President’s Report for the AGM of the Cooleman Ridge Park Care Group on Sunday, 21st November 2021, 8.30 am at Kathner St, Chapman

Parkcare activities have been substantially reduced during the last 12 months due to Covid-19 restrictions. For many months we have been unable to officially run our monthly weeding meetings. Although some of us did use the time to weed individually within the Covid restrictions, we were not able to socialise or discuss matters.

However, we did have two particularly memorable events this year. Our first was the 30th Anniversary of our beginnings as a Group in 1991. We celebrated with a gathering at Kathner St in May. Although the sun was shining, the wind was bitterly cold, so despite the delicious nibbles and champagne, our large gathering quickly dwindled as people escaped to the warmth of their homes. Nevertheless, it was fabulous to see the support that the CRPCG engenders in the local population.

Our second big event was in March, when we planted many shrubs and grasses around the Old Dam. By happenstance, we were assisted by some younger members of our community through SACTCG, which made the exercise relatively easy. Rain has been persistent since the planting, so many of the plants are suffering from inundation rather than the opposite which is usually the case with plantings, but so far they seem to be surviving.

However, despite (or perhaps because of!!) the restrictions, the following activities have kept some of our members busy:

1. Organisation of our archives so that material closely related to CRPCG activities has been sorted through and set aside and will be donated to ACT Archives when time permits. This includes photos, monitoring records, meeting minutes, historical articles, and CDs and thumb-drives of many of the paper records. ACT Archives will hold this material, and it will be available to anyone who is interested.
2. The website has been re-assessed and new information provided, and a new layout is planned. Hopefully this will be finalised within the next few months.
3. Individual members have been encouraged to work on their own up on the Ridge, and some have targeted a certain area to be “caretakers” of that patch.

During the year we enjoyed some assistance from SACTCG. Firstly, the plantings as mentioned above, and secondly, SACTCG placed some cameras on Mt Arawang for a couple of weeks to record animal activity. The camera didn’t record anything unusual, but confirmed that kangaroos, wallabies, wombats and echidnas are active on that part of the Ridge, as well as a fox, rabbits and a dog. We hope that the cameras can be placed on the Ridge again during the next year.

In February the local fire unit performed a fuel-reduction burn in the northern Cooleman Trig area. Unfortunately, the appropriate precautions were not implemented and some patches of native vegetation were burnt despite prior warning about the sites. Hopefully the native patches will fully recover, but it was very disappointing to the Group that due diligence had not been followed. We believe that processes have been amended.

During the year a couple of grass and weed identification courses were conducted, and four of our group (Alan Ford, Helen Govey, Paul Sheils and Chris Oates) took advantage of the extra knowledge provided. Parks and Conservation Service plan to provide more of these courses next year.

Additionally, some members of the group were involved in some research conducted by one of our local lads, Alan Sargent, who completed his Masters at Oxford University during the year. He was researching the effects of volunteering on the connection to country, and used Australian conservation volunteers for his research material.

Rob Lundie, our ever-active Secretary, has colluded with the younger generation, Correa (from SACTCG), and we now have an official Facebook page. Thanks Rob, and we will now be able to attract some younger members.

Arminel Ryan and Linda Spinaze have continued the monitoring under the Vegwatch banner. They monitor two sites on the Ridge each November, and send the results in to a central database. This year the results were noticeably different to the last few dry years.

It was with heavy hearts that we said goodbye to Gosta in August. Gosta had been a very active member of the Group since 1991, participating in committee roles and attending countless work-parties. He has now returned to Sweden to be with his daughters.

We’ve enjoyed welcoming some new members who have joined the Group this year. In some ways Covid has helped us to flourish, with more people accessing the open space during this time of lock-downs and noticing the valuable service that CRPCG provides.

I’d like to thank everyone who has supported the Group over the past 12 months, especially the Committee members – Rob Lundie, Alan Ford, Doug Tinney, Rohan Thomas, Brigitte Brickwood, Jenny Horsfield, Paul Sheils and Chris Oates. Particular thanks to two of our committee members who are stepping down. Doug and Alan have served on the Committee since the 1990’s. Both have taken leadership roles, as well as getting their hands dirty with active weeding. Both of them are remaining as members of the Group – hopefully for many years to come! During the year we also farewelled Brigitte who has moved interstate to be with family, and we thank her for her valuable contributions over the last few years.

Hopefully next year will see a return to pre-Covid flexibility which will enable easier organisation of events and activities.

Linda Spinaze

President

CRPCG .