



President's Report to the 2006 Annual General Meeting

11 December 2006

The Year Past

In the twelve months to 30th June, we continued with the implementation of the Molonglo Catchment Strategy. Two main themes were put into practice – NLP funded devolved grants for on-ground projects for riparian rehabilitation, structural erosion control works and perennial pastures and development of a communications strategy followed by awareness-raising through displays, field days, workshops and forums.

The NLP project funded by the Australian Government's National Landcare Program of \$115,000 delivered through Greening Australia, has proved reasonably successful; on paper we have good uptake of the project but the level of on-ground work actually undertaken has slipped behind and the ability to meet the deadlines is proving worrisome. Further NLP funding has been successfully sought to extend this implementation for another two years, with greater emphasis in the ACT.

Publication of the Lake Burley Griffin Willow Management Plan has been delayed and is now due for release early next year. The Communications Strategy has been a long time in gestation, while the Display Trailer is similarly delayed. These delays reflect poorly on the Catchment Group and its ability to deliver. I believe that we have taken action to remedy the underlying problems.

The *Along the Molonglo* Art Exhibitions continued to be successful and aid in raising the general awareness of issues within the community. These have also given opportunities to extend further with initiations for presentations at Canberra Sunrise Rotary in September and a fund-raising function held by GHD

The Molonglo Catchment Health indicators program (M-CHiP) has been implemented but its extent is still wanting. The first report is due shortly.

Group Objectives

The Group formed formally a little over two years ago, with a set of objectives. The Committee is mindful of these objectives and strives to address them.

The basic objects of the group are:

1. Provide an umbrella organisation for existing Landcare and other natural resource management (NRM) organisations in the Molonglo Catchment.

This objective continues to be slow. There is already support for Parkcare groups through ACT Parks and Conservation; in NSW the Upper Murrumbidgee Landcare Committee provides support. The website is frequently mentioned for its usefulness, and the subscription list continues to grow. Finding our niche continues to prove difficult.

2. Facilitate the preparation of a community catchment strategy for the Molonglo Catchment, as an agreed framework between key stakeholders for regional delivery of NRM, consistent with the Murrumbidgee Catchment Blueprint, ACT NRM Plan and total catchment principles.

The Molonglo Catchment Strategy was released in June 2005. The Strategy was awarded the Australian Government Landcare Regional Award for the ACT. I believe that we have done very well in meeting this objective, but we will need to review in the light of what has been achieved and the review of the Murrumbidgee Catchment Action Plan, and the ACT NRM Plan.

3. Promote a strengthened partnership between stakeholders in the Molonglo Catchment, to enhance capacity to address NRM issues in the Molonglo Catchment in a collaborative, coordinated and cost-effective manner.

As the Group continues to establish its relevance, we find that the Group's support is being sought. The group has been represented at a regional level through the Catchment and Landcare Association and the Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment Coordinating Committee. The Group is seen as a credible vehicle for NRM delivery as we further establish our credentials with effectively delivered projects. However this reputation is at risk if we fail to deliver on time.

4. Provide support to member groups with sub-catchment planning, strategic project development, funding bids, managing projects and to develop cross-sectoral partnerships and corporate support for projects.

Due to the delayed Implementation of the Molonglo Catchment Strategy project this objective is only now becoming a reality. The Group supported the Friends of Mount Majura Dams Rehabilitation Project and continues to hold funds for the Banksia Street Wetland Project on behalf of Sullivans Creek Catchment Group. The Group successfully applied for an ACT Environment Grant for Urban Stormwater Education Initiative.

5. Provide a structural link between ACT and NSW groups

The relationship of the Molonglo Catchment Group to the Upper Murrumbidgee Landcare Committee continues to need refinement. The relationship with the Murrumbidgee CMA is similarly becoming clarified, exemplified by MCMA's support for the Group through hosting the Coordinator position in the MCMA Queanbeyan office.

6. Provide a central point of contact for the broad community, including information dissemination.

This continues to function well within the ACT and the duplication of effort across the border is decreasing.

7. Employ and manage a Molonglo Catchment Coordinator to facilitate meeting the above objectives.

The role of Coordinator for a community-based catchment group is a difficult one, with often conflicting demands on time and resources. Heather Colman resigned in September and the position has been re-advertised. It is small comfort that the Molonglo Catchment Group is not the only organisation suffering from high staff turnover.

The Year Ahead

We are becoming increasingly aware that delivering projects on time is proving difficult and the way that we work must be questioned. It is very likely that synergies exist, with the other catchment groups, with other landcare and NRM networks, and with local government and RLPB in order to use our meagre resources more effectively. We are not alone in this.

On the horizon, weeds and pest animals look like becoming major issues and will require a strategy to address them.

Queanbeyan City and Palerang Councils continue to develop their Local Environment Plans guided by the Sydney-Canberra Corridor Strategy and the Group will be engaging the Councils on behalf of local Landcare Groups and other stakeholders in this critical process.

In the ACT, the Group must remain sensitive to the broad community while drawing the various “care” groups together, mindful of the vast contrast in the skills and aims of individual groups. The community in the ACT presents an enormous resource that may be drawn on; formal membership of Landcare or Parkcare Groups is not necessary and support for NRM is not restricted to planting trees. For example, encouraging people to help out with developing and maintaining websites, undertaking water quality measurements, speaking on the radio, or creating short films are all ways that can be used to accomplish our objectives. All of us can speak at the right time to assist here to introduce new people to Landcare.

Thanks

In closing, I would once again like to record my gratitude for the assistance of the committee throughout the year, and in particular the tireless support of our vice president, Tom Baker and to Maryke Booth, whose business has accounting support. We are indebted to the Murrumbidgee CMA for the provision of office services, and HR support for the coordinator position. The Group is grateful to Queanbeyan City Council for their support through the provision of general meeting venues.

Lynton Bond
6 December 2006