

Blue Mountains City Council

Bushcare Annual Report



2005 - 2006



Introduction

Welcome to the Bushcare Annual Report for 2005-2006 Financial Year for what has been another exciting period of growth. The period rounds off 10 years of Bushcare at BMCC and I'm happy to report it is stronger than ever!

This year we employed an additional Bushcare Officer, started 6 new Bushcare Groups and adopted 3 new Landcare Groups to reach a total of 54 Groups in the Blue Mountains LGA. We increased the amount of volunteer participation by 12% and now have a group in every Blue Mountains Township.

We have started an exciting journey of offering more training and a varied experience to our volunteers. Our Weeds Website continues to boom on the internet and now receive over 13,000 visits a month.

We look to the future by developing an even stronger partnership with community. We wish to improve and refine the training and volunteering experiences we offer.

This report focuses on all the key areas of the 2005-06 Service Level Agreement and records our achievements in each area.

Chris Dewhurst

Bushcare Team Leader



Photo 1 - Wilson's Glen Bushcare Group, Woodford

Bushcare Groups

At the end of June 2006 we are currently supervising **45** active Bushcare Groups on public lands. This includes **6** new groups outlined below:

Site: Birdwood Gully, Springwood

Date Started: July 2005

Description: Bush Regeneration works in Frank Tidwell Reserve, Springwood. This group was active from 1996 to 1999, and has been re-formed with new and old volunteers

Medlow Bath Bushcare Group

Date Started: Nov 2005

Description: The first Bushcare group for Medlow Bath Township with Bush regeneration works focusing on Medlow Park.

Glenbrook Lagoon Bushcare Group

Date started: Feb 2006

Description: Bush regeneration around Glenbrook Lagoon with education about water weeds and Streamwatch.

North Lawson Bushcare Group

Date Started: Feb 2006

Description: Bush Regeneration around Lawson Pool and in Wilson Park



Photo 2 - New Volunteers at Gloria Park

Valley Heights Bushcare Group

Date Started: Mar 2006

Description: The first Bushcare Group for the Valley Heights Township with Bush regeneration works in Beniot Park.

Gloria Park Bushcare Group

Date Started: May 2006

Description: Bush Regeneration in Gloria Park, Hazelbrook. A requirement of the

POM adopted Jan 2004

A full and up to date list is always available on our website:

http://weedsbluemountains.org.au/locate_bushcare_group.asp

Landcare Groups

We are currently supervising **9** Landcare Groups. This includes **3** Groups which were adopted from City Solutions in the 05/06 Reporting period:

Freelander Landcare

Date Adopted: Feb 2006

Description: Bush Regeneration along the private land creekline in Freelander Ave, Katoomba.

Darks Common Landcare

Date Adopted: July 2005

Description: Bush Regeneration in Darks Common reserve, Glenbrook.

Linksvie Landcare

Date Adopted: Feb 2006

Description: Bush Regeneration in SSTF forest near Springwood Golf Course.



Photo 3 - Darks Common Landcare Group

Total Volunteer Hours

The graph below shows the volunteer hours (Bushcare and Landcare) facilitated over the past two years. Total hours for this period is **7,437** which represents an increase of 920hr (12%) on the 2004/05 annual period. This can be attributed to an increase in resources from the Environmental Levy leading to the expansion of both the Bushcare and Landcare Programs. These figures do not include an additional 635 hours of support from TAFE classes on Bushcare Sites (additional detail below)

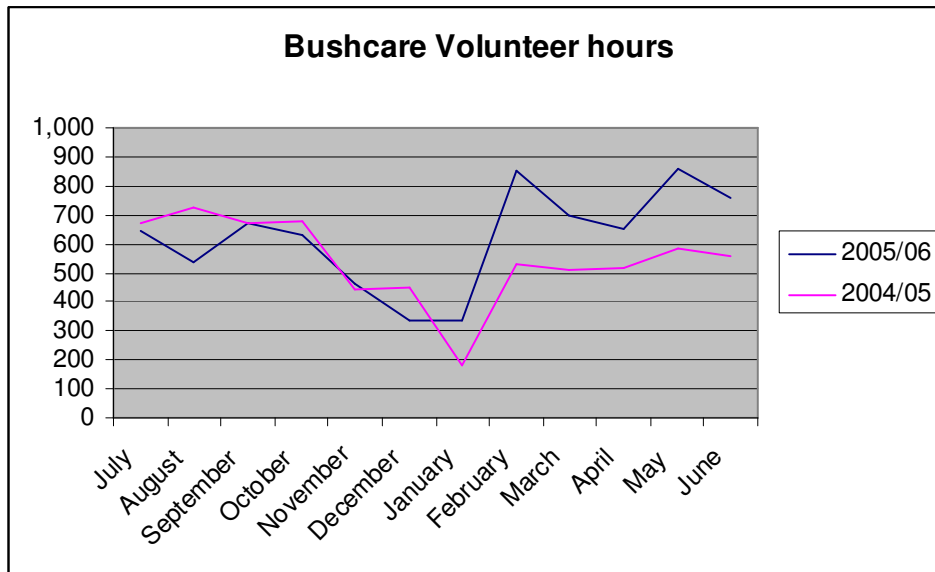


Figure 1 - Bushcare and Landcare Hours 2004 to 2006

Bushcare Special Events

The following Bushcare "Special Events" were held in the past 12 months:



Photo 4- Deanei Biodiversity Workshop

- Alan Fairley "Rare Plants of the Blue Mountains" 11 July 2005 90 Attendees
- Phillip Moore "The Great Sandy Desert and Back" Oct 13 2005 60 Attendees
- Springwood Forest Family Fun Day, Oct 22 2005 - 60 Attendees
- Bushcare "Thank You" BBQ Feb 22 2006 100 Attendees
- Bushcare Biodiversity Workshop - Deanei Forest 20 May 2006 20 Attendees (capped)
- Bushcare Biodiversity Workshop - Megalong Valley 17 June 2006 20 Attendees (capped)

Extra Help from TAFE

An additional 635 Hours was contributed by Wentworth Falls TAFE over the reporting period. BMCC Staff are involved in site planning and on-site facilitation of these activities. The following sites were used:

- Horseshoe Falls Bushcare, Hazelbrook
- Kedumba Creek Bushcare, Katoomba
- Summerhayes Park Bushcare, Winmalee
- Pulpit Hill Road Landcare, Katoomba
- Govett St Bushcare, Leura

Our Quarterly newsletter.

Four "Gecko" newsletters were produced in Winter (Issue #24), Spring (Issue #25), Summer (Issue #26) and Autumn (Issue #27). Circulation 1000 copies.

Development of electronic mailing.

An email system containing over 250 volunteers email addresses has been collated. Each Gecko newsletter is hosted on our website and people are sent an email with the appropriate link (http://weedsbluemountains.org.au/gecko_online.asp). 76 people have removed themselves from the "hard copy" list, and the website will also serve as a community archive for the newsletter.

Responding to customer service requests relating to Bushcare and community involvement with public bushland.

Bushcare has dealt with over 624 customer service requests in the form of phone calls, emails, front counter enquiries and website feedback forms.

Managing Contracts

Bushcare has managed an external contract of \$25,000 (A&S Bushcare) as a "Bushcare Support Contract". The work was closely managed and monitored by Bushcare Officers and Community Coordinators. The contractor did excellent work on-site and gave clear communication back to the Bushcare Groups. The following Bushcare Sites benefited from this:

- Frogs Hollow, Blackheath
- Else Mitchell Park, Springwood
- Central Park, Wentworth Falls
- South Lawson

Maintain, update, develop the Bushland Weeds Website

Our website continues to service sessions from over **13,000** users per month. Our usage stats show a strong interest from local people, but also many users access from around Australia and Internationally. Our website, which is now in its fourth year of operation is widely accepted as the benchmark for weed education on the Internet.

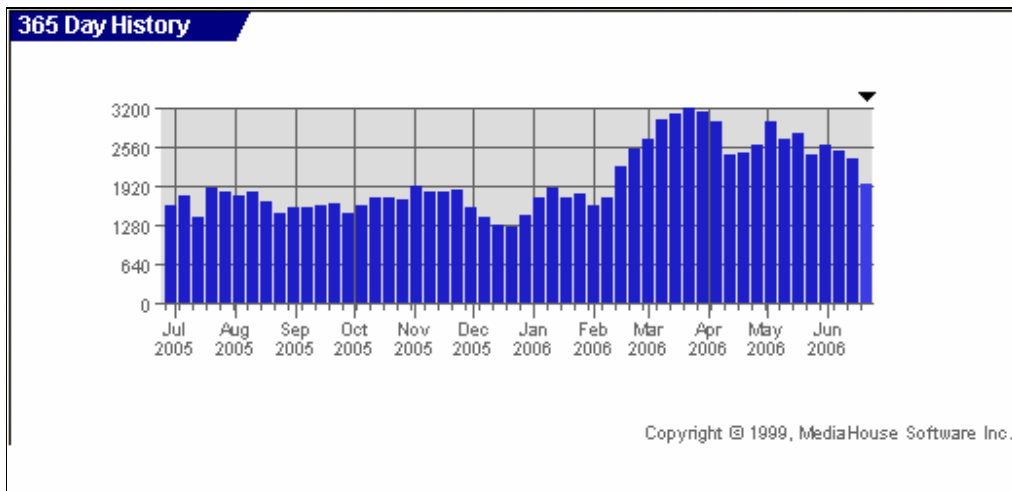


Figure 2 - Website Usage 2005/06

We continue to update the site on a weekly basis with news items and group details to keep the site alive and encourage return visitors. Recently we have done a major upgrade to make the site a "Web Standard" to allow use by people with disability.

Recent upgrades also include:

Two new weed profile sheets:

- Miscanthus (Zebra Grass) <http://weedsbluemountains.org.au/miscanthus.asp>
- Boneseed (Bitou bush) <http://weedsbluemountains.org.au/boneseed.asp>



This includes full descriptions, numerous photos, and control techniques.

The site has also been fully updated to reflect changes to the Noxious Weeds Act.

We have also developed 12 individual pages for Bushcare Groups. This is helping to improve recruitment for new volunteers and also a motivating and recognition force for existing participants.

- Horseshoe Falls, Hazelbrook
■ http://www.weedsbluemountains.org.au/group_horse_shoe_falls.asp
- Else Mitchell Park, Springwood
■ http://www.weedsbluemountains.org.au/group_else_mitchell.asp
- Pulpit Hill Landcare Group, Katoomba
■ http://www.weedsbluemountains.org.au/group_pulpit_hill_landcare.asp
- South Lawson Park
■ http://www.weedsbluemountains.org.au/group_south_lawson_park.asp
- Summerhayes Park, Winmalee
■ http://www.weedsbluemountains.org.au/group_summerhayes_park.asp
- Tortoise Creek Landcare, Faulconbridge
■ http://www.weedsbluemountains.org.au/group_tortoise_creek_landcare.asp
- Valley of the Waters (NPWS)
■ http://www.weedsbluemountains.org.au/group_valley_waters.asp
- Water Nymphs Dell, Wentworth Falls
■ http://www.weedsbluemountains.org.au/group_water_nymphs.asp
- Wilson's Glen, Woodford
■ http://www.weedsbluemountains.org.au/group_wilsons_glen.asp
- Lone Pine, Leura
■ http://www.weedsbluemountains.org.au/group_lone_pine.asp

Springwood's Blue Gum Forest Flyer

Developed and launched by the BMCC Bushcare and Springwood Bushcare groups. This flyer is available on our website and hard copy from Council. It details the values and threats to Springwood's unique Blue Gum forests.

Future Recommendations

The Blue Mountains City Council Bushcare Program continues to show strong growth from within the community for participation as a volunteer and attendance at workshops and special events. We have now reached the point of having at least one group in every township of the Blue Mountains. Options for further development will need to be made within the constraints of the existing budget within the short term.

Areas of development for the next 12 months could include:

- Development of more cross-agency partnerships - develop projects that work with other land management agencies. These would be annual or one-off events that target specific areas of land not reached by core Bushcare or BMCC programs.
- Development of training and utilisation of volunteers - this year we launched our Biodiversity Workshops and have been inundated with positive feedback. The concept is to develop and refine the training we offer volunteers, this would have the impact of helping to recruit more volunteers to existing groups and also increase our capacity to utilise volunteers in higher level skills such as site monitoring and biodiversity surveys.



Photo 5 - Council Bushcare Officer Training a New Group at Medlow Bath