

President's report, Kananook Creek Association – August 2020

Firstly, I'd like to thank all of you who've made the effort to attend tonight. That's very much appreciated, because I know there are many priorities competing for our time. Our thoughts go out to anybody directly impacted by the pandemic.

The format of this AGM is rather unusual but necessary because of the restrictions that have been imposed upon us. This has also impacted our ability to do as much as we would have liked during the year but I will come to that later.

We decided to convene our AGM now and attempt to complete our obligations using this Zoom environment to facilitate the meeting. Our apologies if this doesn't go as smoothly as we hope.

You may have seen that we also requested that any questions be communicated to us prior to the meeting which we will get to later. If you do have questions during the meeting, please type these into the chat session and we will endeavour to address them either during or after the formal meeting.

Next I'd like to thank everybody who's been involved with the KCA committee. Thomas Weichert, Paul Kelly, Andrew Robinson, Jeff Whitehead and David Dodson have all worked very hard over the extended year in the interests of the creek. Unfortunately, for personal reasons, Andrew, Paul and Jeff decided to step down earlier in the year and David is not standing for re-election. I just want to add additional thanks to David who has been instrumental in keeping the committee focused on all the issues. He is a tireless operator and his shoes will be hard to fill.

I also want to thank Paul Davies who stepped down as President last year. Paul has been very generous with his time since dropping his official role. He was very supportive of the committee and in getting me up to speed over a number of months. I certainly would have struggled without his support.

As a result of these departures I made an impassioned plea to the membership earlier this year and I was very pleased with the response. I have been able to welcome the support of Rob Thurley (proposed Vice President), Stuart Allen, Ken Matthews, Russell Taylor, John Shreeve (proposed Treasurer), Margaret Hunter (proposed Secretary) and Yvonne Lynch (proposed for a new role as Membership Secretary).

This is a very solid base on which to move forward.

WHAT'S HAPPENED SINCE THE LAST AGM?

THE KCA TURNED 50.... Tuesday, the 25th of February, saw a celebration of this occasion. A crowd of about 140 people, representing the association's history, met at Frankston Art Centre's Cube 37. The venue was decorated by posters, booklets with a multi-media presentation. The attendees were presented with information about Frankston's and the Creek's history. I wasn't able to attend myself but I understand that the event was very well received. My thanks to Thomas Weichert and Rob Thurley for managing the sub-committee that put this event together.

It's a testament to those that came before us that the Association has endured for so long. I take my hat off to contributors past, present and future.

MEMBERSHIP: Membership numbers are a serious issue for us. Suffice to say that our membership is at its lowest number for many years. From our early days of 400 plus members we now have less than 40 paid up members for 2020. This low take up of membership seriously affects our credibility when we are talking to Government and large private institutions. It's a frustrating position given that the number of properties bordering the Creek is on the increase.

We need to work harder on Community Engagement. This year we have reintroduced the quarterly newsletter in an attempt to generate awareness of the Association. We also supported the Seaford "Love where you live" initiative late last year providing an escorted and educational walk along the reserve. Frankly, the turnout to that event was very disappointing given the effort that the organisers had put into the day.

WATER TOXICITY: About 2 years Melbourne University undertook a toxicity study along the length of the creek. The 45 page report highlighted significant issues with toxic sedimentation along the course of the creek.

After several failed attempts, we did hold two meetings with Melbourne Water and Frankston City Council to progress maintenance and water quality issues and there was real feeling that all parties understand the needs of the community and were willing to work together. We discussed the possibility of implementing a water monitoring program along the creek and Melbourne Water is supportive of this having done something similar in Dandenong. Unfortunately, the pandemic situation has impacted that progress and no action has taken place since our last meeting.

I do believe that we have a better working relationship with Melbourne Water and they have proactively approached us about issues experienced with discharges and pump maintenance.

LEVEL CROSSINGS: The level crossing removal project has continued and the changes that have been made are obvious to all. Earlier this year, there was a lot of publicity around what was happening around Seaford Station to accommodate a shared path. The removal of mature vegetation was a serious concern to us and the community.

As you probably know, there was a demonstration in the area and work was stopped for a short time. Sonya Kilkenny was involved and obtained assurances about the what was happening and registered her own objections to some of the proposals. The powers afforded to the Level Crossing Replacement Authority made it difficult to have our objections heard. We firmly believe that additional consultation should have taken place on this matter before work was allowed to continue.

DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANGEMENT: Frankston City Council is in the process of reviewing its Domestic Animal Management Plan which includes controls to manage the free roaming of cats and dogs. We have provided our input and would support a ban on cats being able to roam freely in order to protect the native wildlife. The reserves are there to be enjoyed by everyone, so control of dogs is a fundamental component of this. Designated and fenced free roaming areas on the foreshore would mitigate some of our concerns as long as there is a proper consultation process on their location.

VIEWING PLATFORMS: As you may be aware, FCC is planning to build viewing platforms off Riviera Street in Seaford and between Fiocchi and Alawah Avenues in Frankston. KCA had concerns about the initial siting of the platforms, but after consultation with Council Officers the chosen locations were agreed as providing enhanced views of the creek for track users and residents generally, especially behind the Riviera Hotel in Seaford.

The committee is somewhat against viewing platforms in general as they can attract anti-social behavior and associated litter. It was our view that capital expenditure could have been better spent elsewhere.

SEAFORD ARBORETUM:

At KCA's 50th Celebration, Mayor Sandra Mayer announced that Council had unanimously endorsed this long-awaited project - a local indigenous botanic garden in the heart of Seaford. The Arboretum Project Concept and implementation Plan (including the Community Engagement Process) is due for completion around now. We will have more on this project later in the meeting.

WORKING BEES: We have 2 well established working bees on the Southern and Central parts of the Creek. Unfortunately, with the Covid restrictions we have only been able to progress minimal work since March.

I have attended the central working bee around the Boonong and Benton Avenue pumping station several times myself. The enthusiasm of the regulars is amazing and so much weeding and planting has been undertaken in that area. The volunteer base is very small and we could do so much more if we had more commitment from the community. One pleasing point for me was that 3 groups of Chinese University students travelled from Melbourne just to contribute to our efforts.

I can't name everyone that is involved in the work but special thanks go to Nigel Woodhouse, Minio Rossetto and Coralie Davies for their continued efforts and not forgetting our local Ranger Pat Murphy.

We have recently received interest from The City of Kingston Parks Department in establishing a working bee in the Northern Stretch of the creek around Eel Race Road. They now have accountability for maintaining the banks in that area. We will be pursuing this once the restrictions allow us to recommence our work.

THE ROAD AHEAD:

Governance of the creek and its environment has been high on the KCA agenda for over 40 years. In 2016, the governance of the creek was the subject of a formal review. The report that was produced had several key recommendations from the Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC), none of which had been adopted.

At the June Council meeting, the proposal to form a Kananook Creek Governance Group was approved. KCA has been invited to participate and the first meeting of the interested parties will take place next week. We are hopeful that this results in significant changes to the way the creek is managed.

Council noted that, over the years, they have commissioned a number of studies and reports about the creek but these had resulted in very limited action. There now seems to be an appetite to make positive changes to that position.

We will continue to work with Melbourne Water to address water quality issues. Melbourne Water has also been invited to participate in the Governance Group so this may become the vehicle for those future discussions.

In the short term, the Committee will need to:

- Increase our membership to levels that are more representative of our community.
- Continue to contribute to initiatives that impact the creek.
- Continue to support the great efforts of the working bees.

In the longer term, I am keen to implement smaller working groups to address specific issues that arise so that we can react quickly.

We still need your help..... Talk to your neighbours about the Association and encourage them to join. There is an interest out there as our Facebook posts regularly receives several hundred views. We need to change that interest into a committed and growing membership base of contributors and supporting volunteers.

Thank you
Phil Carter
President KCA