



PRESIDENT'S REPORT – May 2007

By Wayne Cameron

The year was the busiest and most complicated for our management and working committees. It continued our independent push to be self-sustaining, while applying for grants to target community projects. An upgrade in staffing and expansion of contracted field work dominated, while external projects (out of catchment) expanded dramatically.

Environmental Service Unit:

Our paid and professional field crew. For the first time contracts flowed consistently our way. This enabled two new field officers to be employed (Rob and John). Claire Purcell has the management role and has also two horticultural trainees. Many projects were expanded and new ones undertaken. The improvement to the areas is high profile to a degree and this has allowed us to provide our best practice outcomes with a high level of landscape amenity as our special contribution.

Strategic Planning:

The prioritising our most important actions and planned works. It required negotiations for land transfers (State), acquisition nominations (Council), lobbying to avoid development threats including recreational infrastructure. A separate heading follows for “major infrastructure”. Our Strategic Plan has not been upgraded in 3 years now, mainly because of the workload and having to respond to crises. We are always in reaction, unfortunately. Localized plans have been contributed to (Rochedale LAP, SEQ Regional Plan, Outdoor Recreation Plan and these have dominated time.

Major infrastructure:

A community sub-committee was formed, but has not been active. Too difficult. The projects came thick and fast. We are having trouble responding to all properly. Bulimba Creek is targeted like no other catchment for these projects. We are seeking “Environmental Infrastructure” as the common principal of offsetting the impacts.

Port of Brisbane Motorway II: Currently in negotiation. Have had success in upgrading bridges, alignments and rehabilitation offsets. Excellent relationship with DMR has evolved. Good progress. Sub-committee of Wayne Cameron and Michael Petter.

Altandi to Kuraby Rail Upgrade: 1200 trees lost on Beenleigh Rd, including our 500 tree planting in St Laurence's. Negotiations initially confrontational. An improvement as we went to the press and politicians. A \$64,000 rehabilitation plan was submitted with support of Judy Spence. Awaiting outcome. Wayne Cameron assisted by consultants Paul Morris and Renee Coleman. Hopeful of success – we did everything we could.

Gateway Arterial Upgrade: An early success in having three fauna underpasses approved between Wecker Rd and Belmont Hills. No details of the specifications at this time. Our

response has been piecemeal and inadequate. Individuals have worked hard but we have not got it together to get the best outcome. Negotiations are continuing, but we need to organize a sub-committee quickly. On a wing and a prayer!

Eastern Busway: From the City through Old Cleveland Rd to Cleveland. Very limited consultations and we have not been active on this issue. Norman Creek Catchment has done a good job in submissions but we have not.

Aquifer Project: Currently in an active submission stage. At least four pumping sites in Bulimba Creek Catchment. Negotiations for parkland habitat upgrade at Runcorn Wetlands in train and plant rescue at Sleeman Centre. I have not had the science back-up to question the need or environmental impacts of this project. BREC has real concerns but we have not produced a solid objection that could oppose the project. Environmental Infrastructure component is the negotiation at this time.

Western Recycled Water Pipeline: Only one consultation to this date. The pipeline goes right through the centre of our creek catchment and we have produced a detailed submission seeking reparations “Environmental Impacts”. Cuts through the Oxbow Wetlands and through our Sustainability Centre for example. We have time to negotiate, and our submission was well researched and substantial. Response is awaited.

Trunk Sewerage Line Upgrade: In on this early (one consultation). Line goes from Runcorn to Gibson Island – through our waterway corridor as usual. Will seek more information before any submission is prepared. Negotiations assisted by Water Resources and were meaningful and good. No sub-committee at present. Hopeful.

Freight Rail Line: “It will never happen” according to many, including Terry Mackenroth. I think it will. Every other major project has targeted Bulimba Creek and its Waterway, so I would bet that they will inflict this as well. Conjecture at this time.

Twinning (partnering with other NGOs and schools):

This has been a real success and a lot of work. It has expanded hugely and many things have been initiated and some good achievements already on the books.

Thailand: Project with NGO Yadfon Assoc. has been disappointing. Good links were made and I visited Thailand to see the projects and meet the group’s leaders. School project with college in Trang has been successful. B4C member Steve Cameron initiated “Green English” in the school and also assisted with a major grant application for a Centre of Excellence (sustainability) in Trang, which was successful. Green English may live on in Vietnam with our new friends at the Noosa Catchment taking the baton.

France (Loire River): A great relationship between the partners with Roberto Epple (head of the European Rivers Network) to be hosted by B4C during River Symposium. Working with Roberto has achieved the only Australian entry to the World Expo at Zaragoza in Spain in 2008. A committee is formed to choose the applicant, but I am pushing for the Mary River Catchment to be represented in the Civil Society Pavilion on those displaced by Dams. This was a difficult 8 months of negotiations to get this approved. We have no funding to help the application and may approach the Australia

Council. Video, interviews, high quality photography and a journalistic report by professionals now being sought. A great achievement, but a lot to still to do.

Gregory River (Gulf of Carpentaria): Coordinator and Field Supervisor have just spent a week up there to break the ice. Good links to Southern Gulf Catchments, Doomadgee School and Gregory Downs School. Our schools of Tingalpa, Mansfield, Mt Petrie have been involved with this and are pen pals of the kids of the Top End. An exciting project where we are determined to help the kids understand each other and the adults also. This will be a great success.

River Foundation: the initiator of Twinning and the on-going supporter of Bulimba Creek. I have been included on the “Confluence” Group. A group of ex-riverprize winners who are promoting the River Symposium, Twinning and River Foundation.

Education:

- Continuing support of several schools with classroom presentations, waterwise gardens, catchment bus tours and curriculum activities.
- Twinning with Tingalpa, Mansfield and Mt Petrie primaries.
- Landscape plan for Tingalpa including Squirrel Glider Corridor establishment.
- Grant applications assisted for water conservation in several schools by B4C.
- Swamp Orchid Conservation works to assist Moreton Bay Boys College.
- Negotiations between Lindum School and Hemmant for inclusion in our program

Education Kit: Being developed with a Council Grant for NGOs to deliver to schools. A preliminary simplified version now in operation. Comprehensive plan to be completed.

Networking and Partnerships

- Bayside Catchments – on-going cooperation. Four joint Biodiversity Forums planned and a viewing of “Inconvenient Truth” at Bayside has been held.
- Citywide Catchments Network: Strong support from our Coordinator for this group, which holds the future of Brisbane’s Creek Catchments in its hands.
- Natural Area Alliance (NAA): B4C is a member of this group which will be of importance protecting urban nature reserves and their stewards.
- Biodiversity Advisory Committee: On-going participation in this vital committee that advises policy to Council.
- Working with Healthy Waterways and Moreton Bay Alliance.
- Working with River foundation and Riverfestival Committees.
- State Government Ministerial Forum: A new membership on regional planning.

Campaigns:

- Minnippi: This Catchment has tried to assist the active group MAD (Minnippi Against Development) and the Rivermouth Action Group in opposing this Council-sponsored proposal. The outcome is approaching. Whatever it is, our thanks go to the dedicated people who have fought such a brave action on behalf of the greater community.

- Scrub Rd: Another blow to our catchment and also promoted by some in Council. A new group has formed out of the fight – Mansfield Environment and Community Association (MECA). Still in progress.
- Development proposals on Spring Creek, Salvin Creek Kuraby Bushlands, Mt Gravatt Outlook, Richmond Road, etc. Generally, the outcomes have been reasonable. Unless we were active outcomes could have been a lot worse.

Sponsors:

Coles: The on-going sponsorship of the Tingalpa Wetlands Project has been a great contribution to the Catchment. It has become a demonstration site and the extension of the Strategic Regional corridor has been now undertaken. Thanks to Coles!

Landcare Australia: Without the assistance of LA and the wonderful Ken Gibson (21st Century Group) we would not be as successful today as we are. Thanks LCA and Ken.

Powerlink: the provision of contracts to restore our green areas and the low rental provided to the Sustainability Centre is a great community contribution. Thanks to the people who believed in us – Wayne Hickey, Cam Cross and Keith Callaghan.

Brisbane City Council: Our thanks to the grants program and especially to Water Resources, who have been so supportive. Special thanks to Patrick Bourke for his wonderful work in guiding the Citywide Catchments Group.

Caltex/Transfield – for the sponsorship of our nursery and volunteers.

Energex - for several projects to restore vegetation and support our services unit.

Price Waterhouse Coopers – support with corporate days and upgrades to our sites including the sustainability centre.

Parsons Brinkerhoff for guiding the development of the Sustainability Centre.

Councillors – Catherine Bermingham, Adrian Schrunner, Kerry Rea, John Campbell for community day support and revegetation projects from their community funds.

The Future – 2007-2008:

Leadership – we need people to step up. No one group but a collection of cooperating core groups reaching out to others, who may not be as dedicated to nature conservation and catchment management (at this time). We need to identify and encourage community leadership and new group formation and activities. A wider net if we can cast it.

Land Tenure: Oates Hill needs a Trust Deed to include the NGO and State EPA. Council is abrogating its responsibility on natural area management, with funding cuts. This will take some detailed research and submissions to achieve. Weekes Rd also needs a Deed.

Highlights of the year:

- Peter Garrett meeting the community at our Sustainability Centre. Thanks to Cr Kerry Rea for organizing this visit.
- Saving of Salvin Creek, thanks to BCC acquisition and development assessment.
- Getting the Mary River Catchment to the World Expo in Spain in 2008.
- The wonderful work of our volunteers and Services Unit in saving nature.
- Our Gregory River twinning initiative helping at lot of kids there and here.
- Tingalpa Wetlands becoming a major wetland rehabilitation demo site.