



Chum Creek Landcare Group AGM Minutes
2nd August, 2017
Chum Creek Primary School

Present: P. Hipwell, A. Nowland, A. Fitzpatrick, J. Baker, T. Weber, K. Wade, R. and I. McNees, D. Blair, E. and M. Feller, N. Lithgow, L. Sbalchiero.

Apologies: D. Weaver, B. and K. Bagley, S. Sheaffe, L. Danks

Acknowledgement to country and welcome by president, Evelyn Feller.

Minutes of the 2016 AGM were available, proposed for acceptance by N. Lithgow, seconded by M. Feller. Passed.

President's report

Our main activities this year have been focused around Chum Creek. We now have completed our Chum Creek survey of the main branch of the creek. We have surveyed the creek from its source in Toolangi to almost where it joins the Watts River. Participating in the survey and being involved in writing submissions on government policies for native vegetation and biodiversity really emphasizes the value of revegetating and protecting the creek habitat for birds, platypus and other wildlife in the face of climate change and development pressures. We hope to see the report on the last section soon. We have sent copies of our 2016 report to relevant organizations like council, DELWP and other Landcare groups. For those of you who had reports done on your properties it is a good idea to occasionally reread them if you are planning weed control or to improve habitat on your property.

We wanted to share some of the experiences we had on the survey with our members and in May we had about 16 of us walk from Toolangi to the chook farm and enjoyed afternoon tea together.

Water quality surveys were conducted at two sites along Chum Creek and we would like to thank Beth and Ken Bagley for participating with Michael in that work. Generally we confirmed the water quality in the creek is quite good although there are occasional excessive sediment problems and high coliform bacteria counts. This is something that needs to be improved.

Membership

We now have 85 properties that are members. Because we pay fees to cover insurance through Landcare Victoria we would like to have accurate records of our membership. If you know of neighbours who have moved away or no longer want to be part of the group please let us know. Our finances are still in good shape and so we again don't plan to charge membership fees for 2017-2018.

Blackberry and Weed Control

A big impetus in forming Chum Creek Landcare was to control weeds particularly those that had become worse after the fires. Last year the funding under Northern Yarra Blackberry Action Group finished. The funding helped really successful programs in Steele's and Dixon's Creeks and a number of properties in Chum Creek benefited from the program. There is still a small amount of funding available to Chum Creek members. We did let our members know but we didn't seem to hear from anyone wanting funds. However, we do have access to the spray rig and back pack sprayer through the Northern Yarra Landcare Network (NYLN) and some members did borrow this equipment. We want to secure funding to continue weed control. Weed control needs more than one treatment. Some members of NYLN worked hard to get a facilitator to help us get grants for our programs and tonight our new facilitator Anne Fitzgerald is with us and will speak briefly to us later.

Communications

In the last year we have produced four newsletters, one per season. Michael has worked hard on this and is always interested in feedback or items for the newsletter. In case you don't know a number of our members don't have e-mail and he personally drops these newsletters in mail boxes. We also have a website maintained by Michael and a Facebook page that Debbi Weaver maintains.

Volunteer Program

Our program has continued supervised by Phill. Last year Billanook students worked on two properties in the spring doing a variety of tasks although mainly weed control. They are well organized and accomplish a lot.

This year we have two more days available from them in the spring. Let us know if you are interested in having them work on your property. We now have a shed with our tools and equipment stored on Susi's property.

Grants

Once again we successfully applied for two Melbourne Water grants, one for the Chum Creek survey and the other for general operating grants. Most of this funding went to the creek survey. We also received funding from the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Association and some of this grant covers our insurance and general running costs.

Melbourne Museum Plants

About 1000 plants from the museum were returned to Chum Creek and distributed among members. We are now waiting for when the next lot will arrive and will let those interested know. How did last years' plants survive? It would be interesting to get some feedback on this.

Future Plans

A main objective will be to secure funds for weed control. We are also interested in looking at activities members away from the creek would be interested in such as improving the health of dams or gully areas. We are also interested in increasing the community awareness of the birds in our area through a pamphlet describing the common birds in the area. Many bird populations are on the decline and having an awareness of bird species and their requirements is one way to slow this decline.

Acknowledgements

Once again I would like to thank the other Chum Creek Committee members for their contributions this year. Michael as usual has done great work with the newsletter, distributing it and updating the website. He has also been the person who has applied for our various grants. Susi has again been our capable treasurer keeping up with our financial affairs. Phill has coordinated our volunteer program and updated our members' discounts list. Nella has helped with our catering and researching contacts for workshops.

We really need a couple more members on our committee. We have about 6-8 meetings a year which are only a couple of hours long and it would be great to have some-one organize a workshop. Sometimes serving on an executive can be helpful for some-one building up their resume particularly with some kind of land management job in mind.

Treasurer's Report

Balance brought forward:	\$16,318.92
Income:	\$ 4,992.65
Expenses:	\$ 7,379.82
Year net profit/loss	-\$ 2,387.17
Year-end balance (30/6/17)	\$13,931.75

Higher expenses than income during the year was due to payment for the 2016 Chum Creek survey report from income that was received during the preceding financial year.

Other business

The new Northern Yarra Landcare Network Facilitator, Anne Fitzpatrick, was present. She was introduced by the president and then spoke about her planned work with the network's 3 Landcare groups.

Chum Creek Landcare committee for 2017-2018

Committee positions for the coming year were filled by acclamation as the returning officer, Ann Nowland, received nominations only from – Evelyn Feller, for president, Susi Sheaffe for treasurer, and Phill Hipwell, Nella Lithgow, and Michael Feller, for general committee members. We would still like another 2 committee members.

The formal meeting closed around 8 pm and was then followed by an illustrated talk by David Blair on how to improve a property for wildlife.

David focused on the habitat elements, such as vegetation characteristics, ground cover, and water, that can be influenced by people.

Vegetation characteristics, such as tree hollows for nest sites, tree size, tree and shrub density, size of revegetated areas, and species composition can all be affected by people. More tree hollows resulting from the presence of more large old trees, variable plant densities, larger revegetated areas, and more varied species composition, generally favour increased wildlife populations. Research shows that no landscape, even the most completely disturbed, cannot be improved by revegetation. Wattles (*Acacia* species) and mistletoes generally benefit wildlife greatly.

Downed logs, particularly hollow ones, rocks, and litter (e.g. bark and leaves) are important for a variety of species, reptiles in particular. Water, in creeks, dams, wetlands, and water points, is very important. A good dam for wildlife is one which is shallow, with low gradient vegetated edges.

Subsequent discussion included - providing snake habitat away from houses to encourage snakes to avoid houses, and the pros and cons of providing nest boxes.

Evening finished with light refreshments and discussion, closing at 9 pm.