

Cubberla-Witton Catchments Network Inc
Annual General Meeting
27th March 2012

President's Report

Throughout the last year the Cubberla-Witton Catchments Network (CWCN) has continued to implement its second **Strategic Plan** developed in 2010/2011 with the focus areas of *Landcare and Biodiversity, Waterways and Pollution, Community Engagement and Education*, as well as *Corporate Development*.

The **Landcare and Biodiversity** part of the plan now has as clearly defined core aims the protection and enhancement of our still rich Inner West biodiversity and the repair and development of corridors which will allow for wildlife movement between the Brisbane River, Mt Coot-tha and the D'Aguilar Range. For years to come, special attention will be given to the building and improvement of corridors along three of our four creeks and their catchments. Our **Cubberla Creek Connect** and **Witton for Wildlife** projects are reflecting their recognition by Brisbane City Council (albeit still unofficially) as being core corridors, the **Toowong Creek Turnaround** one as being a stepping stone corridor. All three corridors require this special attention, as the SEQ Regional Plan forecasts population growth and developmental changes to our Inner West catchments. As these changes pose potential threats to our still rich local biodiversity, CWCN is committed to protecting it through on-ground rehabilitation, community education and lobbying for a renewal of Brisbane City Council's Biodiversity Strategy.

All Inner West bush care groups and sub-groups have to be commended for their ongoing dedication to rehabilitating bushland and waterways. CWCN has continued to support those local groups where required and as much as our volunteer run organisation is capable of doing.

It has taken us three years, but we have finally achieved successful Habitat Brisbane registration of the **Toowong Creek Roving Rehabilitators** group, now an active group with already substantial achievements and growing membership from the local community, with successful participation in 2011's **National Tree Day**, and a recent hosting of members of the Kokoda Track Youth Program, brought to the site by Conservation Volunteers Australia.

Unfortunately, we have not been able to ensure continuation of the **Gubberley Creek Bushcare Group**, to help increase numbers and transform it to a sustainable group. This group ceased to exist when their convenor Annette Hall retired after 18 years and substantial achievements. As there is still work left to be done, we will try to organise with local primary school, Brownies, Angligrreen and hopefully our friends from Men of the Trees to complete the task.

We are lending support to an initiative of St Lucia residents who have submitted an application to have an **Ironside Park Bushcare Group** registered after having already done several working bees supported with Taringa Parade and CWCN tools.

CWCN has begun working with **private landholders**, especially those living on properties which abut riparian areas. A start has been made cooperating with three private properties along Toowong Ck and two on Cubberla Creek where owners are receiving advice and some limited material help. As private properties form important wildlife corridor links in some reaches of our creeks, CWCN planning is under way to expand on this engagement of owners more strategically.

At present, the CWCN committee works on a more coordinated approach to rehabilitation work in each of our catchments. A **Cubberla Creek Connect Workshop** for the creek catchment and its wildlife corridor will be held mid 2012, and a **Witton for Wildlife Walk** will be conducted around May, both aimed at informing about links and potential for improvement.

CWCN is grateful to Brisbane City Council's **Habitat Brisbane Program** for the immense support our and all local bushcare groups' rehabilitation efforts receive. The engagement of **Conservation Volunteers Australia** thanks to Council funding has provided welcome help for many rehabilitation sites. We are also grateful for the work **Men of the Trees** have continued to provide at Gubberley Creek and Toowong Creek.

Additional on-ground support for has come through **corporate volunteering**. Members of **SAP** have worked at Rainbow Forest in a one-off working bee and donated tables and tools for CWCN's use to the value of \$500.

Golder Associates volunteers have extensively provided their time and enthusiasm at Greenford Street in the upper reaches of **Cubberla Creek** and have already scheduled their first of three to four working bees for 2012. – Golder Associates generously gave funding for a Family Fun Day at Merri Merri Park which was intended to engage the local neighbourhood and showcase the work done. Unfortunately, the event rained out, yet Golder staff made sure all plants allocated to the day were put into the ground despite the heavy rain. The event was rescheduled, only to take place on one of the hottest days of the year, again with very little neighbourhood participation. Golder deserve better, and we know from a previous event that the area can attract more locals. We will have a special day with a program still to be designed to publicly acknowledge the companies contribution.

The lower reaches of Cubberla Creek at **Cliveden Park/Rainbow Forest** saw two rather successful events following extensive sewer pipe upgrades along Cubberla Creek. Queensland Urban Utilities (QUU) provided funding for offset plantings and engaged the contract arm of Bulimba Creek Catchment Group (B4C) to prepare and provide for on-ground preparation and plantings sites. QUU also invited the neighbourhood to a community planting in August to thank the locals for their inconvenience. 100 came on the day, planted their tree, and enjoyed free coffee and sauges.

In October a second highly successful community event, the **Forest Festival** with around 150 participants took place honouring the International Year of the Forests. It was jointly organised by **Men of the Trees** who provided the funding for all community engagement activities and free plants to take away, thanks to a Queensland Government Grant. Involved were also QUU who again provided funding for site preparation and planting, contracted out to B4C who brought their own volunteers along to the actual planting. CWCN's role lay mostly in offering ideas, experience and advice to Men of the Trees (MoTT) in the planning of the event and in carrying it through the day. We were honoured that MoTT decided to choose our catchment for the event. It included children's theatre, bugs education, and a

wildlife presentation. This event was highly successful thanks to the input of all participating organisations. We are also grateful for Brisbane City Council providing additional marquees, a water tank trailer, and for Creek Ranger Michael Thorley's help with the set up and conducting the much loved story telling. The event gave CWCN a chance to engage with the local community and to inform about our *Cubberla Creek Connect* project.

Our **Witton for Wildlife** project received a boost with a successful Federal Government **Caring for Our Country** grant of almost \$20,000 which will be used to rehabilitate a riparian section of Moore Park. Planning is advanced and includes the engagement of contractors for weed removal, the neighbouring local school for a larger school planting and general community engagement including a larger event. The Moore Park Bushcare Group is the key to this grant's success.

Thanks to **SEQ Catchments** we have received the first part of a \$15000 grant from **Illum-A-Lite** for the protection of biodiversity, specifically targeting vulnerable and endangered species. Multiple projects across our catchments involving schools, Scouts and Brownies, public land and Land for Wildlife properties, and general community engagement and education aim at conserving the Glossy black-cockatoo and the Richmond Birdwing butterfly. Again, planning is advanced and contractors will start work in April and first plantings are intended for May.

Offset funding from the Legacy Way project to the sum of \$10,000 has been allocated to the rehabilitation of **Toowong Creek**. The money is being administered Council internally, but has been used according to the Toowong Ck bush care groups advice. Four large trees have been felled, and the lower weed growth in the area underneath them is being cleared by the rehabilitation group so that planting can occur. Our understanding is that there is a remaining sum of \$1,000. We are a little critical to the administration of funding through Council, because Council preferred suppliers tend to be substantially more expensive than contractors.

Seed Propagation, although considered an essential part of our rehabilitation efforts, is being carried out by only few of our members. A more coordinated and more strategic approach has again been put on hold because we are awaiting progress with our Catchment Centre.

Since receiving the letter in 2009 from the then Lord Mayor and now Premier of Queensland informing us that we will have a **CWCN Catchment Centre**, and since receiving a letter in 2010 from the then Deputy Lord Mayor and now Lord Mayor of Brisbane inviting us to contact his office if any further delays occur, a lot has happened. A house at the Gap remains allocated to CWCN and land is waiting in Chapel Hill for the house to be moved to and set up. When the planning was advanced and the development application was about to be approved by Brisbane City Council our Network applied for three grants. We were successful with two and have since received money from the Queensland Government's Gambling Community Benefits and Solar Sports and Community Funds for fit outs, furniture, and equipment. We are thrilled. However, we have since learned that a second development application with substantial changes was put through the system. These changes, communicated to us after the second DA was approved, alter the way the house and land can be used, potentially put some of the funding received in jeopardy, require changes to aspects of CWCN's planning for the centre and for our work. They have also stopped our own sourcing for alternative funds as the materials sought are apparently no more required. We know a second tender process has been completed and Council is willing to cover a certain shortfall in funding. At this point in time we are waiting for information.

CWCN cannot be strengthened and capacity be built without a catchment centre. We are grateful for Brisbane City Council's ongoing commitment to the house. We understand that the costs involved according to the first tender exceeded all expectations. Yet, we are well into the fourth year of waiting and still have little idea what will await us or when.

On a much happier note, funding not mentioned previously includes around \$500 received from **SEQ Catchments** for **childrens' gloves, small mattocks and a First Aid Kit**. Especially the gloves and mattocks have already been used on multiple occasions.

A donation for \$1400 from **Hydrobiology** will allow for the establishment of **two interpretive signs** in the Cubberla Creek Reserve depicting dragonfly life cycle and native fish species.

An older grant from the **Lord Mayor's Suburban Initiative Fund** for the production of **interpretive signage** was delayed by last year's flood. The chosen site at the Tarcoola Track was heavily inundated and we had to see which plants survived. We also had to renegotiate some aspects with the local rehabilitation group. Finally, we ready to go into the actual production phase and will present the signs to the public in around two months time.

Environmental work with our many **local schools** has continued. Most of this work is done outside of CWCN activities by BCC Creek Ranger Michael Thorley who has engaged several of them in limited rehabilitation efforts and water quality monitoring activities. The Creek Ranger Program also engages individual schools in the Goa Billboard Competition and the Catchment Kids Program which was launched this year in Moore Park, Indooropilly. We know that many of our local schools also use the services of i.e. the Pullenvale Environmental Education Centre.

Among the **schools** with which CWCN itself has longstanding relationships are **The Glenleighden Special School** which incorporated Cubberla Creek and the Richmond Birdwing Butterfly into their annual school concert with a touching performing of their Senior students, and **Indooroopilly State School** which has continued their many years of cooperation with CWCN and the Moore Park bush care groups through another big planting day of around 125 students at the Taringa Parade reach, combined with talks on birds, feral animals, and the River Catchment Game. This year we unexpectedly had four creek rangers to support the event. Also contributing to the environmental activities were Birds Queensland and an Environmental Education Officer. Praise has to go the bush carers who, always reliable, were there to help students plant their native tube stock. We thank all of them for their contribution to the day's success.

Our **Community Education** continues to play a part in our bi-monthly general meetings with guest speakers informing on the Legacy Way project, on native stingless bees, on the D'Agular Range Management Review, on Echidnas, Koalas, and spiders as well as on the trapping of animals of various sizes. Artist Sophie Munn gave a particularly inspiring presentation on her project "Homage to the Seed". We are grateful to all our speakers for sharing their expertise and time with us.

Thanks go to especially Ray Kelly for **monitoring the water quality** of our local creeks, which remains an ongoing CWCN effort. Multiple locations are visited on a monthly basis, and data are fed into the database of the Bureau of Meteorology by Ray. We are grateful to SEQ Catchments for calibrating our Horiba device free of charge and supporting the process with advice.

A **fish survey** is scheduled for April which will allow us to evaluate the effects of a second wet summer on our fish populations.

Our **Waterwatch Group** is needs to build capacity and work more strategically in support of rehabilitation and aquatic corridor building efforts. It also needs to build its knowledge base in order to develop better reasoning to influence Council policies when it comes to development applications hurting waterway corridors as is currently the case with the Kenmore Plaza upgrade.

A **workshop “Creating Habitat for Small Birds”** is under development and will be held in a few months time. We will be working closely with Birds Queensland and consider this workshop to be of particular importance to bush rehabilitators who need to replace weed infestations with native plants as effective and suitable for the purpose.

CWCN is firmly involved with the re-formed **Brisbane Catchments Network (BCN)**, a forum in which city wide issues are being discussed and evaluated, and submissions are jointly prepared to aspects of government policies, for instance in recent months Brisbane City Council Mangrove Management and Weed Management Policies. BCN also jointly works on projects of citywide significance.

Volunteers working in our catchments and giving their time, enthusiasm, knowledge and dedication are an invaluable asset to our goals. At our End of Year celebration we honoured achievements and commitments of Brushbox Court, Merri Merri and Wandering Weeders Bushcare Groups, of Men of the Trees and Vera Street Community Gardens as well as of Transitions Towns with awards. We singled out Ray Kelly for his water quality monitoring work and Indooroopilly State School for their ongoing involvement with Moore Park.

Our newsletter **Catchments Cooe** has recently been revived with an issue published in December, and a second issue about to come out. We urgently need an editor to ensure future editions, as the current one has too many other obligations.

Volunteering requires that work is shared among our members. To enable that, we need a base to work from. Let’s hope that at the next AGM we can finally say we have a home.

27th March 2012

Jutta Godwin
President