

**The Myall Koala & Environment Group Inc. Presidents Report 2022**

Over the last year we have faced ongoing issues with COVID-19 but restrictions have greatly reduced so we have now been able to return normal activities. In the last 12 months our committee and members have been extremely busy and involved in the following projects and activities.

**Meetings** - Our committee now meets on a regular basis (generally once a month) and this has allowed us to implement and complete a number of projects which are discussed below.

**Koalas** - It has not been a great time for Koalas in our area and there have been few sightings in Hawks Nest and Tea Gardens apart from Swan Bay and areas outside town such as Pindimar, Nerong and North Arm Cove. Unfortunately our oldest known Koala, Princess, is in care at Port Stephens Koala Hospital and chances are she will need to stay there. Ian has prepared an annual report on our Koalas which will be presented later.

During the year Ian, Trish and I attended a 3 day zoom workshop on to help formulate a Koala Recovery Plan for the region. This was organised by Hunter Local Land Services and MidCoast Council. The final plan has not yet been released.

We have also been actively involved with the Koala Koalition Econetwork Port Stephens. Whilst most members of this group are from the Port Stephens LGA it still gives us valuable insights into how other groups are dealing with council and other government authorities.

**Website** - One of our major projects for the year was the development of a website**.** The address is www.myallkoala.org. The site was setup and designed by Jane Graham from Peekaboo Creations who is a local resident. Many hours of work went into laying out the site and putting all the information online. A lot of this work was done by Adrienne Ingram who continues to maintain the site for us. A lot of input was received from everyone in the committee and I thank all of them for their time. Special thanks also to Christian Patteson who provided many photos for the site. One notable thing about the site is that it has the ability to apply for new membership and renew existing memberships with payments through direct debit or by credit card using Square.

**Little Terns** - The group’s annual survey of the little terns (and other birds) was carried out from October to February in conjunction with MidCoast Council, National Parks & Wildlife Service and DPIE. It was a poor breeding season for the terns compared to the 2020/21. High tides, bad weather and a fox on Corrie certainly did not help. A full report is available if anyone is interested. Special thanks to Trish Blair, Sharon Taylor and Ann Woods for their efforts.

**Bitou Busters** - The group activities were affected by COVID and bad weather. The Bitou Buster sessions are always well attended and I thank all participants for their enthusiasm and hard work. I would like to thank Jill Madden for all of her years of work with this group. As Jill is moving she has handed the reigns to Adrienne Ingram, Trish Blair and Sharon Taylor as it needs 3 people to fill her shoes.

**Hawks Nest Nature Walk** - We have completed the Hawks Nest Nature Walk. This walk was made possible by a generous donation from the family of the late John Davis who was the Great Lakes Council Tree Management Officer until his passing in 2012. A map of the walk is available at the start of the walk in Sanderling Ave. It can also be found on our website and at various businesses around town. The final part of the walk to be completed was the installation of tree guards and the printing of plaques to attach to the tree guards. Special thanks must go to Jill and Peter Madden, Laurie and Jane Collison and Colin and Deb Wood for the work on this part of the project. A special thanks also to Glenn Henry for supplying the plaques at a favourable price.

**Tree Give Away -** We did three tree give away days. One at Woody’s Nursery and two at Hunter Providores. These were very successful and hundreds of trees supplied by MidCoast Council and others went to good homes. We also received a lot of donations and sold raffle tickets. Special thanks to the nursery and providores for their support.

**Galleries in the Gardens (GIG) Cool Summer Art Exhibition** – This year we sponsored the Galleries in the Gardens Cool Summer Art Exhibition with the theme “A Celebration of Nature Around the Myall”. This event ran during February and early March, We provided two cash prizes for winning artists. This was a great promotional opportunity for our group and in return the gallery donated a painting for us to use as raffle prize which we used for our traditional Easter Raffle. A special thanks to the gallery for their excellent support with this collaboration.

**HN/TG Seniors Day** - We had a stall at the inaugural HN/TG Seniors Day which was organised by the Progress Association. This was a successful day with many visitors interacting with our group to discuss local environmental issues. We also used this as a raffle ticket selling event. Thanks to those who manned the stall.

**Easter Stall** - This year we ran a very successful Easter Stall and Raffle. We started selling raffle tickets at the start of the GIG event and sold tickets over many weekends. In total the stall, raffle tickets and donations were around $2800 which was record for this event. For the first time we had the ability to accept credit card/EFTPOS payments which really helped sales. A special thanks to everyone who volunteered to sell raffle tickets and those who manned the stall on the day to make this a great event. Thanks also to those who donated items to sell or raffle, especially Marilyn Mercer who donated some stuffed Koalas.

**Council Submissions** - We have prepared a number of submissions to MidCoast Council regarding inappropriate developments in Hawks Nest/Tea Gardens. These include developments in Eagle Ave, Marine Drive and Yamba St (adjacent to the council carpark) which are yet to be determined by council. We continue to object about the Sanderling Ave “Golf Course” and Mungo Brush Rd caravan park developments.

The work required to do these submissions is quite extensive and time consuming. This is primarily done by Ian Morphett and I would like to thank him for his tireless efforts.

**SARG** - MidCoast Council’s Southern Area Reference Group Meeting. This meeting is held monthly and attended by key council staff, councillors and representatives from various community groups. The meeting was only held a couple of times last year due to COVID. The SARG group is going to made into an official council committee to discuss strategic issues affecting our area. It will be a good avenue for us to present our views on community issues and push for projects we see as valuable to the community general.

Finally I want to thank all our members, volunteers, our committee and the executive for all their hard work. Without this we would not exist as a group. In particular I would like to thank Jill and Peter Madden for all their hard work over many years. Jill is past President of MKEG and Peter has been a valuable committee member. Jill and Peter are moving to the south coast to be closer to family but will still have a house in Tea Gardens and will be involved with our group when they are in town. We wish them all the best for the future.

We look forward to a great year ahead and hope we can have a positive influence on things happening in our town.

Richard Streamer - President - The Myall Koala & Environment Group Inc.