

## PRESIDENTS REPORT

August 2016

### Barrabool Hills Landcare Group AGM

Once again we have had a very busy year in our iconic “Hills”. If I could sum up the key theme it would be partnerships. Not only within our community, but also within our region and across regional boundaries. **We need to walk together to make a difference.**

I suppose we couldn't have expected anything less after the inspirational presentation from our “walkers” this time last year. This set the scene for one of the most memorable events for our community. Over 40 of our members supported and also joined the intrepid walkers from up river in the third stage of the Great Barwon Walk, from Inverleigh to Merrawarp Bridge. The country was desperately parched but this didn't dust the spirits, which saw a portable loo being carted across the landscape to sites that have never seen such a convenience before, skinny dipping in a quiet Barwon pool, emu burgers and chips, some imbibing of the local grape harvest and gently kayaking amidst the wedge tailed eagle eyries and tree violet. Although the region was blanketed in dust, the river kept its pace, and also its majesty as we traipsed along. Thank you to the nearly 20 landholders who supported the walkers and hangers-on, the Upper Barwon Landcare Network and its community, Geelong Landcare Network, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, Uncle Bryon Powell from the Wadawurrung and our wonderful Barrabool Hills friends for helping to make this such a successful exercise.

We wish the trekkers well next year as they negotiate the urban sprawl of Geelong and the meandering river as it finds its way through Lake Connewarre to Barwon Heads.

We had a partial respite from our rabbit baiting program in February, when Ric and Sheila Walter once again hosted a film evening. Ric chose a movie which he thought would set the scene for the March walk and it was a great night. I tried to no avail later to identify Robert Redford and Nick Nolte from “the Walk” in our Barwon trekkers, but perhaps there was a little escapism in everyone, who knows.

Our next major partnership event was our joint hosting of a Tussock Forum at the wonderful new Barrabool Cricket club rooms at Ceres. People came from

as far a field as Bacchus Marsh and Warrnambool to listen and contribute to a discussion about the identification and control of these insidious invasive weeds. A big thank you to Surf Coast Shire, Geelong Landcare Network, the Serrated Tussock working party, the Barrabool Cricket club and our community for supporting this event.

Once again, we partnered with Karingal Community nursery and managed to propagate nearly 5000 trees and shrubs from native seed collected locally. This is such a valuable program, not only giving our members experience in identifying and growing native flora, but also providing a source of local vegetation for planting across the Hills. A big thanks to Jim Seager who so ably coordinates this program.

I have left what I consider to be our most significant collaboration until last. It was in August last year that we announced that we were planning to publish a rabbit recipe book to celebrate 21 years of our landcare group. We had a flurry of volunteers respond to our request for help, and it is due to their passion, expertise and persistence that we have produced what I think is a wonderful keepsake, a reminder not only of the role that the rabbit has played in the history of the Barrabool Hills, but also of what a special place we live in.

On behalf of the Barrabool Hills Landcare Community an enormous thank you to Sally Jones for her coordination of the project, Wayne Moodie, Christa Jones and Judy Cohn for trialling the recipes, Judy also for her bespoke drawings and Tony Redden whose extraordinary photographs have given the book such a professional touch. A wee thanks also to Stuart Fountain from Mud group in Winchelsea for believing in us.

Our next year's activities are already being planned. We are hoping to have the rescheduled presentation from Chris Pitfield from the CCMA on developing planning tools for landcare programs, in October. We are planning to partner with the Geelong Landcare Network and Upper Barwon Landcare Network, to host a rabbit management field day also in October and there is also the possibility that we may look for funding to help produce a booklet of the Flora of the Hills.

We have already booked the Barrabool Cricket Club for our Christmas BBQ and of course don't forget to book in the rabbit baiting program in February next year.

None of what we have achieved could have been done without the amazing support of the executive committee, who are always willing to put up their hand to turn a sausage, write for the newsletter or chair a forum!!!

Many thanks to the Deputy President, Jim Seager, who has done all of the above and much much more...

To Geoff Anson our newsletter editor.... Again thanks too. It is not a mean feat to find copy and photos every second month, and publish such a great product. While I am on the Newsletter, thank you once again to Stephen Murphy who has continued his regular contributions on the flora of the Barrabool Hills...

An enormous thanks to Anthony Jones who took over as Treasurer last year and totally revamped our financial and membership records. This has meant for the first time that we can invoice members, easily report to our partners and has especially streamlined the management of the baiting program. So much work has gone into this, much of which is hidden from the naked eye... I think Ian Kelly also has played a big part in this too.

Thank you to our new secretary, Joan Anson, who has taken on this job with so much enthusiasm and has lightened the load.

Until recently Neville Trotter has overseen the group's equipment and whilst he and Judy are apologies tonight we hope that we can formally thank them and farewell them at our Christmas break up.

Our email circulation and website are kept up to date by my husband Brent and I would like to thank him not only for the great job he does, but also especially for holding the fort when I am otherwise occupied with my landcare activities. Which is far too often methinks.

The executive comprising all of the above and Christa Jones, Judy Cohn, Sally Jones and Denis Richards has met quarterly since the last AGM and I want to sincerely thank the whole crew for so willingly contributing to all the activities the group is involved in.

Finally thank you all for supporting our community. **We depend on you!!!**. As I said last year, "this is not a closed shop, we always need your ideas and your help to provide opportunities and enjoyable entertaining events that will continue to attract participation from old and new members of the community alike."