



Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc

Annual General Meeting 2022

Incoming President's acceptance speech

Just over 50 years ago my mother stood up in this very auditorium and threatened the local member of State Parliament with the end of his career. She said that the organisation she represented had the numbers to prevent him from being re-elected if he did not prevent Clutha from proceeding with their plans to mine coal on the Blue Mountains. The organisation she spoke of was the Katoomba and District Wildlife Conservation Society, a forerunner of our current Society. Due to their efforts and those of many others Clutha was stopped.

The point of this, apart from my little self indulgence in boasting about my mother, is that numbers make a difference.

I grew up in the Blue Mountains and have lived over half my life here. I have watched the many ways this beautiful place, this delicate and vulnerable environment can be wrecked. There are too many who are willing to exploit its beauty and its grandeur, and too many ways that a city or developers or naive residents or tourists can damage it, even if well intentioned. It is too easy to destroy the basis of the very reason we came here to live.

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society now has over 900 members. This matters. When we write letters and submissions or make other representations, MPs, governments, councils and others listen.

So I'm not saying anything new when I say that we must hold onto this number and add to it so that we represent a reasonable proportion of this growing city. The Blue Mountains City population is now nearly 80,000. Our recent survey about Hut News showed that most of our members are over 60. Residents in this age group, according to the 2016 census, are only 27% of the population. These are the baby boomers. They are well educated and concerned about the future and are the core of this Society.

But where are the younger residents? Surely they too are just as concerned about our natural environment as well as broader issues like climate change and what we can do about it as individuals. Think global, act local comes to mind. Surely they want their children to understand what a treasure they have as their backyard. If not, why not? I don't believe that at least a reasonable proportion of them aren't interested or concerned, especially if they are made aware.

It's too easy to say they're busy. Maybe they don't know about us or what we represent, maybe they don't realise how much we need to fight for what they have here, maybe we haven't given them enough reason to join or to stay with us even if they did. And I don't believe our annual fee, which hasn't been increased for a long time, is too much to ask. Maybe we just haven't shouted loudly enough.

I hasten to say that these questions haven't been ignored by the Society at all. We have been planning. We have a very effective engine room that has succeeded, battle after battle, in protecting our Blue Mountains. I hate to think what this place would have been like without the Society and its forebears working as hard as they did over the last 60 years. We just need more and younger people to know about us, to join us in our efforts and to replace us.

I have a University biological sciences and marketing qualifications and I have worked in teaching, community relations, marketing and senior management for some of our great natural sciences institutions. I'm going to use that experience to help us grow so that we not only exceed that elusive number of 1000 members but also that we continue our quest to protect our natural environment into a future that is full of challenges and so that we become an even stronger force to be reckoned with.

Thank you all for this opportunity and this honour.

Susan Crick