



ANNUAL REPORT

2016-17



MACKAY
CONSERVATION
GROUP

Our Major Partners	4
President's Report	5
Campaigning	6
Research	9
Community Outreach	9
Environment Centre	10
Representation	10

OUR MAJOR PARTNERS

These organisations provide financial or in kind support to Mackay Conservation Group, or receive financial or in kind support from us, or collaborate with us on projects.

- Environmental Defenders Office Queensland
- Queensland Conservation Council
- The Australian Geographic Society
- Whitsunday Residents Against Dumping
- Mackay Regional Council
- Australian Marine Conservation Society
- Birdlife Mackay
- 350.org
- Lock the Gate
- Mackay and District Turtle Watch
- The Australian Conservation Foundation
- Mackay Recreational Fishing Alliance
- The Department of Environment and Heritage Protection

Thanks to the many people who donated to the Mackay Conservation Group. We (literally) couldn't do it without you!

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

2016-17 began with a federal election in which Mackay Conservation Group highlighted the importance of protecting the Great Barrier Reef. The Reef is under threat from global warming, runoff caused by excessive tree clearing, over-fishing, crown of thorns star fish and increased industrialisation along the coastline. Our campaign highlighted these threats and called on political parties to increase their efforts to protect our global icon. During the campaign there were several announcements of increased funding for reef protection.

A couple of days after the election we learned that the Blair Athol mine would be sold by mining giant Rio Tinto to the heavily indebted mining minnow, TerraCom. MCG has been working with Lock the Gate to pressure the Queensland Government to ensure that Blair Athol mine is fully rehabilitated. We have continued to work on the mine rehabilitation issue and have seen major reforms rolled out during 2017.

Cyclone Debbie hit our region in March, causing widespread destruction on land and also to the Great Barrier Reef, especially in the Whitsundays. After the cyclone, Mackay Conservation Group was alerted to significant coal contamination of the Caley Valley Wetlands. Adani had been granted a special licence to pollute during the cyclone but was unable to contain coal fines within its site. This issue put the international spotlight on Adani's environmental record and is ongoing.

In March, MCG heard the news that Patricia Julien, our former coordinator and research analyst was retiring. Patricia has been a loyal, dependable and hard working member of MCG for more than a decade. She organised many projects, most notably the campaign to prevent shale oil mining at the Goorganga Plains near Proserpine. Patricia has worked with community members on many tasks, in recent times coordinating Eungella Honeyeater research with members of BirdLife Mackay.

We continued to be at the forefront of the national campaign to stop the Adani mega-mine. Mackay Conservation Group became a founding member of the Stop Adani Alliance. The Alliance has a total membership exceeding 1.5 million Australians. Our work has led to a significant shift in political thinking at the national level, with the federal ALP ruling out funding the project using taxpayers money.

2016-17 was a year of intense activity for MCG, in which we have set the stage for major campaign wins on a number of issues. We hope to be able to report on those in the months ahead.

Michael Williams - October 2017

CAMPAIGNING

Carmichael Mine



Mackay Conservation Group has been a powerful force in the campaign against Adani for many years. In March of this year, the group was key in forming the Stop Adani Alliance, bringing together 1.5 million Australians opposed to Adani's Carmichael mine. The Stop Adani Alliance now drives campaigns across Australia becoming one of the largest environmental campaigns in Australian history.

The group has organised many actions in the Stop Adani campaign, building a strong local movement.

When Adani met with Mackay Regional Council to seek discounts in setting up their business locally, the group organised a protest outside the council office. A candle lit rally was held at Bluewater Quay to raise aware of impacts on the Great Barrier Reef. The group has put pressure on local CommBank and Westpac Branches to rule out funding the Adani project. Some passionate members of the group made their way to Townsville to rally simultaneously with Adani's public announcement of the location of their headquarters.

A number of Guarding the Galilee screenings were held across the Mackay region to engage a diverse group of people, which lead to the formation of the local Stop Adani Mackay group. Group members continue to keep the issue in the public eye by writing letters to newspapers.

Caley Valley Wetlands

In early April, Mackay Conservation Group became aware that there had been significant contamination of the Caley Valley wetlands which adjoin Adani's Abbot Point coal terminal. During Cyclone Debbie, Adani was granted a temporary emissions licence that enabled the company to emit pollution at a concentration more than three times the normal permissible maximum. However, aerial photography captured within days of the cyclone showed widespread coal contamination within the nationally significant wetlands. Mackay Conservation Group immediately alerted the Queensland Environment Minister and requested an enquiry into the spill.



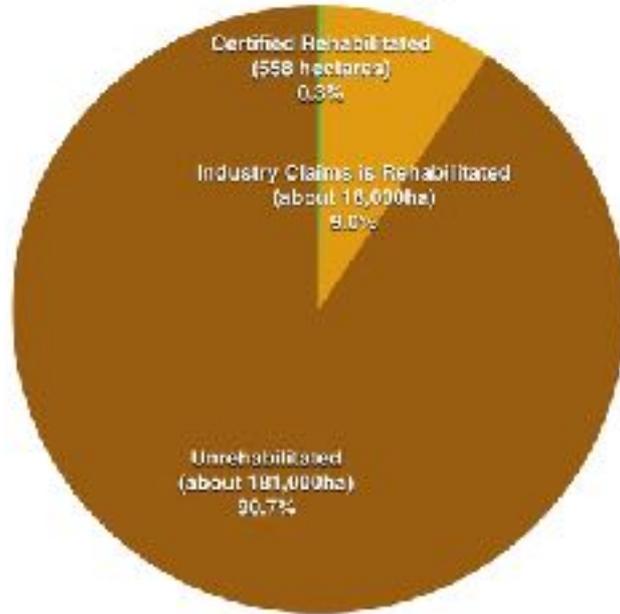
We subsequently visited the site at the invitation of the Environment Minister and witnessed coal fines clearly visible across the site. While we were not permitted to collect photographs or samples of the sediment, we were given both by the Dept of Environment & Heritage Protection. Adani is currently being prosecuted for one of the breaches and we have urged the state government to upgrade monitoring at the site to ensure that no future spill damages the wetlands.

Mine Rehabilitation

Our work on mine rehabilitation continued in 2016-17. We continued campaigning alongside Lock the Gate for the rehabilitation of the defunct Blair Athol mine and opposed the transfer of the mining lease from mining giant Rio Tinto to the financially precarious TerraCom. MCG was represented on the Community Consultative Committee.

MCG was also represented at meetings with the Queensland Treasury Corporation which has been advising the Queensland Government's interdepartmental committee on mine rehabilitation. Those representations have led to significant reforms regarding mine rehabilitation being proposed. A series of community consultation papers will be released during 2017-18 that should lead to a significant change in the way mine rehabilitation bonds and the practice of rehabilitation is carried out in this state.

Mine Rehabilitation in Queensland



Uncontrolled Tree Clearing

During 2015-16 a total of 395,000 hectares of woodland was cleared in Queensland, an increase of nearly 100,000 hectares on the previous year. We were very disappointed when the state government's vegetation management laws failed to pass the parliament with the LNP opposition, the Katter Party and an independent opposing a return to controls on clearing. That has allowed continued clearing of hundreds of

thousands of hectares of trees across Queensland, especially in our region. Wildlife has been deprived of places to live and Koalas are rapidly being pushed towards extinction in our state.

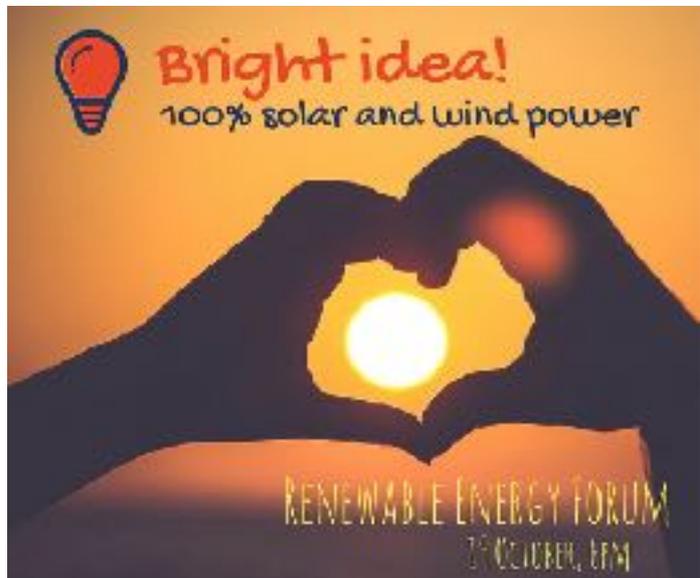
Mackay Conservation Group has joined with other environmental organisations around Queensland in forming the Tree Clearing Alliance which aims to have tree clearing laws reinstated and made more robust. The alliance has been working to gather evidence of the extent and effects of the widespread destruction of our woodlands and forests across the state.

Sun Powered Queensland

Mackay is a leader in renewable energy with around 30 per cent of our electricity created by Racecourse Mill's cogeneration plant which uses waste from the sugar industry. In recent years Mackay has topped Australia in the installation of domestic rooftop solar. There is still a long way to go however before we can say we live in a clean energy city and region.

Our work on this project started with organising people to attend a forum being presented by the Queensland Government's renewable energy expert panel. The state government has committed to 50 per cent renewable energy

production by 2030 which set a new benchmark for Australia. At the forum we challenged the panel to recommend a rapid transition to renewables rather than waiting until late in the 2020s. MCG is also supporting the work of CQ Renew which aims to see Mackay become a 100 per cent renewable energy city.



RESEARCH

Eungella Honeyeater

Mackay Conservation Group research analyst, Patricia Julien, completed her work on the local endemic species, the Eungella Honeyeater. This project has involved three years of collection of field data that was analysed to determine the factors that affect the bird's population.

Patricia has now completed her report and presented the findings to national organisations to assist in ensuring that threatening processes affecting the population are eliminated.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Beautiful walks

One of Mackay Conservation Group's most popular events, a Beautiful Walk was held at Slade Point reserve. This area has an interesting transition from the sandy flats to rocky, dispersed reef and was a great opportunity for locals to ask questions and learn more about their environment.

Expert presentations

Our group held regular presentations at the environment centre, as community education was identified as an important goal by our members.

The Department of Natural Resources and Mines spoke to the group about current laws, policies and procedures governing land clearing in Queensland. Charlie Morgan for Reef Catchments Mackay gave an update on the Healthy Rivers to Reef project. Luke Galea from Mackay Regional Council met with the group to outline a number of projects that the council has in the pipeline to improve water quality in the urban area of Mackay.

EcoPress

EcoPress informs members and supporters about local events and gives an insight into environmental issues that have an impact on our region. EcoPress is a unique resource for the Mackay community. The newsletter was popular across the year, with recipients sharing the information through their own networks. EcoPress kept readers up to date with local environmental information and opportunities.

ENVIRONMENT CENTRE

Community Use

Mackay's Environment Centre was purchased with contributions from the community following an extraordinary donation by David Allsop in 1993. The Environment Centre is the first place many people in the community come to if they have an environmental problem, from inappropriate development, pollution of their drinking water, litter, tree clearing, mine regulation failure and many more issues. Our group uses the centre to hold meetings, training sessions, documentary screenings, social gatherings and community education activities. We also make the space available to other like-minded organisations.

During 2016-2017 period many organisations made use of the resources at the environment centre including:

- Mackay and District Turtle Watch
- Whitsunday Coast and Country Greens
- Boomerang Bags
- Yuwiburra Aboriginal Corporation
- Mackay Recreational Fishing Alliance
- Lock the Gate Alliance
- Australian Conservation Foundation
- Birdlife Mackay

Many groups utilise the Environment Centre for a range of activities including workshops, meetings and working bees. The local Boomerang Bag group is working to make thousands of bags to spread through the local community in the aim of reducing reliance on plastics bags that pollute our oceans and environment. The Environment centre has been a valuable space for the group, where they have sewn and printed hundreds of bags.

The Stop Adani Mackay group has utilised the Environment Centre for a number of craft activities including banner painting and screen printing.

REPRESENTATION

Boards & Committees

Mackay Conservation Group had representatives on the following committees and boards during 2015-16:

- Environmental Defenders Office of Northern Queensland
- Healthy Rivers to Reef Partnership
- Environment Minister's Roundtable
- Blair Athol Community Consultative Committee

We also had meetings with:

- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
- Dept of Environment and Heritage Protection
- Mackay Regional Council
- Dept of Natural Resources & Mines

It is impossible for MCG to be represented on all the committees we are asked to be part of however we welcome interest from members who would like to become more involved in the decision making process.