

President's Report - Annual General Meeting, 9 October 2018

Toward Better Bushwalking for W.A.



Welcome to the 26th AGM of the Federation of Western Australian Bushwalkers Inc, today known as Bushwalking WA.

As President-elect at the 2017 AGM late last year I said I was looking forward to working with the new Board, our Member Clubs and with the broader bushwalking community, to increase BWA's profile and effectiveness as the peak body. That is essential to our mission of fostering and promoting bushwalking in the state. Members will have seen ample evidence over the course of the eleven months since that previous AGM that we have indeed been making substantial progress. I'm grateful for the support of our six other Board members: The Board's decisions at our four meetings held during the year have enabled us to pursue a vigorous program of new initiatives.

The initiatives are part of the implementation of our 3-year [Strategic Plan 2018-2021](#) (link) which the Board put in place in February this year. The Plan is available on the website and most of you will be aware of its contents, but I will recap on one of its most important objectives; that is the need to develop BWA into a sustainable organisation:

For most voluntary organisations – and this especially applies to peak bodies such as BWA - the biggest challenge is for us to build and retain sufficient people resources. The initiatives BWA has been pursuing this year all require a lot of effort and ongoing commitment. To be sustainable that requires a new, expanded BWA organisation and additional funding sources. Similar to most other comparable organisations, BWA's structure will include an Executive Officer (EO) taking overall direction from the Board but empowered to manage BWA operationally. The EO's wide-ranging responsibilities include the coordination and oversight of informal working groups to deal with the quite wide range of matters that BWA needs to involve itself in to be an effective peak body.

During 2018 we have already made good progress toward establishing and resourcing the new structure. We have significantly expanded BWA's sources of recurrent funding by gaining annual commitments from several sponsors (we are grateful to Auswalk, Down Under Discoveries, Inspiration Outdoors, Mainpeak, Paddy Pallin, Red Tail Outdoors and WILD mag.), plus revenue from company adverts placed in our eNews. Assuming we can further grow such sources of income, the Board hopes to be in a position by mid-2019 to appoint an Executive Officer. That position will be supported by an honorarium in recognition of the commitment needed for the role. Although I am currently Acting EO as well as President, I would be handing over my operational (EO) responsibilities to that new Executive Officer once the position has been filled.

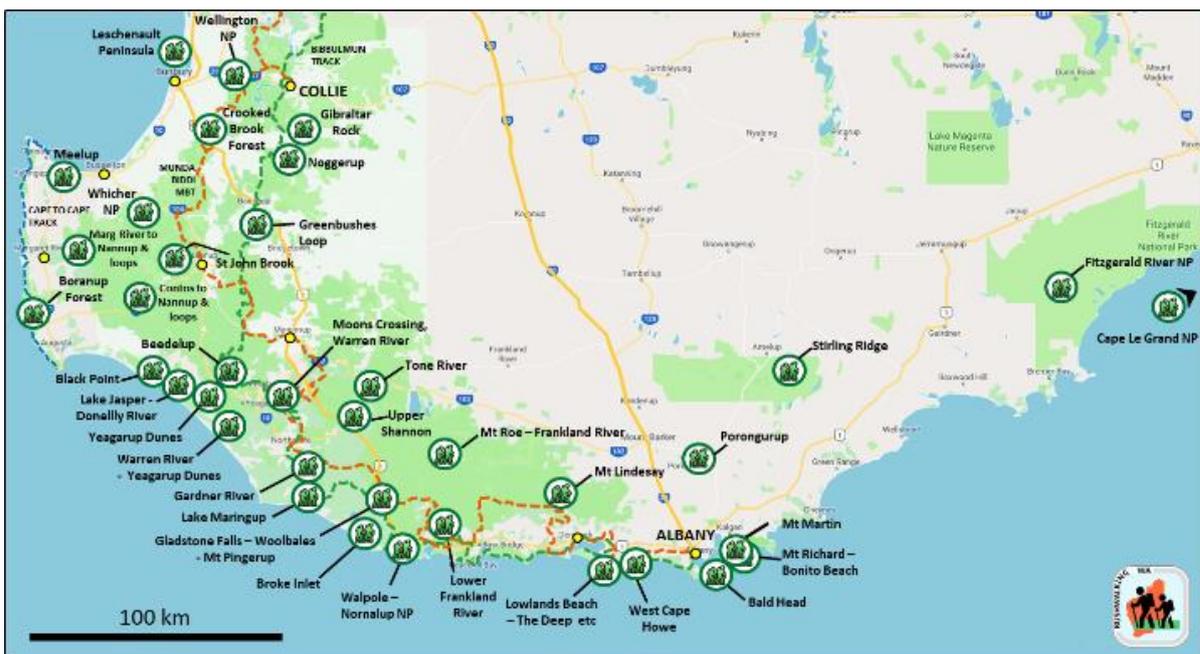
Meanwhile it has been quite a year for BWA on many and various fronts. You will be mostly aware of our year's activities through our several eNews issues and other updates, so I will just list the range of activities that have involved BWA:

- **WA statewide strategy development for bushwalking (and trail running):** BWA is represented on the Key Stakeholders Reference Group for the development of this strategy. With input from members, we provided a substantive [Discussion Paper](#) (link) to the strategy group and BWA has to date participated in six meetings and forums as part of the process.
- **Collie Valley Trails Strategy draft** - BWA responded with [comments as a key stakeholder](#) (link) to the Shire of Collie's preliminary draft of this strategy after gathering input from members.

- **Peel Region Trails Strategy development** - BWA encouraged bushwalkers to respond individually to the online trail user survey as the early phase of this strategy process.
- **Water Catchments access: Draft updated Operational Policy 13** - BWA participated in two workshops in July and subsequently lodged a [submission](#) (link) on the draft updated Policy after obtaining members' input and feedback.
- **Aboriginal Heritage Act review** - BWA lodged a [submission](#) (link) to Phase 1 of this review after obtaining members' input.
- **Bauxite mining in the Darling Range** - BWA lodged a [submission](#) (link) to the continuing Commonwealth senate inquiry into minesite rehabilitation after obtaining members' input.
- **Insurances renewals** – All member insurances questionnaires were processed via BWA and Bushwalking Australia (BA) and members are now covered for their requested cover for the 2018-2019 year. BA advised there had been a total of 15 personal injury claims processed for bushwalkers across Australia for the 2017-2018 year, mostly involving fractures arising from slips and falls. The list of 'conservation ancillary activities' covered has been expanded from track and hut construction and maintenance, to include tree-planting, weed-removal and related flora and fauna conservation (e.g. fauna counting activities).
- **Bushwalking Australia** - Vice-Pres. Des Cook and myself as BWA's delegates on the BA Council have participated in BA's two Council meetings by telecon during 2018 and will be attending the annual 'Face-to-Face' Council meeting in November. The proposed **Australian Adventure Activity Standards** have continued to be a key discussion point. The national standards are intended to replace the individual state AAS's. BA does not support mandating any standards or competencies for bushwalking clubs, and considers the AAS unnecessarily onerous for BA and its volunteer member organisations. However BA supports the development of simple, relevant guidelines that enable bushwalkers to improve the standard and safety of their activities. To that end BA is supporting the development of an online bushwalking manual for national use.
- **Meeting with Minister, The Hon. Mick Murray** (for Sport & Rec, etc) - I met with the Minister on 20th August introducing him to what Bushwalking WA is about and discussing a range of current issues and opportunities. Particular issues I raised in the meeting:
 - A need for Government strategic planning to recognise the importance of access to expanded bushwalking opportunities for the 80% of W.A.'s population living in the Perth metropolitan area.
 - The continuing impact of Operational Policy 13 as a barrier to expanding recreation in the forested drinking water catchments within easy access of the Perth metropolitan area (with emphasis on the need for more developed circuit trails of good length).
 - The need for a sense of urgency in achieving expanded recreational bushwalking opportunities, especially in light of the huge predicted "health and social costs over the next 10 years if people don't get moving" (ref. Sport Australia, Aug. 2018).

This last point warrants a focus on the specific recreational needs, alongside the tourism considerations that are currently driving most strategic trails discussion within WA.
- **Bushwalkers 'Jamboree', Wellington National Park** - All members will be aware of this inaugural jamboree to be held later this month (on 19-21 October). This is the community-spirited initiative of Bunbury Bushwalking Club (BBC), organised under the leadership of Club President Ray Parks. BBC will be hosting the event and BWA Board members will be participating along with many members of Clubs from Perth to Albany. An entertaining and invigorating weekend is assured. BWA will host the sausage-sizzle on the Friday evening and I will be chairing an informal open forum on the Sunday morning. I hope to see you all there!
- **Initiatives and opportunities**
 - **Regular eNews and other updates** - Our monthly to bi-monthly eNews issues which commenced in December 2017 have been reaching a sizeable audience (over 4000 individuals for July issue), well beyond our membership. This is extending an awareness of BWA activities and bushwalking developments and is also broadcasting links to Member Club and supporters' programs to that wider audience. My thanks to those Member Club officers who have made an effort to ensure our eNews reaches their individual members.
 - **New website (and new logo)** - BWA's website is currently being re-developed, funded mostly through an \$11,000 Lotterywest grant. The Board conducted an online logo design 'tournament' which succeeded in delivering a striking new BWA logo which will be used from the launch date of the new website. Meanwhile the existing website was given an interim 'makeover' and update early in 2018.
 - **Talk topics and Guest speakers / presenters register** - BWA aims to build and maintain a list of wide-ranging talk topics and quality speakers available for giving interesting talks to clubs and/or broader audiences. The topics will eventually be accessible to our Member Clubs on the new BWA website.

- **Remote Walks facilitation** - This is intended to cater specially for club walkers seeking opportunities for multi-day back-packing as a club activity in the more remote areas: In cases where clubs lack leaders familiar with the areas, or members are unavailable to organise and lead, BWA can help facilitate a special arrangement with a commercial walks operator offering tailored walks led by experienced local guides.
- **Trails maintenance support** - BWA is investigating the feasibility of obtaining via Parks and Wildlife Service an 'Authority' for Member Clubs to undertake, if they wish, minor maintenance works on sanctioned trails, similar to arrangements already existing in some other states. This could very effectively integrate with Member Clubs' ongoing activities without the need for organising special 'working bees'.
- **Walks of the Southwest project**– I am especially passionate about this project which could become BWA's most significant contribution to date in promoting and fostering bushwalking in the state. We announced the project in April. It has the aim of publishing a handy guide book for walks of the Southwest Region to restore excellent, long-overlooked SW walk areas to the schedules of today's bushwalkers and to provide walk leaders with adventurous new walk ideas. Walkers will gain new opportunities to challenge themselves beyond the most familiar trails. The project has progressed well through these first six months: We held a successful workshop attended by experienced bushwalkers in Albany last month and already have over 30 excellent walk possibilities on the list for testing, with detailed maps and preliminary GPS files for each. The ultimate success of the project will depend in large measure on the continuing contributions of club members and others who are testing the walks and/or sharing their own experiences about these or other walk areas. My special thanks to Albany Bushwalkers Club and Bunbury Bushwalking Club and the various individual walkers for your enthusiasm and active engagement in the project. ([Website link](#) to more info. on this project.)



It has been a very full twenty-sixth year for BWA; putting in the groundwork toward making the organisation more effective and sustainable, while also pursuing our various initiatives. And the coming year will be an especially exciting one: The rewards for bushwalking from our recent and continuing efforts will become more evident in 2019 and the increasing engagement between BWA, our Member Clubs and the wider bushwalking community will help us all to contribute to the vision of Better Bushwalking for WA. Thank you to all members for your interest and support.

Dave Osborne
President
Bushwalking WA