



**AUSTRALIAN
CONSERVATION
FOUNDATION**

Australian Conservation Foundation Inc.

ABN 22 007 498 482

57th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

6.00pm on Thursday 16 November 2023

Held online, on Zoom

DRAFT MINUTES

OPENING OF MEETING

The President (Chair of the AGM), Liana Downey opened the annual general meeting, and introduced Wurundjeri Elder, Aunty Diane Kerr.

1. WELCOME TO COUNTRY

Aunty Diane Kerr welcomed those present to the Wurundjeri land on which the meeting was hosted, and honoured her ancestors and her elders. Aunty Diane acknowledged the elders of different nations, and any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples attending the meeting. She spoke about being brought up caring for Country and that the main laws of the First Nations People are not to harm the land or the waters. Aunty Diane told members of a recent commitment ceremony conducted for First Nations people from America and New Zealand and the importance of the water ceremony that was conducted with them. She emphasised the need to work together for our future and country, particularly in the protection of our life-giving water.

The President thanked Aunty Diane for her welcome to Country and the reminder of why we are all here. She thanked Aunty Diane, her ancestors and elders for their care of Country. ACF and its members will continue that work and will address the damage that has been done to country in recent times.

2. INTRODUCTIONS

The President introduced the virtual head table: Treasurer Joshua Gilbert, ACF Secretary Leon Cermak and CEO Kelly O'Shanassy.

The President welcomed ACF Members, Honorary Life Members, Life Members, Board and Council members, members of the Board's Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, ACF staff and other guests.

3. APOLOGIES AND ATTENDANCE

3.1 Apologies

The President advised that 24 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 45 ACF members were in attendance at the opening of this meeting, exceeding the required 40-member quorum.

Eight proxies have been recorded for this meeting, seven appointed the Secretary, one appointed ACF member Stephen Lightfoot:

Cameron Schuster	Philip (Clifford) Morris	Kenneth Rendell
Lorraine Bull	Mary Latham	Michel Beuchat
Patrick Lightfoot	Stephen Conley	

4. MINUTES OF 56th 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 56th AGM, 25 November 2022 were made available with this meeting and that no requests for amendment had been received.

It was then moved “that the Minutes of the 56th Annual General Meeting be confirmed.”

Proposed: Stephen Lightfoot

Seconded: Leon Cermak

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 2022 Annual General Meeting.

6. PRESIDENT’S REPORT

The President began her report by acknowledging that was the first time she had spoken to many of the members and thanked members for their energy, their commitment to ACF, and for their unwavering dedication to doing the hard things in the face of a potentially overwhelming situation when we think about the challenges that our planet is facing. She noted that members have chosen action and have chosen to step up and to be part of the solution.

The President outlined her background working in non-profits, government and academia, noting her life’s journey has been focused on how we drive change on the topics that matter. She is excited to work with ACF, with its focus on driving big systemic change and commented on the last decade in Australia which left Australia bereft of effective national climate and nature policy.

The theme for ACF for 2023 was rapidly moving Australia forward on nature and climate action. Outcomes included:

- A Federal target to reduce emissions by 43% over the next 6 years, and a legislated commitment to Net Zero by 2050.
- A price on carbon and a clear requirement to reduce emissions for Australia's most carbon intensive industries.
- Australia has signed the global commitment to cut methane pollution.
- Billions of dollars of additional investment in renewable energy and renewable powered exports.
- A Federal Government commitment to end extinction in Australia.
- A global agreement to halt and reverse damage to nature and create a nature positive world this decade.
- Mandatory reporting of climate emissions for companies will be rolling out from next year. Nature reporting is on the way
- A blueprint to build nature positive laws.

The President acknowledged that these are game-changing commitments for nature and climate and could not have been achieved without the tenacity, smarts, and influence of the ACF staff and ACF community. There are some fundamental building blocks in place, from which we can now start to rapidly move forward to address climate change and protect nature.

The President welcomed new Board members: Terence Jeyaretnam, co-opted onto the Board for his skills, and Stephen Lightfoot, elected to the Board from Council. She thanked retired Board and Council member Sarah Reid, and for her service and ongoing involvement in ACF's Community group.

The President thanked the CEO, staff, Board, Council and community group members for their commitment to ACF and nature.

7. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

Following on from the President the CEO, noted that with the change of government there have been real gains, but not nearly enough. Commitments need action and to date there has not been nearly enough action being taken by our government and businesses to curb the climate and nature crisis. The challenge of the role at ACF is to welcome progress while never stopping asking for what is needed.

The CEO spoke further to the work and impacts from the past year including:

- The emissions reduction target of 43% by 2030 is the equivalent of taking 20 million cars off the road.
- The day the government made that commitment, it invited representatives from an unusual alliance of groups to be there for the signing – including ACF, business groups, unions and some energy groups. This alliance not only supported the new target, but agreed it needs to be higher. The government can now set its sights to the next level. The momentum is now building and will be moved forward by this alliance.

- ACF worked hard with our colleagues to strengthen the Safeguard Mechanism, with the outcome being a much stronger law that will reduce emissions by 5% every year from the 200 largest polluters in Australia and ensures that any new coal, gas or fossil fuel plants in Australia have to be net zero.
- This does not include the emissions of Australian coal and gas that is shipped overseas and burnt. ACF will be going after that in the year ahead. ACF also worked hard to get the use of offsets by heavy polluters capped, however at present there is only a quasi-cap in place.
- While there has been real policy advancement in Australia, particularly for climate, there has not been as much progress for nature. The government, in response to the Graeme Samuels review in December 2022, has made a commitment to a nature positive Australia. ACF and our colleagues in the nature movement are working hard on giving feedback and input into the reforms in the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC). The Act will have strong standards for threatened species and their protection in Australia and will have no-go zones for development in areas of critical habitat. The game changer will be a national environment protection authority that will take the politics out of the decision-making.
- ACF is working hard to stop the Toondah Harbour development that would see 3000 homes being built on top of an internationally important wetland.
- The global agreement for nature, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework was adopted at COP15 in November 2022. This included a target of “30 by 30” – conservation of 30% of the world's lands, inland waters, coastal areas and oceans by 2030. With a complementary target to ensure least 30% of areas of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine ecosystems are under effective restoration by 2030.
- ACF is working on mandatory reporting for businesses to disclose their nature impacts and risks. Businesses will need to shift money from polluting and damaging nature to regenerative business practices.
- ACF continued to work with the Australian community around ACF’s theory of change – disrupt, create and activate.
- ACF investigations uncovered unlawful land clearing, and failures of the national environmental law to keep critical habitat protected. Over the next two years ACF will work on exposing methane pollution, using the newly purchased methane camera.
- Looking ahead ACF will: ramp up the urgency of our action, pursue the 2035 climate target, work over summer to increase the understanding that dangerous weather is climate damage fuelled by the coal and gas companies. The EPBC reforms are happening and Australia to host the first Nature Positive Summit.
- Next year will lead into the Federal election and to Australia hosting the Climate COP in 2026

The CEO noted that the rising tension in Australia between renewable power and the protection of nature. ACF has clear policies on how to ensure renewables are good for nature. We cannot fix climate change by destroying nature.

The CEO thanked the members for the support and energy they put into ACF and looks forward to working with the ACF Community in the coming year.

8. TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer introduced himself and noted this was his first AGM as Treasurer. He thanked the ACF staff, Board and Finance Audit and Risk Committee for their assistance and guidance this year.

The Treasurer thanked Aunty Diane for her welcome to Country, acknowledged the land from which he was joining the meeting and paid his respects to others past and present, from the lands people were joining from.

The Treasurer reported:

- ACF is in great financial shape with over \$11 million in cash and investments, ACF owns our Melbourne office and have no debt.
- The financial strength enables ACF to maintain our level of environmental work, despite the economic challenges
- With good management ACF has been able to avoid issues of some smaller charities, such as staff redundancies.
- Despite tighter budgets, ACF has had its second largest year of environmental expenditure.
- Cost of living pressures have resulted in a drop in smaller and one-off donations
- ACF's portfolio approach, having a diversity of revenue resources, allows us to adapt. This year ACF has been able to increase gifts from our major donors, many of whom have had long relationships with ACF.
- There was also a boost in revenue from donors leaving money and property to ACF in their wills. He acknowledged the extraordinary generosity of some of the ACF members.
- The outlook for the new financial year is similar with limited growth in revenue and tight budgets.
- It is expected that, once through this difficult phase, ACF will return to strong growth.
- The fundraising team are extremely creative, using new technologies and techniques to increase revenues and the finance team continues to carefully manage expenditure. He thanked members for their contributions and acknowledged ACF's finance and fundraising team, who worked hard to ensure the best possible position for the last financial year.

There were no questions from Members on the Financial Statements.

It was then moved “That the Audited Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2023, as they appear in Part 2 of the Annual Report, be received and accepted.”

Proposed: Stephen Lightfoot
Seconded: David Hood

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 2022-23 Financial Statements.

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

Proposed: Stephen Lightfoot
Seconded: David Hood

The President confirmed that the motion was CARRIED.

10. PETER RAWLINSON CONSERVATION AWARD

A video was played from Marnie Rawlinson, founder of the Peter Rawlinson Conservation Award. Marnie provided a background on the award and noted that this year, after the two main years of the pandemic, had seen a substantial increase in group nominations. Marnie thanked the ACF Council members and staff members who were on the judging panel.

Judging was on three major criteria: the significance of the issue addressed, the difficulties encountered and the outcomes that were achieved.

Marnie announced the 2023 winner, Barngarla Determination Aboriginal Corporation (BDAC), for campaigning tirelessly for seven years to protect their country in South Australia from the long-term threats posed by radioactive waste. In July 2023, the Federal Court found that former Coalition resources minister’s plan for a nuclear waste dump near Kimba was not valid.

BDAC chairman Jason Bilney, via video, thanked ACF for the award and spoke about how the community had worked collaboratively together through the long and drawn-out fight.

The Chair formally expressed her thanks to the committee and congratulated Barngarla for their action and the amazing result.

11. MEMBERS’ QUESTION TIME

Question: A request for an update on ACF’s current membership, how it is progressing and any strategies ACF has to increase membership in the future.

President response:

- ACF prides itself on being democratic, with a supporter base that has grown to 600,000 over the last decade. ACF has approximately 6000 members, who help govern ACF. The decline in membership numbers over the last few years is in line with some broader trends across the country.
- The ACF Board has a Working Group working this specific issue and the Board and Council will be spending time on this topic in the coming week to make sure ACF is looking at how to increase engagement more broadly, growing both members and supporters. Suggestions and advice from members is welcome and ACF may reach out to members to seek advice via a survey in the near future.

Question: Request for an update on ACF's work to identify illegal land clearing using citizen science.

President response: The results from that work which put together the first really detailed national picture of land clearing around the country has been really important in feeding into a significant amount of work ACF is doing, including the work on the EPBC reforms. This ties into the commitment made by Westpac to no longer fund land clearing activity.

CEO added: Australia is a global leader in land clearing or deforestation – this permanent clearing of land drives agriculture, particularly beef production. ACF looks to do three things: 1) Find it and stop it through the investigations program. Take those investigations to the government, to get them to stop it – this has been successful 2) Work for strong national nature laws 3) Move the money - to get the big supermarkets, banks, superannuation companies and big food retailers to commit to being land clearing free.

Question: Is there any progress the CEO was aware of in bringing more focus on the issue of scope 3 emissions?

CEO response: The business community is taking this seriously and the mandatory reporting for large businesses and investment firms mentioned earlier will push them to measure their scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions. However, she noted that the coal and gas export industries continue to be protected from Australian climate laws. So far the government has resisted building anything into the national laws that will hold the fossil fuel industry accountable for climate and environmental damage that occurs overseas, from exported Australian products.

President noted: the mandatory reporting changes that will come through next year for big companies will also roll out to smaller companies over time.

Question: In response to declining ACF membership numbers, if it would be an option to sponsor someone else's membership?

Secretary response: the current membership fee is \$10 and ACF would encourage members to contact us if cost was a barrier to membership. He noted that the Board have agreed that the focus for the organisation is our mission and objectives for nature and climate and not on placing too much emphasis on boosting membership numbers. ACF does put significant effort into building our supporter bases and networks to strengthen our collective power. He did acknowledge that lower membership numbers in some states, during the ACF Council election process, could create some vulnerabilities. ACF Executive and Board are aware of the balance of priorities that is required.

Question: Would ACF consider revisiting nuclear power as an option in Australia? (Member currently living in Hong Kong, largely powered by nuclear)

ACF Nuclear Free Campaigner response: The positive aspect of the current live debate in Australia is that it highlights Australia cannot do business as usual – we need to change the way that we approach energy generation. ACF does not see nuclear as a credible or effective response to the pressing challenge of climate change. There is no proponent of nuclear in Australia that is arguing we should build and operate the sorts of reactors and nuclear technology that actually exists in the world today and produces commercial electricity. Instead they put their faith in emergent nuclear technology generation for next generation small modular nuclear reactors. These reactors are unproven and early day technology, not commercially deployed anywhere in the world. Australia cannot put our hopes in unproven technology, instead we should be pursuing the suite of renewable energy options that Australia in particular is blessed with. The efficient and effective, proven and deployable climate solution is to embrace and supercharge renewables.

The President, on behalf of the Board, Council and ACF staff thanked members for taking the time to take part in the AGM and thanked them again for their ongoing commitment and support.

14. MEETING CLOSED

There being no further business, the President declared the 57th Annual General Meeting closed.

2023 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ATTENDANCE

Adrian Vicary	Alan Farrar	Alison Zerafa*
Annie Wearne*	Anthony Moore*	Astrid Werner
Barbara Bryan	Bronwyn Campbell	Bruce Dyson
Catherine McNicol	Chris Hibburt	Christine Anderson*
Crystel Gangemi*	Danielle Woodgate	Dave Sweeney
David A Hood	David Redfearn	David Wake
Diane Kerr*	Florence Lindhaus	Gage McNally
Geoffrey Smith	Gilbert Elliott	Ian Bayly
Jonathan King	Joshua Gilbert	Kate Garrard
Kelly O'Shanassy	Laurence Neumann*	Leon Cermak
Liana Downey	Lisa Williams	Liz Reen
Marnie Rawlinson	Martin Mansfield	Melanie Birtchnell
Melissa Goode	Merowyn Deacon	Michelle Springall
Narelle McCarthy	Nicholas White	Nicole Sanderson*
Nola Wilmot	Pamela Gunn	Paul Sinclair
Peter Forsythe	Raymond Gibson	Revel Pointon
Richard Bentley*	Rodney Novak	Rosalind Harvey
Sarah English	Scott Matheson	Shar Molloy
Shellie Watkins*	Stephen Lightfoot	Steven Gatti
Sue Richardson	Sylvia Carr	Terence Jeyaretnam
Tim Corcoran	Tina Stragalinis	Vanessa Payne

*Not ACF members

2023 PROXIES APPOINTED BY

Cameron Schuster	Philip (Clifford) Morris	Kenneth Rendell
Lorraine Bull	Mary Latham	Michel Beuchat
Patrick Lightfoot	Stephen Conley	

2023 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING APOLOGIES

Bill Castleden	Bill Thomas	Cameron Schuster
Christopher Calver	Dallas Kinnear	Duncan Furphy
Fé Ross	Henry Rischbieth	Ian James
J.Denis Guiney	Jade Kudrenko	Jan Lacey
Jane Crouch	Jane R Beavan	Jenna Brooker
Jessica Hargrave	Joanna Peters	Kelvin Thomson
Kenneth Rendell	Lyn Ryan	Margaret Lee
Mary Latham	Michael Williams	Michel Beuchat
Patrick Lightfoot	Patsy Jones	Phillip Morris
Romaine Rutnam	Stephen Conley	Sue Bendel