

Newsletter *for our valued financial members*

November 2019



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Water is on everyone's minds

Well, after Bourke just got 94 mm of rain and Armidale got 3 mm, I guess we can safely assume that the weather world is a little strange at present. Of course, this is the most serious drought that any of us living on the Northern Tablelands have experienced.

But, as they say, "It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good". At least we know that finding more water is a 'hot topic'! There isn't a conversation today in this area where the topic of water does not come up. This means, we have an opportunity to raise important issues about Armidale's and the region's water supply and the lack of environmental flows, including through our city.

With the benefit of hindsight, we might conclude that we have been somewhat complacent since Malpas dam was built over 50 years ago in 1968. Plans to consider doubling its capacity have been mooted by our local member, Adam Marshall.

As we know, Armidale has experienced other serious water crises in the past and we need to reflect on that history as well as on the current drought. For example, the 1940s were a particularly severe period for the region and city. The water supply was replenished finally in 1954 - having been commenced 1947 - by the construction of the Gara River Dam with a capacity of 346 ML or 2.7% of the capacity of Malpas Dam!

Let's all encourage our Local, State and Federal governments to think strategically about the stuff of life - water - and encourage them to seek ideas from the community. Let us together come up with sensible multi-generational plans that will allow our beautiful city, towns, farming and natural areas to thrive into the future. We have so many invaluable assets - including human capital - in this region and we need to maintain a positive frame of mind to overcome the current obstacles; just like our forebears did!

The current drought - crisis management

It is surely a daunting task for our Local government Councillors and Council officers to manage us through the current water crisis in our region. No doubt we are all supportive of measures to save water and plan for the full range of possible rainfall scenarios over the coming months and years.

Still, in spite of these challenges, we trust that Council will continue to pursue its city-wide Master Planning process so that we forge solutions, even in this current climate of considerable adversity.

No doubt our members are aware of the huge challenges being faced each day by our farmers as well as businesses throughout the region. Our thoughts are with you all.

Report on our July Annual General Meeting

In time, we will circulate some minutes of this meeting. But for now, suffice to say that it was a successful meeting when we heard about plans to recycle water upstream from the east of the city to the west and allow it to flow back through the city for the benefit of all life along the creeklands. We had several new members join our association on the night. The meeting was well attended - over 40 enjoyed the evening and the drinks which were generously provided by our outgoing Secretary, Kerry Chick - thanks Kerry!

The AGM was brief and we managed to elect a full complement of 9 committed members - you can see their photos and read about their wishes for the creeklands at [this web link](#).

You will remember our aim is: "To assist in the careful planning, design and development of beautiful, healthy and safe public spaces featuring wetlands, lagoons and billabongs, connected by flowing water along the Armidale Creeklands".

Since the AGM, we have had two committee meetings with a third coming up in mid November.

A few changes on our website (our window to the world)

Our website is at: <https://www.armidalecreeklands.org.au/>

You might be interested in what planning processes can be like in other places. One overseas park system - which is rated number 1 in the USA - that one of us visited recently, is the [Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board](#). Check out the image on this link, which is their Home page, where it says:

"Parks for All: MPRB Comprehensive Plan

Help create a vision for the future of Minneapolis parks | [Learn More >](#)"

Please explore other sites like this to learn more about how communities can positively influence planning decisions.

We have made a place to put past Newsletters on our website for viewing by Members Only (click here: [Members tab](#)). So far, only the June 2019 newsletter has been added - when we get time, earlier newsletters will be added.

A member told us of the new plans for Archerfield Wetlands Precinct in Brisbane - check it out under our Inspirations tab [here](#).

Remember, when you click on the [Members Only](#) tab of our website, you should be challenged for a password - that password is still 'visions'. If we change the password, we will email members. Our intention is that, over time, more information will be put in this area of the website as our intention is to reward you for being loyal financial members!

What is happening with the city-wide Master Plan?

We support Council's decision to embark on a city-wide Master Planning Process. This is consistent with our submission made to the earlier Creeklands 'Master' Plan which pointed out that the limited scope of the plan (only from Markham to Douglas Streets) was a limitation of that consultancy - our association pointed out at the time, the need to consider the broader issue of where any water might come from.

Two representatives of our association were invited to attend the first city-wide Master Planning meeting on May 3, 2019. You might remember we reported on this meeting in our June 2019 newsletter. We have not yet been informed of the next steps in this process.

Confusion about choice of site for new playground prior to completion of city-wide Master Plan

You may have read in the Armidale Express (during September), conflicting statements about the site for the new playground in Armidale. Your committee approved a Letter to the Editor which was published in the October 30 issue of the Express. We understand the pressures that are brought to bear on Local Government but we wanted to point out the need for any infrastructure to be located in a location consistent with planning processes.

If you did not read the letter, you can find it by clicking [here](#).

Reaching out to Armidale Regional Council

We acknowledge that, in order to get any proposals to improve the creeklands, we will need the approval of Armidale Regional Council. So, we have sought to engage constructively with Council.

Only one Councillor was able to attend our Presentation at the AGM in July 2019, when we spoke of the idea for recycling water through the city. This suggestion came from Darling Irrigation water engineer, Sam Maroulis, of Dubbo and it was well received at our AGM.

Your committee decided that we should inform Councillors and the CEO of these ideas and so we emailed them suggesting that we might make a short presentation to Council. Even though we got support for such a presentation from 6 Councillors, we await an invitation.

Undaunted, we recently wrote an email to all Councillors and CEO advising them of our key points and provided them all with a copy of Sam Maroulis' proposal.

Reaching out to the local Aboriginal community

Over recent weeks, two of your committee arranged an informal meeting of representatives of the local Aboriginal community. We wanted to start learning something of the history of the creeklands as understood by our region's First Peoples. We hope to continue to meet with representatives so we can develop a common understanding of how we might improve the flows along and health of the creekland stream.

This is consistent with your committee's belief that we need to work hard to build a consensus across the community if we are ever to have any success in coming up with agreed 'Visions for Armidale Creeklands'.

Engaging with the Armidale Urban Rivercare Group

Recently, two of your committee attended the annual Armidale Urban Rivercare Group (AURG) planning meeting at the Armidale Bowling Club. This was of great interest to us and we were invited to make a short statement of how we see our Visions association working in a complementary fashion to the AURG. Our statement was well received and we have offered for three representatives of AURG to attend our next Visions committee meeting (November 2019) as observers.

As our members have told us, we appreciate the importance of two groups such as ours working together to improve the creeklands.

Growing our membership ...

Our number of financial members has increased 50% in the past year. Thanks for joining us - especially to all our new members.

You might not realise it, but you can help us reach more people if you and your family Like and Follow us on Facebook. (NB we *do* appreciate that some/many do NOT like 'social media'!)

We continue to expand our reach to the community using Facebook and we would like to expand to other social media such as Instagram - if and when we get a talented volunteer to help us out.

For those who haven't seen it, a snapshot of one of our recent Facebook posts is shown below. It was our most successful post to date reaching more than 2200 people.



Visions for Armidale Creeklands



Published by Jim Scott [?] · September 11 · 🌐

Sydney might have just got 100 mm of rain but, here in Armidale - where we have bushfires and are parched - all we can do is squeeze drops out of early morning mist using spider webs! Still, we continue to develop our Visions for Armidale Creeklands ... please share this with your Sydney friends!



WWW.ARMIDALECREEKLANDS.ORG.AU

Visions for Armidale Creeklands



Learn More

2,273

People Reached

567

Engagements

Boost Again

So far, the response to our Facebook postings have been positive with a growing number of Likes. Pleasingly, we have had NO negative responses to our posts - 'touch wood'!

We also have a Twitter account (@CreekVisions) but this has not been used much to date. Here is an example of a Tweet we sent from us (@CreekVisions) that re-tweets a post sent to one of our most important inspirations - Centennial Parklands in Sydney.



Creek_Visions @CreekVisions · Jun 4

Thanks for sharing. We dream that one day, swans and other water birds will feed in a yet-to-be planned and constructed wetland or billabong near the CBD of #Armidale. @CentParklands is one of our inspirations!



tim ritchie @timritchie · May 15

Alone in Sydney's Centennial Park... well, not completely alone, ducks and swans also there. And they were better company than some of people at the gatherings I attend
@CentParklands



You might even choose to join Twitter and follow us @CreekVisions?

A poem - to encourage some rain ...

'Send 'er down, Hughie' by (the late) Roger McKnight

*But we want to go to tennis,
or some other sort of sport,
wails the city-slicking menace
over some old cocky's snort –
Send 'er down, Hughie; send 'er down.*

*Arr, they want to go to beaches,
petty pleasures they desire,
while me pastures, or me peaches,
or me parsnips all expire –
send 'er down, Hughie; send 'er down.*

*They say that it'll rain for years,
there'll be a second Flood.
If all we get is city tears,
I'll irrigate with blood –
send 'er down, Hughie, blow 'em, send 'er down!*

(from The Grass Trees - selected poems Roger McKnight published by Hyde Park Press, Adelaide, p35). Roger McKnight was a passionate poet and dairy farmer from near Victor Harbour, SA, that one of your committee had the privilege to know - he is confident that Roger would not have minded it being reproduced here as we suffer through these extraordinary times.

A few of our plans for the future ...

We are modernising our financial management by moving our data to an online accounting package. Some of our committee are exploring more modern methods of tracking our membership details.

Plans are being made to build on our Charity status by seeking DGR status from the ATO - this will require considerable planning including putting some required changes to our Constitution before a Special General Meeting.

We have commenced liaising with a few representatives of the local Aboriginal community to seek ideas and learn from the stories of this region and the creeklands environment. More will be done in coming months.

Plans are at an early stage of development for getting the youth of the region involved in coming up with exciting, creative and feasible plans for the creeklands environment. It is our hope that, in the future, we can fund some prizes to attract the very best ideas. After all, ours in an inter-generational effort - and that is what is needed if any improvements to the creeklands are to be 'sustainable'.

How can you help?

Like it or not, we have to work with some modern communication tools. To extend our reach, and therefore impact, you can really help by Liking us and/or Following us on Facebook.

Also, you may like to volunteer to help in some way. You might have special skills to offer - like editing, publicity, business management, planning, creative graphics, mapping, researching history, photography with drones, etc. Feel free to email us with your thoughts at mail@armidalecreeklands.org.au.

Also, if you have some photos or reports of places you have been where you saw beautiful ponds, lagoons, lakes, billabongs, rivers, streams, etc. - that you think might inspire us here on the Northern Tablelands - please let us know by email with some attached images. We can then add them to our website to inspire all of us.

Please send us any feedback or ideas ...

We always appreciate any feedback or guidance.

You can email us at mail@armidalecreeklands.org.au



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Web: www.armidalecreeklands.org.au/

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/armidalecreeklands/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/CreekVisions>