

## CWCN President's Report 22 March 2016

Tony Pressland

The Cubberla-Witton Catchments Network has had another very successful and interesting year with the support of our members and organizations including Brisbane City Council, the Lions Club of Brisbane Inner West, and SEQ Catchments. As with previous years, CWCN's work has been aligned with the key themes of CWCN's Strategic Plan - Landcare and Biodiversity, Water Care and Pollution, Community Engagement and Education, and strengthening our own organisation.

Last year in her report, Jutta Godwin referred to our concern "about local biodiversity loss and the effects of the SEQ Regional Plan on our Inner West catchments". These concerns remain, and are not helped by a lack of definition in the Brisbane City Council's City Plan for "areas of high ecological value". We continue to be concerned too on the apparent acceptance by Council that green and open spaces are appropriate areas for infrastructure development – for example bikeways. The new pathway along Akuna Street is an example of where with a little more local discussion and planning, lower impacts on the creeklands and existing vegetation could have occurred. Similarly, it would have been useful if the Council had advised CWCN much earlier of its intention to widen and provide parking space in the roadway off Russell Terrace into Moore Park. After all, the Bush Care groups there have been involved in enhancing the green space in Moore Park for everyone's enjoyment for some years.

The development of new housing areas, and the in-fill of existing larger building blocks in the inner western suburbs also continue to impact on the environmental values of our creeklands. The areas of natural bushland that we have in the inner western suburbs are really important for the maintenance of habitat and biodiversity of native flora and fauna, as well as the health and well being of those who are privileged to live here.

Despite the reservations expressed, we are grateful for the help and support we receive from Brisbane City Council. Council through its Habitat Brisbane arm has supported bushcare groups in our catchments, and has contributed significantly to rehabilitation of significant areas of creeklands. BCC also sponsored CWCN's purchase of a trailer during the past year which has made our work of transporting equipment and plants to various sites in our catchments much easier and less wearing on our private vehicles. It has also offered both ourselves and Council a very visible advertisement for our activities.

The Lions Club of Brisbane Inner West has been a great partner with us, and I want to recognize their support in a number of our activities including the Bat Festival in May last year, and the fund raising sausage sizzle at Bunnings in January this year. We were able to reciprocate a little in their own fund raising at Bunnings.

CWCN has benefited from a range of grants in the last 12 months. Thanks to Energex, we have been able to proceed with a seed propagation facility. Their grant has paid for the site development and will allow the provision of benches and the installation of other equipment required for growing out seeds to be used in our catchments. While this has taken longer than I had foreseen, we will be calling a meeting of members who have expressed their interest to get the process finalised soon. Brian Venz, our Vice President, was instrumental in obtaining the support of the Green Army – a Federal Government initiative – to do some of the work associated with site development.

A grant from the Brisbane Airport Corporation has allowed the further development of the children's education packages which are so important for developing a love of the natural environment. Jutta Godwin has taken charge of this, and together with her helpers, she has been able to run a range of craft and educational days for our young folk. Activities including story-telling, a focus on butterflies, constructing scarecrows (now located in the back garden on the CWCN Center), use of recycled materials for ornaments, egg painting, noise and physical pollution ... the list goes on and on. Jutta's creativity is wonderful!

As already noted, the Brisbane City Council continues to provide funds for activities which enhance our waterways and catchments. Weeding and replanting work continues along Cubberla Creek between Greenford Street and Dilligen Street using funds from the Lord Mayor's Environment Grant. There is also work there and elsewhere along Cubberla Creek (Cubberla Creek Climber Clawback), at Greenhill Reservoir, Kimba Street, and St Lucia Golf Club funded from Council's Community Conservation Assistance Grants. These works include removal of weeds, and replanting and are new grants either applied for through CWCN or supported by CWCN.

CWCN has also benefited from a Federal Government funded project led by SEQ Catchments – "What's your Nature?". This project has allowed major creek bank erosion to be addressed along Cubberla Creek near Burns Parade, and for planting of the area subsequently. Another along Little Gubberley Creek in the vicinity of Kenmore South State School has also benefited from this grant.

All these projects fit in beautifully with our major initiatives which we have had now for three years - Cubberla Creek Connect, Witton for Wildlife, and Toowong Creek Turnaround, as well as areas along the Brisbane River catchment.

We have been fortunate to have the involvement of corporates in our activities. For example, management and staff of Golder and Associates have worked with us and Bushcare groups in both Merri Merri Park and the replanting of the area between Dilligen Street and Greenford Street Chapel Hill. They will continue this association this year. Staff of Coles Indooroopilly have also been involved in the bushcare group's work in Moore Park. Titleys Scientific provided much support for the Bat Festival which I will talk about later.

Brisbane Girls Grammar School, which now owns playing fields along Cubberla Creek in Fig Tree Pocket have been working closely with CWCN in rehabilitating and replanting the areas adjacent to the creek. They hold regular Grammar Goes Green days when students and staff undertake the preparation and planting. BGGGS nominated CWCN as their environmental institution for 2015 and generously donated \$500 to CWCN. Thank you BGGGS!

National Tree Day in July last year was a resounding success. There was a good roll up of volunteers led by the indefatigable Jutta, and again, Brisbane City Council Officers provided invaluable assistance with the provision of water and digging the holes for plants. Thanks Ian for your efforts there. We took the opportunity of asking Cr Peter Matic to officially launch the Council sponsored trailer, which was put to good use on the day. Thanks Peter.

CWCN continues to monitor the water quality in Cubberla, Witton and Toowong creeks as well as Biambi Yumba Park at Fig Tree Pocket. Ray Kelly continues to be involved with this activity together with Henry Comacho and myself. Thank you to both these members. Other CWCN members including Brian Venz have attended various workshops on water quality too. We nominated Ray for the Waterways Champion Award through Healthy Waterways last year for his >25 years involvement in water quality work in the western suburbs. He was pipped at the post by another deserving volunteer, Robert Hampson, of West Moreton Land Care.

Another activity which has been associated with CWCN for many years has been the regular bird walks led by Lyn Cole. Lyn's love of birds - and all things natural- is obvious to those many people who have been privileged to attend the walks guided by her. Thanks Lyn!

The CWCN Book Club has continued to be a well attended monthly activity under the guidance of Robin Trotter. Books discussed have included *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Society* (1997) By Jared Diamond and *Every Hill Got a Story* (2015) compiled and edited by Marg Bowman. There was also an interesting discussion in late 2015 on Australian poets and poems. I am humbled by the knowledge and level of critique that the members of the Book Club bring to these meetings.

CWCN has been active in the research area recently. I have mentioned the water quality studies, and I will talk of the micro-bat study later, but additionally, last year CWCN signed an agreement with QUT and the Department of Science, Information Technology and Innovation so a tertiary student project - Using LiDAR (air borne radar scanning) to monitor catchment condition in western Brisbane – could be undertaken. Four QUT students from the School of Earth, Environmental and Biological Sciences undertook this project in Cubberla Creek. The students attempted to use LiDAR to interpret vegetation changes at three sites. Whilst their study did not result in definitive information, they were able to show that LiDAR could be used for tracking vegetation changes over time. The students presented their findings to us at our November 2015 meeting.

This coming year, we hope to have at least one, if not more, student projects looking at issues relating to one of our key drivers: maintaining and improving connectivity along creek lines; and to develop an on-line database for CWCN data; as well as developing a crowd sourcing system, for example, for frog calls with on-line classification or weed spotting. There are some exciting possibilities in developing this relationship between the State Government and QUT.

CWCN has also coordinated Clean Up Australia Day for a number of years now in March each year. This year we had a well attended event with over 72 volunteers. Less rubbish than last year was collected – a very good sign!! Thanks to Brian Venz for organisation of this.

In undertaking all the things we do, we must also understand that this facility -this Center - requires funding; it does not run itself. Amongst other things, CWCN has run two sausage sizzles at Bunnings, Oxley which have been very rewarding financially. They do involve a lot of work but we have been fortunate in that you, our members, have given lots of support for these activities. Thank you to everyone who has offered their time for these fund raising activities.

I have kept one of our most successful and fun events ever till near the end of this report. The Bat Festival, held in May, was a resounding success with about 200 people coming to hear, learn and enjoy micro-bats. We have to thank many individuals and organisations for this success, particularly: Jutta, for her organizing skills – this was her baby! the Australian Bat Society; Titley Scientific – who provided amongst other things prizes for the best dressed “bats” as well as one of their scientists, Julie Broken-Bow; SEQ Catchments and the Australian Government with their support through the “What’s your nature?” program; QWaLC for insurance; Lions Club (again!); Bat Conservation and Rescue; Queensland Herbarium; Brisbane City Council which funded the study undertaken by Monika and Martin Rhodes; and Fauna on the Wing (Monika and Martin Rhodes, who not only did the research into the micro-bat populations along Cubberla, Witton, Toowong and Sandy Creeks and the adjacent Brisbane River, but also led the attendees in night time excursions to listen for and identify micro-bats. Monika and Martin found 15 species of micro bats! Their report is available on CWCN’s web site.

CWCN continues to be involved in the Brisbane Catchments Network (BCN) - the umbrella organization for catchment groups within the Brisbane region. Brian Venz, our Vice President, is Treasurer of BCN. BCN offers groups such as ours the opportunity to be involved in Brisbane – wide events, but very importantly, also offers the opportunity for issues which are common across a number of catchments to be raised to a higher political level than we can normally expect for a small, community based organization. For example, we attended an event in Newfarm Park last year

organized by Brisbane City Council where members of BCN were able to participate and advertise their activities and functions. We also participated in the workshop organized by BCN on reducing urban nutrient pollution into Moreton Bay in February 2016.

We also have close links to SEQ Catchments – indeed, as already mentioned, our catchments have benefited from projects led by that organisation. It is important for catchment groups such as CWCN to involve themselves in the broader issues afforded by large, umbrella organisations, and SEQ Catchments is presently the body responsible for developing and maintaining the natural resource plan for this area of state – a plan into which our strategic planning fits well.

Members of CWCN have also spoken to a number of groups and organisations over the past year and we have been involved in activities organised by others. These included the Corporate Sponsorship and Partnering workshop organised by the Brisbane City Council in April 2015, and a celebration of 50 years of the Chapel Hill Kindergarten along Sutling Street. It was good to be able to work with this latter group which also involved the unveiling of a sculpture of a water dragon by Cr Julian Simmonds.

CWCN, only 10 days ago, organized a fish survey workshop for members of BCN. We were fortunate to have Leo Lee from SOWN guide us through the requirements and methodology of undertaking fish surveys. This is an activity that CWCN has been involved with previously, and we should continue to maintain this interest over the next few years.

As you know, CWCN has bi-monthly general meetings here at the Center. Over the past year we have had a series of really interesting speakers including: Janet Spillman talking on “Brisbane’s breathing space – Mt Coot-tha”; Ross Hynes – insights from revegetation projects in degraded catchments; Malcolm Frost talking about his position as our delegate on the SEQ Catchments Members Association; and John Stanisic, the snail whisperer. These meetings are an enjoyable social time as well as providing opportunities to cement interpersonal relationships and to learn about our natural environment in all its forms.

I want to recognise and pay tribute to your Management Committee – Jutta Godwin, Lois Eden, Robin Trotter, Maggie Deeth, Mick Capelin and Brian Venz. They have all worked tirelessly to ensure the success of our projects and activities this year. I particularly want to thank Lois for her contribution and guiding hand as Treasurer over some years now. And a big thank you to Jutta for her continuing involvement in bush care activities at Taringa Parade, Moore Park and Toowong and Cubberla Creeks, and for her hugely popular children projects in virtually all the school holiday periods over the last 12 + months.

And thank you, the members of CWCN, for allowing me the privilege of leading this group over the last year. I am indeed humbled by the work which so many of our members do – and indeed non- members too –to enhance the environmental and lifestyle values of the catchments of the inner western suburbs of Brisbane.

Finally, I wish the incoming committee an interesting and productive 12 months. CWCN’s finances are in a sound position and we can focus on some interesting and important issues. These include the seed propagation project, the work with QUT and the State Government, future planning for our catchments, and, later this year, a day focused on celebrating the role of fungi. Watch this space. I wish you well for 2016-17.