

President's Report for 2020 AGM - 19th December 2020

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Welcome. I acknowledge the fact that we meet on land that was never ceded by First Nations and pay my respects to the traditional custodians.

Beginning in 2009 NRG formed as No Rally Group to oppose the imposition of a car crash racing event on the quiet gravel roads that service this region's human population : that threatened our tranquility and the habitat of our wildlife. With amazing people power we convinced the World Rally Championship to move future races away from the Northern Rivers (at the AGM have a squiz at the scrapbooks collated by Meg and Liffy Jack.) In 2010 NRG voted to change its name to Northern Rivers Guardians and take on other issues of concern to residents.

NRG (which has more than 600 members) has always been especially concerned with attempts to dam Byrrill Creek in the Tweed Valley, which often is advocated to service "growth." A community consultative process concluded that demand management was far more attractive than costly dams, and new property developments should provide for the bulk of their own needs by rainwater/ stormwater harvesting. Purified recycled water is also an option. Currently we have concerns that worries about future possible shortages of water will overpower the prudent path of conservation and low-level infrastructure measures such as mandating water tanks for rainwater collecting.

Rous Water considered asking state government to approve a costly new dam that would submerge The Channon Gorge to catch any possible overflow from the existing Rocky Creek dam. I believe that a substantial increase in residents' water rates will not be popular. Probably even the high cost of seawater desalination would be preferred provided it is powered by renewable energy from solar, wind or wave. NRG has made submissions.

Last Tuesday, December 8th, a unanimous decision of Elders and Widjabul Wia-bal people was given to the Rous County Council General Manager, insisting that Rous abandon plans for the Dunoon Dam to save cultural heritage sites. At their meeting on 16th December Rous Councillors voted 5:3 NOT to proceed with plans for a new dam at The Channon. Congrats to all those who lobbied for this result. Thanks to Clrs Venessa Ekins, Keith Williams, Basil Cameron, Simon Richardson and Darlene Cook.

Groundwater extraction: NRG has been party to consultation with the NSW Chief Scientist's 2019 study into the suitability of aquifers for groundwater extraction. The result has been to steer away because we know so little about groundwater connectivity and because climate change brings uncertainty of recharge via rain. At our insistence Tweed Council successfully applied to State government to have further water mining removed from its LEP. Existing permits will be allowed to continue. Rous Water has concluded that more groundwater extraction would also be unlikely for commercial bottling in its catchment.

North Coast Railway - Not all our efforts have met with success. This year the push to convert the disused rail line from Casino to Murwillumbah & Condong into a path for bicycling and walking has received funding from both State and Federal governments. Because of our lobbying for the transport corridor to be retained for future use, the NSW

legislation which authorizes removing the rails contains a clause which supposedly guarantees the land will remain in public ownership.

A Bill by NSW Independent MLC Justin Field to ban CSG extraction state-wide was not passed, but instead the government endorsed a proposal to open the Narrabri region to extensive gas mining. Fortunately, a massive response by citizens and scientists resulted in so many Conditions that the proponent must meet that SANTOS may fail to persevere and thus the project might fail to eventuate.

Stop Adani - NRG has consistently provided support for the removal of consent for Adani Corporation to start the world's largest coal mine in the Carmichael Basin of Queensland. Falling demand for coal exports may be replaced with export of water as the Queensland government has approved 60 years unlimited extraction of water from both streams and artesian basins, if Adani starts a coal mine. The traditional landowners, the Wangan and Jangalingu peoples, continue to fight Adani.

Extinction Rebellion/ Schools Strike for Climate – We of NRG are ever mindful of the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to combat climate change, which saw large areas of Australia (and the world) suffer extreme drought and intense wildfires early in the year. NRG participated in demonstrations to call attention to which human activities are most damaging our natural environment.

Some of these were curtailed by the requirements prescribed to control Corona Virus. Events of all sorts were cancelled, including the *World Environment Day* in Murwillumbah where we usually sell raffle tickets with prizes donated by supporters such as *Mavis' Kitchen*. In recent years WED has been NRG's biggest fundraiser. This year we had no donation tins around the towns: some income came in via on-line donations and passing the hat at meetings. Dee was willing to organise remote attendance at meetings, but that did not prove popular. We met monthly at Mavis' Kitchen apart from May 16th when we tried a virtual meeting via Zoom.

Burning bio-mass. We have been vigilant to contain the spread of bio-fuel use to burn for electricity, which has been subsidized by various governments around the world because it was deemed to be “renewable” by the Kyoto Accord. The Kyoto Protocol was adopted, on 11 December 1997 and came into force in February 2005. Our campaign included joining with North East Forest Alliance [NEFA] to show a presence in the public State Forests south of Casino which Forest Corp had scheduled for logging. We continue to lobby government and the EPA to protect wildlife corridors and specially to save koala habitat.

As Ferris Jabr of the National Geographic Society said: “An old-growth forest is neither an assemblage of stoic organisms tolerating one another's presence nor a merciless battle royale: It's a vast, ancient and intricate society.”

As part of the NSW Premier's much touted “perfect balance “ on koala protection a fairly innocent-sounding Local Land Services Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill was introduced to the NSW Parliament late this year. The National Party bill passed the Lower House where not a single Liberal MP even spoke to it. The Bill was said to ‘de-couple’ koala policy requirements from land clearing laws on private rural land and was hastily passed by the Lower House in October.

On examination by the Environmental Defender's Office [EDO] it became clear that the Bill went far beyond simply clarifying application of koala policy, and included changes that would likely override wildlife protections. NRG and NEFA went into action.

Last month Greens MLC Cate Faehrmann wrote: ” *After a horrific year for koalas and nature we're ending on a highlight, and it's all thanks to you...*

”To kill this bill we needed to make sure Labor and progressive crossbench MPs joined with the Greens to block it in the Upper House. **But we would need one more vote.**

Overnight more than 10,000 of you sent emails to Upper House MPs. In fact, so many of you sent emails so quickly that the parliament's server was overloaded and out of action for an entire day!

We did it, Scott. It was your emails, phone calls, actions and social media blitz that gave Catherine Cusack [a Liberal MLC] the courage to vote against this bill. “

So yes, sometimes politicians listen to their people. More often it seems that lobbyists for corporations sway the votes in favour of the already rich and powerful; the average voter has little influence. Still, we keep up the struggle to maintain a balance because there will be little left for future generations should we become discouraged and quit.

We live in a complex and sometimes scary society. As a grassroots organisation we offer individuals a place to bring up issues, gain knowledge, share ideas and to take action to protect our lifestyles and create a better world. Put simply, NRG promotes the good and opposes damaging greedy developments. We stimulate debate and even give voters a chance to learn about candidates through *Community Voice*, which tries to find the unity in community.

Last Summer's extreme heat and drought climaxed with “unprecedented” wildfires across much of Eastern Australia. While our focus is local, we link with other like-minded groups thru membership in alliances such as Tweed Water Dragons, CEC, Byron, Lismore, Casino and Nimbin EC's and Kyogle Environment Group [KEG}, North Coast Environment Council, NSW Conservation Council and Lock The Gate. We have succeeded in stopping logging on private land at Limpinwood and at Braemar and Myrtle Creek State Forests.

As with any large group NRG has suffered loss through injury and death this year. Collectively we grieve and offer support to our members.

NRG **has** to keep going. Thanks to all of you for being on the journey with me. I especially thank our Committee for their help : Treasurer Rainer Glasker, Secretary Dee , VP Gwyn, Marion, Cas, Daniele, Bill Fenelon, Geoff and Joyce.

For her dedication to editing my writing and sending out frequent messages to the membership, this year's ***Sledge Award*** for outstanding service to NRG goes to Dee Nessel ! Thank you so much !

Treasurer's Report : Rainer

Cheque account balance of \$

Legal account balance of \$.....

Income : deposits from Mem'ship/ Pass-the-hat....

Additional funds: fund-raising float of \$100; and \$75 petty cash.

Set up account at Australian Ethical Investments ?

President's Report : Sledge – Welcome to meeting and acknowledge traditional custodians

1. Abbreviated agenda this month due to AGM
2. Shift away from Mavis Kitchen for meetings?
3. Meeting with Provest re Koala protection and Cudgen Nature Reserve

Approve Minutes. Minutes from the 21stth November meeting

Business Arising.

1. **Writing columns for media:** If writing as a representative of NRG, please send to Sledge or Dee for review and possible editing.

- See NEC column by Sledge in December NGT p. 5

2. **Any mail at PO Box 3321 Uki 2484 NSW ?** – Cas

3. . **NEFA action meetings** : zoom available for fortnightly meetings : next on Tuesday 22nd December from 1730 contact Sean O 'Shannesy.

4. NSW govt failure - We need to write to key ministers RE: koala SEPP reform.

5. BAG – protest at Condong against burning biomass. Int'l Day of action 24th November

6. **Casino to Condong trains** : Bill – NSW govt passed Act on regional rail removal –

See November NGT p.1. and December NGT p. 3

7. **Stop ADANI** : Sledge – Adani going ahead with prep for mining.

FLAC Camp *Binbee* want people to come together now the Qld border is open.

NEC is able to support travel for volunteers. Apply to Sledge or Alan Roberts for funding .

8 . Extinction Rebellion: Chris -

10. Rous Water proposal for new dam near The Channon/Dunoon See NGT p.11 and 15.

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AGM 2020 Agenda : due to start approx. 1 PM Saturday 19th December 2020

Present:

Apologies: Liffy Jack, Nola Firth

Confirm Minutes from 2019 AGM

Reports:

1. President
2. Treasurer
3. Secretary
4. Other Management Committee reports

Appointment of Returning Officer

Election of office bearers/ Management Committee for coming year

Appointment of Public Officer

Set Annual Membership fees

Other Business

Next regular meeting 16th January 2021 from noon to 2 PM at Mavis' Kitchen .

Announcements.

1. NRG annual fees due 1st July = \$10. Must be paid to qualify to vote at AGM. You may pay for the year 2020-21 at this year's AGM
Contact Rainer or
direct deposit to Acc 223 00 597 BSB 728-728
Remember to put your name in the reference line.
2. Native forests - Stop logging native forests : don't chop NSW public forests. For info on all sorts of campaigns and especially the push to Stop De-forestation go to: <https://www.nature.org.au/our-campaigns/ending-deforestation> and nafa.org.au
3. PROPOSAL TO DAM THE CHANNON GORGE: LISMORE CR DARLENE COOK WHO IS ON ROUS COUNTY COUNCIL WROTE IN THE DECEMBER 2020 NGT THAT ROUS IS DUE TO DECIDE ON 16TH DECEMBER WHETHER TO PROCEED WITH ECOLOGICAL , GEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE ASSESSMENTS WHETHER THE DAM IS A VIABLE OPTION. NRG HAS MADE SUBMISSIONS OPPOSING THIS PROJECT.