

FRIENDS OF NORTH BRUNY

CHAIR'S REPORT TO THE AGM – 8 OCTOBER 2022

I am pleased to present this report to the members of Friends of North Bruny (FONB), covering the activities of the organisation for the past year.

I started out thinking that this last year had been less busy for FONB than the one before. It was definitely an illusion!

I will first deal with 2 community projects which are currently under way, and then with 2 that are in their early stages.

Bushfire Readiness

In late 2021, we heard of grants being offered by the Commonwealth government under the so-called 'Preparing Australian Communities – Local Stream Program'. The purposes of the grant round included helping to improve the long-term resilience of Australian communities to natural hazards, including bushfire.

Having heard about this opportunity, our Fire Readiness Sub-committee worked with Leigh Blackwell, Chief of the North Bruny Rural Fire Brigade, to develop an application by FONB for a grant of \$46,000 to address the scarcity of reliable fire-fighting water supply on North Bruny. A survey by the Tasmanian Fire Service in 2021 had demonstrated limited availability of truck-accessible dam water here in summer.

The application was successful. The grant covers preparation for and the installation of a 280,000 litre tank to go behind the North Bruny fire station, to catch rainwater from the roofs of both the fire station and the adjacent CWA Hall. Watch out for its installation next week! The project is an example of how we might harvest and store water from roofs on public buildings elsewhere on the island.

I would like to thank Giselle Nathan as secretary of the Fire Readiness Sub-committee for her work in liaising with Leigh and coordinating the application, with back-up from the TFS and Kingborough Council. Many thanks to Leigh for his volunteer time in managing the project.

We hope to organise a community discussion soon about bushfire readiness and safety, and will be liaising with Kingborough Council about this, since they have received a relevant grant. Giselle will be

helping with that too, and I would like to thank her for all her work on this highly important community issue.

‘Bin Marine Plastic’

This project involves installing special bins on certain beaches where visitors to the beaches can dispose of microplastics and other plastic waste that they collect on the beach. The project has been underway for the last couple of years, and is very close to implementation.

The graphic artist for the project is Gordon Harrison-Williams, of Workhorse Studio in Hobart. Gordon has shown great commitment to the project, convinced of its social importance, and has put in far more time than we are able to pay him for. He not only came up with the bin signage that we originally commissioned, but has also produced designs for a postcard, T-shirts and car stickers. These are all here for viewing today.

We started out with the hope that we could install the bins at 12 selected sites around the island, and applied to the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania for the necessary permissions. However, it became apparent that it would be very difficult to get permission for sites that were under the control of the Parks and Wildlife Service, and we were advised to go with sites that were already licensed to Kingborough Council. So we are now going with 8 such sites, 3 of which are on North Bruny and 5 of which are on South Bruny.

Kingborough Council have been hugely supportive of this project, well beyond the initial grant that has helped fund it. We also have financial support from the Bruny Island Environment Network (BIEN), the Bruny Island Community Association (BICA), the Inala Foundation, Bruny Island Coastal Retreats, the Pennicott Foundation, and the Matysek family. I sincerely thank each of them.

I am hoping that the bins will be in place in a few weeks. We still need volunteers to monitor them, so please come forward if you feel able to help with this.

I have occasionally joked about the enormous amount of effort involved in putting out 8 rubbish bins, but there is a lot of potential here. There is reason to hope that the initiative will extend to other places, to help reduce the amount of plastic on beaches, and hopefully out in the community also. Plastic is so useful, but also pernicious.

I this week met with some folk from Keep Australia Beautiful Tasmania, and showed them the artwork. They were most impressed, and also saw the potential for spreading the initiative elsewhere round the State.

It is worth mentioning that if you collect plastic on the beach which you believe is identifiable as coming from one of the fish farms, this can and should be reported to the Aquaculture Section of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania, which can impose fines and pursue prosecution. An online report form is available, which we helped to bring about a year or so ago. This can be found at <https://nre.tas.gov.au/aquaculture/marine-farming-debris>.

I wish to thank Alex Matysek, Ros Woodburn and Gerry McAfee for their help with aspects of this project, and Alex for suggesting it in the first place.

Galloway Park

Galloway Park is the deceptively grand name of an area of public land uphill from the eastern end of Nebraska Beach that includes the now delapidated public tennis courts.

Members of the community recently approached FONB with the suggestion that we apply for a community grant to improve this area. The suggestion was that the tennis courts should be refurbished and that the area could also include such improvements as a bike track and recreation equipment.

A small group has been formed to carry this forward, and this includes Siobhan Gaskell, Ros Woodburn and Gerry McAfee from our committee. Other members from the wider community are Lauren Jones, Jan Richards, Diane Crosdale, and Justin 'Chainsaw' Jones. The group will soon be seeking community ideas on improvements that could be included in the project. A project plan will then be developed, including costings, and we will then seek sources of funding. The Council will need to approve the project, as the landowner and manager of the site

Habitat improvement for 40-spotted pardalotes and swift parrots

Early this year we heard about the offer of grants to cover the costs of tree planting to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee. This started a conversation between FONB and BIEN about planting corridors of

White gum (*E. viminalis*) and Blue gum (*E. globulus*) to improve habitat and mobility for 40-spotted pardalotes and Swift parrots.

We eventually decided that the project we had in mind did not fit the intent behind the grant round, and decided to develop a project plan with a view to then seeking funding for it from other sources.

Discussions have been taking place about this between myself on behalf of FONB and Daniel Sprod and Marg Graham of BIEN. These have also involved the expert ornithologist Dr Sally Bryant and Nicholas Alexander, Kingborough Council's Biodiversity Officer. The project needs fuller development, but is likely to receive a boost as a result of the Commonwealth government's *Threatened Species Action Plan – Towards Zero Extinctions*, announced by Minister Tanya Plibersek this week, in which Bruny Island figures as one of 20 so-called 'priority places' for particular protection and improvement.

This recent announcement is very important for our island, and is likely to lead to activities in which we should as locals take an active part. I still hold these views, that I expressed in my report at last year's AGM –

“My perspective ... is that Bruny Island is an internationally significant place, for numerous connected reasons – its biological diversity; the fact that it is home to a number of vulnerable, rare and endangered species; the connected fact that it has a number of intact and largely undamaged ecosystems, both terrestrial and marine; its importance to migratory species; its indigenous history; and its significance in the history of European exploration and the settlement of Australia. If you put all this together with its island status, relative remoteness and physical beauty, it deserves a high degree of protection, from an international perspective. We have to be part of that.”

Salmon industry

We of course remain very concerned about the effect of the salmon industry on the environment and lifestyle of the island. This will be a continuing issue for many years to come, and I fear that it will only become more acute as a result of the sale of Tassal and Huon Aquaculture to overseas interests in the last 12 months, and as a result of the foreshadowed intensification of operations in Storm Bay.

Alex Matysek and Gerard Castles are the two members of our committee who help maintain a close watch on developments in this area. Alex is the Bruny Island representative on the board of the

Tasmanian Alliance for Marine Protection (TAMP), and Gerard is spokesperson for the Killora Community Association as well as our Vice-Chair. Thank you to both of them for their constant vigilance and perseverance, which is what this issue requires.

A major development which has occurred this year is the request by the State government for submissions on what should be included in the 10 Year Salmon Plan which is currently in preparation. FONB joined with BIEN in making a submission, which was lodged in late August. The points that we made included these, of particular relevance to Bruny -

- that the Plan should create a timetable for the transition from the sea into land-based farms, and in that context should require the progressive removal of all pens from the D'Entrecasteaux Channel, with no pens to remain in the Channel after 31 December 2029.
- that the progressive removal of pens from the Channel should start with the removal of all pens which are so close to land as to impair the amenity of residents in the immediate vicinity – for example, those opposite Killora at the northern end of the Channel.
- that the pens in Great Taylors Bay, just north of the Labillardière Peninsula, should also be amongst the first to go.
- that there should also be no pens at all in the vicinity of Great Bay, because the benthic fauna in Great Bay and adjacent Simpsons Bay is still intact and diverse, and amongst the best benthic communities in Australia.
- that the Plan should provide for the early removal of all pens which are within important viewsapes, such as the pens off Yellow Bluff on the NE corner of the island.
- that all leases which are vacated under the Plan should be rehabilitated at the expense of the industry, with public consultation deciding their future use.

Our submissions also included these more general points –

- that the monies paid by the industry to the State for its exploitation of the State's public waters should be increased, to completely cover the costs incurred by the State in regulating the industry, and to provide an appropriate return to the State from the revenue generated.
- that the industry's operations should have a net zero effect upon, or reduce, eutrophication, such as has been required in developments in the North Sea.
- that all flow-through aquaculture operations on the State's rivers should cease by an early, specified date.
- and that the industry should be governed by an Independent Regulator using absolutely transparent KPIs, agreed with the

community, with the industry's performance against those KPIs being independently regulated, assessed and reported upon openly in real time.

I have mentioned this submission in detail because the content of the Plan will be of considerable importance to the wellbeing of the island and of the State as a whole. The draft Plan is likely to be released shortly, and the Plan is expected to commence in January 2023,

Planning issues

A major focus of my last 2 reports has been the prospective development at 21 Dennes Point Lane, the last property along the Heritage Trail, and the prospective upgrading of the Trail in connection with that development. Nothing of significance has happened in this regard in the last year, but it seems likely that works will recommence this summer. We continue to monitor this situation.

Of recent concern has been the clearing of the large block of land owned by Bec and Nick Owens which is just to the north of the intersection between Victoria Ave and Bruny Island Main Rd. Alex Matysek contacted the Council for FONB on the day that the clearing started, and the person to whom he spoke said that the Council would send out an enforcement officer the following day. It took 3 weeks for an officer to come, by which time the block had been extensively cleared and scarified, and much of the debris burned.

I wrote to the Council, pointing out that the clearing should not have been carried out without a development permit, as well as complaining at the failure of the Council to act earlier. I have since been told that Council is taking action against the landowners.

I spoke to Bec Owens during this period, and she told me that they are planning a 10-lot subdivision, of which 4 or 5 lots will be sold, with the remainder being kept for themselves and members of their family. We will also continue to monitor this situation, and will let members know when the application for development approval has been advertised.

Other matters –

I must briefly mention other areas of involvement by FONB during the past year –

(a) Bruny Island Visitor Engagement Project (BIVEP)

This is a continuing project being funded by the State government, with the purpose of 'positively (influencing) the way that visitors interact with the environment and people of Bruny Island'. The project started at a time when the island was under increasing pressure from day visitors, and part of the aim was to get visitors to stay longer, spend more money on the island, and experience it differently.

The project largely involves the development of online resources to be used by visitors to the island. This is ongoing, but I have not been brought up to date recently. We will let members know when the material is available for public viewing.

(b) Ferry

Siobhan Gaskell and Lindon Haig continue as members of the Bruny Island Ferry Reference Group, which is no longer organised by the State government, and is now an advisory group to SeaLink, the ferry operator. There is nothing of significance to report in this regard. We remain concerned that the proposal for a booking system could resurface, and will address that if it does. Lindon has a particular interest and expertise in safety issues relating to the ferry service, both on land and onboard, and his involvement in the work of the Group is very helpful on this front.

(c) Landcare and Coastcare

We still wish to breathe life into these activities, and options have been under discussion between Siobhan Gaskell, Ros Woodburn and Jim Mulcahy. There could be tree planting activities and beach cleaning activities in the coming year. A somewhat related proposal is that FONB might organise occasional walks to introduce folk to less well known parts of North Bruny, and I hope that these happen.

(d) Dennes Point Hall

We have held discussions with Kate Morton of the Hall Committee about the potential for greater use of the Hall for community-building events, and for changes to the Hall which might improve its functionality. We have also discussed ways in which communication between FONB and the Hall committee can be improved. The Hall committee is a Council committee and, somewhat strangely, FONB has no direct representation upon it.

(e) Roads

Lindon Haig has been part of discussions with the Department of State Growth over the provision of a safer place at the intersection between Lennon Rd and Bruny Island Main Rd for the school bus to pull in and drop off children who live on North Bruny.

We also corresponded with the Department a couple of months ago, seeking clarity on the transfer of responsibility for maintaining State roads on Bruny from Kingborough Council to Stornoway Ltd. The transfer took effect at the beginning of this financial year.

(e) Interaction with Kingborough Council

I have already mentioned interaction with the Council over the 'Bin Marine Plastics' project and planning issues. We have also been in touch with them on other more day-to-day issues, such as dog control, road safety, public toilets etc.

Conclusion

I hope that it is evident from this report that FONB continues to diligently fulfil, in the words of its Constitution, its objective of being 'stewards for the protection and preservation of the unique environment and lifestyle of North Bruny for current and future generations'.

We are in some ways a blend of BIEN and BICA, with whom we try to work cooperatively where possible. Like BIEN, we have a strong environmental focus. And like BICA, we are also concerned with building and maintaining community. These will continue to be our preoccupations in the coming year.

In closing, I would like to thank all of the members of the management committee for their various contributions to our work during the year.



Simon Allston
Chair

8 October 2022