



Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 28 MARCH 2018

ANNUAL REPORT 2017-2018

2017 was another energetic year for the Society. We are working with the challenge that current governments are often unsympathetic to environmental values and concerns. We are a volunteer organisation but we have a great range of skills and a depth of learning and experience in many disciplines.

Our membership numbers have fluctuated around 800. This is a good number for a regional organisation and it is one of our strengths.

Our activities of running a native plant Nursery and Bush Walks have continued under the excellent management of our Nursery Manager, Walks Convenor, all the walks and study group coordinators.

We have put a big effort into keeping our members abreast with our activities and informed on environmental issues and events. This is through the work of our Hut News Editor, Webmaster, Membership Secretary on weekly emails and several Management Committee members on Facebook and Twitter. New webpages about the Radiata Plateau and Gardens of Stone campaigns have been added.

Our members, and the public, have enjoyed the various events we have run alone or in partnership with Varuna Writers Centre and Science at the Local. These included the Mick Dark Talk for the Future, with environmental activist and former Greens Leader, Bob Brown; a talk by well-known biologist, Tim Low on his book *Where song began* and the more informal Sunset Get Together. We again supported the successful Bat Night at Blackheath. Two of these events filled the Hub at Springwood, however, our smaller events are just as important to us. We also ran information tables at Winter Magic and other events. We thank our Events Coordinator for her work to make these events successes and attract volunteers to help and the Environmental Education Officer for the Tim Low talk.

Our organisation has run through the excellent efforts of our Administration Officer, Membership Officer, Minutes Secretary, Events Coordinator, Treasurer, as well as our two Vice Presidents. We have been fortunate to attract a new Treasurer, Elizabeth Howard, replacing Bart Beech mid-year.

Our campaigns have continued with amazing energy from Land Use, No Western Sydney Airport, National Parks and Protect the Gardens of Stone sub-committees.

Land Use has advocated on issues including Fairmont Resort, the Greater Sydney Commission, tourism, the Eastern Escarpment and Lapstone Tunnel. Their expertise has been assisted by the Bushcare Officer and Threatened Species Officer.

In July the society launched the *Leave Radiata Plateau Wild* campaign including having a spectacular banner drop by abseilers on a cliff face in high winds.

The National Parks sub-committee advocated intensively to the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) regarding their prosecution of Centennial Coal for a mine waste collapse from Clarence Colliery into the Wollangambe River. The court fined them over \$1m - a very good result, given the frustrating constraints of the legislation.

Gardens of Stone sub-committee made submissions to and appearances at several planning commission public hearings to lessen the impacts of mining in the Gardens of Stone. In November 100 people went to the Gardens of Stone Alliance's "Walk in the Gardens" banner event.

No Western Sydney Airport campaign has continued its vigorous work to oppose this unnecessary development because of the major and inequitable impacts we face in the mountains.

We have worked with other organisations in campaigning, notably Nature Conservation Council and its Environmental Liaison Office, the Colong Foundation, Lithgow Environment Group, 4nature, Residents Against Western Sydney Airport and the Katoomba Stop Adani group.

There have been some successes:

- Convincing the planning authorities to reduce the construction of three houses down to only one on private land on Radiata Plateau;
- The EPA reducing the toxicity of mine waste discharged to Wollangambe River and the World Heritage National Park. Further improvements are expected;
- Supporting 4nature's successful court action against Centennial Coal to stop the discharge of mine waste from Springvale mine into the Coxs River, the World Heritage Area and Sydney's drinking water catchment. Although the NSW government legislated to overrule the court's decision, the court case provided a wider platform to expose the problems. The company is now required to treat this discharge for reuse in Mount Piper Power Station within two years.

Management Committee Departures

Brian Marshall, a former society President and, most recently, our National Parks Officer has retired from society work. Brian has made a huge contribution to the Society. He wrote many informed and passionate articles in Hut News, always with a clever or amusing title, ("Finkel's Cave" for an article on Alan Finkels' about-face on the RET, for instance) and countless forthright and substantial submissions to state and federal agencies.

Bart Beech, our Treasurer for fifteen years, guided the management of the society's funds very well. Bart was also a firm believer in the importance of the Society's work. We thank them both.

I believe that the Society is in a good position for the coming year.

Madi Maclean
President