



President's Report to the 2012 Annual General Meeting

10 December 2012

The Year Past: July 2011 – June 2012

The past year has been a year of highs and lows.

- **Andy Westcott**, our Coordinator since 2008 moved on to what we can only describe as a more secure position with the Commonwealth Government. We were fortunate to be able to engage **Anna See** after only a relatively short hiatus to ensure the Group's work continued.
- We continue to suffer the problems of being able to retain Project Officers for a relatively short term. **Debbie Saunders** for 3 months who helped set up the **Biodiversity Monitoring Project**, and guide the commencement of **Sustainable Horse Management on Small Properties**; and **Mary Appleby** for 4 months who helped running the **Rabbit Control Project**. Since the end of August, however, we now seem to be in a more stable situation following the engagement of **Rachel Marks** who has enthusiastically taken over the Biodiversity Monitoring project, naming it **VegWatch**, and undertaking the follow-up for the rabbit project, as well as taking on the **BioBlitz**. And if our application for the **Weed Management project on the Molonglo River** at Captains Flat is successful, Rachel will need to clone herself.
- The **Molonglo Waterwatch** program continues to thrive under the enthusiastic guidance of **Stephen Skinner**. During the year the number of sites sampled decreased from around 60 last year to around 40 at year end and continues to hover around that level. The main reasons for the decline has been the cessation of **Palerang's** sampling of 11 sites in the Upper Yass River and Lake George sub-catchment and the completion of **Cassie Hancock's** project based on 4 sites in Weston-Woden.. We continue to attend the Lake Users meetings and now also attend the Murrumbidgee to Googong Environmental Reference Group meeting and offer advice to the Actions for Clean Water advisory group. While the profile of Waterwatch was encouraged by the community's response to the floods in December 2010, it is likely to be further enhanced when the Lake Burley Griffin Action Plan is implemented.
- The successful **Horse Management on Small Properties** assisted by the NSW Government through its Environmental Trust conducted seven further field days around the ACT Region. The project design enabled outcomes to be reasonably measured, and a poster developed on this basis was displayed at the National Landcare Conference. We have been told that the NSW Environmental Trust is citing the project as a case study for its annual report.
- Continuing involvement with the **Majura Valley Landcare Group** has resulted in extensive consultation with ACT Roads regarding the alignment and construction of the Majura Parkway and monitoring of the realigned Woolshed Creek.
- The **Along the Molonglo** Art Exhibitions continued to be successful and aid in raising the general awareness of issues within the community. With ASOC, the first stand-alone exhibition in April proved successful, and with their enthusiasm, we look forward to a larger and exhibition as part of the Canberra Centenary in 2013.
- Our presence at **Floriade** was reasonably successful, but the hassles with parking and lower level of support from the organisers prompted questions about its value, particularly in the light of a reasonably successful display on World Environment Day at the **Riverside Plaza**.

- The **Molonglo Bush on the Boundary Group** is now well settled, having established a trusted forum for discussions with Government and developers in the Molonglo Valley.
- The **K2C project** was fortunate to find funding for a project to cover the period to the end of 2011. Future funding of the project is more certain with a significant joint project with MCMA and MLI which means a continued profile for the project on the ground and a restructure of its governance has caused more than a few ripples as it re-establishes a brand and takes on projects in its own right.
- The **Oaks Estate** riparian restoration project on the Molonglo and Queanbeyan Rivers, has proved very successful thanks largely to its nurturing by Karen Williams.
- The review of the **Molonglo Catchment Strategy** continues at slow pace, with Anna only recently completing analysis of the online survey.

The coming year is the final year of the current round of Caring for Our Country; the details of the next round are yet to be released, and in the current economic climate we might expect that the level of funding for groups like MCG may be diminished, so it becomes critical to seek other funding if we want to continue with the same level of community involvement beyond June 2013. One such potential source of funding is through the implementation of the Lake Burley Griffin Action Plan, but while our involvement in the implementation seems assured, the level of that involvement may not be known until February 2013.

We need to be aware that we may be called upon to assist the community as several developments progress in the catchment – the Lower Molonglo Valley, East Lake, Eastern Broadacre and Googong.

Group Objectives

The Group formed formally a little over 8 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.

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, but the light is now visible at the end of the tunnel.

Having seen the formation of Friends of Glenburn, and the Majura Valley Landcare Group the previous year, last year we facilitated the formation / reestablishment of a Friends of Jerrabomberra Wetlands and a Friends of Black Mountain.

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 is currently being reviewed, and that review process is perceived as an essential part of the Lake Burley Griffin Action Plan and support for

its completion was taken up in the Parliamentary agreement between the Greens and the ALP.

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 Molonglo BoB Group has served to further enhance capacity and establish collaborative partnerships. We have increased our presence by contributing to the Conservation Council's Biodiversity Working Group, the M2G ERG and ACWA Advisory Group. 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 the Majura Valley Landcare Group, Oaks Estate, Friends of Mt Majura, Burra Landcare, Captains Flat, Royalla Landcare. The small project grants were delayed beyond the end of the 2011-12 financial year, and will be reported next year. Continuing engagement with Queanbeyan City Council and Murrumbidgee CMA continues to bring benefits to each organisation. 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, and at our catchment scale we have been able to encourage greater participation in catchment activities. I doubt we should take any credit for extending the reach of Queanbeyan Landcare into Oaks Estate.
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. However we continue to be stretched for space. The Lake Burley Griffin Action Plan implementation may offer an opportunity for some reinforcement of this objective.
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. Anna See has demonstrated that she 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 a very interesting one. As already indicated, the Lake Burley Griffin Action Plan implementation offers a potential alternative funding stream to the Caring for Our Country through the ACT NRM Council. BioBLitz in March as part of the Canberra Centenary has the potential to be a huge success which means potentially a huge drain on our meagre resources. The Art Exhibition in April will really test our relationship with ASOC, since it too has a huge potential. We have an application for a large weed management project on the Molonglo River at Captains Flat pending.

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 are likely to seriously challenge our resources if we do not plan adequately. At the same time they 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. Karen Williams has offered well reasoned insights; and we gratefully accept Jim Arnold and Don Fraser's suggestions, while Linda Beveridge and Carol Billet from Friends of Black Mountain have helped keep us focussed on the main game.

I again acknowledge the frank and fearless advice that our Coordinators, Anna See and Stephen Skinner have provided. The tireless support from our Vice President, Tom Baker, whose work with *Along the Molonglo* and on the K2C committee cannot be matched; and the work of our Treasurer, Maryke Booth, whose business has provided accounting support. John Bruggeman has continued to experience a difficult year and I am grateful that he has been able to stay with us for as long as he has. We wish him well for the next stage of his life.

Lynton Bond
10 December 2012