President's Report

Capricorn Conservation Council Inc.
Annual General Meeting – 31/07/2026

Acknowledgement of Country

I respectfully acknowledge that we meet today on Darumbal Country.

We pay our deepest respects to Darumbal Elders and Traditional Custodians, past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples here today.

Capricorn Conservation Council recognises that sovereignty was never ceded. We honour the enduring cultural, spiritual and environmental connections First Nations peoples have with Country.

CCC remains committed to walking respectfully alongside Traditional Custodians and ensuring Indigenous leadership, knowledge and cultural authority guide our organisation at every level.

Leadership through transition

The 2025–2026 year has been one of significant transition, growth and achievement for Capricorn Conservation Council.

I was elected President in early 2025 and have been honoured to serve CCC during one of the most demanding and transformative periods in its history.

I stepped into the President and Chair role at a time when no one else was willing or able to take on that responsibility. I did so to provide stability to the organisation, ensure the safety and wellbeing of our Coordinator, and support the goal of embedding Indigenous leadership at every tier of CCC.

Leadership is not always about stepping forward when circumstances are easy. Sometimes it means standing firm during uncertainty, protecting the people carrying the greatest workload and ensuring an organisation remains true to its values.

I extend my sincere thanks to CCC's former Presidents, Committee members and volunteers. Their collective service helped establish the foundation upon which our current strength and progress have been built.

A year of extraordinary achievement

Under the leadership of the Management Committee, Coordinator, Sub-Committee Chairs, Elders, Traditional Custodians and community partners, CCC has delivered on every major priority established for this reporting period.

This has been an extraordinary year in which CCC strengthened its governance, expanded its community reach, elevated youth leadership, embedded First Nations authority, delivered practical conservation projects and maintained a strong regional advocacy presence.

These achievements were made despite limited core funding, restricted staffing hours and a continuing reliance on significant voluntary and unpaid contributions.

Our work has demonstrated that a small regional organisation can achieve far-reaching outcomes when it is guided by strong values, trusted relationships, cultural knowledge, scientific evidence and community action.

Delivering the Strategic Plan 2026–2028

CCC's Strategic Plan 2026–2028 provides a clear direction for the organisation. It centres:

• First Nations leadership and self-determination.

• Biodiversity protection.

• Science-based environmental advocacy.

• Climate action and a just transition.

• Youth leadership.

• Community engagement and regional partnerships.

• Organisational resilience.

During 2025–2026, CCC made substantial progress across each of these priorities. This was supported by strong operational planning and the extraordinary coordination required to turn strategic commitments into practical outcomes.

First Nations leadership and cultural integrity

One of CCC's greatest achievements has been its continuing transition towards an organisation in which Indigenous leadership is embedded across governance, project planning, research, education and Caring for Country.

Cultural awareness training has been delivered to Committee members, staff, the Youth Sub-Committee and the broader membership. Cultural protocols, permissions, appropriate acknowledgement and fair payment for cultural contributions are now fundamental considerations in our work.

CCC remains proud to work alongside Darumbal Elders and leaders, Woppaburra Traditional Custodians, the Ghungalu Three Rivers Sub-Committee, Woorabinda community, Yarbun Creations, Thoolbar Designs and other First Nations organisations, families, businesses and cultural leaders.

Through these relationships, CCC has supported Indigenous-led cultural learning, truth-telling, research, environmental education, youth immersion, Caring for Country and community events across Central Queensland.

The Ghungalu Three Rivers Sub-Committee has become an important culturally governed forum through which Ghungalu descendants can come together to protect Country, culture, heritage and the McKenzie, Comet and Dawson Rivers.

Our partnerships with Woppaburra have enabled young people, researchers, members and community partners to learn on Woppaburra Land and Sea Country under the guidance of Elders, Traditional Custodians and cultural leaders.

This is the direction CCC must continue to follow.

In the future, we hope Indigenous Elders and mentors will join the CCC Management Committee and help guide the organisation from within its highest level of governance.

However, CCC does not expect Elders and cultural leaders to provide this knowledge and responsibility without recognition. We intend to seek funding that allows appropriate sitting-fee remuneration for Indigenous Elders and mentors serving on the Committee.

Cultural leadership is skilled and valuable work. It carries significant responsibility and must not be treated as a free resource.

Youth leadership and organisational succession

The CCC Youth Sub-Committee has become one of the organisation's greatest strengths.

Our young members are not simply attending CCC activities. They are helping plan events, chair meetings, advise the organisation, represent CCC publicly, undertake practical conservation and shape the organisation's future.

The Youth Sub-Committee has delivered and supported cultural immersion, biodiversity activities, reef education, community clean-ups, tree planting, Junior Landcare, advocacy, science education and Youth Week events across the region.

The future movement of youth participation into positions on the Executive Committee represents exactly the leadership pathway CCC has worked to create.

This is succession planning in action. Young people are gaining experience, confidence and responsibility before stepping into organisational governance.

Their progression demonstrates that CCC is not only talking about the next generation—it is actively making space for them to lead.

Community conservation and campaign delivery

CCC delivered and supported an extensive program of community conservation, education and cultural activities during the year.

Major initiatives included:

• National Tree Day and Caring for Country at Capricorn Caves.

• Clean Up Australia Day and coastal clean-up activities.

• Woppaburra-led Caring for Country and youth immersion on Konomie Island.

• Reconciliation on Country at Woorabinda.

• The Ghungalu Nunee Gardens NAIDOC cultural learning event in Blackwater.

• Youth Week activities across Rockhampton and the Capricorn Coast.

• Native planting on Nurim, Darumbal Country.

• Biodiversity Youth Day and the Junior Landcare Relaunch.

• CoralWatch, reef education and Outback to Ocean activities.

• School engagement, science education and NAIDOC activities.

• Community workshops, public discussions and environmental outreach throughout Central Queensland.

These events were not isolated activities. Together, they advanced CCC's strategic priorities by connecting community, culture, science, education and practical environmental action.

Environmental advocacy

CCC continued to provide a strong and independent regional voice for the environment.

The organisation contributed to policy consultations, planning processes, environmental referrals, threatened-species recovery planning, reef protection, energy transition discussions and proposed developments affecting Country and biodiversity.

CCC represented Central Queensland at ministerial and environmental roundtables and maintained constructive relationships with local, state and federal representatives.

Our advocacy has remained science based, community focused and culturally informed. We have worked to ensure the voices of regional communities, Traditional Custodians and young people are heard in decisions affecting the future of Central Queensland.

Governance and organisational development

CCC undertook substantial governance work during the year.

This included the development and implementation of:

• The Strategic Plan 2026–2028.

• The Youth Sub-Committee Terms of Reference.

• The Ghungalu Three Rivers Sub-Committee Terms of Reference.

• Hut Use Guidelines and Agreement.

• Improved cultural-safety, consent and Blue Card requirements.

• Stronger grant-management and reporting processes.

• Clearer organisational roles, responsibilities and accountability.

These systems are essential for protecting our people, our organisation, our property and the communities who place their trust in CCC.

The Hut continues to serve as CCC's environmental centre, historical home and community hub. Maintaining this space, its records, resources and daily operations requires substantial work, much of which has been provided through the personal commitment of the Coordinator and volunteers.

Workforce and operational capacity

CCC secured targeted funding to strengthen its administration, payroll and human-resource functions.

Despite continuing funding insecurity, we maintained the Coordinator and Executive Officer position. This role has been central to nearly every achievement recorded throughout the year.

The Coordinator has developed partnerships, secured grants, delivered events, supported two Sub-Committees, prepared submissions, maintained communications, coordinated volunteers, managed the Hut, supported research and carried an extraordinary operational workload.

Many additional hours have been contributed without payment to ensure CCC met its responsibilities and delivered the work promised to community and funding bodies.

This is not sustainable.

CCC must secure more unrestricted and recurrent funding to ensure staff are paid appropriately, working hours are realistic and the organisation has adequate financial and administrative support.

Financial governance

CCC experienced a transition of Treasurers during the year.

The Treasurer's role is one of the most demanding voluntary positions in the organisation. CCC currently does not have adequate funding to employ a dedicated accountant, bookkeeper or administration officer, and this has made the role difficult to fill and sustain.

These capacity limitations were reflected in the findings of the financial audit.

CCC accepts the audit findings and is committed to strengthening financial documentation, internal controls, payroll administration, superannuation compliance, grant tracking and Committee oversight.

We also recognise that our previous Treasurers were volunteers who gave considerable time to performing complex financial duties without adequate training or professional support. The responsibility for addressing the audit findings belongs to the organisation and Management Committee as a whole.

I express my deepest appreciation to Rob Mooney for stepping in when CCC needed support. His contribution helped the organisation through an important transition.

Our incoming Treasurer will bring stronger financial-management capacity and will be supported through ongoing training and mentoring from sister conservation organisations and professional service providers.

Payroll, superannuation and Business Activity Statement requirements have now been contracted to AdminPro Solutions. This arrangement provides independent oversight, reduces conflicts of interest and helps ensure staff are paid correctly and on time.

The incoming President will also assume responsibility for employment management and work alongside the incoming Coordinator and Treasurer to strengthen financial systems and seek sustainable funding.

Funding and sustainability

CCC's Coordinator has done an exceptional job securing grants for youth leadership, First Nations-led projects, biodiversity, science, cultural learning, community education and Caring for Country.

This funding has enabled CCC to deliver a level of work far beyond what our small core operational grant could otherwise support.

However, most of this funding is short term, restricted and project specific. Every grant creates substantial responsibilities for project delivery, financial tracking, evidence collection, reporting and acquittal.

CCC's annual core funding of just over **$68,000** must support the essential operations of the organisation, maintain the Hut and contribute towards the Coordinator's employment.

The incoming Queensland Nature Values Connect funding will support youth-led and on-Country environmental activities until 2028, but it cannot replace the unrestricted funding required for general administration, financial management and staffing.

CCC must secure another major donor, funding partner or recurrent grant if the organisation is to maintain its current workload safely and sustainably.

Looking ahead

Capricorn Conservation Council enters 2026–2027 with a strong sense of purpose, a clear strategic direction and an emerging generation of leaders.

Our future priorities are to:

• Continue strengthening First Nations leadership across governance and program delivery.

• Seek sitting-fee funding so Indigenous Elders and mentors can participate in the Management Committee without being expected to contribute their expertise without remuneration.

• Support the next generation of CCC leaders moving from the Youth Sub-Committee into organisational governance.

• Strengthen financial systems, accountability and audit readiness.

• Secure diversified and recurrent funding for staffing, administration and conservation programs.

• Continue science-based advocacy on regional environmental challenges.

• Expand cultural learning, Caring for Country, biodiversity protection and community engagement.

• Ensure staff, Elders, cultural leaders and community contributors are treated fairly and paid appropriately.

CCC's strategic direction is shaped by science, guided by cultural wisdom and grounded in community action.

Closing reflections

Serving as President has required me to stand firm through uncertainty, support the Coordinator, protect the organisation and ensure CCC continued moving towards Indigenous leadership at every tier.

I am proud of what we have achieved together.

This work belongs to every Elder, Traditional Custodian, youth member, Committee member, volunteer, scientist, educator, partner and community member who has walked beside CCC.

The strength of CCC does not come from one person or one position. It comes from people who are prepared to show up, listen, act with courage and carry responsibility for something larger than themselves.

With the continued guidance of Elders and Indigenous mentors, the leadership of our incoming Executive, and the support of our members and partners, CCC is positioned to enter its next chapter with integrity and purpose.

It is a chapter that honours Country, empowers community, raises the voices of young people and delivers lasting environmental outcomes for Central Queensland.

I extend my sincere best wishes to the incoming President and Management Committee and offer my full support as they take on this important responsibility.

It has been an honour to serve Capricorn Conservation Council.

Loretta George
President
Capricorn Conservation Council Incorporated
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