



President's Report to the 2008 Annual General Meeting

13 October 2008

The Year Past: July 2007 – June 2008

Several items made the year an outstanding one for MCG:

- The Weed Information Pack was released in February to broad acclaim and is a clear asset for the group and the community. The support from local government has meant we have been able to establish sound relationship base for future projects.
- The Pest Animals Education Initiative is well under way and we can expect similar solid relationships to be developed with NPWS, and the RLPBs and their successor.
- The NLP project funded by the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and delivered through Greening Australia, continued to prove reasonably successful; on paper we continue to have good uptake of the project but the level of on-ground work actually undertaken needed to be driven firmly to meet the deadlines and is proving worrisome. At the end of the year we were approaching commitment of all available funding.
- The *Along the Molonglo* Art Exhibitions continued to be successful and aid in raising the general awareness of issues within the community. The Canvas Project in partnership with the ANU School of Arts took some time to establish but will provide us with the basis to extend the awareness of NRM issues into the arts community. We have been able to build on last year's displays and presentations at Floriade to enable *Along the Molonglo* to become bigger and better.
- The Mapping Lower Molonglo project has gained momentum following publication of the leaflet in February; and is now in its second phase. MCG will host the data from this project on its website. this is an simple example of how projects may need to be developed in the future: partners each seeking different outcomes but with joint objectives – Hawker College sees this project as providing mentoring for students which can help fast-track them on further qualifications; for Stephen Selden from North Belconnen Landcare and a GIS-guru the project helps to establish the ground-rules for new form of data sharing between government and the community; for MCG it helps to develop baseline data for the Landcare and Parkcare groups that will form in the lower Molonglo Valley with the development of the suburbs as well as gaining data that is not available in the catchment; for Keith Joliffe, Chair of the Steering Committee the project helps to raise community awareness of the lower Molonglo Valley
- The Molonglo Catchment Health indicators Program (M-CHiP) is taking clearer shape and with the Waterwatch Coordinator based with Catchment Coordinator in the future we will be able to build on the sound base established by Bayne Geikie.
- The Landcare Display Trailer has been reasonably well used; we believe the demand for it will increase as its presence becomes more visible around the catchment. Cooma-Monaro Council is developing a similar one for weed education in the shire.

However all is not rosy: the new funding arrangements under Caring for our Country are yet to be finalised, but it is clear that the group needs to consider projects that align with CFOC priorities and reflect integration and partnerships. Ultimately we may need to reassess our priorities for the future in case we find ourselves “rationalised”.

Group Objectives

The Group formed formally a little over five years ago, with a set of objectives. The Committee is mindful of these objectives and strives to address them. My comments are largely unchanged from last year.

The basic objects of the group are:

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

Although there is already support for Parkcare groups through ACT Parks and Conservation, our support for NSW groups has grown. The Weed Education Initiative will be one vehicle that can demonstrate the Group’s function in supporting local groups on the ground. The website is frequently mentioned for its usefulness, and the subscription list continues to grow. The long-term sustainability of website maintenance is being addressed.

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 and that year was awarded the Australian Government Landcare Regional Award for the ACT. We will need to maintain its relevance by reviewing the short-term targets and actions as the timeframes expressed in the Strategy are nearing an end. The release of the updated ACT NRM Plan would be a prompt to commence a review of our Strategy shortly after.

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.

The group continues to be represented at a regional level through the Catchment and Landcare Association, the Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment Coordinating Committee and the Kosciuszko to Coast Partnership. The Group is seen as a credible vehicle for NRM delivery as we continue to 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.

We provided support to Friends of Mt Majura for monthly talks, facilitated negotiations for weed control in Illoura Horse paddocks, assisted in enquiries for the development of a “Friends of ...” group near Yarralumla Creek. The weed workshop at Hoskinstown

proved very successful, and Hoskinstown Landcare have asked for another soon. We continue to work with the CLA for the establishment of a shared Landcare Resource Centre,

5. Provide a structural link between ACT and NSW groups

Our representation on the CLA and UMCCC helps this process on a regional scale, but at our catchment scale we need to encourage greater participation in catchment activities.

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. The challenge is to raise the profile of the group and hence the issues of natural resource management.

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. The enthusiasm of our current Catchment Coordinator, Zoe Wood, for her role continued to be very evident and appreciated by all. When Zoe started with us in January last year, it was clear that she was extremely well organised, very professional and a delight to work with. I thought that we would be lucky to be able to keep her as Coordinator for more than twelve months, and we were; she has determined that bigger challenges await her and has accepted a position with the Department of the Environment. Zoe has set the MCG on a firm course for the future, after ensuring that her successor is well equipped to keep us on an even keel.

The Year Ahead

The year ahead promises to be an interesting one: this is the first time that we have a full complement of staff located in the one office with no shared responsibilities. It is also the year which could mark the downsizing of the organisation as we have no guarantee of funding beyond June 2009.

Under the new Caring For Our Country funding arrangements, the 2008-09 year offers an opportunity to put a strategy in place to ensure we are able to remain relevant by providing community-based natural resource management within the Molonglo catchment. It is more than likely that there will be “rationalisation” of support for community NRM within the ACT and we will need to seek support for the work we want to do from a range of sources. To this end we have proposed to become listed as an Environmental Organisation which will enable us to seek and receive tax-deductible donations. But that is just part of the strategy, we need to ensure that what funding we have is spent effectively and we must renew efforts to establish a Shared Landcare Resource centre to achieve some economies of scale and to foster better networking with other groups.

Meanwhile, Queanbeyan City and Palerang Councils continue to develop their Local Environment Plans and the Group will be engaging the Councils on behalf of local Landcare Groups and other stakeholders in this critical process.

At the same time, urban growth within our catchment will become a major issue for the next few years with Molonglo Valley development and East Lake Urban Renewal in the ACT and Googong and Tralee in NSW. The model presented by the Forde development of engaging the community at an early stage is a shining example that we should encourage and be willingly involved in.

The Group continues to suffer because of inadequate community participation in the committee to share the load; I believe that we could be a little more evangelical in attracting increased membership, with an eye on the future.

Thanks

In closing, I would once again like to record my gratitude for the assistance of the committee throughout the year, in preparing, commenting on and refining our submissions, communications, and processes. In particular, I acknowledge: the frank and fearless advice that our Coordinator, Zoe Wood, provided with wisdom beyond her years; Zoe's successor, Andrew Westcott, will find some big boots to fill but already is demonstrating that ability; the enthusiasm with which our Molonglo Waterwatch Coordinator, Bayne Geikie, displayed when working with the community we hope will be by his successor, Stephen Skinner; the tireless support from our Vice President, Tom Baker, whose work with *Along the Molonglo* continues to bear fruit cannot be matched; and the work of our Treasurer, Maryke Booth, whose business has provided 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
13 October 2008