Capricorn Conservation Council Inc.
Annual Report 1992 - 1993

This report marks 20 years of existence for the Capricorn Conservation Council and a milestone at which we can look with some satisfaction at the conservation gains which have been made in the region, in the State of Queensland as well as nationally and globally. Regretfully we must also look at unfinished issues such as coastal sandmining, the paucity of national parks in the region which have been with us since out inception.

There are new issues as well, some of which members would not have dreamed of years ago. Global issues of prime concern today such as the destruction of the ozone layer were scarcely known in 1973 although our inaugral President, Dr. Peter Springell was even then a vigourous opponent of ozone destroying supersonic aircraft, and an advocate on many other issues such as lead free petrol which are now widely supported by Governments.

Environment Centre

Just before the financial year began Lorraine Wright was appointed as Administrative Officer with the brief of getting the Environment Centre running on sound managment principles. Two months after starting work the Committee appointed her to the position of Co-ordinator, a position which she filled with a committment of time far in excess of the hours she was paid for. Through the year we were advised of a large increase in our Federal Government funding for the next financial year. This increase was due in no small part to the vigourous advocacy by Lorraine backed up by the assessment by Don Henry of Conservation Council funding which was submitted to the Minister for Environment, Ros Kelly. Lorraine resigned her position late last year to take up an appointment as Electoral Officer with the Member for Keppel.

Shoalwater Bay/ Byfield

As Co-ordinator, Lorraine quickly found that the issues of proposed sandmining of Shoalwater Bay and Byfield occupied most of her time. The fine photographs which we can now display are largely due to her organizing efforts. Lorraine also spend a considerable amount of time in lobbying some of which has bourne fruit.

Environment Expo.

The Environment Expo, organized with considerable skill by Fay Lawrence provided an impressive forum for local conservation groups. A large paper mache whale and model of the Byfield sand dunes prepared by Rockhampton High School students was supplemented with an excellent photographic display which attracted considerable attention.

Impact Assessment Studies

Capricorn Conservation Council has gained greater recognition as an advisory body on Impact Assessment Studies. There is an extra workload in commenting at the initial stages and then at the draft stages of studies but the evidence is there that our imputs can help steer the studies to cover the most critical environmental aspects,

During the year CCC participated in the Impact Assessment Study processes for Stuart Oil Shale Proposal, Gordonstone and Gordonstone West Underground Coal Mines and in Stage III of the Gladstone Industrial Land Use Study.

We also participated in various aspects of the Curtis Coast Study.

Commissions of Inquiry

The preparation of a submission and attendance at public hearings of the Resource Assessment Commission Coastal Managment Inquiry involved considerable effort by the Co-ordinator. The Commission of Inquiry into the Shoalwater Bay Military Training Area , which will require considerable imput during the current year, has undoubtedly resulted from the evidence presented at this inquiry and by other lobbying efforts by local groups.

Berserker Ranges Quarry Appeal.

During the year CCC became a respondent by election to the appeal against the Rockhampton City Council decision not to approve a quarry along Yeppoon Rd. The issue has since lapsed with the withdrawal by the applicant. The issue has demonstrated the need to defend the open space amenity of the ranges and the importance of an expanded Environmental Park (and eventually National Park) for the area.

Participation on Committees

The increasing requirement placed on Government Departments by new and amended Acts of Parliament is one factor leading to greater community participation on Committees set up for various purpose.

During the year involvment was maintained in the Mount Etna Mine Rehabilitation Committee. Invitations were taken up to join a Blackdown Tableland Consultative Committee and a draft managment plan for the Tableland was circulated.

Representation on a Bridled Nail-Tailed WallabyRecovery Team was also taken up. This project is at the critical stage of considering establishing a separate wild colony of this endangered species in a suitable habitat area.

Keppel Islands

Following on from involvment in the Development Control Plan on Great Keppel Island (which remains ungazetted) members have been involved in assisting various aspects of of the Wappaburra Land Claim for several areas of Vacant Crown Land. It is apparent that the aboriginal heritage and sites on the island are of great national estate significance and it has been pleasing to see recognition of this by tourist operators on the island. Their remains much to do on issues of waste managment and landscape design on Great Keppel.

The acquisition of the North Keppel Island Resort by the Education Department has seen a satisfactory end to a long running issue which threatened national; park values.

Mount Morgan Mine Decommissioning

For several years CCC has advocated and lobbied on issues relating to acid waste from the Mount Morgan Mine. With the final decommissioning by Mt. Morgan Ltd. and acquisition by another company it has been pleasing to see a reasonable effort to minimise acid seepage and establish a recycle system.

The transition of ownership has raised problems which should have been dealt with by the Department of Minerals and Energy given the advice we received that they had been asked to recommend which prospective buyer should be favoured.

The transition which has resulted has done nothing to increase protection for heritage listed buildings at the mine and has been little more than a cop out by the Department.

Central Queensland Land Care Centre

With funding for the Land Care Centre coming to an end during next financial year a number of major initiatives were taken during the year. The development of the library was continued by Glenmary Swan who resigned her employment in early 1993. Lindsay Fairweather continued is outreach role , which at times expanded outside the defined territory to assist groups as far afield as the NSW border. This was a lead in to Lindsay' subsequent appointment as Queensland Project Officer for Land Care with Queensland Conservation Council

Sonia Edwards has now taken the position of Land Care Officer and brings her experience as an Agricultural College graduate to the position

Fitzroy Catchment Symposium

An idea which initiated from the Land Care Centre this was a major initiative which involved considerable liasion with the University of Central Queensland and with Queensland Department of Primary Industries. The symposium was well attended, highly publicised and resulted in the most comprehensive set of papers on local land use and resource issues yet assembled.

The Symposium has lead on the a Fitzroy Catchment Co-ordinating Committee which Lindsay remains a representative on.

Belgamba Save The Bush Project

The smooth execution and completion of this funded project provided a good demonstration of the value of using ecological processes in weed control. Belgamba Holding on the Dee Range is now relatively free of weeds such as lantana, providing favourable conditions for regeneration of native species. The participation of the Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers in this project is appreciated.

John McCabe

President May 1993