



Coordinator's Report – AGM 2020

My first official duty as MRLs Coordinator was to attend the AGM in 2019, which seems like an age ago now! I love coming in to work each week. The place has a warm friendly feel, the staff are amazing and so easy to work with, and the dedication, passion and enthusiasm of the volunteers blows me away, they really are the backbone of the organisation.

We've had an active and productive year despite the constraints posed by Covid-19 from March onwards.

Highlights from 2019/20:

- Our Open Day in October had over 250 people attend despite damp weather. We held a popular workshop on 'Transforming farm dams into wetland habitat' (20 attendees), tours of Biocontrol Facility, mini workshops, Wildlife HQ interactive demo and discounted plant stock.
- in November we became an affiliate of the Cane Toad Challenge (CTC), it 'grew legs' over the next few months and we have rolled out this program to Sunshine Coast residents and beyond. We ran several workshops for the public (63 attendees) and were asked to provide a workshop for SCRC, but Covid-19 delayed this.
- Dingo (long-term volunteer) hit me up on my second or third week at MRL with an idea to establish a pot recycling program. I'm pleased to report we now have a pot recycling skip bin which is free for the public to use (thanks to our partner the Mooloolah Lion's Club) which will see skip bins full of pots destined for landfill being recycled into new products.
- Valued volunteer Ann McGrath started up monthly 'Let's go for a walk' outings in December. These walks provide a valuable new way for members and the general public to meet others, discover local trails and discuss wildlife and flora.
- In December/January we became a Host Organisation for career placement students at USC and have hosted approx. 6 placement students and also had a significant increase in volunteering interest from other USC students. We are loving the new faces, fresh ideas, passion and enthusiasm the students bring to MRL and hope to continue the program into 2021.
- Our members Christmas Party was held where we had a presentation from University of the Sunshine Coast's Koala Detection Dogs as a learning opportunity for members and to promote this service.
- In late March Covid-19 threw a curveball into our standard operations. Covid planning and adaptation involved a significant time commitment for our staff and I have a huge thanks to offer to our on-site staff at that time, Sharon, Jessica and Sarah, who adapted so well in these trying circumstances. We had to close our native plant nursery for browsing by the public, and switch to serving them via a pre-order and gate pick-up. Volunteers and non-essential office staff were excluded from the nursery and office for several months. Later in the year we re-opened the nursery to the public two days/wk (Wed & Sat) and welcomed back volunteers on alternative days (Mon & Tue) to ensure sufficient covid-safe management of customers and volunteers. We currently are still only open to the public 2 days/week (instead of 4) which is working well. We have engaged a weekly cleaner to complete a full office and facilities clean, plus ongoing daily cleaning of high touch areas by staff.
- We had to change the way we communicate to our members and community during the Covid-19 restrictions by increasing and improving our online presence and adapting our information to suit home-

based activities, which Jessica took on with ease and streamlined the process. Her efforts have seen our online engagement statistics flourish.

- We started a new working relationship with SeqWater in 2019/2020, with the Source Water Protection Partnership which sees our new Catchment Officer (Sandra) working with landholders and stakeholders to improve water quality through onground nrm projects in the Ewen Maddock Dam catchment officer. I'd like to make a special mention and thank you to Melina who filled this role during early late 2019 and early 2020 and did a fabulous job.
- Ongoing water quality monitoring program has been undertaken at 20 sites in the Mooloolah River catchment, with data added to the regional database. 2019 was relatively dry with lower than average monitoring events being possible, 2020 has been wetter with more events, and with Jessica's input, waterbug monitoring has been added to our repertoire, which is likely to become a monthly (or so) event open to the public to participate.
- Extension activities include:
 - continued support of local schools with free plants;
 - weed & plant identification advice for landholders;
 - in early 2020 two volunteers (Judith and Jenny) attended a nature playgroup and taught the children about native bees and helped them create their own bee hotel;
 - staff members Jessica and Sarah provided a well-received lecture on biocontrol and catchment management to Qld TAFE conservation students; and
 - Jessica assisted Watergum (formerly Gold Coast Catchments) in establishing their biocontrol facility through provision of breeding bugs and advice.
- Quarterly newsletters, grant delivery and acquittals filled in much of my remaining time in the past year. Grants acquitted include: SCRC grant for benches, Bridge to Bridge, ELP funding from SCRC for the last 12 months.

Year Ahead

- Projects we want to kick off in the next year include the establishment of two new volunteer groups, a Seed Collecting Group and a Revegetation Group which will have monthly organised activities for each group, headed up by a staff member who arranges sites and coordinates volunteers.
- We are looking for opportunities to extend our office space and create a larger workshop area. We would love to create a large community facility for workshops and learning. At the very least an extended office area and larger room for workshops would be great. We are seeking grant opportunities that can assist with this.
- Our staff have changed a little with Suzanne coming on mid-year to replace Sarah who is on maternity leave, and Sandra coming on in September 2020. We are very pleased to have you both on board and hope you feel part of the family, you bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise in both your roles which is of great value to MRL.
- I'd like to recognise the significant contribution from Sunshine Coast Regional Council who have funded us with the Environment Levy Program (ELP) from 2017 – 2020, and have kindly provided us with a 12 month extension of our ELP funding! This funding provides a significant level of security to our daily operations.
- Grants to deliver/acquit: Communities Environment Grant (CEP), Engaging Science Grant (Bugs to the Rescue), Australian Geographic Society seed collection, SCRC Covid-19 grants for irrigation and treasurer training, and our extended funding to ELP.

Finally, a thanks goes to the committee who have selflessly supported me during my first year as Coordinator. They are volunteers too, their time commitment to MRL is considerable, and we are lucky to have a base of skilled and experienced personnel steering this ship.