

## **CWCN Annual Report.**

In 2017 CWCN has had a busy and successful year, with the marquee event being the Pollinator Festival, very effectively compiled and orchestrated by Jutta Godwin. With some 300 members of the public attending, it was a classic opportunity to deliver against one of our objectives of

- ❖ Promoting the environmental values of the Catchments to the public

Before relating the numerous events, actions and issues I want to acknowledge and offer sincere thanks to all the supporters (especially financial) of CWCN, our sponsors. These are

- Brisbane City Council – the community conservation partnerships (the Creek Officers and Habitat Brisbane).
- The State Government through the Justice and Attorney General's - Gambling Community Benefit fund; and through Department of Environment and Science - Community Sustainability Action Grants.
- Healthy Land and Water through the Whats Your Nature Program using Caring for Country grant funds from the Commonwealth Government.
- Bunnings to provide fund raising events and donating resources
- Coles providing consumables for our fundraisings
- Woolworths providing consumables for our fundraisings
- Brisbane Inner West Lions Club support for events
- The Local Bulletin for publicising events and communicating our messages to our largest audience
- Golder Associates for the most enduring corporate volunteering at Dillingen Street
- Sugar Research Australia for corporate volunteering at St Lucia Golf Course
- SunSuper for corporate volunteering at Clarina Street Park

Without this support and resources we would be much more constrained in what we can achieve.

I then want to look to another of our objectives

- ❖ Linking 23 local bushcare groups and another five sub-groups with an interest in the environmental health of the Catchments and their waterways;

As a Catchment Committee, we get torn between doing our thing (ie on ground works etc) and setting the strategic directions for our Catchment. It has been notable for additional local Bushcare groups (so capably supported and direct by our Habitat Brisbane Officer – West) to have formed where there are now 23 active volunteer bodies. Cubberla Witton acts as the legal entity for each and any of these who seek or can benefit from our support, which occurred again through applications for grants, auspicing their financial dealings and promoting their work. They in turn deliver the majority of on ground works and environmental improvement which help us deliver another of our objectives ie

- ❖ Supporting and facilitating funding for projects to improve the environmental health of the catchments

All of the 23 Bushcare groups deliver against this, as can be seen in the Diary of events on CWCN website, where every week of the year one or more Bushcare groups are doing something big or small.

Where there are no such local level volunteer groups, then CWCN has stepped in to facilitate and perform activities. This year significant projects have been undertaken in Manaton Park, at Handel Street Park. On the latter we were able to harness resources of a Green Army team and get financial support under Whats Your Nature. At this latter event it was significant that all the tree and ground cover planting materials had been secured from our own Seed Propagation team.

As we look at what we CWCN do each year, the one thing I believe we deliver on better and more effectively than any other equivalent or better resourced group is contribute to Citizen Science through our natural resources monitoring. Our stated objective is

- ❖ Facilitating research into the condition and environmental trends of the catchments

We are proud that we have inherited and continued to deliver an impressive temporal longitudinal water quality monitoring data set. The small team of Tony Pressland, Henry Camacho and Don Begbie routinely every month, irrespective of weather etc perform a standardised set of physico chemical monitoring in each of our four creeks, using our newly acquired and updated Horiba probe. This data (Both historical and current) is now being recorded in new database established by Healthy Land and Water. Quality Assurance of all this work is critical to its value and utility, and it's a tribute to the team working with our Catchment Officers and Urban Utilities to have the machine calibrated at all times it is used.

We have set plans in place to add to water quality monitoring by participating in the Waterway Health Assessment Training provided by the Creek Catchment program. This year we will resume in stream macroinvertebrate and fish snapshot sampling (something we haven't done rigorously since 2007) and have this monitoring also recorded in the water quality database. It is only the enthusiasm and support we have from our younger members who attend QUT and UQ which will allow us to take on this quite rigorous and demanding work for volunteers.

This is well supplemented by enthusiastic birding team who also regularly and systematically monitor the local environment as represented by the avian populations. Then we add in the work being done on microbat monitoring at key locations which builds on the strategic study "Microbats of Brisbane's Inner West" commissioned by Cubberla Witton in 2015.

Our education events are conducted to deliver against

- ❖ Promoting the livability of the Catchments for residents of the Western Suburbs

These are conducted at all three levels of the formal education spectrum. Our most extensive work is the environmental education events at the primary school level. These are conducted in each and every school holidays, where sometimes the facilities here at the Centre are packed out learning all sorts of

environment themes and moving to in field outdoor based activities contributing to overcome the nature-based deficit which possibly can result from emphasis on NAPLAN thinking.

We have delivered events in water quality natural resources and environmental education in a number of the schools in our catchment. We note particularly the perseverance of Tony and Jutta to keep these available and in front of those very select and few teachers who see the potential to incorporate such initiatives in an otherwise tightly packed curriculum.

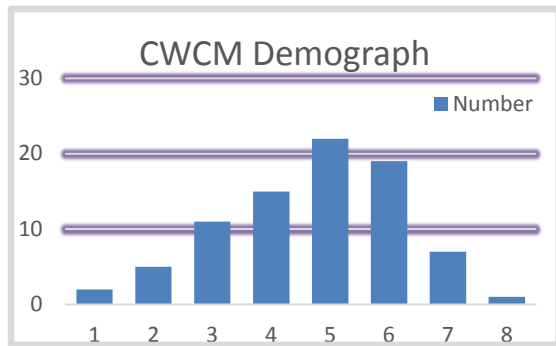
We have initiatives at secondary school, and then mainly we have been working at tertiary level. We have been pleased with joint initiatives from QUT like their 'capstone' project and the recent BCC sponsored Student Catchment Immersion Project (SCIP). CWCB was pleased to conduct the first intervention on behalf of the four Catchments who participated in the SCIP. With UQ this year our success was around some four volunteering activities with GEMS (The Geography and Environmental Management School) students. Allied to this is one of the best examples of social capital building I can report, has been the initiative of Jack Wade to have students who live in Kings College agree to take on the Landcare for Singles site on The Esplanade at St Lucia.

CWCN holds bimonthly "speaker evening" where various scientists and citizen contributors deliver addresses which enlighten and motivate us. Without listing all the events, it is singular to note that we seem to pack out the centres accommodation each and every time, indicating there is support for these and continuing such initiatives.

CWCN held a series of workshops on wildlife, nature journaling, nature writing and even the recent cane toad challenge. These workshops have always been subscribed to capacity indicating that they deliver yet another arm of our objective but now to our members and the wider catchment community. We acknowledge the support we have received from Council and Healthy Land and Water in running these events.

Another aspect on this same theme is the very popular and monthly Book Club events which Robin so capably runs. Robin comes up with very stimulating book topics for each month. Attendances are at the upper limit that the format of the events can accommodate.

Our membership and communicating with members and the wider community have devolved to using emails, the website and social media. These all are posing challenges for us, with our Membership Officer, Maggie striving hard to keep up our membership numbers. An analysis of the age bands of our members shows a graphic something like this



Where the X axis shows the age bracket of our members. For a 100% volunteer organisation which has only limited social enterprises operating, this is probably of similar profile to many other Catchments and similar bodies. This does not conform to the society we physically are located in, where the peak population is 20 to 30 years. And if we look at some of our fellow Catchment Committees in the Brisbane Catchment Network we do not compare real well and have an issue to face in how to retain and build a higher proportion of active members in the busy “working population” of the 20 to 50 year old categories. This is a challenge to pass on to a newer CWCN Committee

Our Finances on the surface look very comforting, as the Treasurer will illustrate, but if we look at a couple issues, one being the routine income we generate from our social enterprises as compared to the resources we are able to obtain from grants, it shows we are possibly too dependent on the latter. And thus are subject to the changes and nature of granting organisations. However this always puts your committee in the position it may need to skew its activities to a grant providers agenda, as against having our agenda and seeking grants to support those. Again this is a challenge to pass on to a newer CWCN Committee.

So summing up I give that CWCN has delivered against a number of its strategic objectives, and the new committee has the challenge to continue possibly with constrained resources.

Brian Venz

President

Cubberla Witton Catchments Network

27 March 2018