

Office News Report --- October 2016

This month's office report focuses on matters raised at the September Ordinary Meeting.

HOPE's major ongoing activities include pursuing corporate sponsorship, seeking grant opportunities, establishing new alliances/partnerships and increasing our national membership. So, if you have any leads or suggestions as to who we can approach regarding these matters, please contact the office by phone on 07 4639 2135 or email office@hopeaustralia.org.au.

Also, our AGM (Annual General Meeting) is scheduled for Saturday 12 November. Your input to, and assistance in managing the HOPE operations is most welcome. More active support on the Executive Committee and in Admin Support is encouraged.

Current vacancies exist on our Media, Publications and Newsletter Teams. So, if you have some spare time and talents to offer, please contact the office at your earliest convenience.

– reports from Anjan, Sue & Steve; other highlights

Lastly, the issue of membership fees has been raised. Personally, I'd be happy to continue with free membership. What do you think? Would you be prepared to pay annual subscription? Or, would those of you who can contribute financially be willing to make a donation at <http://www.hopeaustralia.org.au/annual-pledgedonation/>.

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Office Hours

HOPE's office is open every Monday from 9am to 5pm; with the library resources available at the same time. Other times can be arranged through the office.

Letter to the Editor

Dear HOPE,

ASH (Alliance to Save Hinchinbrook) has always tackled nature conservation as if it is fundamentally essential. We learned to stand firm on principles while continuing to work with unsatisfactory possibilities.

In recent years I've heard conservation activists speak privately of their despair, expressing fear that the big earth systems may have already passed the point of no return; at the local level, council decisions have led to special natural places being opportunistically developed or isolated or manicured into parkland, the natural coast disappearing under concrete, with no real-life respect for how native wildlife would cope with an increasingly dysfunctional landscape.

In Queensland some of us were shocked to hear representatives of the Queensland Premier's Department, at the end of the Bligh Government, and again at the start of the Newman Government, explicitly trash the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment (IGAE), its central principle Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) and the Precautionary Principle (PP). The present government has chosen to apply ESD and PP in only SOME parts of SOME Queensland legislation. This seems hugely symbolic of the direction of government intentions. The moving feast of mapping and clearing and offsets regulations hides what the Queensland landscape will look like in 10 years' time. The only clarity established under the Newman philosophy was that the boundary between naturally-vegetated land and land doomed for clearing would move only one way, i.e. towards clearing.

Meanwhile, no-one wants to talk about dugongs, a major value of the GBRWHA. When commercial hunting stopped in 1962 there were some 62,000 dugongs left along the Queensland coast. During the 1990's long campaign mounted by Friends of Hinchinbrook and ASH and NQCC, there were still around 4,000 dugongs in "our" (Southern GBR) population. The most recent survey (2011) found only 537 (give-or-take 223) dugongs, this population described as "declining" - despite all our efforts, Dugong Protection Zones (1998), EPBC Act (1999), statutory zoning of the GBRMP (2003), and listing of dugongs in Queensland as vulnerable (2000). The Commonwealth Department of Environment website warns us not to run over dugongs in boats; but it's really all about habitat loss and degradation. Remember Gladstone Harbour?

Often conservationists can only hope that future generations will welcome and expand on the remnants left by present governments. Often we cannot have the satisfaction of knowing that our seemingly head-against-brick-wall efforts are having effect. We just have to persist, anyway, even when it looks hopeless.

So it is a welcome change to hear from a writer who thinks that the world of people with power might be changing direction - see link (<http://biographic.com/posts/sto/no-lost-cause>). The article comes to us from TESS (Centre for Tropical Environmental and Sustainability Science) via HOPE (Householders' Options to Protect the Environment).

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