

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT
THE COASTWATCHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**EUROBODALLA REGIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS
SATURDAY 24th OCTOBER 2020**

I would like to welcome members and friends to the 2019-2020 AGM.

It has been a very full year for Coastwatchers with many achievements, but also sadness with the passing of long standing member Richard Roberts and the devastating bush-fires that resulted in the destruction of so much of our native forests and wildlife.

Richard Roberts was a long standing member and former Coastwatchers Secretary and instrumental in keeping the Association viable over recent years. He also created an immaculate archival history of Coastwatchers, including an almost complete set of our Association meeting minutes. Up until last year Richard served as a community representative on the Dargues Reef Community Consultative Committee and it is largely due to his and Emmett O'Loughlin's efforts, that cyanide is no longer used for on site processing and other strict environmental conditions were imposed. Richard's voluntary contribution to Coastwatchers and the environment is acknowledged with extreme gratitude.

Meetings - The Management Committee met officially five times over the past year, three of them by Zoom, and twice socially with a successful Spring barbecue at the Gardens in November and the launching of the Koala Research Project by Federal MP Fiona Phillips on 20 February.

Submissions – Coastwatchers made a number of submissions to various inquiries this year, including: The Natural Resources Commission Citizens Science Strategy, The Draft Private Native Forestry Codes of Practice NSW, The EPBC Act Review, an Objection to the Eden Timber Optimisation Hub, the NSW Bushfire Inquiry, The Dargues Reef Water Management Plan, and The Natural Resources Commission NSW Monitoring and Improvement Steering Committee.

The Environment Fund Committee has been in hibernation this year due to the Covid lock-down. The last meeting was on 4 December for a verbal briefing from young legends on their projects. Environmental projects involving three local high schools have been put on hold. The Committee will meet early in 2021 to discuss current and future projects.

Forest logging issues – Coastwatchers members Joslyn and Nick worked with the new South Brooman State Forest Conservation Group in reporting logging breaches to the EPA, which resulted in the issuing of stop work orders. They also audited Mogo State Forest and after the EPA investigation, Forestry Corporation NSW voluntarily suspended operations for two months. Due to the damage incurred by last summers severe fires the EPA had set stricter conditions on loggers, including a ban on the felling or damaging of hollow-bearing trees. However, not long after logging resumed, the campaigners again found evidence of more felling of hollow-bearing trees, known to be suitable habitat for yellow-bellied gliders, powerful owls and other fauna. Another area further north is earmarked for harvesting in September 2021 and will be monitored for possible breaches. Great work Joslyn and Nick.

Koala Research Project - Dr Keith Jolliffe reports that the fieldwork for the Commonwealth-funded project, testing koala habitat viability between Wamban and Nerrigundah is now complete. Volunteers are in the analysis phase, with reporting due by mid-2021 after an agreed postponement thanks to fires and COVID. Indications are that eucalypt species, slope, aspect, water access render the patch suitable as a breeding corridor for low density populations, with the main inhibitor being topographic ruggedness. The wider Eurobodalla Koala Project's public awareness campaign is benefiting from enthusiasm amongst private landholders for plot surveys on their properties, and from the ongoing media coverage of NSW koala issues including local activism about State Forest breaches. Those interested in the Eurobodalla

Koala Project can learn more at www.eurokoalas.com.

Coastal Management - For various reasons the Coastal and Environment Management Advisory (CEMAC) has not met for two years and was recently disbanded. Council has called for expressions of interest from members of the community to serve on a new Committee. They will be involved in the drafting of a Coastal Management Plan for the Eurobodalla, based on the new NSW Coastal Management Act 2016 and Coastal Management SEPP. After the long break some important matters relating to coastal projects are due to go before Council in November. Coastwatchers hopes to have at least one representative on the Committee, yet to be announced.

Dargues Reef Goldmine - Stewart Needham is currently the Eurobodalla representative on the Dargues Reef Gold Mine Community Consultative Committee. He was involved in the drafting of a Water Management Plan for the operational phase and submitted Coastwatchers concerns in response to the Plan in February regarding water management, water quality and stream health monitoring, incident reporting and the timeliness of reporting and action in the event of an incident that could compromise down-stream water quality and ecosystem health. Also of concern was the use of the toxicant, xanthate, in the flotation process of mineral processing and Stewart recommended that more research be undertaken to better understand the risks, consequences and possible remedial actions. Thank you Stewart.

Social Media – Thanks to Mark the Coastwatchers' website is a comprehensive, up to date record of the Association's activities and achievements, including Minutes dating back to the inaugural meeting. It is a very useful reference tool for those interested in environmental issues in the region, especially of Coastwatchers' participation.

Joslyn, among her many other activities, has kept the Coastwatchers' Facebook page up to date, posting items of interest to members and friends as they happen and has put Coastwatchers out there in the highly utilised world of social media. Thank you Joslyn.

Coastal alliances – The Association works closely with other groups in the region and is a member of the NSW Nature Conservation Council, the National Parks Association of NSW (NPA), and the (NSW) SE Region Conservation Alliance (SERCA). Coastwatchers also has a working alliance with local groups; the Nature Coast Marine Group (NCMG), SHASA, 350 Eurobodalla and Eurobodalla 2020.

Mike Thompson has been very active with his various forest and climate action activities and his involvement as a representative on the NCC and NPA. He is planning and organising a 2nd South Coast Forest Forum at Batemans Bay in 2022 in conjunction with NCC, NPA and Coastwatchers. An event to keep in mind.

I will not be renominating as President this year and in stepping down I would like to stress the importance of continuing the environmental watch dog role of Coastwatchers. Now, more than ever before, we need a proactive, committed Association and a dedicated Committee to meet the environmental challenges that lie ahead.

A huge thank you to the outgoing Management Committee and a welcome to the new Committee.

Reina Hill, President

24/10/2020