



# Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc

Annual General Meeting 26 March 2015

## President's Annual Report

This is my first and only report as President of the Society. I am truly proud and honoured to have held this position.

### Preface

The Society has had another full year in its continuing quest to preserve the environment of the Greater Blue Mountains and to increase awareness of the natural environment in general.

It is a time to reflect on our efforts and especially the synergy and fundamental belief that unites us.

#### *WE ARE THE BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY*

It was a transition year with new people assuming the roles of President, Nursery Manager, Membership Secretary and more recently, Admin Officer.

However, the year has been tinged by the loss of a past President and a current MC member. Plus the news of the death of a life member – and several other dear members of the Society.

Our membership and those active in the Society, continues, in the main, to be us older folk – and to that end we need to do two things -

1. Ensure a continuity of knowledge and maintain the high standard of those that proceeded us.
2. Engage with and educate younger generations.

### Activities

#### Society Administration

The essential and at times thankless lifeblood of the Society. Distributing the post, emails and filing – all the while trying to grasp protocols and deal our personalities. And at the same time migrate the Society into digital processing. A paperless office – well almost.

There have been two Admin. Officers in the past year - Wes Maley until August; Jeanette Robertson since September. Wes & Anne Maley moved to Hornsby to be closer to their grandchildren. Thanks Wes & Anne for all your work.

Jeanette and I have re-jigged the admin. role to allow her to do much of her work from home – and in fact wherever her laptop is. Plus we are questioning whether we need to file/distribute each item.

Distributing post has been supported when required by Robin & Warwick Mosman.

Heather Hull is our Meetings Secretary – calm and professional

Jeanette, Heather and Christine Davies are in the process of “sorting out” the Hut office.

## **Hut News**

Christine Davies would say it is the contributors that make Hut News so great. And while you certainly need good articles and images – it is the editor that combines all the ingredients (just so) to make the dish superb. 11 editions that more than anything else showcases and documents the Society – its journey, its endeavours.

## **Website**

The Vote for the Environment Campaign crystallised that we need to continually promote our brand. “brand recognition” it’s called. And our brand is our logo and URL – the “chooks” and [bluemountains.org.au](http://bluemountains.org.au). Our website gets 200-250 visitors each day.

This year saw - 60 e-blasts, 40 submissions, several research documents, and of course the Vote for the environment webpages. Plus coming soon, an updated version of Living Near The Bush. I am working with several people including Connie Ellwood to achieve this.

The challenge in the year ahead will be to make the website iPhone friendly.

## **Nursery**

Sue Nicol will be presenting a Nursery Report shortly. As with most of our activities, it is not a single person, but a team. The Nursery continues to provide the funds for the Society to mount its campaigns. It also provides an invaluable service to the community - no not keeping elderly folk off the street, but an inexpensive source of healthy local flora.

Sue will no doubt mention our very successful Monster Garage Sale in May.

## **Finance**

Bart Beech will present the Treasurer’s Report shortly. Bart provides sober and sage advice – especially on governance and finance. We are fortunate to have such a responsive and learned colleague. Yes Bart, you are a comfort.

## **Membership**

Ross Coster resumed Membership Secretary role this year. Memberships are increasing – partially due to Ross’s encouraging reminders and also due to the Vote for the Environment Campaign.

Ross is re-writing our Membership System. With his wife (Heather), Ross also prepares and posts Hut News each month. His is one of the essential and unsung Society jobs. Thanks for the cake Heather.

## **Bushcare**

Paul Vale attends every bushcare day in the Greater Blue Mountains. Well it seems that way. Paul represents the Society at many Bushcare days and meetings.

Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group - the Society on the Ground – has had a constantly good turn-up of volunteers over the past 12 months, averaging around 6 or 7 per month. Weeding and rubbish removal around The Hut, in Armstrong Street and Victoria St. More volunteers always welcome.

A significant statistic from the Blue Mountains Bushcare Network (BMBN) & Blue Mountains City Council:

It is estimated that in a 12month period, 500 volunteers contributed 10,000 hours in the Blue Mountains LGA.

Paul’s also our honorary photographer

## **Environmental Education**

Gary Humble was one of our loses this year – which I will cover shortly.

The Society continued its involvement with BushTrackers with the pending release of the Glenbrook Lagoon BushTrackers Guide. This will be the 13<sup>th</sup> in the series.

Threatened Species Day was held in September and the Great Koala Count in November. Plus, of course Bat Night last Friday night at Blackheath. Marilyn Kraus helped the incredible Marg Turton with its organisation. Over 500 people attended on a misty Blue Mountains evening.

## **Bushwalking**

The Society conducted over 160 bushwalks last year. There wouldn't be too many parts of the Greater Blue Mountains that weren't visited. There's the Saturday Serious Walks, Monday Leisure Walks, Thursday Pleasure Walks and Christine's Interpretive bushwalks.

The Society's Walks Convenor is Maurice Kerkham, and the convenors are Jim Percy, Keith Dorrian and Beverley Thompson. Plus the dozens of walks leaders.

I might add that Beverley has been working actively with the Society for 30 years.

## **Our loses**

Winsome Gregory – life member of the Society. Land Preservation Officer.

Imre Gahl – Society President - 1998-2000 plus nursery volunteer.

Gary Humble – Environmental Education Officer – 2011-2014.

Phil Turnedge – active bushwalker & walk leader.

## **Meetings & Events**

The Society held 8 meetings in the year.

- Our Land, Our Water, Our future – 1st June, 2014
- Blue Mountains Wild River – The Wollangambe – 17th August, 2014
- Threatened Species Day – 7th September, 2014
- State of the State – 15th October, 2014
- "Music of the Mountains" – Jim Smith – 25th October, 2014
- The Great Koala Count – 2nd November, 2014
- Sunset Get Together - 19th February, 2015
- Meet The Candidates - 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2015

Our stall at Winter Magic was magic – again! Thanks Rob Baigent and Peter Green.

We also celebrated Myles Dunphy with the Dunphy's Kowmung Adventure.

We acquired three banners this year – thanks Angela.

## **Campaigns & Our Activist Subcommittees**

Campaigns and our magnificent activist subcommittees! These are not presented in any particular order.

The Society prepared over 40 formal submissions and letters over the last 12 months. Many of these submissions contain enormous detail and reflect concern, knowledge and passion.

## **Vote for the Environment Campaign**

The “proof of this pudding” will be if a pro-environmentalist is elected for the seat of Blue Mountains at the 2015 NSW State Election on Saturday.

Shortly after last year’s AGM, a small team of Tara Cameron, Craig Linn and myself was formed and kicked off the Vote for the Environment Campaign. Strategies, budgets and timetables were prepared.

State and Council Elections are easy in that the date of the election is set. So we could plan a long campaign.

- State of The State Meeting – 15<sup>th</sup> October – Kate Smolski, Alandra Tasire & Trish Doyle.
- Meet The Candidates Meetings – 1<sup>st</sup> March - Alandra Tasire & Trish Doyle.
- Over 70 environment decisions by the NSW Government – rated red, amber or green.
- A 24 question questionnaire – responded to by all candidates – printed and posted.
- 9 Gazette ads, Glenbrook Cinema ad, 8 e-blasts and various Hut News articles.

Both meetings were videoed by the talented Gary Caganoff and placed on our website.

Images for advertising were provide by Ian Brown; Vote for the Environment logo image provide by Maurice Kerkham. Plus suggestions and input from many Society members.

And of course the involvement of the candidates for the seat of Blue Mountains.

## **Land Use Subcommittee**

The **Land Use Subcommittee** is concerned with any property or infrastructure development that may affect the Blue Mountains environment and National Parks. Several letters and submissions to Council, NSW government bodies and National Parks have been prepared and sent. Including:

- Draft Blue Mountains Development Control Plan (which is being discussed at Council Meeting this evening),
- Review of the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice for NSW
- Knapsack Reserve Downhill Bike Track
- Horse-riding facility at the Fairmont resort + Segway riding on Isobel Bowden Ridge
- impact of the highway stormwater retention pond on Bullaburra swamp.

## **Draft Local Environment Plan 2013 – DLEP13**

It has been a while since the Society has been able to work with a tier of government instead of against it. And although the Council and Society didn’t fully agree on everything, the resulting Plan that’s been submitted to the NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure for final approval by the Minister is a very good result for the environment.

Following the Society’s 70 page submission last March, members of the Society were involved in 7 Extraordinary Council Meetings on DLEP 2013 held over 6 months. At its Ordinary Council Meeting on Tuesday 11 November 2014, Council unanimously voted to adopt the DLEP 2013. We now await the Minister’s call.

The Society also undertook an extensive analysis of the nearly 600 submissions to DLEP 2013.

Thanks for the Society’s successful DLEP 2013 campaign must go to the Land Use Subcommittee, led by Angela Langdon, and members Carolyn Williams, Paul Vale, Ann & Bob Cantwell, Heather

Hull, Margaret Baker, Judy Smith and Lachlan Garland. Particular thanks should go to Sue Morrison, the campaign co-ordinator, and several other valuable contributors.

## **The Wollangambe – renewal of Clarence Colliery’s EPL726**

The Wollangambe – Blue Mountains wild river.

The discharge water from the Clarence Colliery is polluting The Wollangambe.

The Society funded the analysis costs of several series of samples from various parts of the river.

The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) is conducting a review of Clarence Colliery's Environment Protection Licence that is focusing on the discharge of pollutants into the Wollangambe River.

The Society held a very well attended Wollangambe Meeting in August, and has written submissions to the EPA. We have subsequently met with the EPA, and took them to the river. We now wait.

### **Obj3.**

Objective 3 (it sounds like some World War II special ops unit) is concerned with the Protection of The Western Blue Mountains Escarpment.

Led by Brian Marshall, its members include Chris Jonkers, Karen McLaughlin, Keith Muir, Madi Maclean, Peter Green, Richard Stiles, Tara Cameron, Yuri Bolotin.

Its submissions and campaigns are legend.

I always feel privileged to add their submissions and letters to our Submissions webpage.

Some of their submissions were -

- Centennial Coal Airly Mine Mod 3
- Centennial Coal - Angus Place Mod 4 Mine Extension
- Centennial Coal - Springvale Mine Extension

Whilst much of their work concerns the collieries of the Western Coalfields, they embrace the protection of other national parks and conservation areas.

Here’s a sampling of this year’s submissions:

- Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area draft Management Plan
- The Thirlmere Lakes Draft Plan of Management
- The Sixth Draft Plan Of Management For Kakadu National Park
- Upper House Inquiry into the NSW Environment Protection Authority
- Opposition to Active and Adaptive Cypress Management in the Brigalow and Nandewar State Conservation Areas
- The Crown Lands Legislation White Paper
- Senate committee environmental offsets
- PELA 158 Petroleum (onshore) Ceemac Pty Ltd

### **Coalpac**

On 17th October, 2014, the NSW Planning Assessment Committee refused Coalpac's proposed expansion of the Invincible Colliery and Cullen Valley Mine.

In its determination, the Commission wrote -

*"The site has significant conservation value and is not suitable for the proposed mining, the highest and best use of the area is for conservation"*

Although in receivership, in December Coalpac lodged an “action” under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* with the Federal Government for the relocation of 171 individual Clandulla Geebung (*Persoonia marginata*) in the Cullen Valley Mine. This species is vulnerable. It is thought that this action is part of cleaning up the coal lease in order to sell it.

For future reference, I believe wooden stakes need to be made out of Ash or Hawthorne.

## **Other Letters and Submissions**

Several letters and submissions were also prepared by Peter Ridgeway, Nakia Belmer, Gary Humble, Don Morison and Alan Page.

## **Western Sydney Airport**

The Society does not oppose a second Sydney airport.

However we are strongly opposed to anything that impacts the environment of the Greater Blue Mountains and its world heritage listing.

The Federal Government have commissioned an Environment Impact Statement. It is expected to be completed in May and then be available for comment for 20 days.

This has the potential of being the Society’s major campaign in 2015.

## **Fellow Travellers**

Finally I wish to acknowledge our fellow travellers that regularly join us on our mission.

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| ♥ STOP CSG Blue Mountains                 | ♥ Environment Defenders Office    |
| ♥ Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute | ♥ Lock The Gate                   |
| ♥ Colong Foundation for Wilderness        | ♥ Our Land, Our Water, Our Future |
| ♥ Lithgow Environment Group               | ♥ National Parks Association      |
| ♥ Nature Conservation Council             | ♥ Better Planning Network.        |

Our challenges ahead are formidable – but so are we.

***WE ARE THE BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY***

Alan Page  
President,  
Blue Mountains Conservation Society

26<sup>th</sup> March 2015