

Connecting Country Background

Reference Group Meeting June 5th, 2008

Present: Bernard Slattery, Beth Mellick, Julie von Platen, Chris Morris, Patrick Kavanagh, Peter Johnson, David Major, Jan Hall, Marie Jones, Tim Read, Maurie Dynon, Nicole Bullen, Christine Kilmartin

Apologies: Julie Hurley, Deirdre Slattery, Doug Ralph, John Alexander, Geoff Park, Chris Pollock, Virginia Adrian.

Minutes of the April Meeting were considered and accepted.

Agenda

1. Marie acknowledged Beth and the NWF for the extension of the project to August.
2. *Caring for our Country*: Marie reported on a Connecting Country preliminary proposal prepared under this program. The situation is in a state of flux, but the proposal keeps us in the picture. Endorsement from agencies has been sought.
3. World Environment Day: we'll have a presentation as part of the MASG event at the Theatre Royal tonight including complimentary plants provided by Frances Cincotta.
4. *Green Paper*: Bernard tabled a submission prepared for FOBIF. Julie will prepare a more community focussed submission on behalf of Connecting Country. The Green Paper was then discussed. The importance of local focus supported by Government leadership/responsibility was stressed, as was the desirability of a diversity of responses by groups and individuals. It was particularly noted that the Paper should be challenged over its failure to mention Land For Wildlife, when this program has been touted by Government as a good way of encouraging landholders to be environmentally sustainable.
5. *Website*: Doug Falconer will have a working model up next week. Spatial Visions will do an interactive model for no cost - it will belong to us, but SV will use the techniques developed elsewhere as part of its promotion. Any ideas for the website should be sent to Bernard for forwarding to Doug F. [See below]
6. *Additional Connecting Country projects*: We may need a separate forum to field these, in order to develop credible proposals. These should come up after consideration of the CC maps, but some projects may be considered in the interim. We need to approach the idea of 'incentive funds' cautiously: all projects have to be seen in the context of CMA and DPI programs.
7. *Connecting Country Report*: Julie presented maps and visuals. Of the 152,000 ha in the Shire, 17,043 were covered in the questionnaire responses. 26, 000 is Crown land, and 3, 935 under Agency care. The remaining 100,000+ ha include many Land For Wildlife and Trust For Nature properties. The following matters were raised as a response to the picture presented:
 - --Physical connectivity: there has to be a rationale for this based on our knowledge of biodiversity qualities in a particular set of places. In addition, local desire for connectivity is centrally important.
 - --Regrowth fostered in numerous ways (TFN, LFW properties, for example), combined with numerous farm dams, has resulted in a growth in the kangaroo population that presents its own challenges to biodiversity conservation.

- --‘Patched’ fencing out, or exclusion plots within protected remnants, may offer solutions to this problem, but in any case, monitoring is important.
 - --The importance of Bush Broker and Bush Tender schemes to reward farmers for de-stocking was underlined.
 - --What is the Blueprint for? This question was raised as a challenge to the Reference Group. Answers included: it provides information to people who would otherwise not have a detailed knowledge of the context in which they are acting; it enables networking among groups and individuals; it provides a map based action plan; it directs people with needs to sources of funds.
8. Website: Julie showed a ‘draft’ set of pages from the site set up by Doug Falconer; they will be accessible to group members via a code soon. Ideas fielded for the website included:
- The kind of maps we want to see on the web.
 - Whether people should be invited to nominate features like valuable trees or other natural features
 - Case studies of ideas for things that can happen in a particular landscape.

Next meeting: July 3.

POST SCRIPT: THERE IS A PROPOSAL TO CHANGE THIS TO JULY 10:
WATCH THE EMAILS!