

GLOUCESTER ENVIRONMENT GROUP-PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR 2023 AGM

I would like to begin my report by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and pay my respects to their elders, past, present, and emerging.

Before writing this report, I re-read last year's President's report, and the year before that, and saw that they both said following:

"I have been involved with many organisations over the years and sat on a few boards and committees, but I have never had the pleasure of being involved with a group as harmonious and as effective as the GEG committee. Each member of the committee had the same motivation and shared the same vision, which was to work hard for a better environment for the Gloucester area. So, my sincere thanks to all members of the committee for their great work. Being president is a very easy task when there is such a great and supportive committee who do all the hard work."

I am delighted to report that nothing has changed in that regard, and I repeat my thanks for the great efforts of every member of the committee, but also all other Environment Group members who have been involved in some way in our various activities.

2021/2022 was a year of consolidation after the hiatus caused by covid, but this past year has been a year of significant growth, both in numbers of members and activities. This time last year we had 81 members, and as at today we have 127 members.

We recently had a stall at the recent Gloucester Farmers' Market and I was amazed at the high level of interest in our activities, with lots of membership applications being taken. Thanks to Di Montague for organising the stall.

You will be receiving reports from various committee members who have taken, on and run with various tasks, and they will fill you in about all the good things that has been happening with our financial management, bushwalks, Rivercare, Koalaways, Feasts and Media. My thanks to all those who will be giving their reports.

I want to make particular mention of Penny's amazing work in relation to Rivercare. She has achieved so much by organising regular weeding and planting activities, but she is also often spied working hard by herself at various spots around town. No weed can remain safe when Penny is around. She is such an inspiration to us all, but she has indicated that at some stage she will be looking for someone to take over her work as Rivercare co-ordinator. They will certainly be big shoes to fill but if any member would like to take on this role, then please chat to Penny or me.

My thanks also to both Janine and Terry for their great work as Secretary and Treasurer. Secretary is such an important role to keep the wheels turning and to keep all members informed about what is happening, and Terry was able to keep us on the financial straight and narrow.

Koalaways has really continued to expand during this past year as Di will report. It is proving to be such a worthwhile and much needed local activity. There is quite a waiting list of local landowners wanting to have us plant on their properties which is a great sign.

I would also like to thank MidCoast Council for their support of Koalaways, especially the help and support we have received from Mat Bell, Council's head ecologist.

Thanks to Tibor for looking after the walks and to Sue for her great efforts to promote us on social media and organising the very popular feasts.

We have made a number of submissions to government and the Council in relation to such things as proposed subdivisions, and gravel quarries etc where we have perceived some adverse environmental consequences. Megan and Tibor have been particularly helpful in this regard. As we continue to witness tardiness from many of our public authorities in relation to the environment, I anticipate that the need for local groups such as ours to keep at them will only increase.

We have been trying to encourage the Midcoast Council to expand its street tree planting in the urban areas of Gloucester. In that regard we have been working with the Chamber of Commerce, Gloucester Rotary and the Garden Club. This has been frustrating so far with a poor response from the Council. We will keep plugging on and are not going to go away.

Finally, thanks to those who have agreed to be part of the committee for the year ahead. I look forward to the year as we continue to grow and to further develop our activities and professionalism in a number of areas.

Thanks,

John Watts

19 September 2023