until the library centenary in 2045.

Library users were offered a commemorative library card, tote bags and the chance to be reunited with their missing bookmarks through a pop-up display.

During this period the library continued livestreaming weekly storytime sessions on Facebook and uploading them to YouTube.

Libraries also organised virtual book clubs, an online Lego challenge, online jigsaw puzzles and librarians film reviews and recommendations. The e-library of films, books and magazines was boosted with additional content to help library members unable to access libraries.

The library hosted an online class for adults in December on creating Christmas decorations and other festive gifts using beading, plus a Christmas craft session over Facebook for children aged 4-8 years.



Wahroonga branch library in the 1950s

The Council's Christmas tree and other decorations for 2020 was unveiled in the forecourt of Gordon Library, with a special area for families to take photos of their loved ones free of charge during the festive season.

Ku-ring-gai libraries held a variety of activities for children during the January school holidays with workshops on animation, robotics and coding for primary school aged children booked out.





Ku-ring-gai's Randev Sappany named best adult swim instructor

Recreation

The Active Ku-ring-gai program resumed in January and February 2021 with free or low-cost physical activities for residents of all ages and fitness levels. Activities and sports ranged from Yoga and Tai Chi to tennis and outdoor fitness classes. The Council sought a new provider for the Active Ku-ring-gai program during this period and the successful provider was appointed at the end of last year.

Environmental assessments and consultation proceeded during this period on a proposed synthetic sportsfield at Barra Brui Oval St Ives for use as a regional hockey facility.

During September the Council consulted the community about converting the Norman Griffiths Sportsground at West Pymble to an all-weather synthetic turf. The new synthetic surface would allow all-year-round use of the Sportsground and give residents more opportunity to participate in sports such as soccer, touch football and cricket. Following further reports and the outcome of community consultation the Council decided to proceed with the proposal at the end of last year.

The Council was awarded \$398,000 from the NSW Government's Streets as Shared Spaces grant program for a separated cycleway in Gilroy Road connecting Karuah Park with the Turramurra local centre. Safer crossings will also be installed at Brentwood Avenue and Gilroy Road for both pedestrians and cyclists to improve links with Karuah Park. The cycleway and crossings will be completed by the middle of this year.

An instructor at the Ku-ring-gai Fitness & Aquatic Centre Randev Sappany has been named the best adult swim instructor in Australia at the AUSTSWIM 2020 Awards of Excellence. Randev won both the State and National Access and Inclusion - Adults categories in the awards. At just

24 years old, Dev has expanded the Centre's adult swim programs to include intermediate and advanced levels, adult intensive clinics and parent and child family lessons. He has also conducted more than 200 adult swim assessments.

The new single storey tennis pavilion at Roseville Park opened for bookings at the end of November. The new building has change rooms, accessible toilets, a kitchenette, office and storage space and an outdoor sheltered forecourt.



Active Ku-ring-gai programs for all fitness levels



A SNAPSHOT OF OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

THEME 2 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Working together as a community to protect and enhance our natural environment and resources



Environmental Levy

Despite the lockdown, the Council distributed grants totalling \$50,000 to community groups and individuals for environmental projects in the local area during this period.

The Environmental Levy Grants are distributed as a way of delivering community-based projects in local neighbourhoods.

The grants program is open to community groups, schools and individuals who need support for an environmental project in Ku-ring-gai. Projects may be ongoing, or a new initiative that requires start-up funding to get off the ground.

As part of its 2020 bushfire readiness program, the Council offered local residents bushfire retrofit rebates, which could be claimed for any eligible retrofit changes made to a home that strengthens it against bushfire. Homeowners could apply for up to \$1000 in funding to go towards items such as toughened window glass, gutter shields and sprinkler systems.

Over 14,000 houses in Ku-ring-gai are located in high risk zones and eligible to apply for the rebate. The rebates offered are funded by the Environmental Levy.

Climate change

In September and October local residents were invited to join in a series of online workshops to help get their homes ready for dangerous summer conditions.

The community were invited to a bushfire retrofit presentation with architect Nigel Bell, a bushfire home assessment screened live from a local home and a 3D bushfire simulation workshop with the RFS. All three events were delivered by the Council's Climate Wise Communities program, which builds local preparedness for extreme weather events through an innovative website www.climatewisecommunities.com.au.

The website generates personalised reports to help residents create bushfire survival plans and assess how prepared their properties are for bushfires. Residents were also shown a 3D simulation of how a fire would start and behave in their neighbourhood.

In August the updated Climate Change Policy and Action Plan was adopted by Council. Ku-ring-gai has beaten its 2020 target and now has its sights set on zero emissions by 2040. Having already reduced operational emissions by 24% and



annual energy costs by around \$200,000, the new targets mean the Council will aim for 100% renewable energy by as early as 2025 and net zero emissions by 2040.

Among the key actions proposed by the policy are:

- ♦ A commitment to respond to climate change challenges.
- ♦ Aligning Council targets with the Paris Agreement and the latest climate science.
- ♦ Investment in solutions to transform the Council's electricity supply, transport and energy use.
- ♦ More support for the community to reach zero emissions.

A range of solutions such as electric vehicles and renewable energy will be communicated to the public over the next 12 months, with the aim of supporting residents to achieve zero emissions over the next 10-20 years.

Water

The Middle Harbour Southern Catchments Flood Study and Plan was drafted during this period and will guide the direction of future floodplain management in Ku-ring-gai.

The Middle Harbour Southern Catchments cover the areas of Roseville, Lindfield and Killara east of the Pacific Highway.

Crucial to this study were residents' memories of previous flooding events which were sought during community consultation on the project. Of particular interest were residents who have lived in the catchment areas for between 10 and 30 years, as they will have experienced a number of flood events. This project is being supported by the NSW Government's Floodplain Management Program.

The public were invited to comment late last year on two new names proposed for creeks running through Turramurra. The Geographical Names Board was seeking community feedback on a proposal by a Ku-ring-gai resident to name two local creeks. The Geographical Names Board is the state government authority responsible for approving the names of suburbs, streets, sub-divisions and waterways such as creeks.

Following Council endorsement, the new names proposed for the creeks in Twin Creeks Reserve Turramurra are Water Dragon Creek and Peppermint Creek.

Water Dragon Creek is a tributary of Lane Cove River starting at Holmes Street, and flowing in a south-westerly direction through Twin Creeks Reserve to the Lane Cove River in South Turramurra. The proposed name is in recognition of the colony of Eastern Water Dragons that live in and along the waterway. Peppermint Creek starts at Mitchell Crescent Warrawee and flows in a south-westerly direction to join the proposed Water Dragon Creek at South Turramurra. The name recognises the Peppermint Gums which are common along the creek.

Energy

In July the Council joined 10 other Sydney councils in an agreement which could mean savings of around \$30,000 a year on gas costs. The Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (SSROC) has taken advantage of a 5-year low in wholesale gas pricing and signed a ground-breaking agreement on behalf of 11 NSW councils that allows gas to be purchased at wholesale price with a fixed retail margin.

The 11 participating councils are Campbelltown City Council, City of Canada Bay, Central Coast Council, City of Sydney, Fairfield City Council, Inner West Council, Ku-ring-gai Council, City of Lake Macquarie, Liverpool City Council, Sutherland Shire Council and Woollahra Municipal Council.

Three electric vehicles replaced petrol-driven vehicles as part of a long term plan that could ultimately see the majority of the Council's fleet powered by electricity sourced from renewable energy. Two Renault Kangoo vans and one Hyundai Ioniq are being used to conduct site visits and deliver supplies. The vehicles are recharged at charging stations at the Council's Depot in Pymble before going on the road.



Community education

The Council's Loving Living Ku-ring-gai program of face-to-face community workshops and events was suspended in mid-March due to the COVID-19 lockdown and at the time of writing has yet to recommence.

In July the Council encouraged residents to reduce their plastic use and also take part in a series of online environmental workshops and events. All events were held on Zoom and included a workshop on how to create a native bee hotel in your garden; a special Plastic Free workshop and a live demonstration on how to make your own beeswax wrap.

A free screening of the documentary film A Plastic Ocean was offered showing the dangers posed by the 'great garbage patch' of plastic circulating through the world's oceans. Ecologist Jayden Walsh presented a seminar on the hidden world of native animals living in residential Sydney. The final workshop. The final session offered in July was a workshop on installing solar and battery storage in the home.

In August the Council launched its 2020 Solar My School program to help local primary and secondary schools install energy-saving solar panels. Solar My School is a free program helping schools install solar power and access the financial, educational and environmental benefits of clean energy.

The Council is partnering with four local schools - Lindfield East Public, West Pymble Public, Sir Eric Woodward School and Brigidine College – which have joined the program and are on the path to making savings by installing solar.

Schools joining the program get free access to:

- ◆ independent assessments to recommend the best size and location for solar panels;
- ◆ an estimate of system costs and bill savings;
- ◆ financial advice and help with grant funding to pay for the system;
- ◆ tender and contractual documentation to help select a supplier and facilitate installation;
- ◆ tailored presentations to school boards;
- ◆ curriculum-linked educational resources.

Waste

Reverse vending machines for recycling bottles and other containers in return for cash were installed in Turramurra and St Ives during early 2021.

The Ray Street public car park at Turramurra and the St Ives Shopping Centre car park are the first local sites to have reverse vending machines installed. Other machines will be installed elsewhere in Ku-ring-gai as suitable locations are identified.

The Council approved the decision to install reverse vending machines after community consultation at the end of last year, which showed overwhelming support for them.

Five local schools - Killara Public, Turramurra Public, Warrawee Public, Roseville Public and Beaumont Road Public - have joined the Council's initiative to reduce clothing waste by recycling unwanted school uniforms into usable products. The Council joined the Worn Up project in response to the results of a waste audit carried out in Ku-ring-gai last year. The audit found that on average 3% of red bin waste and 3.7% of booked waste kerbside collections was unwanted clothing.

Worn Up works by installing a 'pod' at each participating school for unwanted uniform items. When the pod becomes full uniforms are collected and either recycled for further wear or turned into products including dog beds and even school desks.

Each school will receive approximately \$1000 in support from the Worn Up campaign to kick start their clothing collections. Worn Up's ultimate goal is to remove 700 tonnes of unwanted clothing from landfill.

In November St Ives business Shed Eleven presented an online seminar on upcycling old unwanted furniture. Using environmentally friendly decorative chalk paint, they take unloved tables, chairs, dressers and cupboards and repurpose them into stylish pieces for the modern home.

Shed Eleven is part of the Better Business Partnership, a free business sustainability program funded by Ku-ring-gai, North Sydney and Willoughby City Councils to promote and support small and medium sized businesses to be more successful and sustainable.

During this period the Council's compliance and communications staff worked together on reducing the numbers of abandoned trolleys, concentrating on the St Ives shopping precinct. Abandoned trolleys were monitored and staff liaised with local businesses to reduce incidences of abandoned trolleys near the Shopping Village. During this period a community education program with videos and advertising in strategic locations in the shopping centre was produced to further reinforce the message to take trolleys back to after use.

Biodiversity

In October 2020 the Council announced the discovery of a rare native orchid at a secret location in Ku-ring-gai. The discovery of the Eastern Australian Underground Orchid in the local area is one of only a handful in NSW where the native orchid has been found.

One of the striking features of this very rare native orchid species is its ability to burrow underground and move slowly through soil. The orchid's flower spike penetrates the soil surface for a few weeks each year, possibly to attract small flies searching for somewhere to lay eggs.

In an attempt to locate other specimens of the orchid in Ku-ring-gai, Council staff are teaming up with NSW Department of Planning Infrastructure and Environment researchers, who will use a specially trained detection dog to locate other specimens of the orchid growing in the local area.

In July 2020 Ku-ring-gai residents were asked to participate in a citizen science project coordinated by the University of Sydney surveying what wildlife is visiting local gardens.

The survey asked residents to observe wildlife visiting their garden, describe what plants they eat and if any methods are used to protect plants.

Wildlife common to Ku-ring-gai gardens include brushtail and ringtail possums, swamp wallabies, brush turkeys, long-nosed bandicoots and grey-headed flying foxes. Residents were also asked to report rabbit sightings.

The University of Sydney team led by Professor Clare McArthur will use the research obtained from the survey to develop new methods to attract or deter wildlife from plants, including threatened species.

Ku-ring-gai residents who registered their interest by November 2020 to host a native bee hive from the Council found out through a Facebook livestream of a 'native bee lottery'.

Mayor Jennifer Anderson drew the winning names during the bee lottery held in December. The lottery draw came about due to the huge demand from local residents to participate in the native bee hive program.

Local residents were surveyed in January 2021 as a first step in updating the Ku-ring-gai Flying Fox Reserve Plan of Management.

The Council's current plan of management was adopted in 2013 and is due to be updated in accordance with state legislation. Council received a grant from the Department of Planning Industry and Environment to update the plan.

Grey-headed flying-fox, the species predominantly found in Ku-ring-gai is listed as 'vulnerable' under state and national legislation. The Council is undertaking community consultation over the next few months to better understand the relationship the community has with the flying fox colony and help guide conservation measures and minimise impacts on nearby residents. A community workshop will be held in March with state government representatives, the consultants and Council staff.

Taronga Zoo's red pandas' favourite food of Golden Bamboo will be harvested in selected locations across Ku-ring-gai by Zoo staff. The agreement struck between the Council and Taronga Zoo in October 2020 is widely seen as a 'win-win' for the pandas and the local environment.

Golden Bamboo is considered an invasive species in Ku-ring-gai and the fast-growing plant can displace other native vegetation and become a nuisance. However Golden Bamboo is also the favoured food of Taronga Zoo's red pandas, with Zoo staff constantly looking for new sources of the tasty plant.

Taronga Zoo has twelve red pandas and Golden Bamboo is the only bamboo species they eat. The Golden bamboo harvested in Ku-ring-gai will also help supplement the diet of giant pandas.



Companion animals

Residents adjoining Toolang Sportsground in St Ives Chase and Bryce Sportsground in St Ives were asked their opinion on creating leash-free dog parks at both grounds in June and July 2020. The proposed leash-free areas were being considered by the Council as alternatives to existing dog parks at Barra Brui Sportsground and Warrimoo Oval in St Ives.

Bryce and Toolang Sportsgrounds were considered suitable locations for off-leash areas as they are under-used as sportsfields and in close proximity to Barra Brui Sportsground and Warrimoo Oval. A report on the potential use of both sportsgrounds as off leash areas was presented to the Council at its September 2020 meeting.

During July and August 2020 the updated Companion Animals Management Plan 2020-2025 was placed on public exhibition and subsequently adopted by the Council.



A SNAPSHOT OF OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

THEME 3 PLACES, SPACES & INFRASTRUCTURE

A range of well planned, clean and safe neighbourhoods and public spaces designed with a strong sense of identity and place.



Completed playground on Abingdon Road Roseville

Lindfield Village Hub

In December 2020 the Council considered several reports presented at that month's Council meeting on the Lindfield Village Hub project. The Council resolution from this meeting was:

- A. Note that the Lindfield Village Hub tender and subsequent negotiation period has coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, creating a global economic downturn, uncertainty in the property market and impacting on project viability and competitive tension.
- B. Note that an offer has not yet been received that is financially viable.
- C. Continue to negotiate with any possible providers, while undertaking a review of Council's project assumptions and objectives.

Lindfield Village Green

Construction of the Lindfield Village Green is progressing well and on target be completed in 2021. The Village Green will transform the public car park at Tryon Road into a new community space that could feature outdoor dining, markets and music. Three levels of short and long stay parking will be relocated underground.

Bulk excavation work of the underground car park has largely been completed. Other works completed include piling works to the shoring walls, installation of ground anchors and further diversion of services including new sewers.

Council staff have been continuing to liaise with businesses located on the perimeter of the site to assist them to continue trading during construction and necessary closures of access roads such as Kochia Lane. A regular e-news update is being provided on the project to those who have asked to receive it.



Turramurra Community Hub

A Council decision in May 2020 paused the Turramurra Hub project with the intention of preparing new planning controls for Ku-ring-gai. These new controls would have concentrated additional development near public transport and in town centres.

Since that decision was taken, community opposition was expressed about the increased housing density proposed by last year's draft housing strategy. This increased density would have provided funding to enable the community facilities component of the Hub project to be built.

The Council decided not to proceed with the draft housing strategy and as a result, no new planning controls to raise building heights or increase dwelling numbers will be implemented and any new housing built under existing controls.

Ku-ring-gai Council's masterplan for a Turramurra Community Hub includes a new library and community centre, open space, new housing and shopping outlets designed to revitalise Turramurra's centre between the railway line, Ray Street and the Pacific Highway.

St Ives Showground

A large regional playground at St Ives Showground was completed and opened in November 2020. The new playground offers inclusive play for children of all abilities.

Equipment for younger children aged 6 and under includes junior swings, a spinning carousel, a rocker, cubby house with low slide and an imaginative farm/showground play setting. Play equipment for older children has challenging rope climbing, high slides, elevated enclosed rope walkways, a double flying fox and a giant bird's nest swing.

Nature play areas have logs, timber, boulders, a stone sculpture and other materials intermingled with plants, providing children opportunities for imaginative play. Accessible parking and pathways provide easy links between the new playground and surrounding parkland and toilets. Picnic tables and seating have also been installed.

Council has won a \$250,000 Metropolitan Greenspace Program grant from the NSW Government to help meet the construction costs of the large new playground, which had an overall budget of \$2.24 million for construction.

Since opening in November, thousands of children from Ku-ring-gai and elsewhere have enjoyed the playground and it has received favourable reviews on various websites and community social media sites.

In July 2020 the Council was awarded a \$1.7 million grant under the NSW Government's showground stimulus package developed in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The \$1.7 million grant is the second awarded to St Ives Showground, with a previous grant of \$88,000 awarded in June 2020 and put towards new lighting in the main arena and surrounding areas.

The \$1.7 million grant will fund the following upgrades:

- ♦ Resurfacing and upgrading of the main arena loop road & parking bays.
- ♦ Fencing, soft-fall surfacing and signage for the new playground.
- ♦ Refurbishment of the amenities block near the playground including accessible change rooms.
- ♦ An upgraded kitchenette in the Louise Lennon building.
- ♦ Improvements to the Douglas Pickering Pavilion.
- ♦ Rebuilding of the Rotary kiosk which doubles as an information centre for major events.

St Ives Village Green

The Village Green is being redesigned as a recreation precinct for young residents. The design includes a new children's play space and a skate area, with a central promenade linking facilities with the surrounding park. New paths, seating, shelters, lighting, picnic facilities, shade tree planting and landscaping are also planned, together with improvements to the existing public toilets, St Ives Community Hall and the St Ives youth centre.



Work commenced during this period with the relocation of a pedestrian crossing in Village Green Parade to provide safer access between the park and accessible parking.

Construction of the new inclusive playground and skate facility will commence mid year following awarding of the tender. Upgrades of the existing amenities building and the Youth Centre and Community Hall have commenced and work is continuing.

The recreation precinct is expected to be completed later in 2021.

Housing strategy

The Council's draft Housing Strategy, was placed on public exhibition between April and May 2020. It followed several months of early consultation with local residents, businesspeople and other stakeholders through surveys, online discussion forums and focus group meetings.

A report on the draft Strategy including public feedback was presented to the July 2020 Council meeting. At this meeting Council voted to defer the Housing Strategy for two months to seek advice from the NSW Premier and the NSW Department of Planning Industry & Environment on proposed housing targets for Ku-ring-gai, and also to further consider community feedback.

The Council voted on 20 October not to proceed with a draft housing strategy based on future development targets set earlier this year by the Greater Sydney Commission.

The Council's decision comes after the NSW Minister for Planning and Open Spaces Rob Stokes wrote to the Council on 8 September. Minister Stokes told the Council the Greater Sydney Commission's target for new housing is not a legal requirement by the state government and that the Council "is responsible for deciding the number of dwellings in its local housing supply target."

The Council voted to adopt a housing strategy that would provide new housing to the year 2036 from existing capacity within Ku-ring-gai's current planning controls.

Retail centres strategy

A draft retail centres strategy was placed on public exhibition for comment during October. The strategy examined issues facing the centres and how they may adapt in the future.

The strategy looked at issues facing local retail centres such as population growth, changes in retail supply and demand and factors affecting the planning and delivery of retail and commercial space.

The main findings of the study were an under supply of retail floor space in centres, high vacancies in commercial areas such as Pymble Business Park and ageing retail facilities. Other key findings include land and development constraints such as fragmented ownership, the high cost of consolidating land and the impact of the Pacific Highway dissecting the centres.

Some of the strategy's recommendations include promotion of mixed-use development, more flexible approaches to planning controls, incentives for investment and investigating a night-time economy.

The draft strategy took into account the potential impacts of COVID-19 on local retail and commercial sectors at this stage of the pandemic, although these are still being evaluated. A report on public submissions received during the public exhibition of the draft strategy was presented to the December Council meeting.

Local character study

Between October and November the public were asked their opinions on what makes Ku-ring-gai unique from a planning perspective. The feedback received was used to prepare local character statements for areas and suburbs.

An online interactive map was used by residents to identify areas of special character relating to views, landscape and topography, as well as a web-based survey.

At its December 2020 meeting the Council voted to place the draft Ku-ring-gai Local Character Study on public exhibition, with further community engagement through workshops to be held next year and a final draft reported to Council by June 2021.

Public spaces

The popular Fox Valley Road shopping strip in Wahroonga is being upgraded with work to be completed by the middle of this year.

Several local shopping areas are being refurbished under the Neighbourhood Centres Revitalisation Program, with the Fox Valley Road centre the latest to receive a facelift. The aim of the program is to make local shopping centres more pedestrian friendly and improve their attractiveness to shoppers through modified layouts, new street furniture and landscaping.

Businesses and residents in the Fox Valley Road shopping strip were asked their opinion last year about the makeover. As a result the redesigned shopping area will have new paving and footpaths, bike parking, improved seating and landscaping.

Parking will be reconfigured to allow for similar number of car spaces while providing a larger paved area outside the front of cafes and shops for pedestrian access and outdoor eating. Following community consultation last year, work is starting on

converting St Johns Avenue and the Henry Street area in Gordon into a pedestrianised area with a focus on outdoor dining.

The design has been developed in consultation with business owners and the community. Features include wider footpaths, outdoor dining, new pavements, street furniture and tree planting. Heritage Square will also be revamped so it is more accessible and better integrated into the St Johns Avenue public domain. The work is expected to be completed later this year.

Development applications

From early November 2020 DAs and other planning applications were lodged 24/7 and without paper copies through the NSW Government's planning e-portal. The new e-portal means that applications can no longer be lodged at Council, although applications will still be assessed by planning staff.

According to the NSW Government, the changes are aimed at making it easier for the public to lodge their applications at times to suit them, as well as reducing the use of paper documentation. Ku-ring-gai Council has embraced the e-portal system and most applications are now being lodged via the e-portal.

In addition to DAs, the following applications are being lodged online:

- ◆ Section 4.55 Modification Applications.
- ◆ Section 8.2 Review of Determination.
- ◆ Complying Development Certificates.
- ◆ Construction Certificates.
- ◆ Occupation Certificates.
- ◆ Subdivision Certificates.

Parks and playgrounds

Apart from the new regional playground at St Ives Showground which opened to the public in November last year, a number of other playground upgrades were completed during this period.

Upgrades to playgrounds at Kissing Point Village Green in Turramurra and Abingdon Road Reserve in Roseville were both finished in time for summer late last year

Both playgrounds have accessible pathways and play equipment, new fencing, drinking fountains, seating, and areas where children can enjoy nature play.

At Kissing Point Village Green existing picnic shelters and the junior bike path have been upgraded, with an accessible car space added and a pathway linked to the playground.

The Abingdon Road Reserve playground was partially funded by a grant of \$50,000 from the Everyone Can Play program, a state government initiative aimed at creating accessible and inclusive play spaces.

Work was completed on an upgrade to the playground at Putarri Reserve in St Ives. In addition to a new playground, outdoor exercise equipment and animal sculptures were also installed at the reserve.



Gordon Recreation Ground Playground

In October 2020 the community was invited to give their feedback on a new accessible playground planned for Robert Pymble Park. The park's playground design was based on a theme based upon the area's former use as a fruit farm by its namesake Robert Pymble.

Playground equipment could include a tractor, a farm-inspired climbing frame and fruit shaped rockers. Other features of the proposed playground design are new seating, picnic areas and cycle parking, plus a circuit track for younger children to ride scooters and bikes. Nearby toilets will also be upgraded.

The second stage of improvements to Gordon Recreation Ground was completed in August 2020. This included the refurbishment of the heritage-listed tennis pavilion/amenities block, including toilet facilities and an improved internal layout. The remaining landscaping works for the site including new lighting and picnic shelters is almost complete.

Heritage

Repairs to the heritage features of the Council's administration building at 818 Pacific Highway are continuing. Roof tiling works are being implemented including the removal and reinstallation of the entire heritage tiled roof with new gutters, downpipes and eaves. The building dates back to the early 20th century.

In November the Council resolved to prepare a proposed heritage listing and include Laverty House - 207 Eastern Road Wahroonga as a local heritage item.

The Council resolved in December 2020 to place interim heritage orders on 33 Young Street, Wahroonga and 7 Curagul Road, North Turramurra for a full evaluation of the heritage significance and prevent any harm to both sites in the interim.

In December public feedback was sought on the draft Ku-ring-gai Heritage Strategy. The draft strategy is intended to measure, plan and report on heritage management in Ku-ring-gai. A report will be presented to the Council on the results of the community consultation.

THEME 4 ACCESS, TRAFFIC & TRANSPORT



Access and connection to, from and within Ku-ring-gai provides safe, reliable and affordable public and private travel, transport and infrastructure



Roads

Upgrades are continuing on the Comenarra Parkway to Fox Valley Road. During this period two right turn lanes were installed from the Parkway to Fox Valley Road.

Other intersection upgrades will involve moving eastbound traffic (from Thornleigh to Ryde Road) onto a temporary lane on the widened area near the SAN clinic building. Westbound traffic will stay on the existing road, but right and through lanes will move one lane closer to the clinic, leaving space for construction of the new island for a left turn to Fox Valley Road shops. There will be line marking and signage guiding traffic.

Council staff are continuing to receive briefings from RMS staff on the pinchpoint program along Pacific Highway between Wahroonga and Turramurra.

Pedestrian safety

After securing additional funding from the NSW Government, works to increase pedestrian safety and amenity will be extended along Wade Lane up to Park Avenue and over to Werona Avenue in Gordon. This will make the Gordon station precinct more pedestrian-friendly, safer and attractive.

Improvements include widened footpaths for terraced outdoor dining with landscaping in the terraced areas. Landings, handrails and seating will assist those with reduced mobility. The work also includes raised pedestrian crossings at Clipsham Lane, Henry Street and Wade Lane and improvements to the park, lighting and kiss and ride areas. Work will start in the next few weeks on this project.



Wahoonga station upgraded

Railway stations

TfNSW are continuing a large scale program of improvements to various railway stations in Ku-ring-gai with the goal of increasing accessibility. Stations where work is taking place include Wahoonga, Roseville, Pymble and Warrawee. Some station closures are taking place on weekends to allow work to take place, as well as at night.

Council staff are liaising with TfNSW to ensure the public are kept informed on the progress of upgrades and any closures affecting stations.

Cycling

The Council has been awarded \$398,000 from the NSW Government's Streets as Shared Spaces grant program for a separated cycleway in Gilroy Road. The \$15 million Streets as Shared Spaces grant program has been created as a result of the pandemic. According to the state government, it aims 'to transform streets across NSW into creative, vibrant and healthy public spaces'.

The funding will be used to create a cycleway in Gilroy Road Turramurra connecting Karuah Park with the Turramurra local centre. Safer crossings will also be installed at Brentwood Avenue and Gilroy Road for both pedestrians and cyclists to improve links with Karuah Park.

Work will begin shortly on the cycleway and could be completed by June next year.



Cycleway



A SNAPSHOT OF OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

THEME 5 LOCAL ECONOMY & EMPLOYMENT

Creating economic employment opportunities through vital, attractive centres, business innovation and technology



Council offered a rebate to business owners for solar systems

Business

During this period the free webinar series to help local companies and individuals maintain and protect their businesses during the pandemic continued.

Webinars presented included post-COVID-19 business and financial planning; networking and marketing opportunities and maximising access to government grants and support.

In September a free webinar with a catering expert was held for café and restaurant owners aimed at helping them get through the COVID-19 pandemic. The webinar was focussed on teaching business owners how to better manage their time, improve their bottom line and reduce stress levels.

The Council is continuing measures aimed at cushioning financial stress on the community, in particular local businesses. Fees for a range of business permits are currently suspended.

In January 2021 the Council offered 20 local business people the chance to develop their skills and boost their success through a free mentoring program. The mentoring program will start on 17 February and run for three weeks until 4 March.

The scholarship program is one hour each week, with sessions delivered by video conferencing. The sessions are designed to be highly interactive and directly focused on specific business goals. Attendees will be grouped together based on similarities in the scale and maturity of their business and relevant sectors.

The Council was again a major sponsor of the 2020 Local Business Awards with winners announced in October. Eight local businesses ranging from a pharmacy to a florist were recognised for their products, innovation and customer service excellence, despite the challenges of COVID-19.

A total of 34 finalists were nominated for awards, with eight businesses from Ku-ring-gai taking out the top award in their chosen category. The finalists in each category were selected based on the number of online and printed nominations they received from the public.

Also in October, the Council presented 12 short free online seminars to local businesses as part of Small Business Month. The webinars were on topics ranging from accessing government grants, social media for business, managing cash flow, recruitment and honing negotiation skills.

The Better Business Partnership offered a range of energy and water rebates to businesses in northern Sydney to help them cut running costs and become more sustainable.

During this period business owners were offered three new rebates to help them cut energy costs and reduce water use. A rebate of up to \$2000 for energy efficiency projects such as lighting upgrades, lighting sensors and timers and energy efficient air conditioning and refrigeration was available. For businesses wanting to install solar panels, up to \$1000 in rebate was available for solar PV systems sized between 5kW and 10kW and up to \$2000 for solar PV systems above 10kW. The third rebate of up to \$1000 was for water saving devices through the Council's Water Smart rebate program for green roofs, rain gardens and rainwater tanks.

Technology

The new Council website was launched in December 2020 following an extended period of consultation with users and planning for the new site, including procurement of a content management system and development of a content strategy.

The new site follows modern practice in websites, with a focus on customer service and transactions, user friendliness, a clean design and clear structure.

Council staff are continuing to refine the content of web pages and each page has a function whereby the public can give feedback.

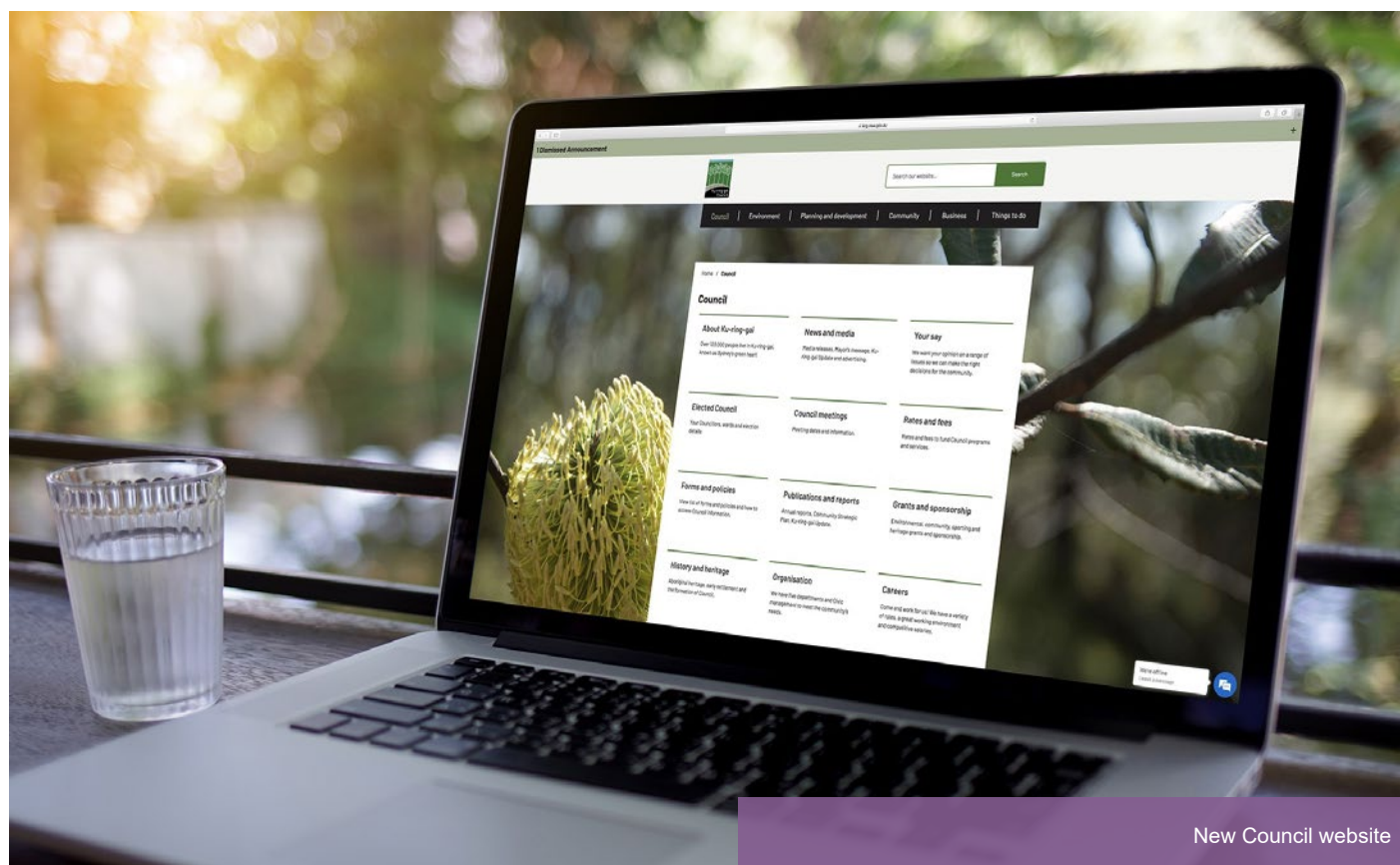
Since the website launch, feedback has been mainly positive from the public. Work is continuing on improving integration of other Council systems such as the booking system with the new website.



SimTable

During this period the Council maintained the web-based Life Online portal, allowing residents to lodge permit applications, waste requests, request planning certificates, register pets and request repairs to roads and other Council assets. Life Online was launched at the height of the COVID-19 lockdown to assist housebound residents get services from the Council.

Other features of Life Online included group therapy sessions with a psychologist; storytime readings for children, free webinars for small businesses and free access to the Council's e-library of music, magazines, books and movies.



New Council website

THEME 6 LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

Ku-ring-gai is well led, managed and supported by ethical organisations which deliver projects and services to the community by listening, advocating and responding to their needs



COVID-19 volunteer meal delivery project

COVID-19 support

During this period the Council continued to hold its meetings via Zoom from March, with the livestream allowing members of the public to observe the meetings. Meetings of the KLPP have continued on Zoom and members of the public able to submit comments to panel members before meetings.

The monthly Public Forums are temporarily suspended and replaced by submissions from the public either as written questions and comments, audio recordings or video recordings.

In April the Council approved a total of \$100,000 in grants for community organisations helping vulnerable residents in Ku-ring-gai, or those experiencing hardship as a result of the COVID-19 situation. Grants totalling \$80,000 were distributed to organisations in June 2020 and the remaining \$20,000 absorbed into the 2020-2021 community grants program. This program distributed \$120,000 in grants during this period.

Among the recipients was the Hornsby Connect Service for a COVID-19 community support project in Ku-ring-gai, including a food bank grocery service and food hampers for needy residents. Ku-ring-gai Meals on Wheels provided a meals service to frontline workers, disadvantaged and homeless people through the Council's grant funding.

Hirers of the Council's community centres and halls had payments refunded or suspended while these remain closed. Council facilities reopened for bookings in October with strict COVID-safe protocols in place.

NSW Health established a COVID-19 testing clinic at St Ives Showground during this period which at the time of writing is open daily between 8am and 4pm. The temporary clinic at the Turramurra community centre was discontinued at the end of January 2021.

Libraries and the Council's customer service centre at 818 Pacific Highway Gordon are functioning normally with social distancing and capacity limits in place. Customers are also encouraged to wear masks.

The Council's Crisis Management Team is continuing to meet fortnightly to plan and assess the organisation's response to the easing of the COVID-19 restrictions, the reopening of public facilities and a staged approach to staff returning to the workplace.

Awards

Ku-ring-gai Council was recognised in August for its bushfire awareness campaign in the 2020 LGNSW RH Dougherty Awards.

The RH Dougherty Awards are presented annually during Local Government Week for projects demonstrating excellence in communication. The awards are hosted by LGNSW, the peak body for 128 NSW councils.

Out of ten nominees, Ku-ring-gai Council won the large council category for its 2019-2020 Get Ready Ku-ring-gai campaign. The campaign aimed to raise awareness of the need for residents to plan ahead for the bushfire season. Get Ready Ku-ring-gai used an innovative 3D simulation tool called the Sim Table to show residents how a bushfire could start and spread in their neighbourhood, as well as videos, a social media campaign and workshops jointly hosted with RFS and SES volunteers.

Council's online education programs for young children during the COVID-19 lockdown received a High Commendation through the 2020 Keep Australia Beautiful Sustainable Cities Awards. The Wildflower Garden received the commendation for its response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the creation of online education programs. At the height of the pandemic lockdown in March, all regular face-to-face education programs for children were suspended. However, Wildflower Garden and other Council staff produced a range of online DIY nature-play activities.

Mayor Jennifer Anderson presented members of the local community with the Ku-ring-gai Local Citizen of the Year Awards at the 2021 Australia Day citizenship ceremony. The awards are presented each year in recognition of groups and individuals who have made a significant contribution to the local community.

This year the awards included two Community Group Awards for Outstanding Service, Young Citizen of the Year, Young Environmental Citizen of the Year, Environmental Citizen of the Year and the Citizen of the Year.

Community

During this period the adopted Community Participation Plan was implemented. Part of the new plan saw the advertising of DA consents, development and other planning applications move online. This also reflects the NSW Government's policy on the advertising of these applications and consents which was introduced as a result of COVID-19. Applications and consents are now posted on the website weekly and advertised in the fortnightly Ku-ring-gai e-news. The Council's consultation practices are being reviewed residents' views are captured through a range of ways into the future.

The review comes as residents are increasingly going online to express their view on new services and projects. The Council is seeking input to ensure updated policies and procedures match current trends in consultation and meet community expectations.

The consultation review will cover other areas where the community is for its views about other projects and services



that affect local people. The review will be carried out through information gathering via surveys, workshops and face-to-face interviews. There will be a focus on 'hard to reach' groups such as residents who have English as their second language and young people aged 12 to 30 years old.

Feedback received will be incorporated into a revised community consultation policy. The policy will be presented to Council and then go on public exhibition.

Finances

Council adopted the Delivery Program and Operational Plan for 2020-2021 in June 2020.

Over \$18 million has been set aside for roads and footpaths in the capital works budget. Parks and sportsfields upgrades will be boosted by an extra \$13.5 million and nearly \$1 million will be spent on new equipment for local playgrounds. A further \$1.1 million has been allocated to Ku-ring-gai's public toilets and shower blocks.

Council has underlined its commitment to environmental protection with a proposed \$4.7 million in funding and \$1.5 million for stormwater drainage. There is an anticipated reduction in income of around \$5.6 million due to COVID-19.

Complaints management

Following adoption of a new complaints policy in April 2020 the Council implemented a series of streamlined and centralised complaints management procedures during this period. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about us, our services, staff or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required. Complaints can include expressions of dissatisfaction with the quality of or delays in providing a service, taking an action or making a decision which are outside of Council's service levels.

The new procedures include an improved reporting procedure via the website, designated staff to handle each complaint, standardised and clear written responses and an escalation procedure whereby management will be involved early in any serious complaints regarding the conduct of staff.

