

## WHITSUNDAY CONSERVATION COUNCIL

### PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2021-22 - AGM 21 March 2022

Thanks for coming everyone, and thanks for your ongoing support.

Wow, what a lot has happened in a year!!

**Just a reminder of our Mission: To conserve and protect the unique natural assets of the Whitsundays through advocacy, education and action.**

As I'm sure that all of you are aware, this is an enormous aspiration, given our resources and the number and scale of the issues we are dealing with. However, if we don't try all is lost, so we have given it a red-hot go, and with everyone's help we hope to be an even stronger voice for the environment in the Whitsundays.

#### Some milestones:

- May 7<sup>th</sup> 2020 incorporated and May 28<sup>th</sup> 2020 ACNC Registration
- June 2021: reached 1000 members and supporters, Tree Tops bi-monthly newsletter launched
- We have established memberships with Mackay Conservation Group, Queensland Conservation Council Inc, Queensland Water and Land Carers Inc, Tourism Whitsunday Ltd and Hands off Our Charities
- This year we will be making an important addition to our Committee: Whitsunday Traditional Owners will to be invited to nominate a representative.

#### Supporting Local Environmental Organisations:

- At present we have 12 local environment-related groups who are listed on the WCC 'We Care' web page & also promoted at the Green Room events every month at the Airlie Beach Markets. These are:  
Eco Barge Clean Seas, Fauna Rescue, Fight For Airlie, Whitsunday Catchment Landcare, Mackay Conservation Group (MCG), OUCH Volunteers, Residents for Traffic Action, Save Our Foreshore, Tangaroa Blue, Whitsunday Organic Community Gardens, Whitsunday Seagrass Volunteers, and the facebook groups: Wildlife of the Whitsunday & Mackay Region and Snakes of the Whitsundays.
- We share messages from these groups with our mailing list to help promote their events and activities.
- We also forward relevant information that we receive to relevant groups to keep them informed.

#### Fauna Rescue

- Spread the word about nest-boxes for wildlife available from FRW
- Featured articles about fruit bat conservation, climate change impacts and their ecological value in the WCC newsletter

#### Fight for Airlie

- High-rise campaigns and events promoted on the WCC website, in newsletters and to mailing list

#### MCG

- Shared of MCG events and campaigns with our members
- Joint press releases & collaborations e.g. the Urannah Dam proposal

#### OUCH Volunteers

- Reef, water quality and Climate Change projects are ongoing
- Tony has attended the WLMAC meetings

### **Residents for Traffic Action**

- Queensland Main Roads Shute Harbour Road 'upgrade' campaign updates on our website & in newsletters

### **Save Our Foreshore**

- we have assisted the community to make submissions on the Airlie Beach Masterplan through a template on our webpage
- the High-rise project is featured on our website
- Regular updates in WCC newsletter/ emails to interested members

### **Whitsunday Catchment Landcare (WCL)**

- WCL nursery promoted as part of the Hugging Tree promotion in our newsletter

### **Whitsunday Seagrass Volunteers**

- Go Slow for Those Below (to protect marine wildlife in Pioneer Bay) project page on website and promoted in newsletter

### **CURRENT WCC/JOINT PROJECTS:**

#### **Reef and Climate Change**

- Received and distributed Climate Action Now stickers and signs at Airlie markets
- 1.5 keeps Reefs Alive social media scrapbook project
- Newsletter article on UNESCO decision to delay GBR 'in danger' listing & upcoming UNESCO Mission
- Tony Attended 'First Adani Coal' press conf. with Sen. McAllister in Mackay
- Submission to 'Stop reversal of GBR protection measures' sion made by WCC

#### **Tree Clearing and MLES (WRC)**

- Submission being developed to WRC on Matters of Local Environmental Significance
- List of significant trees being developed; anyone can nominate trees for the list using a form on our website
- We have posted a form letter on our website to assist members of the community to report tree clearing to WRC.
- Committee members met with Scott Hardy, Coordinator of Natural Resource Management and Climate at WRC, to discuss developing a significant tree register
- 'Hugging Tree' plaque placed on Shingley Hill, in partnership with WRC, to raise awareness about Whitsunday Bottle Trees and the WCL nursery

#### **Whitsunday Heart of the Reef Discovery Centre (WHRDC)**

- WCC has successfully led and engaged the community and WRC to build a Heart of the Reef Discovery Centre to, a land based Reef education facility which will also be a citizen science hub for the region. Now that WRC has included it in their Economic Development Strategy, WCC and other supporters of the project will be looking for opportunities to make it a reality.
- WCC recommended HRDC be considered for funding from the Qld Government to conduct a feasibility study and business case
- 12 presentations given on HRDC to local organisations including the WRC, Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association, Coral Sea Marina, Whitsunday Coast Chamber of Commerce, Amanda Camm
- MP and the Tourism Whitsunday Board.

### **'Go Slow for Those Below' Pioneer Bay Project**

- This proposal is now in the hands of Scott Hardy at Council, we now need to keep following up and if necessary put pressure on. Lindsay to talk to Scott.
- Drone photos and videos from GBR Foundation's Johnny Gaskell documented dugongs with calves, dolphins & lots of turtles, as well as near misses with watercraft, all in 1 day. These have been included in newsletter articles & facebook posts to raise awareness
- A presentation delivered at the Whitsunday LMAC, asking for support from Government agencies to propose a 'Go Slow' area for Cannonvale to protect marine wildlife
- Met with the Regional Harbourmaster, Mr Jason Britton to discuss the process for establishing MSQ 'Go Slow' areas locally. These have to be proposed by a Government Agency.

### **Port of Airlie & Shingley Beach High-rise (SOF & Fight for Airlie)**

- Protests held at site and at Airlie lookout, press releases and media stories.
- The Planning & Environment Court decision is now being appealed, a GOFundMe fundraiser has been set up for donations to pay the legal fees
- Submissions invited and promoted on WCC website: 2035 community submissions were assisted by us against the high-rise
- A 'how you can help' page has been established on WCC website
- Regular updates on the situation are sent to objectors and interested parties

### **Transport and Main Roads Shute Harbour road widening etc. (RTA)**

- Case lodged with the Ombudsman about the lack of response from TMR
- Letters sent to the Minister and to the local Main Roads department regarding the detail of the design and lack of consultation remain unanswered
- Articles in Whitsunday News
- Email template provided for concerned residents to use, sent in newsletter

### **State Capture**

According to the World Bank, State Capture or Corporate Capture occurs when powerful or wealthy interests interfere with decision-making, or have access to decision-makers beyond that of ordinary citizens, and assume a degree of control over the rule-making process itself. If this sounds all too familiar then you know of the problem. It is an insidious creeping influence that can take hold unnoticed, until it is already the established norm. We all need to stay on the alert for this and call it out when we see it, as it is at the root of our failure to address most of the environmental and conservation issues that face us.

### **Awareness Raising and advocacy:**

- 'Green room' held at Airlie Beach Markets on the first Saturday of the month
- Reducing Organic Waste Survey promoted (Qld Government)
- Promoted WRC Climate Hub Climate Change Community Survey
- 'Hugging Tree' Whitsunday Bottle Tree promotion & plaque with WRC
- Hands off Our Charities campaign: WCC endorsed a letter to the federal opposition requesting reforms to enable charities to freely advocate for their causes without fear of retribution from Government
- Endorsed Framework for a Fair Democracy; State Capture is blocking progress on a lot of environmental issues in Australia: the State Capture petition was shared on our website
- Faye and Elvyn met with James Gilmour to discuss environmental implications of the Gilmour Space Technologies rocket range in Bowen

### **Submissions made by WCC to Government organisations**

- to the Enquiry into the Economic & Regulatory Frameworks for Qld Island Resorts (in progress)
- to WRC on MLES in progress
- to Qld Government on an Independent EPA for Queensland
- to WRC on Draft Whitsunday Regional Council Draft Corporate Plan 2021 – 2026
- to GBRMPA on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Draft Tourism Management Action Strategy
- the Federal Government on Terms of Reference for the Inquiry into the Prudential Regulation of Investment in Australia's Export Industries (= Federal Government support for investments in coal & gas)

### **Watch this space:**

- information request made by Lindsay on controlled burns on the Whitsunday islands
- a DA has been submitted for the Hook Island resort redevelopment, we are waiting for the consultation period to start

### **Meetings with politicians:**

- Amanda Camm
- Meaghan Scanlon Qld Environment Minister
- Shane Hamilton, Labour Candidate for Dawson
- Stirling Hinchcliffe MP (Minister for Tourism etc.)
- Mr Sam O'Connor Member for Bonney (LNP) Shadow Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Science Tourism etc. visited Green Room at launch

### **Events**

- 11 'Green Room' events held at the Airlie markets, usually on the last Saturday of each month, plus a night market stall for the Reef Festival. This one is a team effort as it takes quite a bit of organising, many thanks to Heather, Andrew, Suzette, Adrian, Faye, Clay and Jonathan for their tireless work on this. It can be a hot, sweaty job in summer and then there's the wind & rain... but it gives us an opportunity to interact with the community and promote our member groups and our objectives.
- Airlie Markets Stallholder Parking fundraiser, mostly Faye and Elmer have done 40 parking days = 300 volunteer hours in a year. At \$5 per vehicle it's surprising how it has added up. This will continue until the land sells.
- Our Picnic at Galbraith Park in August 2021 had 20 attendees. Thanks to the Whitsunday Community Garden for the use of their shelter & for the garden tour, and thanks to Dave Young for his tour of the WCL Galbraith Park revegetation sites.
- Christmas get-together

### **SPECIAL THANKS TO:**

- Andrew, our webmaster & newsletter editor extraordinaire
- Faye: secretary and general oracle of all knowledge
- The inexhaustible (hopefully) management Committee and the volunteers who have given their time and sweat (real sweat at the markets!) to make things happen
- WCL for lending us their BIG gazebo
- Tropical designs for making our banners
- Megan at Kapow Interactive for her support for our website
- Last but not least our members and everyone else who has supported us and helped our local environment over the last year

**We are always looking for volunteers. Tell us about the topic that fires you up, or check out our wish list:**

- A digital campaigner who can help raise our profile on social media (urgent!)
- More volunteers for the market stall/ car parking to help spread the workload
- Volunteers to assist with project work: this can be donating your time to doing anything from online research to helping to draft a submission or attend a meeting
- If you prefer the outdoors, we need photographs of the trees on the significant tree list so far

### **Looking forward to the next 12 months**

I hope that this year we find a keen social media volunteer to help us to really elevate our profile on social media and bring more traffic to our website.

Of course we will continue to work on our established projects and new ones will come along. On top of that, there is the upcoming Federal election (and potential change of local Mayor), which will have a huge effect on the direction things go in the environmental space this year. Please consider what you can do to promote environmental protection this election, especially addressing climate change and habitat protection; for example writing letters to the editor or to Government, sharing information and just talking to people: we can all do our bit.

Working in a huge field like conservation, we can be sure that the issues requiring a response from us will keep on pouring in. We will always need to balance our desire to take action with our capacity to sustain the workload without burning people out. This is a very real problem for any volunteer community group. For those who are here, think about how you or someone you know, might like to get involved and come and talk to us about it. With more of us working together we grow stronger and can make more of a difference for our local environment and community.

Thanks so much to everyone who has supported us to this point, and let's keep trying to make change for the better.

Jacquie Sheils

President

Whitsunday Conservation Council

21 March 2022