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PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Last month the MCG was awarded the Community Environmental Prize for 2018 by the Bob Brown foundation award. This was an Australia wide recognition of our research, advocacy and other work as a regional environmental group. It is a credit to our volunteers, members, staff, management committee and everyone who has been involved with MCG since 1984, when the group was founded.

We gained a presence in our community, a voice for the environment, early on, with a respect for our message in the media and from community organisations. Phil Armit was our first co-ordinator, contributing tirelessly, including leading a community vision planning process backed by council. We've continued to have tremendous co-ordinators including Jacki, Peter, Ellen and Patricia. Our focus then was on the sugar industry, the reef, tree clearing, sustainable development — particularly of our coast — and they are still high priorities.

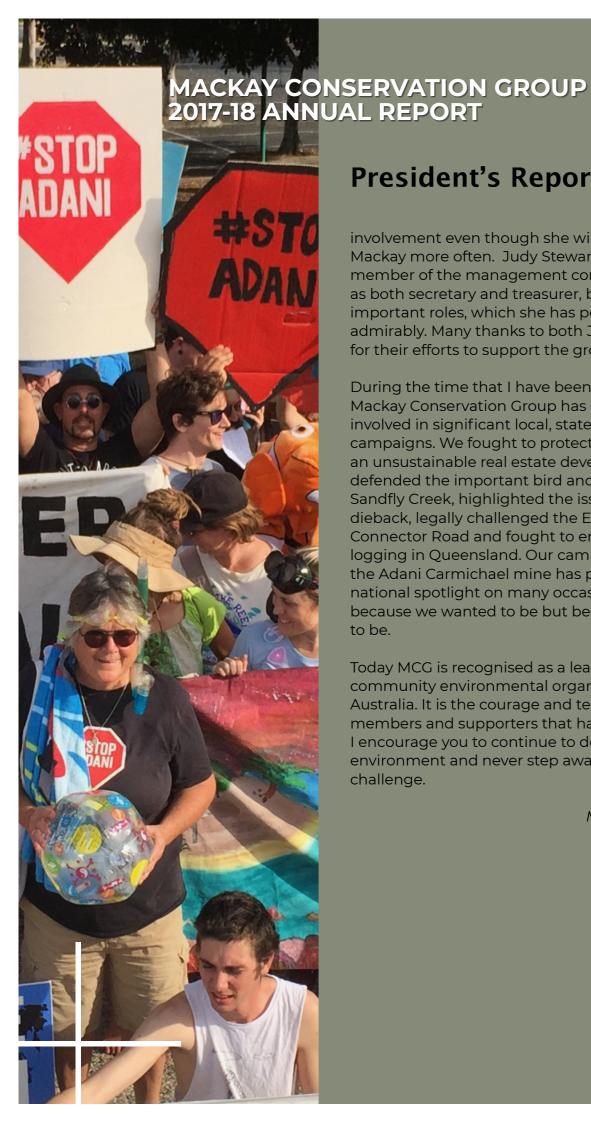
But for some years we have focussed strongly on climate change, an overwhelming threat to our natural heritage including the reef but also the greatest threat to health this century. We have an intergenerational responsibility to act.

MCG works mainly in the Mackay, Whitsunday and Isaac regional council areas, which includes Queensland's major coal mining region, the Bowen Basin, and potentially a much larger one, the Galilee Basin. To address climate change coal production must be reducing now, the tipping point is now, hence no new coal mines can be opened. The critical line in the sand is Adani's proposed Carmichael mine which, if allowed to proceed, would initiate a domino effect of more new mines in the Galilee Basin. As the local group this has led to MCG taking a leading role in the stop Adani campaign.

We have continued to build our community links in 2017-18. Emma has organised the very popular Beautiful Walks programme which helps people see and learn about the natural heritage in our neighbourhood and we have held numerous events, films and meetings, mostly at the environment centre.

This year two committee members are stepping down after years of service. Joan Fitzsimmons has been an active member, including as vice-president, for decades. She has given enormous support to the group and I hope will continue

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President's Report

involvement even though she will be away from Mackay more often. Judy Stewart has been a member of the management committee acting as both secretary and treasurer, both very important roles, which she has performed admirably. Many thanks to both Joan and Judy for their efforts to support the group.

During the time that I have been president Mackay Conservation Group has constantly been involved in significant local, state and national campaigns. We fought to protect East Point from an unsustainable real estate development, defended the important bird and fish habitat at Sandfly Creek, highlighted the issue of mangrove dieback, legally challenged the East-West Connector Road and fought to end rainforest logging in Queensland. Our campaign against the Adani Carmichael mine has put MCG in the national spotlight on many occasions, not because we wanted to be but because we have to be.

Today MCG is recognised as a leading community environmental organisation in Australia. It is the courage and tenacity of our members and supporters that has led to this and I encourage you to continue to defend the environment and never step away from a challenge.

Michael Williams

COORDINATOR'S REPORT



Late on a Friday afternoon in July 2017 I was putting the finishing touches on MCG's monthly EcoPress newsletter when an email popped up in my inbox saying that there had been a change on the Department of State Development's Lindeman Island website. Over the past year or so I had many similar emails, all non events. Usually they were telling me there was a change in a word or two but this time was different. The development proposal documents had been uploaded to the site and it contained some very startling news. One of the plans was to privatise nearly

four square kilometres of beautiful national park land.

How do you react to that on a Friday afternoon? Go home and come back to it on Monday morning or cancel your Friday night plans and get on with causing a fuss? Of course if you are part of a community environmental organisation then you have to choose the latter. I was in the office with a volunteer. Together we wrote a story for EcoPress, created social media posts and a sent a media release. When we finally left it was after 9.00pm but we had our side of the story out to the media and the public. The government spin would not be setting the agenda this time.

It's a real privilege to work with a group of dedicated people who are willing to put themselves out in order to achieve a real benefit for the future of life in our region and around the globe. And what an agenda we have had this year.

The group joined the Queensland Landclearing Alliance to put an end to uncontrolled tree clearing in the state that reached nearly 400,000 hectares in the most recently reported data from 2016. That culminated in new tree clearing laws this year to restore vegetation laws. We will continue to work on improvements to ensure that ecological integrity is maintained.

MCG became founding a member of the Stop Adani Alliance in 2017. Since then we have shown that we have a significant role to play in the campaign. We pushed the Commonwealth and Westpac banks to withdraw financial support for the mine. We organised a Stop Adani Summit to bring local people who cared about climate change together so we could plan our activities for the year ahead. MCG supported two Stop Adani local groups, in Mackay and Finch Hatton. We held marches and other high profile events.

Climate change is the most serious issue facing the Great Barrier Reef but the quality of water flowing from our rivers and streams into Reef waters is also

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Coordinator's Report

causing significant damage. We have been working alongside other national and state organisations to have laws around water quality tightened in order to protect the Reef.

At the local level we were successful in changing some government policies. For example the Sandfly Creek environment reserve towards the mouth of the Pioneer River requires tidal flows to ensure that mangrove and salt marsh systems are regularly inundated. Mackay Regional Council had decided that the floodgates on Sandfly Creek should be closed during significant tides which would have meant the highest parts of the system received no water. Our lobbying efforts overturned that policy.

MCG continued working with Lock The Gate on the mine rehabilitation issue. This week new laws are before the Queensland Parliament to radically change the mine rehabilitation agenda. The mining industry is pushing back hard but we hope that we can keep sufficient pressure on the government to ensure that the laws enacted meet community expectations.

Over the next year we aim to ensure that the Adani mine does not proceed to construction and we will keep working to ensure that the next federal government cancels the licences for all mines in the Galilee Basin. We want to see new rules in place to ensure that nobody is allowed to pollute the Great Barrier Reef waters. We also want to ensure that mine site rehabilitation rates increase significantly. Lastly we want to ensure that Queensland's tree clearing laws are further enhanced to protect the wildlife that depends on our forests and woodlands. There's a lot to do, so we'll need your help.

Peter McCallum

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STOP ADANI

Our campaign continued though 2017-18 to ensure that none of the giant coal mines proposed for the Galilee Basin are ever built. This year we continued the focus on the Adani Carmichael mine, without which it is unlikely any of the Galilee mines will proceed.

We worked to build a strong movement of local people in our region to raise their voices and speak out in favour of sustainable alternatives. Our group attended public meetings with politicians — including federal opposition leader, Bill Shorten and Queensland Premier, Annastacia Palaszczuk — where we voiced community concerns about the impact of Adani's mine on global climate change.

Mackay Conservation Group also played a crucial role in exposing pollution at Abbot Point coal terminal, a port owned by Adani. Using Right to Information laws, MCG exposed Adani's attempt to keep information from the public about its prior knowledge of the potential for coal polluted water to flow from the mine into the waters of the Great Barrier Reef.

Stop Adani has become the world's most prominent climate change campaign. Across the country over one hundred local Stop Adani groups have been formed including two here in our region.

In 2017 Mackay Conservation Group was very fortunate to employ Maggie Mckeown, a very dedicated campaign worker. Maggie supported volunteers and continuously encouraged members of our team to ensure that our actions were

highly visible in the media and to the public. That work will be carried forward by our new campaigner Michael Kane

In 2018 & 2019 we will continue to drive the campaign forward in Mackay. We'll be doorknocking, running stalls, holding community events and much more. If you haven't yet joined in, now is the time.



MACKAY CONSERVATION GROUP 2017-18 ANNUAL REPORT



220,000 HECTARES

AREA OF QUEENSLAND DISTURBED BY MINING

The mining industry has a huge footprint. That's equal to a kilometre wide mine all the way from Coolangatta to Cape York.

600 HECTARES

FULLY REHABILITATED

Mining laws have not encouraged mining companies to rehabilitate their mines. Currently less than 0.5% are fully rehabilitated.

MINE REHABILITATION

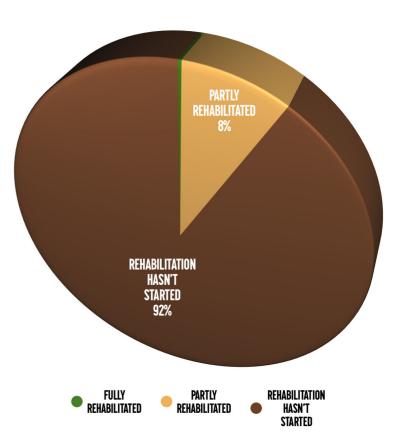
Over the past three years Mackay Conservation Group has been working with Lock The Gate and other state and national environmental organisations on a campaign to reform mine rehabilitation laws in our state. The current laws are not encouraging mining companies to undertake the progressive rehabilitation that the community expects them to.

The state has 15,500 abandoned mine sites and the list continues to grow. The big recent addition was Link Energy's underground coal gasification project near Chinchilla and is estimated to cost up to \$100 million to rehabilitate from a bond

of about \$3 million. The mining industry has disturbed a huge area of Queensland, currently 220,000 hectares in total. That's equivalent to a one kilometre wide mine stretching all the way from Coolangatta to Cape York.

We want to see mines fully rehabilitated. We want the giant pits filled in and the huge piles of waste rock levelled. We want the landscape restored to a similar shape to what it was before mining commenced and we want the land to have an equivalent ecological and/or economic value to what it had prior to mining. That's also what the community expects but its not what the mining industry wants.

MINE REHABILITATION FAILURE IN QUEENSLAND



The big miners are pushing back against law reform and demanding the right to leave their sites un-rehabilitated forever. We are continuing to work with our partners to ensure that mine sites are restored to good condition.

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MACKAY CONSERVATION GROUP 2017-18 ANNUAL REPORT





NUTRIENT REDUCTION TARGET

The Queensland government wants to see an 80% reduction in nitrogen reaching the Reef by 2025



ACHIEVED

So far the nitrogen load in our rivers and streams has been reduced by just 18% and is on target for a 25% reduction unless new rules are introduced.

REEF WATER QUALITY

A number of targets have been set over the past 15 years to attempt to improve reef water quality. The Bligh government established reef regulations that were abandoned under the Newman government. The ALP promised before the 2015 Qld election to establish a taskforce to examine reef water quality. In May 2016, the taskforce recommended new regulations that would lead to increase standards for all agriculture in all catchments.

A series of consultations have occurred with the aim of producing new policy and legislation and we are hopeful of a good outcome for the Reef. However, there is always the chance that government may be influenced by industry pressure so we must be vigilant to ensure that the policies that are enacted are backed by scientific evidence and produce the best possible outcomes. Canegrowers position is that they don't want any regulation of the industry. They say that it will stifle innovation in water quality management.

The main source of excess nutrients, fine sediments and pesticides from Great Barrier Reef catchments is from agriculture. In our region that is mainly sugar cane production, which involves significant soil disturbance making soil vulnerable to erosion during large rainfall events. Improved land and agricultural management practices are proven to reduce runoff of damaging sediment, nutrients and pesticides from farms.

We know that ninety per cent of reef pollution comes from agriculture. Other industries, such as urban wastewater treatment, have been regulated for a significant period. The scientific evidence is that when sediment and other pollutant loads are reduced, marine ecosystems can recover. So it is possible to restore ecosystems if pollution from streams is reduced.

The Queensland government has targets to reduce nitrogen loads reaching the reef by 80% by 2025 but they are not going to be met. Currently farmers have reduced nitrogen runoff by about 18% and are on a track to reach a 25% reduction by 2025.

The main tool being used to reduce runoff is a voluntary system of Best Management Practice. Individual farm studies are used to determine the appropriate application rate of nutrients. However, voluntary BMP programs are not working because the uptake of BMP has plateaued. We have to ensure that additional farmers adopt BMP for targets to be met.

In 2019, Mackay Conservation Group will continue working to ensure that our rivers and streams are cleaned up and that nobody is allowed to pollute the Reef.

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PEOPLE HAVE ATTENDED A BEAUTIFUL WALK

Our walks are easy and popular with the public. Our special guest presenters make them informative and sociable.



WALKS ORGANISED

We have visited locations all around Mackay, including our coasts, rainforests, mountains and wetlands.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH



In 2017-18 we organised many community activities that brought people with environmental ethics together to share knowledge and company. Our Community Outreach Officer, Emma Barrett, has been organising monthly Beautiful Walks to sites all around our region. We visited the Kommo Toera trail at Slade Point to look at one of the few remaining examples of Mackay's melaleuca wetlands. When the shorebirds began to arrive on their annual migration from the arctic circle, we took a group down to Shellgrit Creek. **Community Outreach** We have been lucky to have support for our Beautiful Officer, Emma Barrett Walks programs from organisations such as Mackay Regional Council, Birdlife Mackay, Mackay TurtleWatch,

Mackay Christian College and a host of individual experts.

It's important that local people get to know more about the environment in which we live. When people know more about the complex relationships between different species and habitats they are more likely to want to protect them.

Our other activities have included school visits to provide an environmental perspective, participation in arts events, presentations by experts at the environment centre, public forums and film presentations.

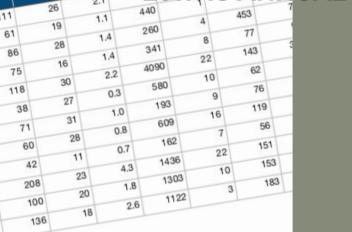
We had a number of sustainability socials, but sometimes our work life is so unsustainable that we have failed to make time for socialising. Next year we'll

host a social event at the environment centre once per month. We don't have the format exactly organised but it could be a film followed by drinks and music. If you'd like to suggest some films or other activities. Emma would love to hear from you.



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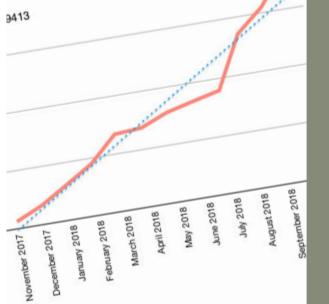
(Number of people







Over the past five years we have built a strong social media presence especially on facebook





ACTIVE EMAIL USERS

We only send email to people who actively engage with our correspondence.

Average Daily Reach

82 = 0.2483

1000

1000

COMMUNICATIONS

Over the past decade we have shifted our communication efforts to be more inline with the modern world. 30 years ago we used monthly posted newsletters and occasional phone calls to keep in touch with members. Today Mackay Conservation Group embraces a range of communications technologies.

We currently email our newsletter EcoPress to about 1700 people each month. The Mackay Conservation Group Facebook page is updated daily with current news and events and reaches a daily audience of around 2600 people on average.

Our website is viewed by around 1500 to 2200 unique users each month. This year we will undertake an extensive review of the content and structure of the site to make it easier for users to navigate and find the information they want.

Mackay Conservation Group has a regular column in the Daily Mercury and our articles are engaged with by a higher than average number of readers of the newspaper.

We have the ability to set up web based platforms to enable our members and supporters to send letters directly to decision makers such as politicians. Our knowledge of this type of technology but it is something we will be making greater use of in the coming year.

Meetings can now be conducted easily by teleconference so that management committee and other members

can join in no matter where they are at the time.

Mackay Conservation Group has continued to evolve our communications strategies and methods. We have to work continuously to be recognised in a world where information comes from many non-traditional sources. It's a challenge we have accepted.



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STAY IN TOUCH

You can reach us in many different ways. Please give one of them a go.

Drop in

Mackay Environment Centre
156 Wood St
Mackay
Open 9am-2pm Tuesday to Friday

Email

info@mackayconservationgroup.org.au

Postal

Mackay Conservation Group PO Box 826 Mackay Qld 4740

Phone

07 4953 0808

Facebook

Facebook.com/mackayconservationgroup

Twitter

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