Capricorn Conservation Council

President's Report for the 2007 Annual General Meeting
The Hut, Haigh Park, Livermore Street, Rockhampton
20 June 2007

This year has been one of consolidation for Capricorn Conservation Council. Our coordinator, Crystal Jasperson, has been with us all year and has worked hard establishing CCC's presence in the community. This has only been possible with the great help of funding from a number of sources, but predominantly from Fitzroy Basin Association.

We must remember that FBA sourced funding is really aimed at helping build the capacity of the voluntary environment sector so that we can more effectively stand on our own feet in future. Therefore the pressure remains on recruiting and retaining sufficient members; which is always difficult when there are few major local environmental issues in the headlines.

Coordinator

Crystal is employed part time at 4 days per week, and has been on a steep learning curve since she started with us in Feb 2006. I would like to thank her for the way she has taken on the job with great enthusiasm and dedication. While we are in the fortunate position of being able to fund Crystal's employment almost full time, it does not mean that we can just leave everything for her to do. Being in a one person office she has to do everything from checking the mail, appearing in TV, thru to meeting with MPs and Ministers. She does most of this on her own and it can get a bit cold and lonely up here. I encourage all dedicated CCC members, whether on the committee or not, to volunteer some time on a regular basis to help Crystal in achieving CCC's goals. Let her know what things you might be good at and she will try and engage you in the process, even if it is just part of an email group helping to draft letters. Mentoring.

Campaigns and Projects

CCC is pursuing a large number of issues which are listed in detail in the coordinator's report. I will just mention a few of the key ones here-

Waterpark and Sandy Creeks, Byfield

Federal funding has now been promised to build the pipeline to supply water from the Fitzroy River to the Capricorn Coast. This means that temporary emergency pumping from Sandy Creek will only be necessary for the next two years. We still need to be vigilant that pumping from Waterpark and Sandy Creeks is only done in accordance with the guidelines developed. There is still the potential for salt intrusion into the rainforest watertable during times of low creek flow and extreme tide events.

Central Qld Climate Project

A year ago I drew attention to the big issues of global warming and climate change, and stated that we are not really in a position to do much about these issues locally. How wrong I was, as thanks to an approach from some very committed religious groups we jointly staged the Central Qld Climate Project which held three public meetings with trained Al Gore presenter Sue Hayes. We thank all the groups and individuals who contributed financially to help cover the cost of holding these events.

Fitzroy Industry Infrastructure Study (FIIS)

A group of Central Qld councils have convinced the state government to look into the possibility of establishing of intensive feedlots and associated cropping on the lower Fitzroy. CCC does not support this scheme which we believe will cause a host of environmental problems. We also think it is quite ridiculous to be actively looking for ways to **consume** more water given the current climatic trends. It will also cause an advancement of the construction of Rookwood dam and the raising of Eden Bann Weir. Some of us had a tour of the affected areas including the Rookwood dam site last October and CCC has made personal representations to the three local MPs and Rockhampton Mayor. We have had briefings from officers of Dept of Infrastructure and DPI but we remain of the opinion that the potential environmental damage is too great for the dubious economic benefit that may or may not result.

***Publication of* "Plants of Capricornia"**

CCC is taking on the role of publisher for Rhonda Melzer and Joel Plumb's landmark text *Plants of Capricornia*. We have received a total of $27,000 in sponsorships and donations towards the printing costs. This will allow us to keep the retail price as low as possible to allow for the widest distribution. We are currently taking pre-publication orders and look forward to the book launch at the Birds Australia Congress on 6 October.

Coal Mine Rehabilitation Assessment Project

Crystal and I participated in an experimental project conducted at German Creek coal mine – "Stakeholder Visual Assessment of Coal Mine Site Rehabilitation"

Submissions

Written submissions were made to a number government and other bodies.

Meetings at The Hut

We continued with our ongoing program of providing a public forum for environmental issues and conducted 6 meetings with guest speakers on a wide range of subjects. The coordinators report will have a full list of quest speakers and topics.

Representatives on other groups

Crystal is the CCC rep on FBA's Stakeholder Council

Crystal and I represent CCC on Livingstone Shire Council's community Environmental Reference Group (ERG) which was fairly active during 2006. This was set up by the LSC to help ensure the best environmental outcomes for Waterpark and Sandy Creeks. It has been re-constituted to help come up with a workable solution to Causeway Lake.

I represent CCC on the CQ a New Millennium, a state government sponsored planning group for coordinating regional development.

Christine Fraser and Liese Childs represent the environment movement on the Fitzroy River Coastal Catchments (FRCC) committee.

Funding

I wish to express our thanks to FBA, the State government EPA and the Federal govt for their funding support.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge all of those who have supported us during the year including our committed volunteers. In particular I wish thank Christine Fraser who has served as Secretary for many many years and kept the minutes recorded and the filing system sorted in exemplary fashion. Also I would like to thank Jeanie Heaslop and Geoffrey Smith for their extensive effort and contribution over many years. We wish them well in their new careers in Townsville.

I also thank all committee members and others who have contributed in a variety of ways throughout the year.

Conclusion

We need to keep CCC strong so that the political decision makers know we are still watching. More pragmatically we need to keep up a membership numbers so that we retain our Tax Deductible status. Our membership fees are deliberately kept low to help low income earners stay as members. Our tax-deductible status allows other members to make an additional contribution and get a tax deduction at the same time.

Before finishing it is worth reminding ourselves that, as Al Gore says, this is no time for despair. Even though we are faced with the biggest environmental issue ever, which is about to gobble up the whole planet, and here we are in Central Queensland at the hub of the coal mining boom, which is all part of the same problem, there are things we can do that will make a difference. Short to medium term environmental issues are still extremely important and it is possible for a few people like us to really make a difference. Whether it is stopping illegal quarrying at Keppel Sands, influencing the route of a pipeline, or talking to every student at Mt Archer school about power saving, there is a lot that can be achieved, and with that a good deal of personal satisfaction. Just look at what Jeff Simmons has achieved at the Duckponds Reserve through persistence and sheer bloody-mindedness.

Ian Herbert
President