

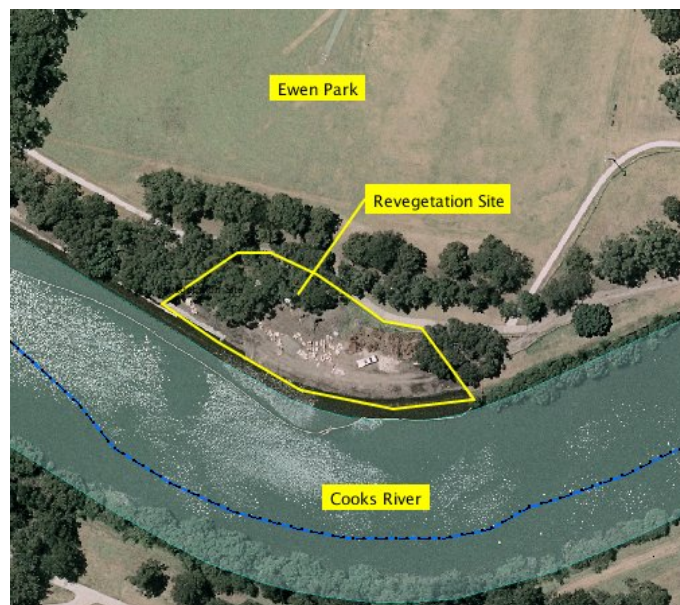
Case study: Creating a green web in a metropolitan environment – Ewen Park, City of Canterbury, Sydney

Project Site

Situated in the City of Canterbury Local Government Area, Ewen Park, which was gazetted in 1921 comprises a landscaped picnic area and play area which is used by the community on a daily basis, and two sportsfields used according to season. Formerly a low-lying floodplain, the park is part of a narrow but continuous open space corridor which runs along the Cooks River from Botany Bay to Strathfield. Although this provides a valuable green buffer zone between the urban environment and the river, the mowed grassland does not provide habitat for birds and insects and the lack of adequate riparian zone does not ensure the river is protected from impacts from the land.

While the environmental values of the river and floodplain have been greatly diminished over the last 200 years, one particular area of concern was the steel sheet piling which was erected in the 1960s along the banks of the Cooks River to reduce inundation of the parkland with sea water.

The Ewen Park Revegetation Site is a fragment of bushland on a bend of the Cooks River adjacent to the steel sheet piling, where the land bulges south from the pedestrian/cycle path. The reach of the river adjacent to the site is tidal, offering potential habitat for mullet, bream, eels and small crabs.



Ewen Park on the banks of the Cooks River. Map © Canterbury City Council.

There are a number of passionate community groups in the Ewen Park area, including: *Cooks River Valley Association* (CRVA) whose objectives are to increase and improve the amenity of open space and community resources, the *Friends of Ewen Park* who have been active since 2000 in protecting the park and foreshore from further development and

ensuring there is a balanced use of the Park's resources and the *Mudcrabs*, a passionate local group who regularly do foreshore clean ups and restore the bush along Cooks River. In 3 years the Mudcrabs, with support from Council in the form of supplying bags, rubbish grabbers, boots and gloves, has removed an estimated 2000 bags of litter from the Cooks River.

The project

Ewen Park is just one, of many, open space parks in Sydney. Over 10 years ago a plan was developed by the combined Sydney Regional Organisations of Councils (ROCs) that attempted to connect these small parks and isolated remnant bushland areas and establish a 'green web' of native vegetation. The objectives were to protect, conserve and enhance remnant bushland in the Sydney region, and in doing so, facilitate the migration of wildlife and the natural dispersal of native plants.

The Green Web Sydney project is currently funded by the Commonwealth Government's Caring for our Country program and facilitated through the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority.

In 2008, after years of campaigning from the local community, the NSW Government removed the highly deteriorated steel sheet piling along the foreshores of Cooks River in Ewen Park and replaced them with safer, more aesthetically pleasing and more natural sandstone blocks. However, the works left the river banks considerably disturbed.



*Sandstone blocks replaced deteriorated steel sheet piling to stabilise the banks of the Cooks River.
Image Canterbury City Council*



*Local community groups collaborated during the project to enhance the foreshore environment.
Image Canterbury City Council*

With assistance, administrative support and project management from City of Canterbury Council the local community groups implemented a project through the larger Green Web Sydney project to enhance the values of the foreshore environment.

Over an eight month period community volunteers, under the direction of a professional Bushcare supervisor, planted over 5000 indigenous trees, bushes and groundcover on the foreshore rehabilitation site. The tubestock were provided by neighbouring Marrickville Council community nursery. In total over 700 m (0.14 hectares) of the Cooks River foreshore has been rehabilitated providing beneficial outcomes for long-term river health and the

users of the park. A number of community events were also held to promote the values of the parks environmental features to the wider community.

Ongoing maintenance at the site which involves community working bees has been undertaken by the volunteer groups. This project value adds to other environmental initiatives in the area including the installation and maintenance of a Gross Pollutant Trap at Ewen Park by Canterbury City Council.



Volunteers from Friends of Ewen Park, Mudcrabs and Cooks River Valley Association planted over 5000 native plants. Image Friends of Ewen Park

The benefits

- Improved native biodiversity along the Cooks River riparian zone, at Ewen Park.
- Increased the extent and connectivity of native vegetation along the Cooks River riparian zone.
- Raised community awareness about the values of biodiversity and vegetation corridors of the Cooks River foreshore.
- Involved the local community in bushcare and biodiversity activities.



Volunteers removing weeds and tending the recent plantings. Image Friends of Ewen Park



Indigenous plants in the riparian zone of Cooks River. Image Friends of Ewen Park

'The Ewen Park Riparian Revegetation Project would not have happened without the strong support it received from the community. 155 volunteers attended the 5 planting days and continue to maintain the site. It is these kinds of community partnership projects that really add value to our local environment.'

Nell Graham, T/L Environmental Issues - Canterbury City Council

'The intensive planting of the Ewen Park Revegetation Site restores some of the ecological balance which has been destroyed along the Cooks River floodplain over the last 200 years. As well as providing habitat for birds, insects and lizards, this tiny pocket of bush is greatly appreciated by members of the local community who regularly walk along this part of the river.'

Nadia Wheatley - Friends of Ewen Park

'The Ewen Park revegetation site is one of four bush reconstruction and revegetation sites in the riparian zones of the Cooks River that the Cooks River Valley Association and the Mudcrabs are working on. Our goal is to increase the "green web" connection and biodiversity along the Cooks River and provide links with the Wolli Creek and GreenWay corridors.'

Peter Munro - Cooks River Valley Association and Mudcrabs