



Sydney Weeds Committee

• Sydney Central • Sydney South West
• Sydney North • Sydney West – Blue Mountains

Minutes of SWC Board Meeting Thursday 14th October 2010

Macquarie Tower, Valentine Avenue, Parramatta

Time: 9:30 am – 3:00 pm

Attendees

Steven Smith	Mosman Council
Jonathan Sanders	National Parks & Wildlife Service
Jillian Macintyre	Warringah Council
Jeff Hill	Woollahra Council
Geoff Green	Camden Council
Frances Pike	Sydney Weeds Committee

Apologies:

Maree Costigan	Holroyd Council
Joel Daniels	Liverpool City Council

1. Welcome

1.0 Introductions and Apologies

2. Sydney Weeds Committee Board – role and office bearers

2.1 Information package for Board Members: The meeting viewed a document prepared by the Executive Officer (EO) outlining responsibilities of the SWC to the Department of Fair Trading, responsibilities of office bearers and penalties for non-compliance with the regulations of the Incorporated Associations Act. Regarding the contact list for Board members it was noted that Jonathan Sanders' title had changed back again to Area Manager of Cumberland North. Jeff Hill advised that his title is quite often varied.

When it was advised that AGM needed to occur within six months of the end of the first financial year it was suggested that the AGM should ideally take place early in that quarter to permit planning for the next funding round. The AGM was set tentatively as the **fourth Wednesday in October 2011**.

2.2 Election of office bearers: Geoff Green queried whether the clause in the constitution referring to the Board requiring representation from each of the permanent sub-committees (4.3.1 c) also related to the office-bearer positions, i.e. do the office-bearers have to cover the four sub-committees? It was suggested that although this clause relates to sub-committee representation on the Board (rather than the office-bearers), it would be a good thing if there was representation of the four sub-committees across the office-bearers, if possible. It was suggested that this could be flagged for review of the constitution at the AGM if there was ambiguity. *** Please see postscript to this item*

Jeff Hill queried time commitments for office-bearers who were also their sub-committee Chairs, resulting in suggestion of a mechanism by which a Board member might be briefed in relation to sub-committee issues, if they were unable to attend all of their relevant sub-committee meetings..

The election of offices for the Board was held:

President: nominated by Steven Smith and seconded by Geoff Green,

Jonathan Sanders accepted the nomination.

Vice President: nominated by Jeff Hill and seconded by Jillian Macintyre,

Geoff Green accepted the nomination.

Treasurer: nominated by Jillian Macintyre and seconded by Jonathan Sanders,

Steven Smith accepted the nomination.

Honorary Secretary: nominated by Jillian Macintyre and seconded by Jonathan Sanders,

Jeff Hill accepted the nomination.

3. Formalities

3.1 Correspondence

Letters out: None
Letters in: WAP applications received

3.2 Executive Officer Report

An issue arising from the report was the question of how many bank accounts might need to operate. Once the Executive Officer had explained that the contract book-keeping would track expenditure of WAP and other funds received so that discrete internal budgets applied, it was agreed that there need not be separate bank accounts for WAP and other funding sources. Geoff Green supported the Treasurer's concern that book-keeping needed to reflect income and expenditure of any grants.

The President suggested that "line item" reporting, though not required of the recipients of WAP funds might be instituted so that if there was a situation where a recipient economised in a particular area and was left with a surplus of funds there should be a process whereby this might be able to re-distributed to the next most strategic area, either within the same recipient's program, or in the same project with another recipient.

The issue of extended leave for the Sydney Weeds Project Officer was discussed. The fact that the contract for the project officer role had expired was also discussed with the Board deciding to draft a new contract for the Executive Officer role, with the option to extend it for another financial year after returning from leave. It was agreed that a substitute worker would be employed on a casual basis for 16 hours a week, according to the conditions specified in the Executive Officer contract. From the 20 hours per week allocated to the Executive Officer role Frances would still be available to support this person for 4 of those hours per week (or in less-frequent blocks of more hours) and to complete projects already commenced or less immediately critical, e.g. the upgrade of the web-site, less critical aspects of the Policy and Procedures document. A potential contractor replacing the Executive Officer would be referred to the Executive Officer contract for a statement of duties. Shelly Slater (currently working with the SMCMA) has been invited to take on a casual contracted position as GIS/Operational officer for the first financial year of the WAP project. Jeff Hill suggested that the process by which staff be appointed needed consideration so that member organisations could be satisfied that it was appropriate. Geoff Green asked about the history of the role which was described, i.e. that previously there had been two project officers each supporting two of the four Sydney Weeds Committees.

Resolution: The original project officer contract will form a basis from which to draft the new Executive Officer contract including conditions agreed to at meeting, these being:

- the option to extend the contract for a further financial year upon return from extended leave,
- the requirement of being present in the office every week no longer required, but with provision at all times for members to know how and when the Executive Officer could be contacted when not in the office,
- a requirement that any network connections utilised when not in the office were of sufficient speed and quality as to be efficient.
- The contract would need to specify the minimum number of hours when the Executive Officer would be available and that members would need to be readily aware of that availability.
- The contract should also include a clause whereby the Board might terminate the contract if it was found that the arrangement was not meeting the needs of the association.

Action: The Executive Officer would also draft for the President and the Vice President the contract for the GIS/Operational Officer, Shelly Slater.

The President and the Vice President will review and finalise the contracts.

4. Agenda Items

At the end of 3.2 agenda items were reviewed owing to time constraints with the Board agreeing that **4.1 and part of 4.2** had been covered during the Executive Officer Report. Owing to time constraints the meeting then moved to 4.3

4.3 Weed Action Program

The regional project and its targets were explained as the final submission was viewed. There are two levels of targets, i.e. those required in the WAP submission 'summary' and those nominated as 'activities' that had to be specified with associated detailed targets. The critical *summary* annual targets are measured in numbers, kilometres and hectares of high risk sites inspected and of on-ground control. There is an annual permissible deviation from targets of 20% without reporting to the Department, but it is also the case that there is accrual of unrealised targets, (i.e. if only 90% of targets are reached, then it is expected that 110% will be reached in the following year to make up the shortfall).

The provision for community education, and a communications strategy that is web-based was also explained.

The assessment process was described. A spreadsheet drafted by the Executive Officer to permit comparison between similar activities undertaken by different organisations was viewed. This worked reasonably well on October 7th given the time constraints and the fact that late applications were continuously being received. The spreadsheet was seen as a useful tool in permitting a comparison of % regional output and relative cost. Steven Smith, who was present at the assessment meeting, suggested that reporting on the assessment process could be achieved by the addition of columns indicating what was, or was not, funded. Alternatively, this could be revised to show a record of the revised targets (if any) and space for reporting targets actually achieved.

The funding shortfall due to acceptance of late applications was discussed. The Executive Officer illustrated from additions to the spreadsheet post-assessment the rationale behind some further 'culling' but indicated that the receipt of even more late applications indicated the need for another review of allocations if the Board wished to ensure the engagement of as many parties as possible in this initial year. To achieve this a shortfall of \$54,000, arising from late applications needed to be taken into account in further revision.

Resolution and Action: Executive Officer to amend funding spreadsheet so that deletions/non-funded items are clear and send this to both Steven Smith and Jeff Hill for review. (Steven and Jeff are Board members whose organisations are not applying for funds and who also represent different permanent sub-committees).

Action: A letter is to be drafted to the assessment panel to explain the reasons for this further refinement of the assessment process.

Reporting on the WAP allocations and the draft MOU

Both prior to the submission and since the appointment of the new regional co-ordinator Mich Michelmore, Departmental advice has been sought on acceptable mapping/reporting standards.

Recent verbal advice from the Departmental staff has been that the region needs to map in a manner that it deems practical for assessing progress. The previous recommendation that monitoring formats derived from the state-wide Bitou Threatened Species Abatement implementation would form the accepted state-wide standard for both DECCW and I&I weed control now appears to be in abeyance. Jonathan Sanders mentioned that an Australian standard for weed mapping existed. He suggested that certainly there should be a bottom line in the WAP reporting that there is an improvement in the condition of EEC and other high-priority managed areas.

In relation to progress reporting to the SWC by organisations receiving funding, it has been intended for some time to achieve this by adapting the former weeds committees 'pro-forma' into a

spreadsheet that permits easy reporting of quantifiable targets. This can then be collated for reporting the regional WAP targets annually.

A spreadsheet designed to capture both the 'critical' targets (as quantified in the spreadsheet) by which comparable assessment was done as well as the 'activities' listed in the submission, would be required. The operational officer would develop this form, based on both the WAP submission and the application forms.

Regarding the MOU between SWC and organisations receiving funds, it was suggested that there needed to be notice that some form of check or audit might occur. Geoff Green suggested that rather than a paper audit a field visit might be useful. It was agreed that this would be an excellent means for the Board to gain a picture of the regional issues and to stay in touch with the regional project.

Resolution: Jonathan Sanders and Jillian Macintyre will function as a sub-committee to formulate monitoring/mapping standards for Sydney Weeds Committee (and in particular the agreement between SWC and WAP fund recipients in relation to monitoring) that will be consistent with Australian standards. They will circulate their recommendations to other Board members.

The draft MOU already circulated to some members by the project officer would be sent again. The web link to the "standard tier monitoring methods" recommended by the joint Department discussions in mid-2009 would also be sent to Board members.

*Postscript: at the MERI training conducted by the department December 2009, the Executive Officer asked if setting up from the outset for standardised mapping/reporting was important and was advised to do so. Also advice received from SMCMA re weed control work monitoring was that Envite – a North Coast company has set up appropriate monitoring/mapping procedure and the Executive Officer will forward this to the board monitoring/mapping sub-committee when it is available.

It was also suggested that a large map of the region capable of providing an overview of new incursions and management zones of significance would be useful for meetings.

At this point Jillian Macintyre and Steven Smith left the meeting.
There was a resumption of Agenda Item 4.2 Policy and Procedure draft manual.

4.2 Policies and procedures/draft document

Geoff Green suggested that the entire sample Policy and Procedure manual from which the draft is being developed be sent to the Board so that members could ensure that no items were omitted, e.g. though SWC might not apparently have an issue with some of the items, these might relate back to procedures of members; so to ensure clarity the document should consider this. There was also discussion of the need to articulate quite clearly in the document (both the Policy & Procedures and the MOU) that insurance responsibility devolves back to the organization undertaking actions while participating in the SWC project and activities. Geoff suggested that the Regional Organisations of Councils might have a useful model/mechanism for providing for this. Geoff suggested that in drafting the Policy and Procedure document the *insert comment facility* be utilised. Also, as an administrative issue it should be stipulated that without the payment of membership fees, grant funds could not be processed.

Action: Forward the original NCOSS Policies and Procedures document to the Board along with first SWC draft.

4.5 Partnership projects/staff/advisory working groups

Roadside Environment Committee project for improving linear reserve management: This project was conceived in December 2009. This project is very important as it will help us achieve the most critical of the mandatory targets, i.e. identification and documentation of high risk pathways and reviewing of regional inspection programme. At all stages requests from the REC, and a subsequent small assessing committee, for further information, specific formatting of proposals, and more detail have been provided promptly.

It appears that the structure of the REC and the timing of its meetings doesn't allow for a quick turn-around time for proposals. The project has been considered favourably since August and would require completion by June 2011. The Executive Officer is concerned that unless it is formally agreed to immediately there will not be time to conduct the necessary workshops to achieve its objectives, which have been 'scaled down' already.

African Olive Roadside and Reserve Control: this project has stalled owing to lack of response since initial interest expressed by the Department of Corrective Services. This will become an agenda item for the next meeting and could result in higher level correspondence between the Board and Corrective Services.

4.6 Community education initiatives/timetabling/resource material

The Executive Officer reported on the initial interest expressed following from this being raised at sub-committee meetings. It was suggested that the sub-committees be requested to identify people from within, or associated with, their organisations which might have special expertise or a functional role within these organisations for these activities.

Resolution: Community education sub-committee network to be facilitated through sub-committee meetings.

Action: Request sub-committee members to canvass within their own organisation for people interested in being involved in the sub-committee community education network.

5. General Business

It was asked if more Board members are required. SC is missing a nominal second (interim) representative. It was suggested that there would be merit in inviting the new general manager of HRCC to the Board.

Resolution: Jonathan Sanders nominated Chris Dewhurst who will take up this role in November and this was seconded by Jeff Hill.

Regarding membership the issue of a long-term member of the Sydney South West committee was raised.

Resolution: The issue of membership fees for this long-serving South West Sydney Weeds Committee was resolved with the decision to charge this person a nominal \$10 membership fee given her circumstances, i.e. as a retired councillor not supported by any other interest and assisting the committees at her own expense.

Action: SWS community member be invited to join the association and is to be forwarded the nomination form.

The issue of when the next sub-committee meetings were scheduled was discussed, as Geoff Green indicated that any time in the last quarter of the year was important for planning council budgets.

Action: Send to members the suggestion that they start thinking about requests to council budgets in relation to next years WAP. The President recommended that this be an item for the next sub-committee and Board meetings, i.e. to gain an overview of council budgets and to start leveraging through the WAP process for internal funding

5. Next Meeting: 24/11/2010 with a 10.30 start rather than 9.30 and to finish at 3.00

ACTION LIST

Action	
<p>Initial draft of contract for the GIS/Operational Officer and Executive Officer roles</p> <p>Review and finalise the contracts.</p>	<p><i>Executive Officer</i></p> <p><i>President and Vice President</i></p>
<p>Amend funding spreadsheet so that deletions/non-funded items are clear and send this to both Steven Smith and Jeff Hill to review and approve. (Steven and Jeff are Board members whose organisations are not applying for funds and who also represent different permanent sub-committees).</p> <p>A letter is to be drafted to the assessment panel to explain the reasons for this further refinement of the assessment process</p>	<p><i>Executive Officer</i></p> <p><i>Project Secretary and Treasurer</i></p> <p><i>Executive Officer</i></p>
<p>2. Monitoring sub-committee will circulate their recommendations to other Board members re monitoring content in MOU for WAP recipients</p> <p>The draft MOU to be sent again. The web link to the “standard tier monitoring methods” recommended by the joint Department discussions in mid-2009 would also be sent to Board members.</p> <p>Try to get large map of the region capable of providing an overview of new incursions and management zones of significance would be useful for meetings</p>	<p><i>President, Jillian Macintyre</i></p> <p><i>Executive Officer</i></p> <p><i>Executive Officer</i></p>
<p>Forward the original NCOSS Policies and Procedures document to the Board along with first SWC draft</p>	<p><i>Executive Officer</i></p>
<p>3. Request sub-committee members to canvass within their own organisation for people interested in being involved in the sub-committee community education network – <i>(email members & agenda item)</i></p>	<p><i>Executive Officer</i></p>
<p>4. Forward membership nomination form to SWS community member</p>	<p><i>Executive Officer</i></p>
<p>5. Place on sub-committee agendas that members commence to negotiate internal funding now re council budgets in relation to next years WAP.</p>	<p><i>Executive Officer</i></p>

*** Postscript to Minutes Item 4.2: In relation to the query re whether office bearers should be elected from each of the permanent sub-committees, it is not EO's recollection that this was ever the case. This extract from the combined SWS/SWBM meeting 24/10 about this matter should clarify this, i.e. in relation to an amendment requested by Geoff Green that the constitution specify clearly that representatives from each permanent sub-committee be on the board, there is no reference to office bearers needing to represent the four permanent sub-committees.*

"The Project Officer explained the background to the wording of the constitution at that point for which advice had been sought from the Managing Services Unit of the NSW Council of Social Services who were heavily involved in the drafting of the new Associations Act and advised that there had been strong advice not to rely solely on a representative management committee (or Board) but to recruit some specialist Board members with financial, human resource and risk management skills. The Chairperson explained that the Board was comprised of the association's elected members with the exception of those who would be recruited for specific skills. It was suggested that a clause clearly convey this intent.

Other issues raised in Camden's memo re the constitution i.e. background of Board members and ensuring balanced representation of organizations with weed management interests were discussed, with an understanding that balance on the Board has been designed by provision for election from within the permanent sub-committees and also the fact that the expertise of state and other organizations could be drawn upon by the Board, i.e. to be in a position to liaise with other agencies whether or not they were voting members. As far as control over the background of members there was a provision that the Board, itself composed largely of people with weed management experience, were in a position to invite similar members to the association at their discretion.

Action: *Insert clause at 4.3 1, (c) "must include representation from each of the four permanent sub-committees"*

Action: *Ensure consistency throughout document in terminology*

The constitution was adopted with the amendments.

This was moved by Nicola Booth and seconded by Geoff Green.