

Watson Community Association Inc

Annual General Meeting 16 April 2024, 7.30PM, YWAM

- I. The Chair opened the meeting and spoke the acknowledgement of country.
- II. Attendees :
Committee: Geoff Murray-Prior (Chair), Simon Clarke, John Briggs, Leonie Watts, Max Pouwer, Veronica Walker,

WCA Members: Aileen Conroy, Angela Rymer, Adrian Mackenzie, Merinda Nash, Melissa Hammond, Benjamin Walters

Guests: Dr Michael Mulvaney

Apologies: Petra Lean, Peter McDonald
- III. The meeting opened with the presentation of the guest speaker Dr Michael Mulvaney
- IV. The minutes from 2023 AGM were accepted. No matters to follow up (moved Leonie Watts, Max Pouwer seconded)
- V. President's report – see below. The meeting accepted the report (moved Geoff Murray-Prior, seconded Melissa Hammond)
- VI. Treasurer's report – see below. The meeting accepted the report (moved Geoff Murray-Prior, seconded John Briggs), thanked Matthew Beale for auditing and appointed him as auditor for the next year (moved, seconded).
- VII. The following reports were received from WCA working groups (see at the end of the document):
 - Woodlands
 - Planning
 - Summernats
 - Watzon
 - Watson Events
 - Friends of Watson Greenspace
 - Friends of Mount Majura

The Chair moved to accept the reports, seconded by John Briggs. (The Chair also moved to thank John Briggs, Simon Clarke, Aileen Conroy, Nora Chan (editor WATZON) Veronica Walker (Watson Greenspace), Margy Burn and Max Pouwer (Friends of Watson Greenspace), and Jon Real (accounts) and asked to pass on the thanks of the WCA to John Harding for the beautiful photos in the newsletter.
- VIII. There was no other business

IX. Election of new Committee

Aileen Conroy took the Chair and declared all positions vacant. Elected were: Geoff Murray-Prior – Chair; Simon Clarke, Vice Chair; Petra Lean – Treasurer; Leonie Watts, Secretary; Committee Members: Veronica Walker, Simon Clarke, Mary Sietsma, Merinda Nash and Benjamin Walters. Leonie Watts agreed to continue as the Public Officer.

The Chair, in the name of the Committee and the WCA, thanked John Briggs who did not stand for election again for his support over the last years. John will continue as a Convenor of the Woodlands Working Group.

The meeting closed at 8.55pm

Chair's Report to 2024 Watson Community Association AGM

16 April 2024 – Geoff Murray-Prior

My report is usually fairly brief, because the Treasurer's report covers our financial activities, and most of our activities are undertaken by our various sub-groups, so those activities will be covered by their individual reports.

At the start of this term as your Chair I was anticipating a peaceful year, a year of consolidation following a somewhat busy year previously with planning consultations and submissions.

But as to a peaceful year – how wrong I was!

One major issue which arose relates to our excellent newsletter, the *Watson*. As you will be aware, the *Watson* has, for the last 30 years, been printed for us by the Australian Catholic University (ACU). The is enabled the *Watson* to be distributed to all households in Watson with minimal cost to the WCA. Unfortunately, we have increasing circulation; not so long ago we distributed around 2,000 copies each issue. This has now risen to 3,200 copies per issue, and I suspect will be 3,500 copies within a year. Within three years the circulation could reach 4,000 copies per quarter. Then there is a change in student learning, where they now do most activities online obviating the need for high-capacity printers on campus. These two things have resulted in the ACU being unable to continue printing the *Watson* for us. We sincerely thank the ACU for their 30 year support and we look forward to continuing a relationship with them, as they are an integral part of our Watson community.

I am sure, your incoming committee will strenuously seek alternative options for the continuation of the *Watson*.

The, in February, Watson received some unwelcome media publicity because of anti-social and criminal behaviour. Fortunately, the WCA was able to quickly respond and make these reports the focus of our February quarterly meeting. This was attended by Minister Vassarotti and a representative from Elizabeth Lee's office. This then led to a series of higher

level meetings with additional ministers, or their representatives, along with ACT Policing and ACT Housing. Indications were that the primary perpetrators were residents of nearby ACT Housing apartments, so a proposal was made for a community event to try and bring the community together. The initial suggestion was to hold it on Neighbour Day – the last Sunday in March – but this year that was Easter Sunday, so the following Sunday was chosen.

Noting that just a few days later was the birthday of John Christian Watson, a former prime minister after whom the suburb is named, it was decided to call the day 'Watson Day'. It is at this point that I need to make an apology. In press, radio and TV interviews that I did, I failed to make it clear that we were referring only to a small number of people; inadvertently all residents of those apartment blocks carried the blame for the actions of a few. Please accept my apologies for my unacceptable oversight in that regard.

The organization of Watson Day was pulled together with undue haste; something that should be avoided in the future. The event was well attended despite the threatening weather, and by all accounts can be considered successful. All five of our elected Assembly members attended, and spent some time circulating.

Our thanks to the many that assisted. ACT Housing and ACT Policing were in attendance, having been involved in the initial planning for the day. We are indebted to the Majura Mountain Scouts Group who provided the barbeque and cooked and served the sausages and drinks.

We sincerely thank the Watson SupaBarn Express for their support with the food and other supplies that made the day a success. We also thank ACT Housing for their contribution to the day.

I have separately prepared a more detailed report for the committee and I will be happy to discuss this in more detail should the incoming committee decide to hold a similar event next year. In that report I recommended that the approach next year should be to replicate the success and prove the concept before we consider getting ambitious. Finally I must point out that I am the face of this organisation. Much work is done by our subcommittees and 'behind the scenes' activities. To Leonie, Petra, Simon, Max, John, and Veronica, my sincere thanks for your efforts over the past year. So many people contribute to the activities we undertake. Unfortunately, for the last time, I think, I thank Alexandra Montero, at the ACU, for printing the *Watson* for us. Of course that leads to Nora, our excellent and unflappable editor, And Maggie who organizes the *Watson* distribution (and her army who pound the streets putting the *Watson* in our letter boxes). And then Aileen who organizes the 'Welcome to Watson' events for people new to our suburb.

I must also acknowledge the incredible support we receive from YWAM; we are able to hold our meetings here because of their ongoing support. Having a confirmed meeting venue is essential and I thank Leonie and YWAM for their support. They also provided chairs and many tables for our Watson Day event. We could not hold these functions without their support and we are indebted to them. Thank you.

Treasurer's Report to 2024 Watson Community Association AGM

16 April 2024 – Petra Lean

The WCA's financial year matches the calendar year and the WCA reports on a cash basis.

At the end of **2023**, our asset balance was \$6,876.71. In 2023, the WCA made two separate donations totalling \$400 (\$200 to the Smith Family, \$200 to the Environmental Defence Fund for the speaker at the last AGM).

As in previous years, the only source of revenue were donations from WATZON advertisers (\$1,250). Paper for the WATZON newsletter represented our largest cost (\$521.10 (*though this is short \$192 for the summer WATZON, which was only paid out in 2024*)).

I ask the meeting to note our appreciation for the Australian Catholic University which has continued to print the newsletter in 2023 at no cost to us.

Though the bank balance looks healthy, we are faced with the fact that ACU will not be able to continue printing the newsletter and we will need to get it printed externally. While members may wish to consider whether there are some useful projects which the WCA could support financially, this needs to be kept in mind.

As the previously approved auditor was not available, the Committee agreed on another reviewer. (*Note we need a review, an audit is not necessary, due to the small amount of receipts.**) The WCA accounts were reviewed by Matthew Beale, a qualified accountant of 10+ years, who has no connection to the WCA. He did this at no cost to the WCA and I ask that the meeting note our appreciation for Matthew's generous assistance.

I move be that Matthew Beale be appointed to audit the accounts for 2024, with Gethin Constable being a backup.

*The Annual Return form for Incorporated Associations states: All associations must have their accounts reviewed or audited. The total revenue of the association will determine whether a review or an audit is conducted. Reviews and audits cannot be undertaken by a person who is an officer of the association or has prepared or assisted with the preparation of the association's accounts. A **reviewer** undertakes a review of the association's accounting records and provides a report in relation to the association's finances but does not have to provide audited financial statements. ...

Small Associations: If the association's gross receipts are less than \$400,000 the accounts must be reviewed and a written report provided by the reviewer which states if anything has come to the reviewer's attention that causes the reviewer to believe that the accounting records do not satisfy the requirements of Part 5 of the Act.

Woodlands Report to 2024 Watson Community Association AGM

16 April 2024 – John Briggs

Disappointingly, due to surgery last October followed by ongoing post-operative complications I have not been able to be anywhere near as proactive in woodland management issues as I would have liked. My report is thus focussed on some issues that I intend to pursue in coming months, now that I am on the mend.

Whilst I was out of action in January a concerned resident raised the issue of the invasive weed, St Johns Wort, that had been untreated and was going to seed within parts of the Watson woodland. A private working bee was then organised with the assistance of the WCA committee to cut off the seed heads before they shed. I understand the seed heads were subsequently disposed of by a PCS Ranger. Many thanks to M. Beatie for initiating that activity.

The fact that this task was needed raises the ongoing issue of weed management within the woodland. It also raises the same issue for the adjoining Stirling Ave and Anthill St road verge, which if unmanaged, become a serious source of weed invasion into the woodland. In a recent visit to the woodland I also noticed a concerning expansion of African Love Grass. This, Chilean Needle Grass and a Euphorbia sp. have been an ongoing problem. In my opinion both these exotic grasses pose even more a threat to the native groundcover than St Johns Wort. Veronica Walker who leads the Watson Green Space group advised me today that other woodland management concerns have also been raised by members of her group. The main issues have been the slashing of the internal tracks, potentially leading to further spread of weeds and the lack of recent reports on the management of the Woodland as an offset. These are certainly legitimate concerns.

In the last couple of days I have spoken to one of the rangers and a field officer responsible for the woodland regarding some of these issues. The discussions were quite positive in terms of the future. Currently PCS is undertaking rabbit control and is mapping weed locations in preparation for a spray contractor to commence control works within the next couple of weeks. As a follow up to our discussions in the last couple of days we are proposing to meet on-site in early May with the offsets manager and a representative of the Watson Greenspace Group to discuss the control of these invasive weeds and other management issues. Hopefully we can also engage City Services who manage Stirling Ave and the road verges to give higher priority to invasive weed management on those areas adjoining the woodland. Subsequent to that meeting it is proposed to hold a community information session at which ACT Parks will explain what management is proposed and we will outline particular projects where volunteers could assist.

As I have stated in previous annual reports, in 2012 the ACT Government made an unexpected and highly controversial decision to nominate the Watson Woodland as an environmental offset in order to gain Commonwealth approval for the clearing of more Box - Gum woodland to the north of Negus Crescent for housing development. The Commonwealth required the ACT government to prepare a new management plan and to allocate a substantial annual budget for the management and improvement in condition of the reserve. Under the offset arrangement the ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) is now responsible for basic management actions such as weed and rabbit control. The role of

the Watson Woodland Working Group (WWWG) is to provide conservation advice and assist with more specialised restoration work such as the enhancement of the native grass and wildflower component of the understorey.

Many of you would probably not be aware, but between 2018 and 2020 the management plan promised a total of \$460,000 towards the management of the woodland and then \$120,000 annually. I'm finding it difficult to see that much of that money has actually gone into on-ground works in the woodland. I believe this situation needs to change and the ACT government should not rely on volunteers to honour the commitment it made when electing to use the already protected woodland as an offset.

One of the conditions of Commonwealth approval was the establishment of permanent vegetation condition monitoring plots to measure change over time. Since the management of the woodland as an offset commenced there should have been five monitoring events since 2017. I will be seeking access to those monitoring data and it will be interesting to see whether there has been any improvement, or perhaps it will be a decline, in the condition of the groundcover. One would certainly expect an improvement in the canopy cover as the 500 or so trees planted by the WWWG prior to 2005, plus the numerous patches of shrubs planted by the WWWG up to 2012 have continued to grow.

In the last annual report I flagged that the Parks and Conservation Service was intending to conduct some trial patch burns to help reduce groundcover biomass and possibly stimulate native wildflower seed germination, but these have not happened. However, the field officer advised me today that these patch burns are now planned for February or March next year. Previously I have mentioned a joint PCS and WWWG project involving Kangaroo Grass re-establishment trials. Over the past three years the trial plots have been periodically sprayed with herbicide to greatly reduce the amount of Phalaris prior to the sowing of the Kangaroo Grass seed. One good piece of news is that the PCS have sown the seed last November and the plots have been fully fenced to prevent grazing whilst the native grass establishes. One task the WWWG will be able to undertake is to hand weed those plots whilst the Kangaroo Grass establishes.

My health problem meant that the proposed working bee for planting out an area with Kangaroo Grass seedlings did not happen. Hopefully this activity can still happen providing Kangaroo Grass seedlings will still be available from the ACT PCS. The proposed planting area was fenced and the weeds sprayed by the ACT PCS autumn 2022, but will need re-treating prior to planting.

Planning Report to 2024 Watson Community Association AGM

16 April 2024 – Simon Clarke

The Planning Landscape

Planning rules have changed with new legislation coming into force in 2023. Most commentators believe it shifts the focus to further favour developers – as if they needed any help! However, like all new legislation, it will become clearer as it is tested in real life. We will keep watching, learning and protesting where appropriate.

What is happening around Watson?

Watson Play Space (the old Watson High School oval)

Construction should begin this year on Stage 1 of the new destination style play space on the old oval. This is an exciting development and the culmination of years of lobbying by WCA and others to ensure that this land remains as a community asset. A win for Watson!

Aspinall St Playground & tree line retention

The new playground on Aspinall St is almost complete on the parcel of land known as Block 76. This project (along with the old Watson HS oval), has been the focus of much lobbying and community engagement over the past 5 years. Led by the WCA and Living Streets, we have an exciting new playground being built. Just as exciting, however, is the knowledge that the perimeter tree line will be maintained AND maintained by the ACT Government. This is about a 5 to 10m wide strip right around the block. Another win for Watson!

The service Station site! (Western end of Watson Shops)

What an eyesore it is! Sadly, this is a private site and so the information is scarce. There was an abortive attempt to get planning permission in 2019 but it was withdrawn when they realized their design was seriously flawed. Nothing concrete has happened since, to our knowledge. Let's keep watching!

If only they would, at least, keep the site tidy.

The Car-o-Tel site (Corner of Antill and Aspinall St's)

This is a very large site held in private hands. There was an application in 2022-3 for a Territory Plan Variation (rezoning) to allow for residential development but there has been no further news about this application. Let's keep watching!

Block 74 (Corner of Antill St and Federal Highway)

This is another very large site and it's Government land. It will be sold for housing eventually but is not in the current 5 year plan for land sales. Let's keep watching.

Summernats Report to 2024 Watson Community Association AGM

16 April 2024 – Simon Clarke

Nothing to report as we are not invited to daily briefings anymore

Watson Report to 2024 Watson Community Association AGM

16 April 2024 - Norah Chan

First and foremost, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to each and every one of our readers. Your engagement, feedback, and encouragement have been the driving force behind every issue we've published. Our local businesses are what make our community so vibrant and resilient. Thank you for your generous support!

Juggling full-time work (not retiring any time soon) and looking after a family can be a handful sometimes. I want to express my deepest appreciation to those who have reached out in the last year with great stories, updates, and all things Watson. Here's a special shoutout to Melissa, who has introduced many new ideas to the recent newsletters.

Last but certainly not least, I want to acknowledge the incredible efforts of our newsletter volunteers. The Summer issue was brought to you by:

Aileen, Fasyen, Peter & Anne, Chris & Helen, Simon, Matthew, Fiona & Bob, Ingram, Jenny, Petra, David & Vilaisan, Leonie & Ben @YWAM, Janelee and Living Streets Associations, Helen, Leigh, Peter, Pamela, Suni

Alex@ACU, Maggie, and Petra remain the masterminds who orchestrated the printing, paper drop-off, and delivery. To those who aren't aware, Australian Catholic University has been printing our newsletter for the last 30 years, we are immensely grateful for their support and generosity.

Most recently, we bid a fond farewell to Liz, our long-time Watson newsletter delivery coordinator who has moved out of the area. We will all miss your leadership very much.

Some of you might have noticed some recent changes to the format and layout of the newsletter. I'm sure the committee will provide some updates regarding the newsletter moving forward. Here's to many more years of collaboration, growth, and community spirit. Thank you.

Watson Events Report to 2024 Watson Community Association AGM

16 April 2024 - Aileen Conroy

Since our previous AGM, Welcome to Watson events have been held quarterly in April, July and October 2023 and January and April 2024. The barbecue area at Ridge Apartments was the venue in October and we met at The Knox Cafe for the remainder and shared some bakery treats. All the newcomers responded to the advertisement in *Watson* newsletter, which is delivered to over 3,000 Watson homes by volunteers. Pleasingly many newcomers are keen to be involved and volunteer to help deliver *Watson*. Numbers attending vary but the atmosphere is always friendly, and newcomers enjoy connecting with Watson locals and a few representatives of organisations. We share local knowledge and answer questions helping nurture and sustain Watson's community culture.

Friends of Watson Greenspace Report to 2024 WCA AGM

16 April 2024 - Veronica Walker

Liaising with Veronica

Friends of Mount Majura Report to 2024 Watson Community Association AGM

16 April 2024 Margy Burn / Max Pouwer

FoMM celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2023, our first project being a drainage line near the Hackett water tank. Sustained work has transformed it into a shady watercourse, enjoyed by frogs and many bird species, including migrating Swift parrots. FoMM volunteers have propagated plants to replace weeds, including Hardenbergia and native raspberries.

We also worked on two other early sites, an old sheep camp on the ridge of the summit trail, and an area near two former dams. This latter site is close to one of the least modified areas of the reserve which features rich and diverse flora including rare and endangered species. Occasional maintenance visits help limit weed incursion.

Most of our efforts continued at The Fair site in North Watson, weeding, planting, mulching and building on a decade of activities rehabilitating this formerly highly degraded part of the nature park. <https://majura.org/progress-the-fair>

St, John's Wort remains our biggest challenge and we focused on rich floristic sites. Tedious hand-weeding was relieved by bird song, including that of a rare visitor, the White-Browed Babbler (*Pomatostomus superciliosus*), last sighted in 2007. Unfortunately, we also sighted new weeds, such as the toxic Inkweed (*Phytolacca octandra*) and Barberry (*Berberis*).

Our educational activities included guided walks about trees, birds and wildflowers and at twilight to hear and see nocturnal animals. We welcomed groups including local Cubs and Scouts. Some 300 people receive our monthly e-newsletter.

FoMM volunteers actively map areas we have controlled, as well as significant weeds requiring treatment by contractors and evidence of vertebrate pests. We also contribute to the Canberra Nature Map.

Thanks to the 90 volunteers who worked with us this year to weed, plant, sow and mulch – every bit of effort helps to maintain our beautiful part of the nature park.

Attachment 3

Treasurer's Report to 2023 Watson Community Association AGM

18 April 2023

The WCA's financial year matches the calendar year and the WCA reports on a cash basis.

At the end of 2022, our asset balance was \$6,513. In 2023, the WCA made four separate donations (two to local community groups, plus two for charities chosen by AGM speakers) totalling \$1,100. These included donations of \$900 committed to in 2021, but paid out in 2022. Another \$400 were committed to by the Committee in December 2022 but only paid out in 2023.

As in previous years, the only source of revenue were donations from WATZON advertisers (\$1,550). Paper for the WATZON newsletter represented our largest cost (\$597). I ask the meeting to note our appreciation for the Australian Catholic University which has continued to print the newsletter at no cost to us. The bank balance remains healthy, and members may wish to consider whether there are some useful projects which the WCA could support financially. The WCA accounts were again audited by Gethin Constable at no cost to the WCA and I would ask that the meeting note our appreciation for Gethin's generous assistance.

Petra Lean

Hon Treasurer

Watson Community Association

Attachment 4

Attachment 5

Attachment 6

Attachment 7