



Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc President and Treasurer's Reports, 28 March 2003

President's Report

This is my last Report as President of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, as our Constitution prohibits any President serving more than 3 consecutive terms. But of course that doesn't stop me being involved in the Society's work so you haven't got rid of me completely! The greatest reward for me personally over the last 3 years has been my contact with members. We have a marvellous membership who are very generous in their support of the Society and I start this report by sincerely thanking the many members who have contributed during my time as President.

Membership is the lifeblood of the Society. Numbers have reached a plateau during the last financial year where despite 154 new members, total membership has remained static at around 875. Some members move away from the Blue Mountains, although we continue to attract members from outside the immediate area. In fact, we have continuing members from as far afield as Western Australia, USA and Malaysia. We have four members "letter box dropping" Hut News in different villages of the Blue Mountains and we leave copies in Doctors' surgeries, in the local libraries and Neighbourhood centres, as well as the Conservation Hut, all in an effort to attract new members. Any suggestions which might encourage an influx of new members will be gratefully received.

The Native Plant Nursery has achieved its most successful year ever. The supply of 26,500 native plants to the RTA for the Soldier's Pinch highway realignment near Mt Victoria provides an excellent showcase for locally provenanced plants. It also generated substantial funds which resulted in a record year for the Nursery and made possible a very healthy surplus for the year as described in the Treasurer's report. I would like to express sincere appreciation for the marvellous work performed by the Nursery volunteers.

The major activity of the Land Use Sub-Committee was the review and promotion of Blue Mountains City Council's Draft Local Environment Plan 2002 which represents a huge improvement from existing planning rules. Revenue from the Nursery made possible the hiring of a lobbyist to promote the DLEP against the inevitable resistance from the development community. This is a battle we must win if we are to have any chance of restricting unsustainable development in the Blue Mountains. This has been conducted in tandem with support for a Vegetation Management Order to prevent continued unnecessary clearing of native vegetation on private land. BMCC's second draft of their proposed VMO is now on public exhibition and again we have to promote it against attacks from the development community. The Land Use Sub-Committee has also been involved in promotion of Blue Mountains swamps as a vulnerable ecological community and in detailed activities regarding individual developments and/or acts of environmental vandalism. Many battles have been necessary trying to enforce development conditions, but these have produced disappointing results and this will be an area of focus in the forthcoming year.

On the political front we achieved notoriety by publicising councillors' voting patterns on controversial development applications. In the recent state election, the Blue Mountains ALP, Greens and Democrats candidates all provided their views on our identified key issues for circulation to our email members' distribution list.

The Environmental Education Sub-Committee has provided showcases to the environmental community in the Blue Mountains and beyond. These included involvement in the following events: World Environment Day, Songlines, Winter Magic, Celebration of Clairvaux ownership change, Department of Land and Water Conservation catchment education in Blackheath, our wonderful Swamp Dance, the Art of the Environment exhibition, the State Environmental Education Conference and World Wetlands Day. The high standard of our displays has been recognised by the Sydney Catchment Authority who have awarded a further grant of \$8,000 to develop a visual display for the Valley of the Waters Sub-catchment at The Hut. Other activities included sale of BMCS calico bags and production of a BMCS brochure.

President's Report (continued) ...

Another area of the Society going from strength to strength is the Bushwalking group. Bushwalking was described by Sharyn Cullis, of the George's River Environmental Alliance, quoted in the SMH on Monday 24th Feb. 2003: "The Grand Challenge of course, is to re-connect urban people to the natural world that they so often forget is the very foundation of their lives". Our team of walks leaders, weekdays and weekends, go bush and enjoy themselves, helping to do just that. Weekday walks have seen a big increase in attendance and continuity with up to 24 on Mondays, 14 on Thursday and a regular group of 15-20 on the Thursday Interpretive bushwalks. The bushfire season affected where we were able to walk with many of our favourite walks affected by fire. Recent rains will help the recovery of the bush and the scenic beauty will return to our mountains. Bus trips for walkers were popular during the year, enabling us to walk in areas south, west and east of the mountains. New coordinators for these walks have started and we thank the walkers and leaders for the tremendous year. Our Toddlers' Walks have become Pre-school Children's Walks. New co-ordinators for these walks will need to be found soon when some of the children start school. Finally we have initiated a project to introduce standards in line with those of other Bushwalking Clubs. The aim is to provide guidance and help for leaders in the event of a mishap as well as a structured approach to the individual walk. This will be ongoing and we envisage more training for walks leaders in the future.

"Hut News" — the wonderful flagship newsletter, continues to set exceptional standards in environmental reporting, capturing that elusively successful mixture of serious advocacy and joyful celebration of the environment. The Society's message is also reaching a much wider audience through our redesigned website at the new bluemountains.org.au address. Our site is now achieving over 1,500 visits per month, a level we could have only dreamed of a year ago.

Finally and most importantly, we continue to have fun! The second Swamp Dance was another resounding success and enjoyed by all, while the monthly meetings maintain the high level of entertaining speakers set in previous years.

Robin Mosman
President

Treasurer's Report

It gives me great pleasure to present this year's report on the excellent financial results for your Society for the year to 28 February 2003. Key items are as follows:

We are able to report a substantial surplus for the year of \$35,112, almost certainly a record. This compares to last year's surplus of \$3,108.

The result is dominated by the Society's main revenue generator, the nursery. We received \$39,918 from the RTA for the native plants supplied to the Soldier's Pinch realignment. Nursery revenue for the year, after expenses, was \$50,633. Other areas of income have had a mixed year. Membership fees were up 39%, reflecting last year's fee increase which did not result in any membership reduction. Donations were down 23%. We received a second \$4,000 grant from Environment Australia towards our administration costs and we generated \$1,202 of other income mainly from the sale of BMCS calico bags. The disappointing result was an interest and investment loss of \$3,590 as our ethical investments fell in value along with the world's stock markets.

Your Society's operating expenses were down by \$3,272 or 16%, thanks to reductions in newsletter printing costs (we changed printer!) and administration expenses.

This left us net revenue before project expenditure of \$53,325 compared with \$12,033 last year.

Your Society spent \$17,663 on our core business of conservation. The main item was the very successful lobbying of support for DLEP 2002. There were also modest levels of expenditure for the other main areas of activity being environmental education, political activities and bushwalking.

Bart Beech
Treasurer