



President's Report to the 2009 Annual General Meeting

9 November 2009

The Year Past: July 2008 – June 2009

Several items made the year an outstanding one for MCG:

- The Molonglo Waterwatch program came under our direct administration, building on the solid base established by Bayne Geikie over many years. We were very fortunate to obtain the services of Stephen Skinner to undertake the role of Waterwatch Coordinator. As one of our committee has stated so eloquently: *The MCHiP Programme in particular has grown and improved so much under his leadership and professional approach. As well as imparting his incredible knowledge so enthusiastically, he has a wonderful, quirky personality that appeals to children and adults alike, and he makes his subjects both interesting and fun.*
- In wrapping up our NHT/NAP funding we took on a part-time project officer to run some extra projects. Doing so also allowed us to accept management of the Molonglo River Rescue project to occupy the remaining work hours for the project officer. Terry Korodaj and Hugo Bowman filled this role exceptionally well and, since the end of the financial year, Vanessa Keyzer is also proving also to be a valuable member of our team. It is most disappointing that the funding situation is such that we find it difficult to establish this Project officer position as a permanent one, because we seem to be able to attract, yet not keep, such skilled and dedicated people.
- The development and production of *Guide to Frogs of the ACT Region* was entirely the work of our staff, Andy Westcott, Stephen Skinner, Terry Korodaj and Hugo Bowman. They identified the need, developed the material and saw it through to completion. The success of that document alone shows how having such skilled and dedicated staff working together as a team pays dividends for the community.
- The additional staff meant that we moved out of the Murrumbidgee CMA office to set up one of our own. Again, we have been lucky to find accommodation in Cassidy Arcade through the good auspices of Queanbeyan City Council. Having a shopfront has brought with it the additional benefits of casual “drop-ins” or “the passing trade”. Having our own payroll however brought with it significantly more work for our book-keeper, Helen Tyssen, and for our Treasurer, Maryke Booth. We are very grateful for their dedication and patience.
- And it is not just our staff who continue to shine: this is the third time that one of our committee members has been received the ACT Individual Landcare Award – we have monopolised the last three awards! We are very fortunate to have such dedicated people on the committee. Congratulations, once again Maryke.
- The MCS Roll-out Incentives project funded by the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and delivered through Greening Australia proved reasonably successful. There continues to be demand for this style of project in the peri-urban area and future projects may need to concentrate on this area.
- Successful participation in the Queanbeyan Regatta in February, the Festival of the Forests at the Canberra International Arboretum Open Day in March and the Queanbeyan Enviro Expo in June all gave opportunity for promotion of the group.

- The *Along the Molonglo* Art Exhibitions continued to be successful and aid in raising the general awareness of issues within the community. Again 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 continues, but at a much reduced pace due to the departure of the project instigator, Keith Joliffe, and, more lately, the illness of the Stephen Selden who was providing much of the GIS support.
- Having established ourselves as a deductible gift recipient the challenge is now for us all to take as much advantage of this as possible. Having a reliable on-going funding source is highly desirable for groups such as MCG.

However all is not rosy: the new funding arrangements under Caring for our Country are very tight, and it is clear that the group needs to consider projects that align with CFOC priorities and reflect integration and partnerships. All project proposals must also include an allowance for project administration and coordination.

Group Objectives

The Group formed formally a little over six 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. I believe we have established credentials for support with field days at several locations through the catchment. Our suggestions for additional support to the ACT NRM Council are usually welcomed and viewed very favourably. 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, regrettably all too slowly.

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 recent release of the updated ACT NRM Plan should be a prompt to commence a review of our Strategy.

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 effectively deliver 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 groups for rabbit mapping, finalised the Friend of Googong reveg project, GPS training, subsidised First Aid and Chemcert training, assisted with funding for weed control at "The Poplars" and established a solid relationship with the National Capital Authority. I believe the extent of support provided to the community to achieve a sustainable outcome for ACTEW Murrumbidgee to Googong proposal was outstanding. We continue to work with the CLA for the establishment of a shared Landcare Resource Centre. I am constantly amazed at our ability to pick up a project at relatively short notice and add value to it. The support for the Booz & Co corporate planting day in conjunction with the Queanbeyan City Council's River Restoration Project is one example. Again, this reflects the enthusiasm and professionalism of our staff.

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 function continues to operate satisfactorily 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. Having a shopfront in Queanbeyan certainly helps.

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 departure of our enthusiastic Catchment Coordinator, Zoe Wood, was highlighted last year, noting that she had set a firm course for the future. Her successor, Andy Westcott has demonstrated that he is well-equipped to continue the very professional approach to catchment coordination as well as managing the office.

The Year Ahead

Once again, the year ahead promises to be an interesting one. The economic situation and the structure of Caring for our country has meant that we are running on a very tight budget for the next two years.

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. These developments and the M2G pipeline are likely to seriously challenge our resources if we do not plan adequately. At the same time they can present an enormous opportunity that could enable us to expand our horizons.

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 wish to record my gratitude for the advice that Claudia Nye provided over the years. In a year of change, I acknowledge: the frank and fearless advice that our Coordinators, Zoe Wood and Andrew Westcott have provided. Bayne Geikie assisted greatly until Stephen Skinner was able to commence with us. The experience and enthusiasm of Project Officers, Terry Korodaj and Hugo Bowman is being matched by Vanessa Keyzer. 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, and current ACT Individual Landcarer, 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 until the end of September, 2008 and to Queanbeyan City Council for the ease with which we have been able to settle in to the new office.

Lynton Bond
9 November 2009