



WESTERN PORT BIOSPHERE RESERVE

"Showing the way to sustainability"



MINUTES 2010 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Sunday, 14 November 2010
Balla Balla Community Centre
65 Berwick Cranbourne Road, Cranbourne East

The Chair, Rob Gell, opened the meeting at 11.00 am, acknowledging the Traditional Owners and welcoming Biosphere Foundation Members and guests.

PRESENT

Board and General Members

Rob Gell, Jane Jobe, Jack Krohn, Jeff Weir, Jim Kerin, Libby Anthony, Cr Reade Smith, Cr Lynette Keleher, Peter Woodgate, Eligio Bruzzese, Marnee Fraser, Anwyn Martin, David Nicholls, Yvonne Reifenberg, Robin Borger, Roger Richards, Jillian Verhardt, Cecelia Witton, Peter Avery, Janet Borley, Hans Brunner, Gillian Collins, Michael Johnson, Garrique Pergl (Southern Dandenong Community Nursery), James Dooley, Barry Priestly, Helen Priestly, Cr David Gibb.

Guests

Mornington Peninsula Shire Councillors Leigh Eustace and Antonella Celi, Nicola Ward, Catherine Manning, H Thompson, Jan Charleswood, Neil Murdoch, Joanne Krafjik, Pam Corcoran, Ron Corcoran

APOLOGIES

Graeme Davis (Parks Victoria), Cr Stuart Halligan (CSC), Dr Michael Kennedy (CEO MPS), Mike Tyler (CEO CC), Ian Stevenson, Greg Hunt (SECCCA), George Modrich (CEO FCC), Cr Veronica Dowman (BCS), Cr Peter Paul (BCS), Cr Christine Richards (FCC), Cr Sandra Myer (FCC), Neil McCarthy (Parks Victoria), Ian Stevenson, Alex Atkins, Robyn Dzedins, Tim Ealey, Mary Stemp, Grant Arnold.

CHAIR'S REPORT

- Rob Gell introduced the Directors of the Foundation, and reminded the meeting that Foundation's 2009-2010 Annual Report and Financial Accounts, has been available on the Foundation's website and he thanked Jane Jobe for her time and effort spent in maintaining the website which is a vital link for the organisation.

Rob Gell referred to the Chairs report contained in the Annual Report and then highlighted some key points:

- The meeting attended in Noosa twelve months ago with internationals and members of Great Sandy and Noosa Biosphere Reserves and steps taken following that meeting to ensure the Foundation had improved engagement with the five local councils and to

work with other Australian Biospheres and those around the world and formation Australian Network of Biosphere Reserves, AusMaB.

- The meeting with five council CEO's where it was quickly agreed to do two things, one was to develop a shortened working title for our organisation, a reason being that when in Noosa he observed that no one could be bothered to say Mornington Peninsula and Western Port Biosphere Reserve Foundation Ltd, they called it the Mornington Biosphere, so with agreement of CEO's the trading name Western Port Biosphere Reserve was adopted. The other thing was to take steps to move as quickly as possible to stage two of the biosphere.
- With a focus to work with local governments more closely this year, than previously and trying to find things that knitted the five local governments together, sustainable agriculture and sustainable tourism were identified and these have become two of our functional challenges in terms of the work we are going to do and are now doing much more effectively with our local governments.
- A core component is our research focus, there is no doubt that the strong underpinning that scientific research provides. We have to be able to use that both as a board and as an organisation and rely on the research committee to provide us with that strong spine of science, but also need to enable them to go ahead and do their own work in bringing other important issues and capacities to the organisation.
- The other important thing that happened during the year was the Roberts Evaluation. The state government was required to go through this process, it was felt that this was a very valuable process, it highlighted some of the obvious things about the biosphere, some things we already knew about ourselves, that we were not as functional and not delivering nearly what we would like to deliver and that has been a matter of our capacity.
- There is a need to have significant annual income as well as a corpus of funds that would enable us take on projects as they come up, so that we are really able to be responsive or proactive in doing things, we do not have that. We are very grateful for the support of the councils and we must pay particular gratitude to the Mornington Peninsula Shire who have been steadfast in their support financially and to also compliment the other four councils for their increased financial support, we really welcome that, and we have to develop that critical mass.

To conclude Rob Gell encouraged all members to continue their support and that the Foundation desperately needs more members to join the organisation. We are doing some really good things and moving from the bottom of the curve and are hoping to do some better projects. Critical to the organisation, is our (DGR), Deductible Gift Recipient status and we need to ensure our financial membership base, to continue to maintain that status.

Rob Gell, sincerely thanked the board of directors for their work, and to the executive team, Cecelia Witton the executive officer, Janet Borley project officer for Watson Creek ICM Project, and David Nicholls Manager, Southern Brown Bandicoot Recovery Program.

NB: Information on any of the above subject is available on the Foundation's website at www.biosphere.org.au

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD 18 OCTOBER 2009

These were posted on the Foundation's website already, in December 2009.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Honorary Treasurer Jeff Weir reported on the Foundation's financial position as disclosed as in the 2009-2010 Financial Accounts and highlighted that the organisation had turned the corner with the result a small profit and that the critical thing to understand, is behind that, is the support from the councils, the additional buy in has given us engagement that will not only help us deliver in those five regions in a much stronger way, but it has also given us a backbone for the foundation from which we can go forward, without that it would have been a very different story.

There is commitment for this year and on the basis of the Foundation continuing to achieve the expectations that are the subject of our agreement with the councils, that will continue and give us the opportunity to now to grow. That is something we did not have last year, and this is a critical achievement of the executive to have brought that about and should not be underestimated.

The meeting was given the opportunity to ask questions after which Jeff called for a motion to adopt the audited Financial Report.

Question - What are the plans for expending the balance of funding shown in the accounts for the Eco Footprint project.

EO – responded that all funds on the project had been expended, the balance in July 2010, but that Frankston Roundtable had not submitted a detailed report for inclusion in the annual report. Report to be followed up for presentation to the board.

Question: - Membership fee collection.

EO- responded that invoices for membership fees had been sent out in January 2010 to all members on the database. For the last three years all membership renewals have been sent out usually in December, requesting that all fees be paid direct into the Foundation's bank account or a cheque sent to the Biosphere office.

Question: – You mentioned hand to mouth, low income, no income what would be your desired budget for this year how much would you want and how would you use it?

Treasurer responded – We are currently in a position where we need to consolidate, with more time to develop the organisation and build relationships with the communities and five local governments in those areas. If we had more funding we would try to build those relationships, the networks, participation in those areas and build projects that relate to those communities. The work we have been doing with the local governments has highlighted that the needs in the various areas are quite different and additional funds would go in to developing communications and building relationships with those communities.

The Chair - \$100,000 - \$250,000 would be the region of funds sought.

EO - provided further comment in relation to communications and marketing to lift the profile of the Foundation which is an area lacking and that additional funding would certainly facilitate the ability to engage appropriate personnel and utilise professionals. We are continually seeking to apply for funding for this purpose and working at developing a sound strategy for the future. Mr Ian Stevenson former Sustainability Director at Cardinia Shire Council will be working with the Foundation, one day per week in a Development Director role, with out additional funding from councils this would not have been possible.

MOTION:

That the Biosphere Foundation adopts the audited Financial Report for the financial year of 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010 as presented.

Moved: Jeff Weir, Seconded: Barry Priestly Carried.

Jeff Weir also highlighted the addition of a face book page on our website and thanked Jane Jobe for her continued work in developing the website.

APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS 2009-2010

The Foundation's current auditors, WHK Horwath, be retained to conduct the audit of accounts for the financial year 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2011.

MOTION:

That WHK Horwath be reappointed as auditors of the Foundation for the financial year 2010-2011.

Moved Jeff Weir Seconded Anwyn Martin Carried

RESEARCH COMMITTEE REPORT

Dr Peter Woodgate – Research Committee Chair provided brief background on the committee and its work to date, he went on to foreshadow the committee's thinking at the moment and where we might be going as a biosphere over the next few years. The committee is of the view it is time for a strategic briefing, in terms of the research and that the committee would like to undertake a "state of the biosphere report" to fundamentally understand the condition the biosphere is in across all its primary indicators social, environmental and economic. He provided brief overview of the proposal and work done to date. Over the last few years we have already been very active with one indicator, the Southern Brown Bandicoot, which along with those other indicators we would like to use to continue to push for funding to undertake a Mass Balance study. Peter provided some background on an approach by CSIRO.

Those sorts of studies are probably going to cost several hundred thousand dollars to do properly and to do that we need to resource the core administration and to achieve that we are looking at recurring funding of \$200,000, about double what we have at the moment.

Peter Woodgate expressed his thanks to members of the research committee Garrique Pergl, Ian Stevenson, Dr Sharron Pfueller, Eligio Bruzzese, Dr Terry Coates, David Nicholls for their work during the year, also express thanks to the executive officer, the Chair and the board for ongoing support.

David Nicholls – Manager Bandicoot Recovery Program reported that the program has reduced foxes, is reconnecting and restoring the landscape, hopefully increasing bandicoots, they live well and they eat truffles and provide a vital contribution in recycling precious nutrients in the soil. Throughout the year we continued to engage with a wide range of stakeholders including DSE, LMA, GAA, Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, Vic Track, PPWCMA, Council representatives, CEC, and Swamp Landcare and numerous other groups. A group of scientists meet regularly under the Technical Reference group and have met with Commonwealth Department of Environment and wildlife consultants.

An overview of progress made as a result of grants received under Caring for Our Country, a small contract with DSE, and current funding from CMA with their Western Port Ramsar Protection project was provided. Fox control started by Biosphere has now been expanded by DSE and they have resourced it, and CMA also work in this area with a number of stakeholders. Preparations are underway for next Southern Brown Bandicoot public meeting for which there is considerable

support and determination to make it an exciting day and will launch regional recovery plan and regional recovery group is to be formed.

David posed two questions - Can I prove we have increased bandicoots?

There is some evidence that there are more bandicoots around the Royal Botanic Gardens as a result of fox control, but elsewhere the picture is more complicated, we can't prove it yet but tools and skills are vastly improved.

and is this a core activity and are we making best use of the resources?

The Bandicoot is a core business of biosphere in line with biosphere charter and both Watson Creek and the Bandicoot Recovery program are landscape oriented projects, this may not have been sufficiently clarified in the past, as there are perceptions that the bandicoot program is a single species population program and that is contrary to the objectives.

There is a need for close contact and engagement with all stakeholders across the biosphere to maintain and expand on ground fox control and habitat restoration and open discussion with all stakeholders should continue to take place on issues that impact on sustainability in the biosphere.

There should be a vision for our sustainability and biodiversity ambitions in the biosphere to 2030 - 2040 and the impact proposed infrastructure programs may have within the biosphere, and large infrastructure projects should be seen as an opportunity to reconnect the landscape.

David thanked members of the executive for their support and community members for their efforts and support and his research committee colleagues.

Rob thanked David for his comments and acknowledged his views.

The Chair opened the floor to questions:

Question

To David Nicholls - can you elaborate on the observed or expected impact the freeway extensions is having on bandicoots?

We do not have an objective study that measures that, but there is a lot of strong very objective opinion and it is hoped the regional recovery plan is a mechanism that would enable facts to be gathered.

Question

To Peter Woodgate – Is the baseline study being done in isolation to the Melbourne Water project, commonly known as Schapiro Two?

We very much want to engage with Schapiro Two, do not want to do anything in isolation and want to build on existing works starting from the top down, from National State of the Environment Reports, to Victoria State of Environment Report the Catchment Management Authority, Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water etc., pull all that together with some cohesion across it and put a biosphere boundary around it and make some concluding statements for the biosphere so we can build on that.

Rob Gell emphasised that the Biosphere does not want to do anything in isolation we are not wanting to replicate the work of any other organisation, neither are we wanting to carve out a new niche in areas that other organisations already hold, that is diametrically opposed to our position. We are really wanting to make sure that a variety of organisations can actually utilise the biosphere as the framework that it is and if we can facilitate cooperative work between organisations that either do not know each other or could benefit from working together or from with in a project then well and good.

Question:

Has there been any connection with the work Malcolm Legg has been doing over the last 15 years on fauna surveys and that throughout the biosphere there is going to be flora and fauna Atlas which is under way and lot of work seems to be done by individual people and groups like SPIFFA on project like biolinks, but there seems to be a lack of co ordination or linking, is the biosphere taking this on board and what is it doing about it?

Rob Gell – we are very aware of this and would like to do more but are limited in what we can do, we know groups like SPIFFA and the work that they undertake. An objective would be to say all of these groups are working with us and look what we are achieving as a group, that, is the value of the Biosphere.

Garrique Pergl - commented that the Mornington Peninsula Shire's work on the flora and fauna Atlas was in progress and that this is a project that will be primarily configure rated into the biosphere program for collating further information and data will be shared with State and Commonwealth and Environment protection agencies.

Cr Reade Smith – related his observation from a recent trip to Noosa Biosphere that they have a number committees for special interest groups e.g. art and culture, environment,. education, social, economic and tourism committees so people with an interest attend meetings of a specific committee, and within our biosphere there are many people with different interest trying to be heard. Cr Smith proposed a structure where we have committees and that each council could host committee for a year or two. Suggested this could be discussed during the workshops today.

Clarification on the structure of the Noosa Biosphere was provided, for context.

Question:

With the sustainable agriculture and sustainable tourism push could the word sustainable be tightened up, as sustainable might mean a whole lot of different things to a whole lot of different people including things that might not be any good for the environment or tourism, I think we need to drill down on what sustainable is.

Rob Gell response – It is hoped the workshops later will help in this process. .

Presentations

Jack Krohn attended an environment conference in Geneva and whilst in Europe took the opportunity to visit three Biosphere Reserves, Entlebuch Switzerland, Wienerwald in Austria and Rhon in Germany and spent three or four days in each. These three were chosen as they are similar in size and with a number of characteristics similar to our biosphere. During his time he looked at the management models adopted, methods used to promote the biosphere, these included ecotourism sustainable agriculture and how these could be related and may have application to benefit our biosphere reserve.

The presentation provided a very informative overview of these biosphere reserves.

Cecelia Witton at the invitation of UNESCO attended Climate Change conference and 21st ICC meeting of Man and the Biosphere Program on Jeju Island, Republic of South Korea On the agenda was an item on how Biosphere Reserve can do eco tourism better. There are a number of programs happening through out the world and they are using this to support and involve the community. Biosphere Reserves and the ICC are looking at ways whereby they can establish global standards that would apply to biosphere reserves. At the same time the Pacific Seminar on Eco Tourism was being held which provided an opportunity to hear how eco tourism is being managed in various countries.

The presentation provided an overview of some of these applications and how they may be of relevance to our biosphere reserve.

Rob Gell – recapped on the his visit to Noosa in November 2009, with an overview of Great Sandy and Noosa Biosphere Reserves and the importance of an identity highlighting how signage plays such an important part in promoting the biosphere reserves. The establishment of the Australian Network of Biosphere Reserves – AusMab has potential benefits for biosphere reserves from this network in strengthening co operation and opportunities.

In October 2010 Jack Krohn and Reade Smith attended Biosphere Reserve workshop in Noosa, also the launch of Noosa Arts Federation Biosphere Reserve Film and Photo Exhibition to which our Biosphere contributed. The exhibition will travel around Australian Biosphere Reserve and overseas providing a great opportunity to promote our Biosphere.

The presentation focused future opportunities and better cooperation being established between Australian Biosphere Reserves.

Jack Krohn provided an outline for the workshops.

Topics for the workshops - Sustainable tourism
 Sustainability in agriculture
 Sustainable community
 Sustainable environment

There was scope to initiate a conversation not covered by the suggested topics.

The conversations are structured to look at what are the gaps, what are the opportunities for the biosphere to take part, who should be involved in that, who should be our partners, what sort of resources are required and where would they come from plus other thoughts.

Sustainable tourism and agriculture have been identified as target areas and we look forward to receiving your input on how we may progress these over the next twelve months.

The Biosphere and five council CEO's and representatives will be meeting on a regular basis and the feedback will be fee into those meetings as well.

The format was open space style where participants could move from topic to topic, the workshop end for one hour and a summary report was made at the end.

At 12..45 pm the Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the formal meeting and invited everyone to join in the light luncheon before participating in the workshops which commenced at 1.15pm

A light buffet luncheon was served.