

Annual Report

Mount Roland Land Care Incorporated

July 1 2022 to June 30 2023

(and to the 2023 AGM, Sept 10, 2023)

Elected at or since the previous AGM (Sept 26, 2022):

President: Kristen Lang

Vice President: Barbara Alsop

Treasurer: Janet Dunbabin

Secretary: Greg Taylor

Other committee members: Clive Bott, George Callister, Libby Alsop, Kylie Tune, Tracy Kelly, Geoff Page, Councillor Don Thwaites, Rob Van der Weide and Councillor Terry Hughes

Public Officer: Don Thwaites

Property Coordinator: Rob Van der Weide

Membership Coordinator: Elizabeth Dale

Auditor: Summit Advisors (Rachel Joyce)

Our Group's new name, Mount Roland Land Care, will shortly celebrate its first birthday. With that name has come an amended Constitution, a new logo, including flags and a banner, and both a consolidation and an expansion of what was already a broadened range of activities. New reach, from Wilmot to Beulah, Lorinna to Nook, and Stoodley to Barrington, adding to the more familiar ground from the Gog Range to Gowrie Park, has accompanied a year of extensive tree planting and weed control, an intensive focus on culverts and giant freshwater crayfish, a number of public talks and workshops, a mini land-care festival, and a good deal of connecting of people to people, people to place, and of place to an awareness of need (of which there is much). Supporting these undertakings has been the new and impressive MRLC website, a powerful tool for the Group, with the MRLC Facebook page having also been revitalised under the governance of our social media subcommittee.

Of the Group's five-thousand-plus hours of volunteer work in the past year, most have been taken up by trees and weeds. Between the end of June 2022 and July 2023, MRLC planted more than 1800 trees across seven private and two public sites. By the end of September this year (2023) we will likely have added a further 500 to that count. Vital to this number is our review of the success of the plantings and we're proud to say that in our January review of the previous year's plantings, survival rates for the five sites concerned were high (100, 99, 94, 97 and 98%). Casualties were replaced and strugglers noted, and reviews will continue to form an important part of the tree-planting project.

Survival rates from Spring this year are also looking good, though a few unfortunately-timed frosts did leave their mark. At our most challenging site, on public land between the pony club and the transfer station, where 500 trees were planted in April, the survival rate is currently at 94% and may dip lower. The potential for this site, and indeed for all sites, undoubtedly remains significant. Casualties will be replaced and we look forward to tracking growth. Enormous thanks go to both the landholders and to our fantastic volunteers, many of whom come to multiple plantings – all of us will continue to reap the benefits of this effort and commitment! Thank you so much!

In addition to planting purchased seedlings, MRLC also conducted seed collection and propagation workshops in 2023 and 2022, led by the very popular Ruth Mollison and our own Greg Taylor



respectively. These are areas of MRLC's work that may well expand should the significant existing interest prove to be something we can nurture.

The outlook is also good regarding funding for MRLC's future tree planting, following the success of our application for a grant from the Tasmanian Government's Healthy Tasmania Fund. This grant, worth \$43,000, will support the planting of 3500 trees over the next two years. It will also fund several workshops and public events as well as training in the area of event management – MRLC has enjoyed the commitment of a five-member management team for the tree planting and we're keen now to develop a second, perhaps younger team able to share the management of the tree-planting events.

For funding this year, we're grateful for a local donation from Luke Davies Construction, Luke's very welcome support forming part of a significant commitment to sustainability within his business generally. MRLC has recognised that financial input of this and other kinds is something our attention needs to be directed to in order to secure greater capacity and security for our endeavours. Progress towards the implementation of a Fundraising Strategy has been slow, primarily due to the Group's engagement in its many activities, but an initial outline does now exist thanks to Greg and the valued input of several other committee and non-committee members. Our genuine gratitude is extended to all who have made donations to MRLC over the year – all of it makes a difference.

On the more practical front, MRLC has had the immense pleasure of encountering numerous skilled and dedicated individuals working to increase land health and sustainability in the last year. The drive and commitment of these individuals is something MRLC has been keen to support, both for the direct improvements to land health and to help spread knowledge through the community. Landholders joining MRLC's tree-planting program are among these individuals and we're thrilled not only by their involvement but also by the network each have allowed themselves to become part of, helping each other out on an ongoing basis. In the mix, there are organic and regenerative farming techniques being utilised, and numerous plans for extensive revegetation.

MRLC's shelterbelt and blackwood plantation day in July this year provided further examples of some positive, highly valuable sharing, giving community members access, via two farm walks, to shelterbelt and small-scale plantation knowledge held by some remarkable farmers, Ronald and Marleen van de Winckel and Gilles Carrabin. Our deep thanks. We look forward to more encounters of this kind.

On the inspiration front, the year has been blessed, as well, with presenters and performers of extraordinary calibre, many of whom featured in our rather lively mini-festival in April. The festival, funded by a successful, \$10,000 grant application to the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, combined the planting of 500 trees with live music and talks on numerous topics (bats, slime moulds, soil health, edible native foods, currawongs, bees, earth wall construction, natural dyeing, and the ethics of coffee). One of these topics, earth wall construction, has made it onto the MRLC website and we hope other members will also, over time, offer their particular passions and skills for inclusion on the site. Thanks go out to Sarah Lloyd, Lisa Cawthen, Rees Campbell, Theresa Chapman, Amber Rae Slade, Isabel Rumble, Pete Cornelius (and the band), Matt Fell, Jennifer Stackhouse and Peter Male, Laura Wildsmith, Cindy Thompson, Geoff Page, Cyriel van de Winckel, and the MRLC committee.

Effective words well delivered can have a lasting effect on how we see and care for the world around us, enhancing not only our knowledge but also our willingness to act. In 2022, we also enjoyed presentations by Andrea Henderson from Parks and Wildlife Service and John and Gail Dennett from Conservation Landholders Tasmania. These were important talks, and though they were attended by only a few, the topics touched on are of significance to all of us, namely the methods we have for protecting the land around and under us. The reserve we owe our name to, Mount Roland, is just that, a reserve. That the



mountains remain vulnerable is evidenced by the very real interest being shown and action taken by the mining company Flynn Gold with regard to the Gog Range and the eastern area of Mount Roland. MRLC has been seeking to meet with representatives of Flynn Gold with, to date, no success. The lack of security for the mountains and their surrounds is very much not to be forgotten. We can love and respect a place that for others is no more than a resource. It's too frequent a story for it not to be disturbing and we do need to find a response.

Another strong interest for MRLC concerns our capacity to secure and engage younger members. In January this year we were able to work with 80 Scout Rovers, aged 18 to 28, part of a much larger group visiting Tasmania at the time. Speaking with these young adults on topics of biodiversity and biosecurity only emphasised the value of connecting with the concerns, knowledge and energy of this age group. This was reinforced again via recent engagement with twelve student members of UTAS Landcare, donating a weekend of their time to weed work in Lorinna. It would be wonderful not only to work with this group again but to engage as well with the young adults here in Kentish. We do have younger folk attending our tree-planting days and workshops, one of the tree-planting days was held at the Wilmot School, and the mini-festival demographic was somewhat encouraging, indicating that this is an area where improvements can be made.

Weeds require special mention in this summary of the past year. A \$3000 grant from Cradle Coast Authority enabled priority weed control around Mount Roland (*kunzea ericoides* and foxgloves). Three working bees were held to physically remove weeds at priority locations and contractors were hired to spray weeds where needed. A strength Greg lends to MRLC in this area, aside from his extensive knowledge, is his capacity to connect effectively with other forces: Parks and Wildlife, Sustainable Timbers, Reliance, Forico, Kentish Council, Cradle Coast Authority, TasNetworks, State Growth, contractors and landholders; participation in Statewide forums and the Regional Weed Management Group has also been sustained as a priority by Greg. For Spanish Heath, the result has been not only a coordinated response but also a five-year management plan by TasNetworks in relation to the Beulah area. The support coming back from the various bodies MRLC connects with should also be noted – these are two-way relationships the Group certainly benefits from. Support received from Cradle Coast's Hannah Sadler is a perfect example. Thank you Hannah.

The connectivity achieved by committee members Tracy Kelly and Kylie Tune in relation to foxglove awareness and control needs also to be celebrated. Kylie has been spearheading an active community response in Lorinna, including the pursuit of a Weed Management Plan for the area, developed with strong assistance from Greg and Council. Input here from the UTAS Landcare team previously mentioned has led to what is hopefully the early detection of a new weed arrival, *Daphne laurel*, a find that would certainly underscore the usefulness of weed mapping. Our thanks to UTAS Landcare. Further and huge thanks go to all the volunteers who turned up to pull and cut and carry away throughout the year!

MRLC has acted politically as well in an attempt to win a greater response to the rapidly expanding problem of foxgloves, which are infiltrating more and more land, including our reserves. A 'Four Point Plan for priority actions on Foxgloves' has been submitted to NRE, with a subsequent Government commitment given to implementing three of those actions. If achieved, this would establish both better management guidelines and greater awareness of the threat and toxicity of the plant; as yet there has been no commitment to developing a biocontrol agent. Greg and Tracy have delivered four public presentations on foxgloves, and three media stories have also been published.

Despite the intensity and breadth of MRLC's weed efforts, we were recently unsuccessful in our major grant application for weed control – foxgloves were not considered a high enough priority, something



those responding to MRLC's foxglove hotline (set up via the MRLC webpage during the flowering season of 2022) would be unlikely to agree with. The hotline, it's worth noting, provided many valuable reports, including one of a foxglove population on the doorstep of the World Heritage Area, subsequently controlled via cooperation between MRLC, Parks and Wildlife, Sustainable Timbers and Council.

Special thanks go to Sam Blackwood-Beattie for his strong part in the Council-MRLC partnership regarding weeds and NRM issues generally, and indeed for his great support in a number of our endeavours, from here to Lorinna and involving our trees and species watch projects as well. Sam's efforts and availability have made a significant difference to our achievements. Thank you Sam.

The partnership in weed management with Council is a subset of a valued, broader relationship, secured again this year by the renewal of another 5-year agreement. Council has granted MRLC much-appreciated support in the form of an annual (and indexed) payment of \$7000. The agreement also confirms the availability of a discretionary fund, currently valued at \$40,000 and capped at \$50,000, for use in responding to specifically identified events, risks or conditions, including extreme weather events. We look forward to developing effective mechanisms for triggering the utilisation of these funds and of maximising the benefits for land health in Kentish.

Financial priorities for MRLC are in part established by our ongoing projects, but we rely on observations and calls for assistance from community members as well. This was how our Landcare-Tas-supported giant freshwater crayfish project began, a project that is still in progress – ways to assist GFCs in their use of our culverts continue to be explored, as summarised on ABC news (radio and online) earlier in the year. It is also what has instigated our current platypus watch. Residents' sightings and a letter from the Tasmanian Platypus Conservation Group has led to a conversation with the Department of State Growth which will hopefully be part of an ongoing effort to improve culvert standards and wildlife safety Statewide.

One last ambition to mention is a new and long-term project to establish a climate-change monitoring capacity at various sites on Mount Roland. This is a project designed to run over decades in conjunction with Parks and Wildlife and the Department of Natural Resources and Environment. The aim is to pick up early indications of stress due to climate change and to use these indications to guide, if possible, supportive responses. Involvement from interested members is in the process of being sought. Our thanks to NRE, and a particular acknowledgement, for assistance here and elsewhere, to Ben Hill from Parks and Wildlife. The relationship with Parks and Wildlife is multifaceted and much appreciated.

Thanks must be given to all on MRLC's governing committee. Thanks are also extended to the wonderful team responsible for establishing and maintaining MRLC's website, most notably Elizabeth Dale and Geoff Page; Don Thwaites, Greg Taylor and Jodie McQueen were also instrumental in its creation. Elizabeth is, in addition, our Membership Coordinator, and our sometimes-caterer as well, and deserves deep thanks for her care and time. Our membership has reached 108 this year. Other members taking on particular roles, Barbara Alsop (Vice President), Rob Van der Weide (Property Coordinator), Don Thwaites (Public Officer), Tracy Kelly, Barbara Alsop, Jodie McQueen and Elizabeth Dale (Facebook Managers) – our thanks to you also. And for the effort and consistency of our wonderful Treasurer, Janet Dunbabin, and of our extraordinarily dedicated and meticulous Secretary, Greg Taylor, not only a massive thank you but an acknowledgement of indebtedness. May you inspire others and may the land be better for it.

I move that the Annual Report be accepted.

(President)