



## MINUTES

### WEPA Annual General Meeting

8pm Tuesday 21 March 2017

Glенаeon School Hall, 121 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag

**Attendances:** Marie Bassett; Mark Crew; Barry Duncan; Cotter Erickson; Dennis Fernandez; Meredith Foley; John Holder; Susan Horsley; Diana Jones; Geoff Osborne; Christina Pender; Diana Pryde; John Pryde; John Rawson; Lynne Saville; Gay Spies; John Steel; Bob Taffel; Kate Westoby; Dominic Wilson

**Visitors:** Alice Beauchamp; Gabe Fernandez; Andrew Little (BPN; STEP); Fergus McPherson

#### **Apologies:**

Margaret and Carrick Chambers; Heather and David Cooper; Helen Jordan; Harold Spies;

#### **1. Welcome and apologies**

Gay Spies opened proceedings and welcomed everyone to the 35<sup>th</sup> WEPA Annual General Meeting.

#### **2. President's Report**

In presenting the President's report for March 2016- March 2017, Gay spoke about the following:

##### **Meetings**

- Business meetings were held bi-monthly during the year.
- Every second month, public meetings were held with speakers including Steve Austin on the use of canines for conservation; Andy Burton on local birds; Dr Andrew Huggett on surveying fauna in the WCC area.

##### **Stalls**

- A WEPA stall to provide information and collect petition signatures was included at the WCC Fauna Fair in March 2016.
- We also had a successful WEPA native plant stall during the WCC Spring Fair in September 2016. The Willoughby Spring Fair will now be known as the 'Emerge Spring Festival'.

##### **Land Clearing**

- Earlier in the year WEPA members participated in meetings, demonstrations, petition writing and other forms of activism in opposition to the State Government's Biodiversity Conservation package.



- We added WEPA's voice to the almost 5,500 submissions which challenged the legislation.

## **Crown Land**

- Concerns were raised in July about proposed changes to Crown Land management and fears that reforms would open up Crown Land (which includes over 70 packages such as parks and reserves in Willoughby) to sale and/or commercialisation.
- A WEPA submission was lodged in July to the NSW Parliamentary inquiry urging recognition of Crown Lands as vitally important to the ecological and social health of our neighbourhoods.

## **Greater Sydney Commission**

- In July WEPA collaborated with the Lane Cove Bushland and Conservation Society to seek better community engagement with the Greater Sydney Commission (GSC) prior to the release of the draft District Plans in November.
- WEPA committee members have since participated in a range of workshops and information sessions on the district plans. Gay noted that we appeared to be fortunate in having Deborah Dearing as the North District Commissioner. To date she had proven to be open and honest in her vision of the role of the GSC.
- We are currently preparing a final response to the GSC North District Plan which is due by 31 March.

## **Channel 9 Development**

- WEPA made a submission in August opposing any increase in the building storey height and apartment numbers of the proposed redevelopment on the Channel 9 site (6-30 Artarmon Road, Willoughby) above the 8 story and 400 apartment limits that were set by the Land & Environment Court and Planning Assessment Commission after extensive community consultation. Gay congratulated Bob Taffel for his advocacy on this matter.

## **Gore Hill submission**

- WEPA made a submission in August on the Draft Plan of Management and Landscape for the proposed Gore Hill redevelopment stressing the need to maintain mature native trees where possible and utilising native plants in landscaping.
- Bob Taffel noted that the proposed site for the sports centre has since been relocated in the plan.

## **Medium Density Housing submission**

- In December WEPA commented on the draft Medium Density Housing Code which proposed the expansion of code-complying development for medium density housing (eg town-houses, two up/down) across all residential areas.



## **Willoughby Planning submission**

- Most recently, WEPA provided WCC with comments on the *Council Planning Strategy 2016-2036* and *Willoughby Housing Position Statement*.
- We stressed the need for Council to fully investigate the basis for the number of new dwellings proposed by the Government and to consider more fully the existing environmental qualities of the area in question and the number and size of the proposed new open spaces.
- WEPA also commented on the preservation of heritage conservation areas, the lack of cycleway infrastructure and the needs of the disabled and elderly.

## **SOS Green Spaces Meeting**

- Gay explained that the SOS Green Spaces campaign was concerned with the impact on local environments of a number of State Government legislative changes
- WEPA members attended various SOS Green Spaces meetings during the year and circulated information about the campaign to members.

## **Planning reforms**

- WEPA joined Better Planning Network during the year.
- The NSW Government is proposing a number of significant changes to the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. Some changes of process are welcome but the Government has included proposals that will override environmental protections, limit local planning powers and reduce transparency in decision making.
- WEPA is preparing a submission on the proposed planning reforms which is due by 31 March.

## **Council mergers**

- The uncertainty surrounding the proposed merger of Willoughby, North Sydney and Mosman councils is making it difficult to envisage long term strategies. We are awaiting the finalisation of current legal action and the holding of new elections.

## **WEPA Online communication**

- The **WEPA News** and **Bulletins** are now sent electronically; the savings on postage is being put to other campaigns. Gay thanked Kathryn Foley who designed the news and bulletin and is instrumental in getting each issue out and Meredith Foley who prepares the content.
- WEPA also launched its **new Facebook site** last week. Go to <https://www.facebook.com/wepa.org.au/> The Facebook site is designed to circulate material quickly to WEPA members and to reach a wider group within the WCC area.



- WEPA is also reworking its **web site** to provide more information and online functions to members. We will let you know shortly when it is fully online and would welcome your comments.

## **Northern Beaches Tunnel**

- Gay commented on the latest proposal for a northern beaches road tunnel. She noted that the Castlecrag community had fought against earlier proposals which threatened to destroy bushland for the Warringah Freeway. The Premier has announced a tunnel to relieve congestion from the Northern Beaches (and open it up to further development).
- At this stage, the mapping released suggests the tunnel will go under Northbridge and Artarmon. There will be extensive tunnelling and stacks potentially placed on our green spaces. There are concerns that the plans as seen will permanently absorb Artarmon Park and a significant part of Artarmon Reserve.
- In discussion, it was noted that the primary aim of the tunnel appeared to be to open up the northern beaches area to further development. Members noted the need for further public transport rather than roads.

Gay thanked each of the members of the WEPA Executive for their contributions during the year. Cotter Erickson spoke on behalf of the Executive in declaring that Gay was the heart and soul of WEPA.

**RESOLUTION:** It was moved Cotter Erickson, seconded Christina Pender, that the President be thanked for her work during the year and that her Report be accepted. AGREED (with applause)

## **3. Treasurer's Report**

WEPA Treasurer, Diana Jones, spoke to the circulated Treasurer's report. She noted that there was \$16,5000 in assets and that less reserves were needed since WEPA was no longer paying employees. A number of donations were made during the year to campaigns and organisations.

**RESOLUTION:** It was moved Diana Jones, seconded Gay Spies, that the Treasurer's Report be accepted. AGREED

## **4. Election of Office Bearers and Committee**

John Steele was the returning officer for the election of office bearers and committee. He declared all positions vacant and read out the nominations and seconders with the following results:

President: Gay Spies

Vice-President: Cotter Erickson

Secretary: Meredith Foley



Treasurer: Diana Jones  
Publicity Officer: Christina Pender  
Committee Member: Geoff Osborne.

The Executive Members were congratulated on their election.

## 5. **Amendment to Constitution**

Cotter Erickson noted that the Executive had circulated (via *WEPA News* March 2017) a notice of a proposal to change the WEPA constitution to add a category of Honorary Life Membership.

The change, which is designed to allow WEPA to award Life Memberships, is as follows:

That a third sub-paragraph be added to part (b) of section (i) of Clause 2 MEMBERSHIP QUALIFICATIONS. **The addition is in italics in the extract below:**

- (i) A person is qualified to be a member of the Association if, but only if:
  - (a) that person was a member of Willoughby Environmental Protection Association (WEPA) immediately prior to incorporation
  - (b) the person is a natural person who:
    - (i) has applied for membership of the Association as provided by Rule 3; and
    - (ii) has been approved for membership of the Association by the Committee of the Association; or
    - (iii) has been granted honorary life membership of the Association by the Committee in recognition of outstanding service to the Association as determined by the Committee.*

**RESOLUTION:** It was moved Cotter Erickson, seconded Gay Spies, that the constitutional amendment be accepted. AGREED

## 6. **Motion to Award Life Membership**

It was noted that Harold Spies had recently been forced by ill health to retire from the Executive Committee. Members congratulated Harold for his exceptional commitment and contribution to WEPA.

**RESOLUTION:** It was moved Cotter Erickson, seconded Marie Bassett, that Harold Spies be made an Honorary Life Member of WEPA. AGREED UNANIMOUSLY

## 7. **Speaker: Jeff Angel '2017: endless campaigns??'**

Gay introduced Jeff Angel, Executive Director, Total Environment Centre (TEC). She noted that TEC, alongside the Nature Conservation Council, was one of the premier NSW environmental organisations and had been involved in critical campaigns since the early 1970s.



Jeff thanked WEPA for its generous donations. In line with his theme 'endless campaigns', Jeff spoke about a range of campaigns which he had been involved in since the TEC was set up in 1972.

One of the longest-running fights has been the 40 year battle for a **Container Deposit Scheme** (CDS) which was recently achieved in NSW and should soon be in place in all mainland states. The most recent leg of this campaign started 13 years ago and involved 10 environmental groups working together as the Boomerang Alliance. The beverage industry fought hard against the proposal by, at various times, threatening to run electoral advertising against Government MPs, requiring a large number of feasibility studies and lobbying to change the focus to all litter (for which container deposit legislation is not the answer). The [NSW Government's CDS](#) will be rolled out in December this year.

Jeff noted that the Boomerang Alliance now has 46 member organisations and continues to work to **end plastic pollution** and dangerous tyre dumps. It has adopted a target of reducing plastic pollution of our waterways by 70% by 2020.

Jeff also spoke about the work undertaken by TEC on promoting **Green Energy**. He noted that the Government's stunt with the piece of coal in Parliament in February was probably the 'last hurrah' for the coal industry. Renewables are now politically mainstream and the focus is on using our own resources before exporting them and moving to carbon pricing. Elon Musk (Tesla) has recently demonstrated how renewables can be put in place efficiently and quickly. The fight for renewables has gone on as long as that for CDS but Jeff suggested that the marriage of economic forces with community aspirations would probably result in enough momentum to generate real change on this issue.

**SOS Green Spaces** was the last campaign Jeff outlined. He referred to the 'growth spirals' Sydney was undergoing and the impact of infrastructure which was not well thought through. He noted that in the case of WestConnex and the South-East light rail there were opportunities to reroute and protect trees and open spaces but the communities' wishes were not respected. Jeff was hopeful that the Greater Sydney Commission (GSC) planning process would bring a degree of balance. He spoke about the recent work done by an alliance of environmental professional, community and university groups to prepare a [New Environmental Vision for Sydney](#) as an input to the GSC process. A Green Spaces Forum planned for 1 April will work on bringing together the type of economic valuations of the environment that need to be brought into decision making.

In summary, Jeff spoke about his own 45 years of environmental experience, acknowledging that environmentalism, which only started in the 1960s, was a relatively young social change movement. He said that established and upcoming environmentalists alike could profit from understanding the need for the following:



- for local groups to be involved in online communication so that they could reach younger and more diversified audiences;
- the importance of ‘finding your own voice’ when trying to influence issues;
- encouraging hope and convincing people they had an opportunity to make things better;
- the psychology of persistence – as individuals and as a group;
- taking the initiative, for example, in pushing alternatives as early as possible to the proposed North Tunnel;
- negotiating strategically and building alliances for example in the business community; and
- being unpredictable in campaigns/avoiding stereotypes.

In discussion members raised questions and discussed:

- the efficacy or otherwise of stored hydro systems;
- micro-grids whose members can collaborate to store own power;
- population growth. Jeff noted that TEC does not have a formal position on population growth but he believes that we will reach a stabilising position at some point as current consumption patterns are unsustainable;
- a campaign to stop one-use plastic rolling out in Noosa and the Illawarra;
- the need to balance development in our district with a westward limit on Sydney to contain its environmental footprint; and
- an analysis by STEP of the metropolitan strategy and noted that the central and north district had already met the targets set earlier but were now being asked to absorb a further 17,000

Gay thanked Jeff for his informative and inspirational talk.

## **8. General Business**

The following issues were raised:

- an ALP/community forum on renewables will be held 12-2, Saturday 25 March;
- the Stop Adani Roadshow was coming to the Seymour Centre on 29 March; and
- Gay encouraged members to follow the renewables discussion by subscribing to the daily online newsletter Renew Economy

The meeting closed 11:15pm.