

Centenary and District Environment
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The CDEA AGM was held on Saturday morning, 29 October, 2022, combined with a presentation on koalas in South-East Queensland.



Newly Elected Centenary and District Environment Action Management Committee (Vaughan Kippers (Newsletter Editor), Shealagh Walker (President), Ray Lane (Treasurer), Tricia Dakin (Secretary) & Ed Parker (Vice-President) + Di Ruffles not in photo) outside Pooh Corner Environment Centre, 100 Wolston Road, Wacol, Brisbane (Photo © Sarah Hutton, iPhone 12 Pro Max)

MORNING TEA WITH THE GOVERNOR

(Shealagh Walker, President)

In late October I received a very unexpected invitation to morning tea – it was from Her Excellency the Governor the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM to attend Government House for a commemorative tree planting on 1 November. It would be in memory of Queen Elizabeth II and was being held on the anniversary of the Governor's first year in office. Of course, I was delighted to accept.

I arrived at the main door on the day and was guided, with the other arrivals, into an elegant pale green room lit by chandeliers, reflected in gold-framed mirrors. Beautiful flowers adorned the mantle piece. On the walls were fine paintings interspersed with sculptures. I recognised volunteer uniforms and name tabs from groups such as Scouts Australia and the RSPCA, plus six other Bushcare Leaders.

A gong was sounded and Her Excellency the Governor the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM entered the room. She greeted us and told us that we were all volunteers and had been invited so that she could thank us for our work. It was very rewarding to be acknowledged by the Governor and have volunteer work so appreciated.

A Queensland Macadamia tree had been chosen to be planted to honour Queen Elizabeth II and it was to be planted near the entrance using a brand new engraved spade from Sheffield, England. Seventy local native trees were to go in another part of the grounds, one for each year of the Queen's reign. They will be part of the Queen's Commonwealth Canopy. This a network of forest conservation programmes throughout the 54 countries of the Commonwealth of Nations to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

After the Governor's speech we were served a delicious and elegant morning tea. I had a rewarding conversation with the Governor as she moved around the room talking to her guests.

Unfortunately, we couldn't go on to do the planting because of the rain, but the gardeners were going to do it later in the afternoon after it had cleared up.

The volunteers really appreciated that the Governor used important anniversaries to thank us; it was encouraging to see that she supports the natural environment and sets a good example in her own backyard, as it were.



Some of Habitat Brisbane guest volunteers at Government House (Carole Bristow, Noel Standfast, Michael Richardson & Shealagh Walker).

RECENT ENVIRONMENTAL ARTICLES – CHRISTMAS READING

General

“Is recycling the problem, not the solution?”

Last week, my colleague, Chris Vedelago, broke one of the biggest stories of the year: Australia’s soft-plastics recycling system had collapsed. REDcycle, the company that collects plastic bags and other soft plastics at Coles and Woolworths, was unable to recycle them and had been storing them in huge warehouses for months. There was outrage: at the supermarkets, at REDcycle, at Australia’s broken recycling system. Economist Jason Murphy has a different take. Recycling plastic, he argues, is “kind of bullshit”. Here’s my summary of Murphy’s hypothesis: 1. People are very worried about reducing landfill – but landfill size is only a minor environmental problem compared to reducing greenhouse emissions. 2. With the exception of aluminium, recycling is extremely inefficient. It is much, much cheaper to make new products. That’s why our recycling market does not work. 3. Recycling makes us feel good about all the stuff we throw away – which enables us to keep consuming. Consumption is the real problem, not recycling. In sum: recycling does not work and just makes us consume more.”

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/is-recycling-the-problem-not-the-solution-20221115-p5byi8.html>

“To stop new viruses jumping across to humans, we must protect and restore bat habitat. Here’s why. Bats have lived with coronaviruses for millennia. Details are still hazy about how one of these viruses evolved into SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID in humans. Did it go directly from bats to humans or via another animal species? When? And why? If we can’t answer these questions for this now-infamous virus, we have little hope of preventing the next pandemic. Some bat species are hosts for other viruses lethal to humans, from rabies to Nipah to Hendra. But their supercharged immune systems allow them to co-exist with these viruses without appearing sick. So what can we do to prevent these viruses emerging in the first place? We found one surprisingly simple answer in our new research on flying foxes in Australia: protect and restore native bat habitat to boost natural protection. When we destroy native forests, we force nectar-eating flying foxes into survival mode. They shift from primarily nomadic animals following eucalypt flowering and forming large roosts to less mobile animals living in a large number of small roosts near agricultural land

where they may come in contact with horses. Hendra virus is carried by bats and can spill over to horses. It doesn't often spread from horses to humans, but when it does, it's extremely dangerous. Two-thirds of Hendra cases in horses have occurred in heavily cleared areas of northern New South Wales and south-east Queensland. That's not a coincidence. Now we know how habitat destruction and spillover are linked, we can act. Protecting the eucalyptus species flying foxes rely on will reduce the risk of the virus spreading to horses and then humans. The data we gathered also makes it possible to predict times of heightened Hendra virus risk – up to two years in advance.”

<https://theconversation.com/to-stop-new-viruses-jumping-across-to-humans-we-must-protect-and-restore-bat-habitat-heres-why-194634>

“Chefs, doctors and real estate developers among new coalition calling to rid kitchens of gas cooking. For decades, "natural gas" has sold itself to families as the fastest, most-efficient way to cook. But now there's a battle for your kitchen stove, and a push to get you to embrace electric for your health and for the planet. A coalition of chefs, doctors, climate scientists and real estate developers have joined forces to push back against the gas industry's marketing, with the aim of removing gas from kitchens worldwide. Campaigners say in addition to heating the climate, gas stoves contribute to asthma and other health conditions. And that coalition thinks that if they can rid kitchens of gas, they'll rid homes of the fossil fuel altogether. The Global Cooksafe Coalition is being launched in Sydney today and announcing partnerships with developers Lendlease and GPT, who have agreed to stop putting any gas in new buildings by 2030 and to retrofit existing buildings by 2040. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-11-22/doctors-climate-scientists-chefs-push-for-end-to-gas-in-kitchens/101678140>

“Scientists need help to save nature. With a smartphone and these 8 tips, we can get our kids on the case. Citizen science is touted as a way for the general public to contribute to producing new knowledge. But citizen science volunteers don't always represent a broad cross-section of society. Rather, they're often white, male, middle-aged, educated and already interested in science. This lack of representation has several problems. It can undermine the potential of citizen science to bridge the divide between lay people and experts. It also means fewer people benefit from the chance to advance their informal science education and gain valuable life skills. It's important that citizen

science projects engage volunteers from across society, including young people. A new Australian initiative is doing just that. The B&B BioBlitz aims to get school students gathering data about Australia's natural environment. This year's event shows how citizen science in school can help develop STEM skills and make gains in biodiversity research.”

<https://theconversation.com/scientists-need-help-to-save-nature-with-a-smartphone-and-these-8-tips-we-can-get-our-kids-on-the-case-192622>

“Economics has helped to destroy the environment. Can it be used to save it?”

Australia is on the verge of having the world's first national accounting system that tracks the health of a country's natural environment, according to former Treasury secretary Ken Henry. It may help to solve one of the most urgent problems facing humanity: how to reverse global environmental destruction. "I think this is a game changer, I really do," he told the ABC. "What we've done for the first time anywhere in the world at regional scale is to make an assessment, an audit if you like, of the environmental condition of the landscape. "We've now demonstrated that it can be done ... and there is intense interest from financial markets people in seeing whether it's possible to commercialise this data, in the form of a biodiversity credit for example, and it looks like there is the possibility to do so." Dr Henry said it will hopefully lead to future business profit-making also regenerating the planet. "After all, almost all of human activity on earth rests one way or another upon the condition of the natural environment, and if we don't address the deterioration of the natural environment sometime pretty damn soon, the rest of it's going to come crashing down," he told the ABC. So what is he talking about?"

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-11-28/economics-has-destroyed-the-environment-could-it-save-it/101693286>

Local (Queensland)

“Barramundi with tags in Brisbane River could be due to impact of climate change, says biology professor. Climate change and migration of barramundi from North Queensland could be responsible for a population of barramundi living in the Brisbane River. Secretary of Suntag Australia and Infotag Australia coordinator, Bill Sawynok, said fish for housing in tagging data showed 35 barramundi were tagged in the Brisbane River in 2021. Mr Sawynok said, since 2013, just three had been caught in the city's major waterway. He said the appearance of barramundi in the Brisbane

River could be because of climate change, fish released during flooding from farm dams and private dams, and, in some rare cases, pet barramundi from fish tanks.”

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-11-11/climate-change-likely-35-tagged-barramundi-in-brisbane-river/101637738>

“Native species thrive on Curtis Island after removal of feral animals. To locals on Curtis Island off the central Queensland coast, it's not unusual to see wild horses roaming the beach, bushland or even through the streets of the small township of Southend. "To us they're just part and parcel of the island," Kerry Freney said. "You've got the ocean, you've got the scenery, the beaches, and you've got the brumbies and the roos." While striking to see, the horses are part of a feral animal problem on the southern Great Barrier Reef island, according to the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS). "Feral animals cause an extensive amount of damage to key habitats, to critical species, like the yellow chat and the flatback turtles," said Damon Shearer, senior officer of the QPWS Capricorn Coast Management Unit. While some horses remain on the island, about 15 kilometres off the coast at Gladstone, their numbers have significantly reduced since the introduction of a feral animal control program. A Department of Environment and Science (DES) spokesperson said feral animals, including horses, cats, foxes, dogs, pigs and cattle, spread diseases and weeds, trampled vegetation, damaged wetlands and preyed on a range of native wildlife, including turtle clutches. They said the control program involved aerial shooting, which was conducted by experienced members of staff from helicopters. The spokesperson added that QPWS "complies with standard operating procedures and codes of practice to ensure animal welfare requirements are met" and the public was notified before shootings took place.”

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-11-22/pest-management-island-ecosystems-feral-horses-conservation/101669382>

“Qld environment minister powerless to object to land clearing in priority zones. Queensland Environment Minister Meaghan Scanlon cannot object to environmental issues triggered by land clearing once the State Development Department has declared the land a Priority Development Area. This was confirmed by her department on Wednesday after frustrated conservationists complained about koala habitat being clear-felled in Priority Development Areas Greater Flagstone between Jimboomba and Browns Plains. PDA-related developments are designated as “exempted” under schedule 24 of the Planning Regulation 2017 and are therefore

4 “not subject to referral and assessment once a Priority Development Area has been formed”, the Environment Department said. Greater Flagstone is one of 34 PDAs in Queensland. They are mostly in south-east Queensland but stretch to Townsville, Mackay, Toowoomba, Moranbah, Redlands and Caloundra.”

<https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/national/queensland/qld-environment-minister-powerless-to-object-to-land-clearing-in-priority-zones-20221123-p5c0rc.html>

National (Australia)

“‘Toxic cover-up’: 6 lessons Australia can draw from the UN’s scathing report on greenwashing. The United Nations this week slammed corporate “greenwashing” and said organisations cannot claim to be net-zero while supporting fossil fuel projects. The report, released at the global COP27 climate conference in Egypt, called for new rules to ensure emissions pledges were credible and transparent. UN Secretary-General António Guterres appointed the expert group in March. Releasing its report this week, Guterres had strong words for companies that use “bogus” net-zero pledges to cover up massive fossil fuel expansion: *It is rank deception. This toxic cover-up could push our world over the climate cliff. The sham must end.* Guterres said loopholes in rules around corporate emissions reporting are “wide enough to drive a diesel truck through” and require major tightening. Let’s look at what that means for Australian corporations.”

https://theconversation.com/toxic-cover-up-6-lessons-australia-can-draw-from-the-uns-scathing-report-on-greenwashing-194054?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20November%2014%202022%20-%202464024675&utm_content=

Regional (South Pacific, New Zealand & Antarctica)

“Antarctica is changing, and wildlife and weeds could be on the way. Only a tiny portion of Antarctica — less than 1 per cent — is permanently ice-free. Yet that's where the bulk of its unique plants, mosses, lichens, algae, invertebrates and animals manage to survive. But that's all changing. Between now and the end of the century, thousands of square kilometres of permanently ice-free habitat is going to open up on the continent, even under moderate climate change. In general, growing seasons will get longer, more precipitation will fall as rain, more fresh meltwater will be released, average temperatures will become milder, and extreme weather events, like elsewhere, are likely to become more intense.”

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2022-12-01/antarctica-is-changing-and-wildlife-and-weeds-are-on-the-way/101706746>

