

Coordinator's Report to the Capricorn Coast Conservation Council Committee March 2021

I can only say that the last month has been busy! Here's a snap shot of what's been happening in CCC-land.

Headline highlights

- ✦ Marine monitoring program. As you may already know, Capricorn Conservation Council, along with the Capricorn Coast Local Advisory Committee, have been agitating for the inshore marine monitoring program to be reinstated since the original buoys were relocated in 2015. The good news is that the Great Barrier Reef Foundation has invested \$1.6 million into the Fitzroy Basin Marine Monitoring Program for Inshore Water Quality over the next four years and the program has recommenced.
- ✦ Single-use plastics. Earlier this year, CCC made a submission to the Parliamentary Committee reviewing the legislation which will ban a number of single-use plastic items. The Parliamentary Committee review report has been completed with the committee recommending that the *Waste Reduction and Recycling (Plastic Items) Amendment Bill 2020* be passed.
This effectively means that single-use plastic items, starting with straws, stirrers, plates and cutlery will be banned in Queensland by September 2021.

Local matters

Great Keppel Island (GKI). The Queensland Government has committed to providing \$30 million to fund common-use infrastructure on Great Keppel Island. The GKI Progress Association has requested Livingstone Shire Council endorse Altum's (a potential developer of the island) priority infrastructure list. LSC subsequently asked the community for their views on the spending of State Government funds prior to making a decision on whether to endorse, or otherwise, GKI/Altum's proposed use of the funds. CCC made a submission to LSC which is available on the submissions page of our website: <https://cccqld.org.au/submissions/>

LSC held a special meeting to discuss the matter and resolved to write to the relevant State department advising their support for responsible development on the island, the resolution of lease issues as a matter of urgency the development of some common-user infrastructure and to request that the promised \$30 million dollars remain allocated to GKI. LSC will not be supporting Altum's proposal and will be leaving it to the State to decide but have indicated that they will not accept management of any public infrastructure unless agreed prior to development.

Clive Palmer's Central Queensland Coal Project. This project has been lurking around since 2017. Now, after the submission of the third EIS, the Queensland Government has decided to allow the project to go to the Environmental Review stage. This is a project that will cause significant adverse impacts on the environment in our region and one that I believe CCC should be active in its advocacy role.

Joskeleigh-Long Beach Road. Council is considering developing an all-weather vehicle access to Long Beach from Joskeleigh Road. They are holding a meeting on site and then there will be further opportunities for community input.

Project updates

This update section includes projects that CCC has an interest in and there is something to report.

Climate change symposium

Key progress in progressing the organisation of the symposium:

- A venue visit to CQU to look at a couple of options and to discuss onsite logistics. We have decided on the Health theatre for the event.
- Receipt of \$1000 from Councillor Donna Kirkland's (Rockhampton Regional Council) discretionary fund.
- Funding application for a \$2000 FBA bursary was prepared and submitted.
- Securing speakers has been time consuming, but the program is now in final draft stages and will hopefully be finalised within the next two weeks.
- Darumbal Welcome to Country booked.
- Have secured a MC for the event.
- Initial discussions on how to run a no/low-emissions and no/low waste symposium.

There is still a lot to organise. Next steps will be to finalise the program, work through the technology requirements for the day, get catering quotes and start the promotion and ticket sales.

Platypus watch

The second platypus Watch steering committee meeting was held. The steering committee is now made up of:

- Coral Rowston (CCC)
- John McCabe and Steve Elson (Wildlife Capricorn)
- Blair Chapman (Rockhampton zoo)
- Cheryl Greene and Claire Donaldson (Community)
- Braden Mitchell, Fitzroy Healthy.

Not everyone was at the second meeting, but it was a productive meeting and we pulled together a bit of a plan in how to best roll-out the program, had a look at the mapping of potential habitat that Steve and John have been working on and we each took away some homework that will get us more ready to take the "go public" step.

Citizen Science Fungi Blitz Project –a project funded by RRC.

The fungi project sure got a kick along after our last meeting when we decided that CCC needed to help Sherie get things started so we could get the community looking for fungi during the wet season. Since then, Sherie has done a lot of work on the Fungi Blitz page on our website and has put together a project outline with a rough timeline.

Sherie had planned to promote Fungi Blitz on social media, but the CCC Facebook site was taken down. By chance, ABC news contacted CCC for an interview and then subsequently ran a story about Fungi Blitz on their online news and on radio. Anna kindly turned the media release into a social media post. This promotion has resulted in the start of a register of interested fungi citizen scientists.

ABC Capricornia also put a cute Fungi Blitz post on their site and they are getting lots of people posing photos and wanting to be involved. Sherie will follow up with those people and bring them on board.

Community networking

A good proportion of my time is developing my local networks and finding ways that we can value add to their work and vice-versa. Some examples of interactions in the last month:

- Livingstone Shire Council's Environment and Regulatory Task Force meeting.
- Capricorn Coast Marine Advisory Committee meeting.
- Climate Change Symposium Steering Committee meeting and regular communication.
- Tom Henderson in relation to Climate Change symposium volunteer program.
- Platypus Watch meeting and out of session communication with steering committee members.
- Conservation groups. Australian Marine Conservation Society, Lock the Gate, Environmental Defenders Office, Mackay Conservation Group, Save our Planet and other groups that were at zoom or telephone meetings in relation to the Central Queensland Coal Project.
- Boomerang Alliance to meet the plastic-free place project manager, Kellie Lindsay and the new coordinator, Jo Stoyel and hear more about the program and discuss mutual support concepts.
- FBA in relation to bursary funding application and future funding to support CCC's community engagement activities.
- QCC in relation to fundraising training and support.

Other meetings attended by a CCC representative

Port of Rockhampton Sustainable Sediment Management Project Forum. Michael McCabe has completed a survey for Gladstone Ports Authority and has provided some interim notes on the project which has been distributed to Committee members. Michael will provide a full report after the final meeting to be held in the next couple of months.

Policy and position statements

The following policy statements were finalised:

- ✱ GD1 Social media
- ✱ GD2 Rheodytes Award
- ✱ GD3 Covid-safe office procedure
- ✱ ADM1 Public Donations Fund

These documents will be put on the CCC website as they are finalised.

Media

CCC contributed to the Great Barrier Reef Foundation media release in relation to the reinstallation of the inshore monitoring bores. I don't think their release got much air play, but it was circulated through CCC social media.

Morning Bulletin published story "Facebook bungles science project launch" about CCC's social media site being caught up in the news block and our inability to publish our Fungi Blitz or Platypus Watch stories.

Fungi Blitz. As outlined above in the Fungi Blitz report, ABC prepared a story which was put online, on social media, and grabs were aired on radio news throughout the day. Channel 7 also did an on-camera interview with Sherie, myself and one of the Fungi Blitz participants.

CQC Project. There was lots of activity among conservation groups in the lead up to the decision of the Chief Executive of the Department of Environment and Science on whether the Central Queensland Coal Project could proceed to the next stage. I prepared a couple of releases in preparation – one for if the project was refused, and one for if the project could proceed. Unfortunately, it was the latter than was distributed. The Morning Bulletin ran with our release, ABC did a live interview with me and Channel 7 took some grabs from an on-camera interview which made the 6 o'clock news.

In the social media space, we have published 18 new posts on Facebook since the last meeting covering a wide range of topics from wildlife stories about rakali, flying foxes and fungi, to water quality monitoring, seaweed to cure cattle flatulence, towns that are transitioning or are using renewable energy, climate predictions and the proposed Central Queensland Coal Project. I'm not going to list the stories, but please check out our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/capricornconservationcouncil>) if you are interested in the stories and the engagement they are getting.

At the time of writing this, CCC Facebook site statistics (as at 3 March 2021):

Likes 779 (up 13 from previous month)

Followers 786 (up 10 from previous month)

Shares Our posts were shared 17 times

I think we are on the right track in increasing engagement and providing stories that the community are interested in. However, the increased engagement means that more work in keeping up with engagement. Most engagement is positive, but now that we are touching on coal mining, there are some alternative views coming through. Which I guess is positive in that we are getting readership from the less-environmentally conscious community too.

I should also mention that we are special. CCC's social media page was shut-down for a few days during the Facebook/Government negotiations in relation to news media. Trying to rectify this took a bit of time and a lot of chasing to find out how to get us up and running again.

And to finish off, I extend my sincere thanks to the Committee members that have helped out during the month with reviewing documents, fielding my questions and helping me with, writing award text, filling in for my technology luddite-ness and providing both positive and constructive feedback.

That's all for this report.

Coral Rowston
CCC Coordinator