



2018 NATIONAL LANDCARE AWARDS

11 October
Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre

Nominee: Cooloola Coastcare Association, QLD

Category: Coastcare Award

Cooloola Coastcare Association (CCA) was formed in 2001, uniting the Rainbow Beach and Tin Can Bay Coastcare Groups, including Cooloola Cove in the southern-most coastal area of the Burnett-Mary Region. Originally formed to help implement foreshore management plans along the Cooloola Coast, CCA now works to protect the Great Sandy Strait (GSS) Ramsar wetlands through a variety of diverse activities.

During the last six years, CCA has coordinated the monitoring of 18 Seagrass sites throughout the southern GSS. Seagrass monitoring was first established in the Great Sandy Straits (GSS) following the 1992 and 1993 floods, which diminished seagrass beds as well as dugong and turtle populations. A training course was held 2012, 2015 and volunteers have been involved throughout this time.

In 2014 the Group completed a Foreshore Flora survey for Gympie Council, informing the Council's Environment Strategy for future management of Tin Can Bay foreshore. This project led to the second edition of Great Sandy Beauties and Beasties native plant and weed guide; and built upon CCA's established Tin Can Bay Foreshore Birdwalk, Wildflower Walk and Mullen's Wader Walk, which have become drawcards for local, interstate and international travellers, especially bird watchers.

Cooloola Cove's Revive Our Creeks project spotlighted best management practice of urban wetlands to prioritise biodiversity and manage fire, weeds, stormwater and scenic amenity. Participants in the project removed invasive weeds and unwanted pasture grass that was clogging three creeks. When a particular weed proved too onerous, the local fire brigade assisted with a controlled burn, and paragrass removal was conducted without the use of chemical sprays with the help of Duntroon recruits who took a break from training at the nearby military training area. The Revive Our Creeks project also hosted community presentations about the region's Indigenous history, geomorphology, hydrology and aquatic flora and fauna and fish biopassage. The project culminated in the production of Cooloola Cove Wetlands and Waterways, which is used by schools, council employees, new residents and distributed by QPWS, Rainbow Beach.

Cooloola Coast Waterwatch was established in 2014 to gather baseline data on catchment freshwater and estuarine creeks. Waterwatch has volunteers collecting data from 21 waterways, and informs coastal wallum water quality guidelines by providing consistent data over time.

The program has also educated land managers about threats to water quality, and the community's role in maintaining healthy wetlands and waterways. Data collected contributes to formulating the Queensland Guidelines for Coastal Creeks, with Cooloola Coastcare regularly providing input on development proposals at federal (EPBC), State Coastal and Local Planning levels.

CCA partnered with Reef Check in 2016 to ground-truth coral biodiversity of the southern GSS. This activity prompted the Cooloola Underwater Biodiversity Assessment: the first underwater video and catalogue of Tin Can Bay Ramsar marine flora and fauna. Presentations were held at six venues to inform the public with hundreds of people attending. Tide Tables featuring GSS benthic and marine fauna were produced in 2017 and 2018 to promote marine biodiversity.

This program is supported by Landcare Australia and the National Landcare Network, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.





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Two lead volunteers implement Marine Debris removal and audits across the GSS on a regular basis; the data is shared with Tangaroa Blue supporting government initiatives to reduce litter. Tin Can Bay Sand Flat Walks in the school holidays and Gympie's STEM hub initiative have also supported environmental education about the GSS.

Landcare is a grassroots movement that harnesses individuals and groups to protect, restore and sustainably manage Australia's natural environment and its productivity. Groups that fall under the Landcare umbrella work on a diverse range of environmental projects and include farmers embracing sustainable farm management and any community group that partakes in volunteer environmental activities. To find out how you can become a Landcare volunteer and for full details on all 2018 National Landcare finalists, visit www.landcareaustralia.org.au

Ends

For further information, photographs or interviews contact:

Naomi Straw
Landcare Australia
naomi.straw@landcareaustralia.com.au
02 8440 8823

Fiona Hawthorne
Cooloola Coastcare Association
admin@cooloolacoastcare.org.au
0423 344 316

Web summary:

Formed in 2001 to implement foreshore management plans along the coast, the Cooloola Coastcare Association (CCA) works to protect the region's Ramsar Wetlands. Over the last six years, CCA has coordinated diverse activities including the monitoring of 18 seagrass sites throughout the southern Great Sandy Strait (GSS); a Foreshore Flora survey for Gympie Council to inform their Environment Strategy; regular marine debris removal and audits across the region, supporting government initiatives to reduce litter. CCA's Waterwatch monitoring of 21 sites informs water quality guidelines by providing consistent data and the impact of urban stormwater runoff. Revive Our Creeks raised much awareness about coastal catchment management, while the Cooloola Underwater Biodiversity Assessment documented for the first time GSS marine biodiversity. CCA have produced many informative booklets, brochures and tide tables. CCA's liaison with schools and Gympie's STEM hub initiative has also supported environmental education about the GSS.

Pull quote:

Seventeen years on Cooloola Coastcare continues to 'Value, Protect and Enhance the natural environment, particularly coastal wallum and marine areas' – Keeping the Great Sandy Strait great!

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