



**AUSTRALIAN
CONSERVATION
FOUNDATION**

Australian Conservation Foundation Inc.

ABN 22 007 498 482

55th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

6.00pm on Friday 26 November 2021

Held online, on Zoom

MINUTES

OPENING OF MEETING

The President (Chair of the AGM), Mara Bún opened the annual general meeting, and introduced Wurundjeri Elder, Aunty Doreen Garvey Wandin.

1. WELCOME TO COUNTRY

Aunty Doreen welcomed those present to the Wurundjeri Wandoon land on which this meeting is hosted. Aunty Doreen acknowledged past and present Elders of this land that must be respected in honour of her ancestors. Aunty Doreen acknowledged outgoing President, Mara Bún, members of the Board and Council, and ACF Members.

Aunty Doreen's people are known as the Manna Gum people. They stand tall on this land, which provides sustenance and shelter and must be respected. This land full of eucalypts provides the ritual of Welcome to Country. Taking a leaf from a eucalyptus, accepting that leaf, provides a symbolic link with the Wurundjeri Wandoon people and a belonging with this land.

2. INTRODUCTIONS

The President introduced the virtual head table: Treasurer Miles George, ACF Secretary Tim Chapman and CEO Kelly O'Shanassy.

The President welcomed ACF Members, Honorary Life Members, Life Members, Board members, ACF staff and other guests.

The President then welcomed Councillors of the 2021-2024 Council:

Councillor for the Australian Capital Territory - Sarah Reid

Councillors for New South Wales - Sarah English, Jonathan King and Stephen Lightfoot

Councillors for the Northern Territory - Jade Kudrenko and welcome back Shar Molloy

Councillors for Queensland - David Hood Revel Pointon and Narelle McCarthy

Councillors for South Australia - Leon Cermak, Sue Richardson and Jessica Hargrave

Councillors for Tasmania - Joana Cubillos and Martyn Summers

Councillors for Victoria - Melanie Birtchnell, Kate Noble and Elizabeth Reen

3. APOLOGIES AND ATTENDANCE

3.1 Apologies

The President advised that 23 apologies have been received from Members. A list of apologies has been posted on the AGM page of the ACF website and will be included in the minutes of this meeting.

3.2 Attendance

The President noted that 94 ACF members were in attendance at the opening of this meeting, exceeding the required 40 member quorum.

Nine proxies have been recorded for this meeting, all appointed the Secretary:

Howard Foster	Geoffrey James	Keith Little
Marjorie White	Clifford Morris	Geoffrey Wratten
Kenneth Rendell	Don White	Cynthia Harrison

4. MINUTES OF 54th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The President explained that a simple majority vote is required for this item, and that voting would be by show of hands.

The President noted that the Minutes of the 54th AGM, 20 November 2020 were made available with this meeting and that no requests for amendment had been received.

It was then moved “that the Minutes of the 54th Annual General Meeting be confirmed.”

Proposed: Miles George

Seconded: Tim Chapman

The Chair confirmed that the motion was CARRIED.

5. BUSINESS ARISING

The President noted that there was no business arising from the minutes of the 2020 Annual General Meeting.

6. PRESIDENT’S REPORT

The President began her report by thanking ACF Members who, through their election of Council, made her election as the first woman President of ACF possible. Acknowledging the great honour of the role, the President also praised the talented and committed members of the ACF Board during her term.

The President reflected on the model for conservation globally, which has changed in response to global warming. ACF’s work has transformed over the years from preservation to systemic change, understanding of the need to work at the level of economy, democracy and business, and that mass people power is needed to achieve lasting change.

The President remarked how impressive ACF's focus on democracy and on environmental protection biodiversity conservation laws has been during her term. This has been widely acknowledged across the business and ngo sectors. ACF is demonstrating growing, sophisticated influence on capital investment in the solutions that will achieve net zero and lasting change.

ACF, its CEO, its staff and its community are changing the story about what is possible. The President thanked CEO, Kelly O'Shanassy, for leading with sophistication, grace and generosity. ACF is privileged to have a CEO who uniquely faces inside the organisation as much as outside, which underpins this great potential that ACF has to influence change.

The President introduced Erika Avellaneda Celis, outgoing Councillor for Tasmania and member of the Board. Erika steps up as Acting President at the close of this meeting.

The President then acknowledged and thanked each of the 2018-2021 Councillors who had retired from Council this year:

Erika Avellaneda Celis, Councillor for Tasmania since 2013 and an elected Board member

Donna Bagnall, Councillor for New South Wales since 2018 and an elected Board member

Daisy Barham, Councillor for New South Wales since 2015

Tim Chapman, Councillor for New South Wales since 2015, elected Vice President in 2018 and Secretary in 2021

Jimmy Cocking, Councillor for Northern Territory since 2012, elected to the Board in 2013, elected Vice President in 2018

Anita Cosgrove, Councillor for Queensland since 2020

Anne Martinelli, Councillor for Victoria since 2018.

Ash Peplow Ball, Councillor for Victoria since 2018, and an elected Board member

Mia Pepper, Councillor for Western Australia since 2018

Melanie Poole, Councillor for Victoria since 2018

Philippa Rowland, Councillor for South Australia since 2017

Margaret Steadman, Councillor for Tasmania since 2016

The President spoke briefly about the significant contribution of Honorary Secretary, Jon Anstey, who had retired from the Board in September 2021 after eight years' service.

7. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

The CEO commenced her report by noting that when the stakes are high it can be hard to see the progress that has been made. The wins are there:

- Net zero emissions by 2050 goal – a bipartisan agreement in Australia. The government moved, because the community shifted, the states and territories shifted, and the capital shifted. ACF aims to influence a commitment to at least halve emissions by 2030.
- The shift away from coal will happen much quicker than 2050. Our government has moved because our community, our business, our capital and the global picture is moving.

- For the first time, the Australian government signed up to protect global ecosystems by 2030 and to end extinction this decade.
- ACF continues to work strongly to stop the government forcing ARENA and CEFC to fund coal and gas.
- ACF and allies have been able to block the federal government's efforts to weaken national environmental law.
- ACF is working with business: the big banks have exit strategies from coal and gas; influenced the investment strategies of major superannuation funds; and clean exports are starting to become a reality.
- Australia's longest running uranium mine closed this year.
- The Business Council of Australia called for an emissions reduction of 46-50% by 2030.
- The Australian Climate Roundtable is collectively calling for action.
- ACF is changing the story. In the news at least 18 times a day, which means ACF is very influential on the stories that are being told. The poll taken in August, showed that people in every electorate in Australia believed the government should take further action on renewables.

The CEO acknowledged the major challenges that will be faced this year as the climate and extinction crises grow. These cannot be solved quickly and the community will need to be resilient to the damage that will come. But the CEO assured Members that ACF is bending that arc towards a better future. Government is moving because voters are moving. Business, states, territories and the international community have all moved and the community is increasingly active.

Our ACF community is a big player and the foundation of the environment movement in Australia. When advocacy is required, ACF steps up. When solutions are required, ACF does the hard yards and then shares the work and the stories. When people power is needed, we build it. When collaborations are needed, we fund them.

In finishing, the CEO noted that although it sometimes seems impossible, ACF is creating change and creating the future that we all long for. The CEO thanked Members for being part of that.

8. TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer commented that over the last year, pandemic related lockdowns have taken an immense financial toll on many small businesses. Many charities have also been hurt financially in the economic downturn, particularly those who rely on major events for fundraising. However, with a great deal of foresight and good planning ACF did not suffer financially during the pandemic.

ACF remains in excellent financial health and delivered a surplus of \$3.3 million in 2021, the seventh surplus in a row. This size of this surplus was unexpected and was principally due to the receipt of two major bequests, for which ACF is very grateful.

ACF is funded entirely by donations. It is a testament to our supporters that ACF was able to achieve record revenue of \$18.4 million last year - representing a growth in revenue of nearly 50% over the past seven years.

Despite pandemic lockdowns, ACF also spent a record amount on our environmental campaigns last year. At \$8.4 million, our annual environmental expenditure has grown by over 60% since 2014.

ACF continues to accelerate expenditure on environmental activities at an unprecedented pace. In the past few months, a multi-million dollar campaign - Renew Australia – has been launched. This campaign flows through and beyond next year's federal election. ACF staff numbers have increased by 20% in order to resource the significant expansion in activities.

Over the past seven years, CEO Kelly O'Shanassy and her team have built an organisation that is focussed, efficient and impactful. The Treasurer noted that the role of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, of which he is chair, is to challenge management, test their strategy, ensure that risks are being addressed, assets are maintained, financial returns are maximised and that funds are allocated wisely.

ACF is in a strong financial position, not because of luck, but as a result of years of smart decisions, persistence and an excellent organisational culture. The quality of the ACF team - from those working directly on environmental campaigns all the way through to those in the back office - is something about which Members can be immensely proud.

The next few years will be pivotal for climate and nature. ACF's financial strength, excellent staff and 700,000 supporters make us a powerful voice calling for governments and businesses to step up and do more. The Treasurer thanked Members for their continued generosity and support.

Questions from Members on the Financial Statements:

Question: A Member queried the effectiveness of ACF's expenditure, commenting that a much higher percentage of ACF's financial assets, including those held in operational reserve, should be spent, for instance, on a range of election-time strategies.

Response: The President responded that the Board is accountable for strategy and financial management. The Board has deeply thought through ACF's strategies and, at the same time, has a duty to ensure efficient and responsible management of the organisation. The President respectfully disagreed with the proposal that all or most of ACF's assets should be expended, commenting that the degree of capital that is flowing through to our campaigns should be celebrated.

Question: A Member asked about the level of funds held in the Environmental Impact Reserve (EIR), and how much of this will be spent.

Response: The Treasurer explained that surpluses go into the EIR, giving ACF the ability to fund high impact campaign areas. The Treasurer advised that of a \$3.3M surplus at the end of the 2020-21 financial year, \$3M went into the EIR with the intention of spending this in the next 12 to 24 months.

It was then moved “That the Audited Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2021, as they appear in Part 2 of the Annual Report, be received and accepted.”

Proposed: David Hood

Seconded: Garry Gale

The President confirmed that the motion was CARRIED.

9. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR

On behalf of the Board and the organisation, the President thanked the external auditors, Grant Thornton, for their work in undertaking the audit of the 2020-21 Financial Statements.

It was then moved “That Grant Thornton be re-appointed external auditors for the coming year.”

Proposed: Jimmy Cocking

Seconded: David Hood

The President confirmed that the motion was CARRIED.

10. PETER RAWLINSON CONSERVATION AWARD

Marnie Rawlinson advised Members that, this year, the judging panel had agreed that there were no nominations that fulfilled the award criteria. A video celebrating the winners of the Award over nearly 30 years, was played for Members present.

11. MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME

The first questions to be addressed, were several that had been submitted in advance of the AGM.

Question: What role has ACF played and what do Australian governments need to do to implement International Union for Conservation of Nature Motion 101 calling for the protection of 50% of earth's lands and seas. Is ACF a Nature Needs Half member organisation and, if not, will it consider becoming one?

Response: The CEO explained that ACF's role in Australia has been leadership: working with NGOs to bring together statements, to agree on the statement, working with the business community to encourage them to speak up to support this global agreement and targets. If ACF is not already a Nature Needs Half member, membership will be investigated.

Question: Why doesn't ACF visibly support Blockade Australia and Extinction Rebellion?

Response: The CEO responded that unfortunately it is illegal for charities in Australia to support groups that purposely carry out illegal activities. ACF can and has defended the activities and spoken in support of organisations like Extinction Rebellion.

Question: How can we let the Victorian government know that legislation around urban deforestation and illegal tree removal needs reform?

Response: The President noted that the CEO had provided a response to this question prior to the AGM. The CEO commented that the role of protecting nature through local government will be explored by ACF going forward. ACF endeavours to help local groups

connect their local issue to the national issue that ACF is working on. In this case, the national environment laws.

Question: Why does the question of excessive, ongoing population growth, which is one of the major factors causing environmental degradation, rank so lowly on ACF's priorities?

Response: The President noted that there was a similar question in the Chat. ACF does agree that population growth is a key driver of unsustainability globally. ACF has regularly deliberated over many years on running a campaign on managing population growth and immigration. The issue was most recently debated and voted against by Members at the 2016 AGM. Research has shown that population is largely driven by immigration and is an economic and humanitarian issue. ACF feels that it cannot adequately influence issues such as birthing rates and empowerment of women in developing nations, nor influence the drivers of immigration in a material way as a conservation group. This continues to be the position of the Board and staff of ACF.

Question: Is ACF's charity status at risk, due to current legislative proposals?

Response: The CEO commented that attacks on ACF's charitable status are one of ACF's two biggest risks. The CEO briefly referred to proposed changes to election laws regarding "political campaigners". ACF will not lose Deductible Gift Status because of this, but risks being labelled "political". ACF finances will not be impacted.

Question: A Member asked for assistance with presenting a petition to the federal government MP.

Response: The CEO asked the Member to contact her by email, so that connection can be made with an ACF Community group experienced in meeting with MPs.

Question: What is the situation with JobKeeper and ACF?

Response: The Treasurer explained that ACF had applied for JobKeeper at the beginning of the pandemic. When it became apparent that ACF had not suffered the anticipated drop in revenue, the Executive and Board agreed that returning the JobKeeper funds was the right thing to do.

12. FAREWELL TO OUTGOING PRESIDENT

Vice President and Secretary Tim Chapman farewelled and extended the thanks and recognition of the Board, Council, and Members to the significant contribution to ACF and the movement made by Mara Bún. Mara's term as President of ACF ended at the close of this meeting. Not only highly respected in the business sector, Mara has had a lifelong passion for the environment. Tim acknowledged Mara's leadership, and how much she had brought to ACF. Mara challenged and inspired ACF as an organisation, helping lead ACF in the direction of greater focus on the business sector, and encouraging ACF to think innovatively and boldly.

13. MEETING CLOSED

There being no further business, the President declared the 55th Annual General Meeting closed.

2021 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ATTENDANCE (MEMBERS)

Mara Bún	Marnie Rawlinson	Jo Wainer
Tim Chapman	Sharon Clements	Hilary Kuhn
Doreen Garvey Wandin	Jim Le Cornu	Florence Lindhaus
Bruce Dymock	Rod Novak	Elizabeth Goodwin
Warren Muller	Stephen Lightfoot	Fi Pahor
David Hansman	Jane Macaulay	Tom Knowles
Geoff McVeigh	Lindy Black	Loretta Smith
Graeme Dennerstein	Judith Noble	Gill Caunce
Jack Hoadley	Doreen Hanzl	Anda Banikos
Gerard Vaughan	Michele Smith	Rebecca Gardiner
Nicholas White	Julia Croatto	Shar Molloy
Raymond Gibson	Ray Peck	Sarah Reid
Robert Gordon	Eve Kantor	Joy Cooper
Gordon McAllister	Alison Watson	Sarah English
Nola Wilmot	Gayle Dallaston	Melanie Birtchnell
Liz Reen	Joanne Peters	Rosalind Harvey
Michel Hedley	Jessica Hargrave	Vaughan Kippers
Chris Hibburt	Patricia Harrison	Phil Latz
Fraser Gibson	Yousif Suliman	Miles George
Brigid Dowsett	David Hood	Anthony Daley
Maelor Himbury	Maureen Eyles	Garry Gale
Frank Schaer	Bronwyn Campbell	Kate Noble
Ian Bayly	Kelly O'Shanassy	Narelle McCarthy
David Wake	James Cocking	Adrian Head
Sue Richardson	Hannah Stoios	Christine Anderson
Sybil Free	Mary Latham	Molly McGinley
Kathryn Kelly	Rosie White	Carylyn Lightfoot
Jonathan King	Tina Stragalinos	Fabiola Martin
Phillip Geschke	Philippa Rowland	Martyn Summers
Alison Street	Erika Avellaneda Celis	Michelle Springall
Jane Crouch	Garry Jolley-Rogers	Anthony Moore
Tim Norman	Revel Pointon	Hoeun Im
Margaret Steadman	Cheryl Pultz	Nicole Sanderson
Kelvin Thomson	Sonja Davie	

2021 PROXIES APPOINTED BY

Howard Foster	Geoffrey James	Keith Little
Marjorie White	Clifford Morris	Geoffrey Wratten
Kenneth Rendell	Don White	Cynthia Harrison

2021 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING APOLOGIES

John Ackroyd
George Karoly
Ian Weeks
Kenneth Rendell
Helen Colman
Duncan Furphy
Geoffrey Wratten
Howard Foster
Don White
Clodagh Norwood
Cynthia Harrison

Philip Morris
Jane R Beavan
John Godfrey
Beverley Parker
Gabriel Fuller
Gail Green
Cheryl Cooper
Ewan Ogilvy
Barrie Pittock
Diana Pittock
Julia Lacey

Pamm Brittain
Jane Smithers
Maria Miranda
Joana Cubillos
Judy Bain
Helen Lynes
Tana Edye
Johanna Rosenthal
Geoffrey James
Jade Kudrenko