

NVCA PRESIDENT'S REPORT Grassy Head, Saturday 11 February 2017

This year has seen a great upsurge in our activities in terms of our Forest Campaign, aiming to stop logging of native forests. Our strong focus on this issue is in response to the appalling decisions by State government to water down our State's Biodiversity laws, and leave the community, and our fellow species, with totally inadequate legislation, in terms of biodiversity, water quality, and loss of threatened and endangered species – plant and animal.

The Forest Campaign has been undertaken in co-operation with North East Forest Alliance (NEFA), with a key focus on addressing and publicising the destruction of koala habitat, and the plummeting numbers of koalas in the wild.

In this area, Lyn Orrego and Paula Flack have worked tirelessly, with wonderful results in terms of the campaign. We now have a colour flyer inviting the public to look at what is happening now in our native forests, detailing Forestry Corporation's current and proposed activities, describing the diverse values of native forests, and encouraging the public in what they can do about this terrible state of affairs for our native forests. Thank you so much, Lyn and Paula, for all the background work in bringing those ideas to fruition, in the form of the finally produced pamphlet, via the wonderful work of Maia and Andrew, graphic designers/advisors in Nambucca Heads.

The project also yielded T-shirts with "forests 4 ever", and these are worn at our market info stalls and any other awareness-raising activities.

Lyn and Paula have also worked together throughout this year, in further enhancing the fantastic power point presentation – "Going ... going ... gone forever?" which was developed in 2016. Thank you!

The Forest Campaign has been the main focus of our work throughout this year. However, we have managed to cover other issues, as and when they emerged.

In February I addressed Council opposing the proposal to sell off some Crown Land at Gordon Park, to adjoining private landowners. Sale did not proceed.

Also, in February I attended a workshop at Council re proposed allocation of Environment Levy (EL) funds towards funding consultants GDH to conduct a study re dredging the Nambucca River and a shoaling investigation for the lower estuary of the Nambucca river.

We pointed out that there is already ample information available, from previous shoaling studies, demonstrating that this study would be an unnecessary expenditure of EL funds.

At that time, we had Rudy van Drie as NVCA's representative on Council's Estuary and Coastline Committee. We have now appointed Paula Flack as rep on this committee, with Phil Margolis as alternative rep.

In September NVCA conducted an event at Argents Hill Hall – 'Koalas in Crisis in your Backyard', with trading table, excellent musician Paul Robert Burton and a great time had by all, which raised much needed funds for the Forest Campaign. Lots of T-shirts sold, and 'out there', no doubt proving to be further promotion for our campaign.

In June we joined NEFA and Greens Candidate Carol Vernon and others in a walk to promote awareness re Climate Change – the Climate Change Pram Walk, in Nambucca Heads CBD. This was well received by the general community passing by.

For Youth Environment Day, Nambucca Heads primary school contributed to the Threatened Species Art Competition. Lyn and Paula attended the launch of the exhibition in Sydney Parliament House, dressed as a koala and a quoll! Many eyebrows raised in the corridors of power!

In November NVCA held a very successful membership drive / awareness-raising event, at the home of Wendy Kaczan, at Grassy Head. This was extremely well supported, with some forty people enjoying a wonderful lunch, followed by the power point presentation, and questions. Thank you to all involved, for the amazing food, your great company, and especially to Wendy and Chris, our hosts. We gained nine new members. I extend a warm welcome to all new members, and a sincere thank you to our existing members for your ongoing support.

We have maintained our membership of NSW Nature Conservation Council (NCC), and this year we were able to make a donation to the Environmental Defender's Office (EDO), to support them in their valuable work representing community groups and individuals in legal actions against mega companies, government departments, etc., as appropriate.

NVCA has also maintained our connection with Lock the Nambucca Valley (LNV), and recently some of our members attended an auction at Scotts Head in aid of the parent organisation Lock the Gate. The event was very well patronised. As LNV has not needed to actively engage with any new mining exploration lease in our Valley these past two or so years, they have chosen to become a group member of NVCA, so LNV can be covered by our Public Liability Insurance, for the purpose of undertaking its activities, in concurrence with the NVCA Executive.

We have held information stalls at markets at Coffs Harbour in October, and Valla Beach, in February, August and October. NVCA's gazebo is proving a wise acquisition, as are the folding tables. Thank you to our inveterate 'hunter-gatherers' Phil, Carol and Lyn.

We also held a highly successful raffle, with many thanks to Sally Cavanagh, for donating the valuable prize, won by local friends who later joined as members. A wonderful outcome!

Throughout this year our meetings have mainly been held at the home of Phil and Carol Margolis, our Vice President and our stalwart Secretary / Treasurer, while on occasion we have also held meetings at Lyn and Dee's homes in Nambucca. Thank you all, so very much for always making us so welcome. Long may this continue, (please, Phil and Carol) ... ☺

I also say a huge Thank you to Phil, in his role as Vice President, for his balanced perspective on all issues, and to Carol, for your quiet, patient way of sorting everything out, and always being prepared to despatch documents and communication of all matters required. Thank you both!

This year we lodged various submissions ...

(February) to NPWS re Yarriabinni National Park re Draft Plan of Management;

(March) To Nambucca Shire Council re Council proposal to use Environment Levy funds towards funding consultants GDH to conduct a study re dredging the Nambucca River and shoaling investigation for the lower estuary of the river;

(May and June) to Department of Planning and Environment, and also to Department of Environment and Heritage, re Draft North Coast Regional Plan;

(June) To Forest Corporation re Tuckers Knob State Forest Operations; and to State Government Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) re illegal clear felling across region; and to Nambucca Shire Council re 2016 – 2017 Environment Levy Program.

In further administrative matters, we have updated our membership application forms, and also updated our Constitution, setting out operating protocols and requirements re office bearers, Executive, quorum, Aims, membership fees and processes for membership application.

We have also re-vamped our logo and letterhead. Again, great appreciation goes to all the executive for input on choices we have made re graphics, but especially to Paula, who carried out all liaison with Maia.

To Lyn, I extend my great gratitude, not only for all the sterling work on the Forest Campaign, but also for being a gentle and kind 'ear' for me, throughout this year (and always).

Throughout the year we have been given the benefit of very thorough and comprehensive Council reports by our Council representatives, Clr. Paula Flack, and Clr. Anne Smyth, who each provide excellent input on environmental matters which involve Council. As is well known, Paula has now stepped down from Council, after twelve years' amazing service to our community, particularly on all matters of environmental protection. Thank you Paula! ... for that faithful service to us all, and thank you to you and Anne, for your Council Reports to our meetings.

Other committee members, Dee, Sally, Alyson and Doug, have always been of great help throughout this year, ever ready to help at market stalls etc., as well as providing valuable input at our meetings. Also thank you to John for special help at Valla Beach Community Markets. Thank you all!

I extend my personal thanks to each and every one of our valiant group – long may we survive and even flourish!

On a personal note, as you know, I retired from paid work in mid 2015. I find it has taken me until now, early 2017 to really switch off from my work role, and create space for myself to explore what I choose to do more of, at this time. Other pursuits are calling me, wanting added focus and time.

Accordingly, I have chosen to stand down as President of NVCA, as from this AGM.

I am happy to continue as a general Committee member, if elected as such.

Love and appreciation to you all,

Georgette Allen