

Parklands Albury Wodonga Ltd
Annual Report
Year ending 30 June 2008



parklands

the benefits are endless...



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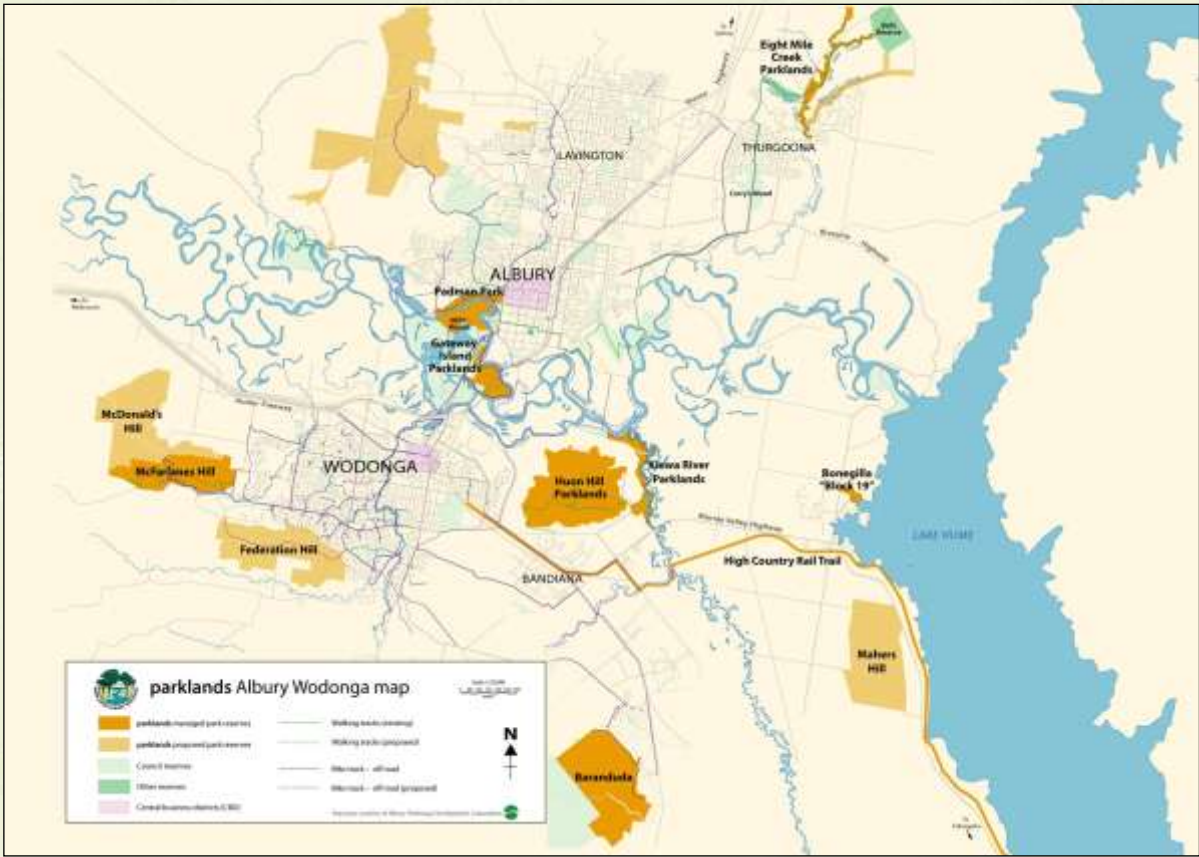
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VISION

parklands, in partnership with the Albury-Wodonga regional community, will *establish the most magnificent lifestyle through the development of its regional parklands*, based on the best possible ecological principles, for the benefit of current and future generations.

MISSION

The Board is to plan, manage, monitor and promote the Albury Wodonga Regional Parklands, to the highest international standard, on behalf of the community.



CONSTITUTION OBJECTS



Object 1

Optimizing the biodiversity of the reserved land surrounding the cities.

Object 2

Educating the regional community about environmental issues and the wise use of resources such as soil, water and vegetation.

Object 3

Providing opportunities for volunteers and members of the general community to engage with and learn about the natural environment through the implementation of conservation works plans and programs, and the development of passive recreational opportunities in the reserves.

Object 4

Establishing and maintaining a public fund to be called the “Parklands Public Fund” for the specific purpose of supporting the environmental objectives of **parklands**.

Object 5

Providing international best practice environment and passive recreation management guidance to the community through the setting of policies, goals and priorities, by developing appropriate plans and by monitoring on ground outcomes.



Object 6

Involving the community through regularly seeking their views, advice and participation.

Object 7

Achieving financial independence through rigorous pursuit of government funding, corporate sponsorship and commercial practices which are compatible with environmental and heritage values; and

Object 8

parklands shall be organized and operated exclusively for the attainment of, and holds its assets and income on trust exclusively for those objects.



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Overview

The 2007 – 2008 year in review has been one of stabilization for Parklands Albury-Wodonga (PAW) and it is satisfying to report that the difficulties of recent years have been overcome. Financial management is now sound and stable albeit on a reduced level compared with previous years. This is due to the skills of senior management, 'in house' capability and excellent financial advisors.

The Board's Operations

At the Board level some difficulty has been experienced in attracting suitable new members although Julie Hind and Bernie Evens did join at the beginning of 2008 and other prospects have now been identified. Julie resigned from the Board after a brief period for personal reasons. The Board has set itself the aim of establishing a fully independent structure drawn from the community with an emphasis on relevant environmental and business skills. This will engender a new focus on our relationships with federal, state and local governments. Healthy relationships in these areas are vital to the effective future of PAW.

The Board is in the process of re-establishing committees to effectively manage its responsibilities. An Audit and Risk Management Committee and Structure and Succession Committee are being formed and Relationships and Commercialisation Committees are being considered. On the broader issue of governance, the Board has, over the past two years strengthened its position and welcomes the excellent reporting provided by the Senior Ranger.

Relationships

We continue to have excellent relations with the commonwealth through the agency of the Albury-Wodonga Corporation (AWC) and we acknowledge their generous annual contributions in return for the work done by PAW on AWC land. We also have

maintained excellent relations with the Victoria Government through the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE). During the year in review we were advised by the Minister, the Hon. Mr. Gavin Jennings MP that one hundred Hectares of land transferred to DSE from AWC would be placed under the care and management of PAW. This land has significant funding attached for management and maintenance under the transfer agreement between the parties. PAW also acknowledges the annual contribution made by Parks Victoria and the valuable contribution made by its representative on the Board, Mr. Hamish MacLennan. PAW is endeavouring to achieve a similar outcome to that with DSE with Lands NSW over land AWC is transferring to it.

At the local government level PAW continues a close relationship with Albury City and acknowledges too, the valuable financial contribution it makes to our organization. In the past PAW has experienced a problematic relationship with the City of Wodonga but in the past year this has evolved into a good working relationship over environmental lands under the care and management of the city.

Auspiced Organisations

In regard to the organizations associated with PAW, these are addressed in the *Ranger's Report*. PAW is working to establish these organizations, apart from the High Country Rail Trail, as independent organizations or under alternative auspicing arrangements.

The Future

The future for PAW is promising and in the coming year the Board is looking to strengthen its membership and to further develop the committee system. It will be also working to strengthen its relationships with the three tiers of government and through this work to grow the organization.

RANGER'S REPORT

A year of creativity...

This has been a year of great creativity as a reduced number of staff have worked alongside our regional community to manage more land than ever before, with the most diversified sources of funding in our 12 year history. Acknowledgement goes firstly and most importantly to our honorary Board who have steadied the ship through some rough seas on this journey.

Many thanks to our regional community for investing more than \$463,960 worth of time in the planning, development, management, maintenance and promotion of 3,350 hectares of bush reserves.

Thank you to staff members Ben Berry, Toby Alker-Jones and Wayne Carlson, who resigned during the year. These staff collectively contributed over 14 years of time, effort, passion and commitment.

On ground outcomes focus...

As a consequence of a substantial cut in funding this financial year from our largest stakeholder, **parklands** rose to the challenge that we needed to operate with a more diversified revenue base. In February 2008, **parklands** celebrated it's 12th birthday. We would not have reached this milestone without the strong partnerships and community support that have evolved over the past decade.

Albury Wodonga Environment Centre moved into the office space vacated by Regional Skills. A diversity of community volunteers provide reception, administrative and research assistance to both the Albury Wodonga Sustainability Alliance and **parklands**. This has enabled Rangers to spend more time in the field "making things happen".

Our core focus throughout the year has been maintenance works across 3,350 hectares of public land. As we are often asked, I list below our core activities;

- broadleaf & blackberry spraying 20km of river frontage & steep hill country
- slash track verges & firebreaks
- maintain over 150km of boundary fences
- woody weeds (primary & follow-up work)
- rabbit fumigation
- maintain 70km of walking tracks
- address risk management issues

Additional project-related funding and sponsorships has enabled our community to further develop our regional parklands;

- 5km new fences
- 5km new track established
- 2km track upgrade (benching)
- 1 boardwalk, bird hide & 8 park seats
- 100 nesting boxes installed
- 8,000 seedlings planted winter 2007
- 34,000 seedlings planted winter 2008
- 5 Heritage Buildings restored

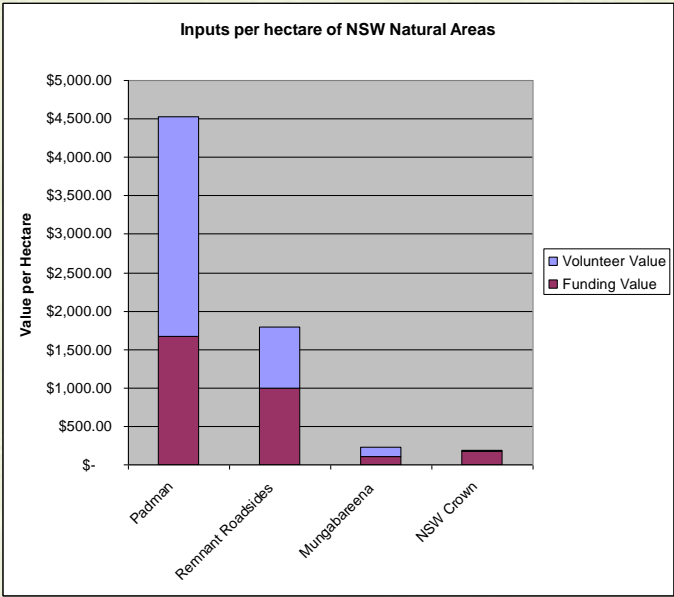
Working in partnership...

Parks Victoria provided a staff person on secondment during our busy spring period which coincided with the lead up to the Bonegilla Migrant Camp's 60th anniversary celebrations.

Corrections Victoria has been a key supporter of Parklands for the past decade. During the past lean year, CV provided a Supervisor and bus for the Parklands Community Service Order team. It was with much delight that we witnessed these volunteers grow personally whilst also making a significant contribution towards achieving environmental and recreational outcomes.

Our 7th Greencorp team, the Gateway Island Wetland Restoration Project was one of our best teams yet. They left lasting imprints through extending the Wetland walking track and relocating a bird hide, installing a footbridge and pedestrian gates at Kiewa River, tonnes of woody weed removal (the dreaded False Acacia!), km's of fences, thousands of seedlings planted and more. Most importantly, these youths completed their six month employment with increased self confidence and life direction. We value this important youth development program.

Albury City Council increased both their funding and the range of bush reserves where we have been working in partnership with the community. It has been rewarding to undertake bush restoration projects at such high conservation value reserves as roadsides backing onto Albury Ranges Threatened Species Network lands, Eastern Hill Reserve, Mungabareena Reserve, Monument Hill Parklands and Kremur St Reserve. We look forward to involving more local residents in learning to appreciate and care for the magnificent natural areas that are their backyards.

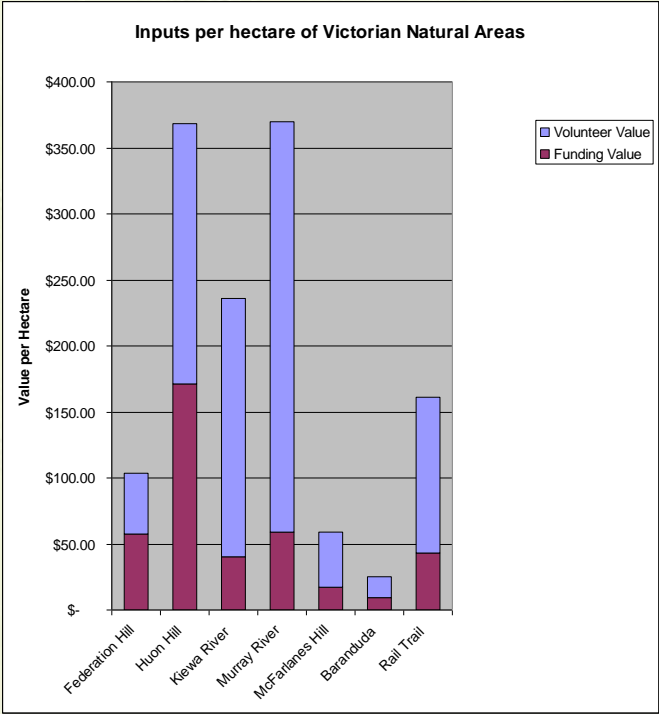


Special thanks to the Friends of Padman and casuals employed through an Envirofund grant for implementing the steepest and most challenging stage of the Padman Park Management Plan. Through the efforts of lots of community members over the past seven years, this weed and pest infested wasteland has been transformed into a popular recreational reserve and one of the key sites for the 2008 Multisport Event.


Albury Wodonga Corporation financial support enabled ongoing restoration works on Albury Ranges and Thurgoona Threatened Species Network lands and Huon Hill North-East.

Whilst no longer funding Crown land (an 80% cut in our service agreement), Wodonga City Council have continued to support Parklands in works on Wodonga-owned bush reserves. The findings of a WCC-funded financial review confirmed to all stakeholders that parklands operates extremely efficiently with a financially viable future.

The following chart demonstrates just how efficiently we operate and the real value of our involvement when including community contributions across a diversity of landscapes.



It is interesting to note the level of funding per hectare. In Victoria, where we are working on significantly degraded lands and high maintenance river frontages, we operate on an average of \$10 per hectare plus additional project-related funds. In contrast, with higher investments per hectare in NSW we have achieved quality outcomes.



Diversifying our income base...

In keeping with our core philosophy of “lots of people all doing a little, really adds up”, we take this opportunity to list the various sponsors of projects;

Bonegilla Migrant Experience Heritage Park Victorian Multicultural Centre (website development), Heritage Victoria (develop & print 4 booklets; “*Caldwells Balts, Forever Dutch, The Army at Bonegilla*” and “*Food at Bonegilla*”), Department of Environment, Heritage & the Arts together with Heritage Victoria jointly funded major restorations works on the Hume Club and a number of other heritage buildings. Thank you to the many former migrants who have sponsored our Tribute Wall, Dutch Exhibition and 60th Anniversary celebrations.

High Country Rail Trail –Community Support Fund (horse yards at Tallangatta), Goulburn Murray Water (fencing), Ian Potter Foundation (fences, tractor, revegetation, weed & rabbit control) and VicTrack (traffic control training to support CFA environmental burns & other capacity building activities)

Huon Hill/Kiewa River – Sunshine Foundation

IMBY Project – Sustainability Victoria

McFarlanes Hill – DSE’s CORIS Program

Murray River: (including Gateway Island) Envirofund; Fred Archer Charitable Trust; Department of Sustainability & Environment’s CORIS and Stewardship in Action programs & Hume Building Society corporate sponsorship of our Growing Green Offset Program

Padman Park - Bundaberg Rum & Envirofund

Volunteer & disability volunteer support: Rotary Foundation of Albury and Department of Environment & Heritage’s Voluntary Environment & Heritage Organisation program

Lots of small amounts really add up and enabled us to get some great outcomes.

Our Parklands Public Fund has attracted \$22,430 of donations during the year from Foundations and local supporters. In November 2007, the Public Fund Management Committee approved the first Parklands Community Grants. We thank Management Committee members John Watson, Frederick Dougald and Bruce Grant for their work in developing Policy and Implementation Guidelines to ensure

expenditure from the Public Fund complies with relevant ATO legislation.

Working cooperatively...

The past three years of severe drought have taken their toll on the farming community. Despite the ongoing fence repairs from hungry stock and increased weed control, we are appreciative of the ongoing cooperation of our neighbouring landholders and our 45 licensees who graze 735 hectares of Crown land parcels which are yet to be developed into bush reserves.

Building community capacity...


As has been our experience over the past 12 years, the process of community involvement from the planning stage in all aspects of projects is vital if we are to build strong community ownership and stewardship of our regional parklands.

VicTrack and Ian Potter Foundation grants supported volunteers undertaking accredited certificates in chemical user, chainsaws and traffic control, thereby increasing the “weekend warrior” workforce able to support environmental burns, weed control and track maintenance.

We thank the local Indigenous community for their efforts over the past six months, working to establish an Indigenous-managed and more diversified Burrinja the Journey Cultural Centre and pursuing funding opportunities. Thank you to Regional Skills Inc for part-sponsoring two Cultural Officer scholarships.

Six active groups from the Albury Wodonga Sustainability Alliance, together with the Iris Steiner School have worked hard over the past six months to restructure the IMBY Project. Sustainability Victoria is funding a job share Community Sustainability Officer to support these community education projects over the next three years. Thank you to Wodonga City Council for their support by way of supplying the IMBY site.

We are seeking expressions of interest from community members to establish a Friends Group to oversee development of the Murray River Parklands. Fencing, revegetation, and pedestrian stock-proof gates are underway.



Celebrating our successes...

As a consequence of the significant cut in recurrent funding from Wodonga City Council, parklands were unable to run our popular Discovery Ranger activities and school holiday programs.

Our Friends Group committees organised a number of well attended community events. These included the 60th anniversary celebrations at Bonegilla Migrant Experience Heritage Park. It was at this Lithuanian Reunion that we were advised that the site has been officially listed on the National Heritage Register as one of the top twenty heritage sites in Australia.

More than 150 of the local Indigenous community celebrated NAIDOC week with an open day at Parkland's Burraja- the Journey.

The Friends of the Rail Trail quarterly rides attracted around 150 participants. Activities included the Tall Trestle Treadle, Kiewa River Ride, Jarvis Creek Circuit and Off The Rails - Huon Hill Hike.

The future...

The benefits of working in partnership with the regional community and stakeholders in developing, managing, promoting and using our regional partnerships are endless.

The Victorian Government pledge to reinstate the Sandy Creek Inlet railway bridge on the High Country Rail Trail moved one step closer to reality with tenders for the design and construct closing in July 2008. Thank you to Wodonga City Council, Indigo Shire Council and Towong Shire Council for their financial commitments in future budgets to supporting this high profile project. The success of this community-driven project is testimony that "the sum of the whole is far greater than the sum of the parts". Together we CAN achieve great things.

I would like to reiterate Geraldine Doogue's comments at the Leadership Ideas Summit in Wodonga earlier this year; "together Albury-Wodonga will thrive, divided we will fail".

Regional parklands systems operating in South Africa, USA, Canada and New Zealand are proving to be the most appropriate model for park management. Regional parklands working with regional communities across local and state government boundaries are really efficient and effective.

Power to the people! To be successful communities must drive the process.

In closing, I would like to thank the various supporters of **parklands** throughout this financial year including the **parklands** board, volunteers, friend's of parklands, and corporate sponsors who have all been so kind in offering support in so many forms. It has been a rewarding year.

Ant Packer
Community Ranger



BOARD DIRECTORS

At 30 JUNE 2008

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Board will achieve its Mission by:

- developing policy in accordance with *best practice* social, ecological and recreational principles;
- considering the needs of present and future generations in all policy decisions;
- ensuring that the community has appropriate input into all strategic planning and policy development;
- facilitating a common public vision for the development and management of the **parklands** in order to ensure community 'ownership';
- ensuring **parklands** achieves financial sustainability; and
- ensuring all Board members are highly motivated, well informed, decision makers.

parklands Board of Directors



INSURANCE OF DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS

At 30 JUNE 2008

During the financial year 2007/2008 Parklands Albury Wodonga Ltd paid a premium of \$3,438 to insure directors and officers of **parklands**.

The Directors of parklands covered, include: Cliff Swatton, Brian Scantlebury, Craig McIntyre, John Alker-Jones, Kevan Porter, Bernie Evans and Hamish MacLennan.

Past Directors: John de Kruiff, Julie Hind, Stuart Baker, Ron Dennis, Richard Kennedy, Sue Brunskill, Julie de Hennin, Maurice Grealy, Neil Lipscombe, Bob Martin, Annelies Willinck, Lyn Coulston, Rob Fenton, Phil Suter, Graham Wade, Bruce Gardiner, Christine Nesbit, Carol Bartley, Darren Baldwin, Kylie Kent, John Riddiford, Ray O’Toole, Peter Joyce, Steve Cooper and Tony Long.

The Officers of parklands covered, include Reg Hinton, Danny Jones, Noeline Elvin, Ant Packer, Tim Lucas, Candy Nichols, Lance O’Connell and Narelle Boal.

Past Officers: Ben Berry, Wayne Carlson, Toby Alker-Jones, Annie Tait, Caro Roach, Jessica MacGregor, Tracy Harrison, Toni Lancaster (Costello), Megan Graham, Craig Reid, Darryl Dear, John Stevens, Jessica Aitken, Mike Hansen, Brendon Kennedy, Barbara Martin, Richard McTernan, Richard Kennedy, Rick Pascoe, Chris Price, Terry Kelly, Christine Thorpe, Emma Knezevic, Steve Pollock, Georgina James and Donna Mitsch.

The liabilities insured include costs and expenses that may be incurred in defending civil or criminal proceedings that may be brought against the officers in their capacity as officers for Albury Wodonga Regional Parklands Inc. and or Parklands Albury Wodonga Limited.

STAFF

At 30 JUNE 2008

Ranger - Land Management	Reg Hinton
Ranger – Community	Ant Packer
Ranger – Field	Danny Jones
Office Manager	Noeline Elvin
Bonegilla Migrant Experience Caretaker	Candy Nichols Lance O’Connell Narelle Boal Tim Lucas



*parklands has been actively involved in the protection of Squirrel Glider habitat in Thurgoona.
Photo: K Atkinson*



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