

GLOUCESTER ENVIRONMENT GROUP

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 21 July 2021 at 6pm at Gloucester Uniting Church hall, 5 Cowper Street Gloucester

Present: as per Attendance book

Acknowledgement of traditional owners : John Watts

Apologies: as per Attendance book

Minutes of previous AGM:

Minutes of the previous AGM held on 14 May 2019 have been circulated and read and unanimously accepted.

(proposed Dianne Montague; seconded Sue Watts

Matters Arising not on Agenda:

No matters arising from previous minutes.

President's welcome and Report: John Watts

It is 26 months since our last AGM. Because of the annoying Covid virus the Environment Group (GEG) did not hold an AGM in 2020, and so my report is for the period since our last AGM instead of the usual one year. So, your committee was able to cling to power for longer than usual without the need for any messy democratic vote in 2020-which I know sounds like the kind of excuse used by some third world dictator for not going to the polls. But thanks to all the members for not rioting in the streets in protest.

Before writing this report, I re-read Jeff Kite's 2019 President's report and I would like to start by saying that the good things that GEG achieved during the last 2 years was only possible because of the solid foundations laid by Jeff during his six years at the helm. So, thanks again to Jeff for all he achieved as President.

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.

You will see from the agenda that we 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 have been happening with our financial management, bushwalks, Rivercare, Koalaways, Feasts, Media, and plastic free Gloucester. My thanks to all those who will be giving their reports, but my particular thanks 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 make sure that we did not spend more than we had.

I would like to say something about two matters which are not specifically on the agenda.

Firstly, I would like to mention Minimbah Gardens.

Minimbah Gardens was established some years ago by a few people of vision as a place to acknowledge and celebrate the Aboriginal community of this region.

Last year we were approached by Anna Burley from Bucketts Way Neighbourhood Centre who told us that they had received a Government Grant to carry out some rejuvenation work at Minimbah Gardens. She asked whether GEG would like to be involved in organising and carrying out the work and we jumped at the opportunity, although we were very conscious of the need for extensive consultation with the local Aboriginal community so that we were not seen to be butting in and taking over where we were not wanted. There has been far too much of that over many years. We did consult extensively and made it clear that we were there to listen to any concerns and that what we intended to do was to simply undertake some rejuvenation work with no intention of changing the character of that beautiful place. All throughout we had a good relationship with our local First Nations peoples.

One problem we had was trying to make the conditions of the Government grant fit with the actual work that was needed. We had many enthusiastic volunteers attend the many working bees which were held, and lots was achieved with fences, paths, gardens, and steps being fixed. Many trees and shrubs were planted, and many weeds were removed.

In the end we were not able to spend all the grant money and it was diverted into a tree and shrub planting of a nearby area.

The second issue that I would like to mention relates to our relationship with the Midcoast Council and its several environmental plans. The Council has produced a Biodiversity Strategy; a Greening Strategy; a Manning River Estuary Management Plan and a Vegetation Management Plan. The committee decided that we should make our views known and we held meetings with the Council officers responsible for the reports. It was great to meet with people with such expertise and enthusiasm for improving the environment of the Midcoast area.

We have been lobbying for a long time for the introduction of some kind of Tree Preservation Order to stop the wilful destruction of native trees. The Vegetation Management Plan does introduce some limited protection for parts of Barrington and Gloucester. It does not go nearly far enough but we decided to strongly support it in the hope that it will be strengthened in the future. The Council people explained that politically it might be difficult for more to be achieved with the present Council makeup.

My thanks to Tibor for preparing all the very professionally written submissions that were sent to Council.

The Council has no power to control vegetation management of rural areas and State Government laws are weak and poorly enforced. Part of the Council plans involve using a carrot to encourage better vegetation outcomes in rural areas, and we are starting to play our part as Di will explain when she presents her report.

Our membership numbers continue to grow. It is now well over 80.

Finally, thanks to those who have agreed to be part of the committee for the year ahead. I look forward to working with you.

Thanks,
John Watts

* Report unanimously accepted
(proposed John Watts; seconded Penny Drake-Brockman)

* Jeff responded to John's report and thanked him for all he has been doing and achieved in his current role as president.

* GEG committee thanks Ian Jackson for his cooperation and work with Minimbah Gardens.

* A local Aboriginal Womens Activity Group is using Minimbah and has asked Ian to plant more fibre plants for their weaving.

* Minimbah Gardens was also used for canoe, spear and boomerang making activities recently.

Treasurer's Report: Terry Hardwick

See attached report

* Report unanimously accepted
(proposed Terry; seconded Alison Lyon)

* Terry reported that our current membership is 92 members

Walks Co-ordinator Report: Alison Lyon

- Walks have been plodding along well with some better attended than others

- Covid and rain affected some planned Walks

- It's time to check and update GEG's First Aid kit

- A PLP should be purchased by GEG for Walks Program especially needed for Walks that are out of mobile range in case of an accident or emergency (Terry will investigate PLP pricing)

- Next Walk is 31 July led by Joost

- August Walk will be organised by Jeff and Hilary

- Cheese Farm needs to be confirmed for 18 September (Steve & Pippa)

- We need Walks for October and November

- GEG Camp: 20/21 November Myall Lakes National Park

- Covid restrictions at the moment: if car sharing and not in the same household, you will need to wear a mask

* Alison thanked Pat for all her work and organisation of Walks while she was away

* John thanked Alison and Pat for the great work they have done with the Walks Program

* Report unanimously accepted (proposed Alison; seconded Hilary)

RiverCare Co-ordinator Report: Penny Drake-Brockman

Owing to the pandemic restrictions last year, no report was submitted for 2020 so this report covers two years.

With the commencement of the Koala Plantings and then the work at Minimbah, the RiverCare sites have received less attention. However, most sites have been checked following the 2021 floods and all except two are in good condition. Below is the current situation.

SITE 1 GUY'S BENCH

Upper level was relatively unaffected by the floods and has been cleared of debris and weeded. Flood removed the huge Fig tree, bank and lower level at the southern end and swept clean the lower mid to north area; Council have now removed the broken white cedar at the southern end. A few sandpaper figs, bottlebrushes, casuarinas, lomandra and water gums have survived on the lower level. Perhaps we should plant a few more water gums on the bank as these survive well. I cleaned out the section we planted in July 2016 for National Tree Planting day, removing debris and cutting broken branches, and a small group of us completed the planting on the eastern end.

SITE 2 THUNDERBOLT'S BRIDGE

This hasn't had any work done on it for two years and is very overgrown. The floods took out mature casuarinas and some of our trees beyond the first gulley. A clean up on the section as far as the first gulley with more planting of lomandra and a few trees could be done. Ian Jackson would like us to plant on the grassed area above, allowing for easy mowing. Perhaps a Koala project?

SITE 3 MINIMBAH SOUTHERN BANK

This suffered particularly at the northern end near Minimbah garden. David Kirkwood and I have staked trees and cleaned up debris. Two larger trees are too flattened to raise except with a lot of hard work; a Swamp Mahogany and an acacia at the north end have died. Some infill planting and weeding has recently been carried out.

SITE 4 KING GEORGE PARK

The lower level was flooded to above 4 metres with river bank lost and trees damaged. Plastic bread bags were collected in quantity. Weeding has been neglected and I'm trying to get on top of it. A sink hole appeared on the upper level (now filled) and a mature liquid amber tree died. Grey-headed Flying Foxes took up residence at the north end of the boardwalk and stayed about a month.

SITE 5 BILLABONG BANK BEHIND HARDWARE

This site has been neglected and is high in weeds. Some trees are growing well and I suspect more are hidden by the weeds. No work done here for at least 2 years. Weeding / infill planting needed.

SITE 6 BANK EITHER SIDE OF NEW FOOTBRIDGE

This was badly hit by floods with tree trunks banked up against the footbridge. We did some work on the east side of the bridge, clearing and freeing trees from flood debris, and very

few have been lost. Since then Council with Aus Eco workers have carried out a major job laying jute mesh and planting. No work has been done on the west side.

SITE 7 MINIMBAH ABORIGINAL GARDEN

This suffered badly in the floods, particularly around the billabong where serious damage occurred to trees and the new steps. Shrubs and trees were lost on the western side and here Council have cut down all or part of the dead casuarinas and removed heavy flood timber from most of the area although there still remains some in the northwest corner. We cleared debris and rescued trees on the upper level. Our recent planting on the north boundary survived and has been re-staked and mulched; 3 tube stock have since died and need replacing. David K, Tibor and I recently planted lomandra and tree tubes left over from previous stock, to fill in gaps. Mowing and whippersnipping continues to be carried out by Community Service workers from Taree.

*Report unanimously accepted
(Proposed Penny Drake-Brockman; seconded Sue Watts)

KoalaWays Co-ordinator Report: Dianne Montague

See attached report

* Report unanimously accepted
(proposed Dianne Montague; seconded Penny Drake-Brockman)

* Di and Stef, with Matt Bell, will be organising an information pack for any interested property owners.

* 6 people have approached Penny for tree information. She has given them a list of suitable trees.

* Sue reported that some interested people have come through our Facebook page.

Plastic free Gloucester: Sue Watts

- This project has been affected by the covid situation and was suspended due to last year's covid lockdown

- Matt Bell from Council has given Sue contact details for Annette James. She is looking into a possible collection point at our tip. She will get back to us at a later time

* Report unanimously accepted
(proposed by Sue Watts; seconded by Dianne Montague)

Feasts Report: Sue Watts

- Star Gazing had to be postponed at the Winter Feast due to unsuitable weather. Hopefully it will be available at the Spring Feast at the Watts property in September

- Sue thanked Jo for her assistance and support with the Feasts

* Report unanimously accepted
(proposed Sue Watts; seconded Terry Hardwick)

Other Reports:

* **Publicity Co-ordinator:** Hilary Kite

- mainly articles on our Walks Program at present

- Contact Hilary if anyone from GEG would like to write an article on any environmental issue. Articles need to be 350 words approximately and include photos if possible.

*** Facebook Page:** Sue Watts

- Sue posts information and events regularly. Walks are advertised and reported on.
- Latest post was about The Steps. Camping sites are available; day visits are \$5. Neil has created some artwork on the rock campsite markers.

*Reports unanimously accepted
(proposed Hilary Kite; seconded Sue Watts)

Election of Office Bearers: As Alison Lyon was not standing for election, she acted as Returning Officer. Elections were held for 4 executive positions and 6 committee member positions. All positions were declared vacant. There being no additional nominations the following Office Bearers were elected unopposed:

Position:	Nominated:	Proposed:	Seconded:
President	John Watts	Jeff Kite	Sue Watts
Vice-President	Dianne Montague	John Watts	Janine Phillips
Treasurer	Terry Hardwick	Janine Phillips	Alison Lyon
Secretary	Janine Phillips	Sue Watts	Alison Lyon

Committee Members:

Tibor Kovats	Sue Watts	Janine Phillips
Penny Drake-Brockman	Janine Phillips	Terry Hardwick
Sue Watts	Janine Phillips	Dianne Montague
Hilary Kite	Janine Phillips	Sue Watts
Stefanie Garland	Sue Watts	Dianne Montague
Jeff Kite	John Watts	Sue Watts

*** Public Officer: Jeff Kite**

Note:** The role of Public Officer is a permanent and non-elected position that ***MUST be ratified at the AGM.

Alison congratulated the Office Bearers on their election, then handed the meeting over to the President, John Watts, who thanked Alison and congratulated everyone on being elected.

The meeting closed at 7.20pm

