

Judge Report

CLEAN BEACHES 2013

Currumbin, Queensland



Keep Australia Beautiful National Association

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“In all of the five finalists, it was obvious that a special spirit emerges where a community has a strong and enduring connection to its local environment”.

Introduction

Overall

Currumbin is a small community set within the larger Gold Coast tourist area. It is characterised by its natural beauty, committed locals and its dynamic culture. Currumbin faces the challenge of managing a large number of tourists, and in Currumbin this is done in a way that keeps a strong sense of community at the heart of things. As well as keeping Currumbin Beach free of litter, there is a real sense that the Currumbin community, including through its clubs and businesses, is finding ways to respond to long-term issues of sustainability and environmental management and has strong intergenerational connection that allow preservation and growth of local traditions. Further efforts to manage conflicts arising due to multiple use zones, to manage and respond to the impacts of erosion, and to demonstrate a community-wide commitment to recycling waste, will mean Currumbin’s residents and visitors will continue to enjoy a very special place.

Date judged

19 September 2013

Population

2,785

Contact

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Community Action & Partnerships

Currumbin Beach is a small community set within the larger Gold Coast area, and attracts many tourists and visitors. The Currumbin community, which includes long-term locals who demonstrated deep understanding of the area's history and challenges, are diverse in their backgrounds, interests and contribution to maintenance and enrichment of the beach. A few of the notable projects at the beach include:

- Friends of Currumbin's lobbying for and contribution to community beautification, presentation and pride: e.g. landscape plantings in parks, catchment, dune and beach restoration, general maintenance, fencing issues, beach access awareness, community sponsorships;
- Friends of Currumbin – BeachCare partnership: dune restoration and beach maintenance activities, coast care education outreach to other groups, educational institutions and local businesses;
- Griffith Centre for Coastal Management – Coastal Community Engagement Program (CoastEd and BeachCare) – school and community-based education and community-partnership coast care activities;
- National Surfing Reserves dedication – symbolically dedicated Currumbin Rock as part of Gold Coast's Point Breaks National Surfing Reserves;
- Bleach Festival – “Bleach* Surfing The Fringe celebrated all art forms kissed by the ocean, encrusted in salt and bleached by the sun”;
- Currumbin Vikings Surf Life Saving Club community activities;
- Currumbin Vikings SLSC 'green' waste partnership with the Currumbin RSL;
- Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary's partnership support for community programs;
- SWELL Sculpture Festival – “inspires, amuses, uplifts and captures the hearts and minds of all who visit the 10 day outdoor sculpture exhibition”;
- Currumbin Alley Boardriders club activities – e.g. Alley Classic and Fish Fry; and
- Gold Coast Community Catchment Crawl – SEQ Catchment funded NRM networking event to raise awareness of NRM activities on the Gold Coast. The project raised awareness of Currumbin Beach, Friends of Currumbin and BeachCare to local community NRM partners.

Gold Coast City Council plays an important role in supporting the projects listed above. It hosts a coordinated approach through various council departments, such as the local divisional office, engineering, community development, environment and planning, as well as other community engagement focused programs. It also has a Three Point Plan for Coastal Protection, Ocean Beaches Strategy, Nature Conservation Strategy and a Gold Coast Shoreline Management Plan which provide direction for the research on research and

development, policy and strategy, and major capital works. The challenges associated with beach erosion, in particular through storm events, will likely be an ongoing one at Currumbin.

Dame Phyllis Frost Litter Prevention

Gold Coast City Council's daily maintenance of Currumbin Beach includes beach sweepers, park maintenance and dune litter pick-ups. Bins provided along the beach and public areas are general waste and do not include butt out bin facilities. Extra bins are provided during high season and for special events. Council clean-ups along Currumbin's adjacent estuary are assisted by good upstream management that limits the amount of litter entering Currumbin Creek and making its way to the beach. Active litter prevention programs include:

- Friends of Currumbin's successful youth program held over an eight week period in 2011: activities included litter collections and auditing;
- New auditing program with Gold Coast City Council and Tangaroa Blue Foundation through BeachCare;
- Education awareness activities at local schools;
- Additional bins in adjacent parks;
- A beach litter inspired art sculpture to be included in the 2012 SWELL Sculpture festival (beach litter collected by BeachCare volunteers will be involved in the art sculpture);
- Multi-use bins during festivals – e.g. SWELL Sculpture festival; and
- Media coverage to encourage people to join the local BeachCare group to help keep the beach clean.

Resource Recovery & Waste Management

Currumbin Vikings SLSC is a key leader in sustainability initiatives at Currumbin Beach. Griffith Centre for Coastal Management hosted a Griffith University student to investigate, audit and provide recommendations to Currumbin Vikings SLSC on how to improve resource recovery and waste management. From the key findings, the Club was already engaged in effective resource recovery and waste management. Activities included the use of appropriate bins (e.g. glass crusher onsite), donation of all green waste to Currumbin's RSL community vegetable garden, signage of water consumption and appropriate wash down areas, etc. Considering the location of the Club, it was important to highlight this in a constructive way to the Club committee. They have acknowledged key recommendations with future commitment to continue to reduce their urban footprint.

The Gold Coast City Council have reported a continued commitment to the management of the coastal environment and delivery of services that improve resource recovery and waste management. They provide multi-use bins during festivals, although these were not in evidence during the site visit.

Currumbin's RSL is a previous winner of the QLD Premier's Sustainability Award, and the UNAA World Environment Day Award for Best Specific environmental initiative for its Greening Currumbin program. Another important leader in efficient use of resources in the local community is the area's Eco Village. Located in the Currumbin Creek Catchment, the Eco Village demonstrates leading water and energy initiatives, as well as encourages its residents to live a low-waste, low impact lifestyle.

Environmental Protection & Innovation

Friends of Currumbin, supported by the Gold Coast City Council and its Nature Conservation Strategy, undertake significant dune protection and weed control work. They also play a role in Council's programs to control invasive animals such as the Common Mynas, which have the potential to cause significant negative impacts on biodiversity. Other relevant activities in the area include:

- Gecko's Green Week program, which highlighted many environmental innovation and protection strategies to help develop sustainable communities and the protection of native flora and fauna;
- Sustainability initiatives, such as passive cooling, demonstrated at Currumbin's ecovillage;
- Transition Town Currumbin's meet up group has been conducting workshops in Currumbin to develop a collective vision to achieve the status of a Transition Town – 'a sustainable community';
- Industry and community restoration work – from the Upper Creek to the Lower Creek catchment (integrated Catchment and Coastal Management);
- Ongoing monitoring of biodiversity through the Currumbin Creek in-stream flora and fauna assessment;
- A climate change adaptation workshop at Currumbin Vikings SLSC – engaging with the club to highlight coastal management and develop understanding of club and organisational vulnerability and future climate projections (Project: Adapt Between the Flags coordinated Griffith University with funding from NCCARF);
- Seagrass-Watch and Waterwatch activities.

The area is also home to Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary. This provides tourists and locals alike opportunities to better understand Australian wildlife, and also acts as a rescue and rehabilitation centre for injured wildlife from the local area. The Sanctuary works in partnership to with Sea World to rescue marine animals, such as whales, that may be injured in the area, for example animals trapped in the shark net off Currumbin Beach. At the time of the site visit, the Sanctuary was also working in partnership with organisers of the Swell Festival to raise funds by auctioning sculpted animals painted by local school children.

Water Conservation

Gold Coast City Council provides:

- Automatic shut off taps on all public showers and taps;
- drinking water bubbles that reduce needs of bringing bottled water to the beach;
- signage in public areas about water conservation;
- education programs about water conservation - CoastEd, Waterwatch, Watersaver and a close partnership with Healthy Waterways;
- Signage and internal awareness about water conservation at Currumbin Vikings SLSC.

The Gold Coast City Council also uses recycled water (tertiary treated water) for garden and landscaping activities, and supports industry water conservation through the QLD Water Commission (part of the Water Supply Emergency Project Part 8, Water Regulation 2002), e.g. substitute recycled water to industrial customers.

Local businesses, including the Currumbin RSL, the Vikings Surf Life Saving Club, and the Ecovillage all have well-developed water efficiency plans and projects, and play a leadership role in developing a culture of water efficiency in the local community.

Energy Innovation

Gold Coast City Council's continues to roll out its Bold Future's Carbon Neutral 2020 program, which includes, for example, improving energy efficiency of all new street and park lighting.

Other notable energy efficiency measures include:

- Currumbin's solar-powered beach patrol tower; and Currumbin SLSC's Environmental Management Plan
- Currumbin Eco-Village continued awareness education for more energy innovative techniques for the average family home;
- Currumbin RSL's heat exchangers and monitoring system installed to air conditioning unit, as well as its Smart Living Workshops, and efforts to transition all lighting to low-energy alternatives;
- Currumbin's participation in Earth Hour.

Heritage & Culture

There is a strong sense of the beach culture along the ocean foreshore of Currumbin Beach. The weatherboard beach shacks, plinths recognising the area as part of Australia's National Surfing Reserve, The Currumbin Alley Boardriders club house, local cafes, surf shops and the Gold Coast Surf Museum and heritage listed Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary. Meetings with long-term locals during the site visit provided a strong sense of a living culture, with strong intergenerational links between older community members – regarded as carrying knowledge and history valuable to the area – and younger residents, particularly in the surfing community.

Also impressive was the community spirit driving the Swell sculpture festival. Set up by local women wanting to improve accessibility of the arts, and sculpture in particular, in Currumbin, it is now a key program that brings visitors to the area, and enriches the local community in a dynamic and interesting way. Weaving the theme of litter prevention and recycling through the works gives the sculpture festival a key sustainability message as well.

Other major projects in the last year include:

- Dedication of the Currumbin Rock as part of the Gold Coast Point Break's National Surfing Reserve and the production of a community publication about the surf break;
- Celebration of local artist, heritage and culture at the Bleach Festival and SWELL Sculpture Festival;
- Symbolic projective art on Elephant Rock;
- Art coverage over Currumbin Rock;
- Friends of Currumbin information and awareness support in all Currumbin-focused projects; and
- Gold Coast Surf World museum events.

Young Legends

A unique part of Currumbin's youth program is the continued involvement of young people through the Griffith Centre for Coastal Management in active coastal management. As well as involving school-age children in beach activities and management, this provides young adults with an opportunity to understand the dynamic geophysical beach environment and how it relates to the community's activities. The Griffith Centre for Coastal Management, and its engagement with Currumbin, provides an important avenue for young people to translate their love of the beach environment into professional management of coastal areas.

Other activities that engaged young people include:

- Friends of Currumbin hosted a TRADE College over an eight week period that encouraged and promoted coast care activities;
- Local Boardriders Club's involvement in educational awareness about the health of the coastal involvement during club meets;
- GeckoEd involvement with Palm Beach Currumbin High School programs – promotion of environmental awareness;
- Local school children involvement at the SWELL festival – 2011 activity for dune care sculptures;
- Eco-kids programs at Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary – promotion of environmental awareness, protection of native flora and fauna and conservation values.