



Volume 1, June 1999

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Newsletter of the Ecological Consultants Association of NSW Inc.

A New Professional Organisation is Formed

A group of 60 consulting ecologists met at the Australian Museum on 24 September 1998 to form a professional association to represent the interests of practicing ecological consultants. Recognition of the organisation followed 6 months of planning and organisation by a Steering Committee of Central NSW ecological consultants.

Why?

Ecology is a field characterised by rapid growth and increasing complexity. Ecological assessment is an integral component of modern planning and management. During the past decade NSW has introduced some of the most comprehensive and powerful fauna and flora protection legislation in Australia and the world, reflecting the global trend toward introduction of ecologically sustainable development. Until now, experts and practitioners in the field have had no professional body to oversee crucial processes such as accreditation, further

education, training, standards, ethics, information exchange and negotiation with government and policy makers. While experience, basic training in ecological and environmental science and technology are required, they are no longer sufficient for the practicing ecologist. Ecological consultants must now be client educators, policy and decision-makers, legal advisers, mediators, planners, business managers and innovators.

Goals

The Ecological Consultants Association has been formed to provide a forum for ecological consultants to service and regulate their own profession. Formation of the association should result in better ecological outcomes, more cost efficient and consistent development outcome, providing an advantage to both developers and regulators.



Who Can Join?

All practicing ecological consultants are invited to join the Ecological Consultants Association. The strength of numbers will move the organisation from small beginnings to an operational footing as a leading and much needed professional service association.

History of Formation

Formation of the Association was the culmination of 6 months planning and 3 public meetings (2 April, 18 June and 3 September 1998 at Gosford Fire Control Centre). The meetings were organised by a group of Central Coast consultants (the Organising Committee) and a Steering Committee of interested ecological consultants. Members of the Association owe their thanks to the efforts of the following individuals:

Organising Group

- Phil Conacher
- John Travers
- Gary Worth
- Brian Wilson
- Geoff Winning

Steering Committee

- Paul Burcher
- Phil Conacher
- Deryk Engel

- Claire Felton
- Glenn Hoyer
- Sally Hunt
- Tim Norman
- John Pickard
- Andrew Smith
- John Travers
- Garry Worth
- Geoff Winning

Constitution of ECA

Geoff Winning formulated a draft constitution for the Association under the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act following the rules set down by the Department of Fair Trading. This draft was adopted by the meeting on 24 September subject to having its legal structure verified by a solicitor. This structure has since been verified, putting ECA on a valid footing as a professional organisation.

Contact Information

Mailing Address:
PO Box 9
Wyong, NSW 2259
Phone: (02) 4353 1010
Fax: (02) 4351 2563
Web Site: www.eca.asn.au
(active after 8/7/99)
Items for Newsletters:
Peggy O'Donnell
ecolab@ozemail.com.au

Objectives of ECA

- To represent practicing ecological consultants in NSW
- To liaise with regulatory authorities and other bodies on matters relevant to the practice of ecological consultants in NSW
- To co-operate with other bodies or organizations and institutions both within Australia and overseas having objects in part or similar to the objects of the Association.
- To prepare and/or support standards and/or guidelines relevant to the practice of ecological consultants in NSW, including but not limited to:
 - Accreditation of consultants;
 - Standards for the practice of methods used by ecological consultants;
 - Peer review of work of ecological consultants;
 - Code of ethics to be followed by practicing ecological consultants;
 - Code of business practices.
- To initiate, co-ordinate or undertake training programs, seminars, etc for the betterment of the practice of ecological consultancy in NSW.
- To undertake any activity which in the opinion of the Council of the Association is calculated to promote the interest of ecological consultants in NSW and elsewhere.

Council

At the inaugural meeting of 24 September 1998 the following persons were elected as the foundation Officer Bearers and Council Members of the Association:

President

Andrew Smith
Austeco Environmental
Consultants

Vice President

Paul Broese
Arnhem Environmental Impact
Assessors (AEIA)

Secretary

John Travers
Conacher Travers Pty Ltd

Public Officer/Treasurer

Geoff Winning
Hunter Wetlands Research &
Management

Council Members

Craig Anderson
Wildthing Environmental
Consultants

Susan Calvert
Environment Protection
Authority NSW

Martin Denny
Mount King Ecological Surveys

Dominic Fanning
Gunninah Environmental
Consultants

Glenn Hoye
Fly By Night Bat Surveys

Tim Norman
Graduate School of the
Environment, Macquarie
University

Peggy O'Donnell
The Ecology Lab Pty Ltd

Judith Rawling
Urban Bushland Management
Consultants

Brian Wilson
Ecotone Ecological Consultants

Arthur White
Biosphere Environmental
Consultants

Making ECA Work

To help establish the organisation members of ECA have agreed to undertake specific topics for which they will be responsible, either as chairpersons of standing committees, delegated officers or "devil's advocates". Each Councilor or member will report to Council meetings in their area of responsibility and provide an annual report to members in the Association newsletter. Each newsletter will feature plans, goals, discussions and accomplishments in one of these topics. Members are encouraged to contact the people listed below to address any topic relevant to their area of responsibility:

Professional Ethics
Geoff Winning

Accreditation
Geoff Winning

Animal Welfare
Tim Norman

Threatened Species
Brian Wilson

Training
Judith Rawling

Guidelines & Survey
Standards
Martin Denny

Insurance
Phil Conacher

Information & Intellectual
Property Copyright
Andrew Smith

Membership
Craig Anderson

Newsletter Editor
Peggy O'Donnell

Profiles

To familiarise members with the new ECA executive and Council, each newsletter will profile one member. This week we feature the ECA president, Andrew Smith



Profile: ECA President Andrew Smith

I was born on a sheep farm in the 90 mile desert of South Australia, went to kindergarten in Woomera, and spent my youth in the Adelaide Hills collecting moths and fantasising about girls at an all male school. At age 15 I moved to Wollongong (which gave me an inside appreciation of the Auntie Jack Show) and soon after enrolled in Science at the University of Sydney specialising in under age drinking, bushwalking, caving, and entomology (against the family tradition of engineering). For my first job I was sent to Darwin with a butterfly net by CSIRO to hold back the invasion of Australia by the Oriental Fruit Fly. After a year as an apprentice Territorian (how to be a yobbo and survive on a diet of mud crabs and beer without getting scurvy) I put myself out of work by discovering that the national threat was a harmless undescribed native species that bred in an obscure sand dune creeper. Declining an offer to study other fruit flies I migrated south, married the best looking girl in the bushwalking club, and enrolled in a PhD at Monash to study insectivorous possums and gliders.

Undaunted by the failure of two previous PhDs, I established a study site in the Victorian Central Highlands 200m from the State's tallest known tree. After 3 months of unsuccessful trapping in the snow I realised there was nothing for it but to climb the trees and catch the little buggers (up to 30m above ground) as they came out of their den sites. Thus began a routine of ladder building and vertical bushwalking to capture and mark the first population of Leadbeater's studied in the wild. While I was figuring out how to do this I made a low level study of sugar gliders in Gippsland, confirming what I had suspected all along, that insectivorous possums couldn't survive on a diet of insects alone but relied on nectar, honeydew, eucalypt saps and acacia gums. For these feats I was offered several choices of career, two of which were in New England. Clearly after four years (too many) of frost hardening in Melbourne I was destined for the northern tablelands where I opted for a lectureship in wildlife management, bought a passive solar house on 10 acres, slaughtered sheep, grew vegies, played tennis, became a wine snob, and contributed to the next generation (Nicholas 17 and Freya 15). I spent the next 6 years writing lectures for a surfeit of students in everything from statistics and physiology to economics and ecology. But I was most interested in multivariate statistical modelling and the use of GIS to map rare species distributions for conservation and management, first applying these methods to Leadbeaters Possum in Victoria and later to lemurs in Madagascar. I began consulting in the late 1980's, initially to fund research and student excursions (possum patting pissups) but soon became an addict. Commercial clients paid well, did what I asked them to do and said "thank you" afterwards. But most importantly I was able to bring about many real, tangible changes in standards of environmental protection and management. In 1996 I resigned from my position as an Associate Professor at UNE to undertake full-time consulting as a principal Austeco Environmental Consultants, a company that I co-founded in 1989. Since then I have become more heavily involved in government policy and planning, and the development of standards and guidelines for implementation of environmental protection legislation, but I always look forward to getting away from the computer screen and back to the bush.

The ECA Newsletter

As with any organisation, communication with members is ECA's lifeline. Like other organisations, ECA has chosen the time-honoured media of the newsletter to keep the membership informed, and to serve as a sounding board for ideas and discussions on topics of interest to the membership. To reach a wide audience and to reduce running costs, the plan is to distribute all future newsletters by e-mail, with printed information about the Association prepared for specific purposes such as press information and position papers.

To date the frequency of newsletter publications has not been decided, but is likely to be four times a year. Contributions, discussions, comments and creative ideas for the ECA newsletter will be welcomed by the editor. As a first salvo, the editor would be interested to have feedback on the following regarding the format of the newsletter: Some of you received this newsletter in printed format; would you have been able to read it had it been sent via e-mail as a pdf document (portable document format) ?

From the editor's position, the pdf format ensures that what was sent is what you see, un

corrupted by vagaries in printers, fonts, operation systems, etc, and unable to be altered at the recipient's end. It would also mean a much smaller file than the equivalent Word document. The Adobe reader is a free download on the web, so no expense is involved in acquiring the necessary software. Your feedback would be appreciated.

The ECA Logo

The ECA logo, seen on the front page of the newsletter was designed and drawn by Noelene Cassettari, a free-lance illustrator who specialises in wildlife subjects. She can be reached on (02) 9975-2654. Good logos should be self-explanatory, and representative of the organisation they hope to portray graphically. For those of you who need some help, the logo portrays three habitats, water, land and air, representative biota from those habitats, and, yes, even a food chain, the interaction among biota and with their physical habitats being the feature that distinguishes ecology from other disciplines within the natural sciences. While the logo has received support from a subset of the executive and Council who were interested enough to respond, it is not immutable. Serious objections accompanied with positive alternatives can be

lodged with Peggy O'Donnell at ecolab@ozemail.com.au.

Membership

Membership of the Association is open to any person who is:

- An ecological consultant;
- Employed in an occupation relevant to ecological consultancy;
- Training in disciplines relevant to ecological consultancy;
- In sympathy with the objects of the Association, and;
- Willing to comply with the objects of the Association.

Members may be elected to membership of the Association as either practicing members, non-practicing members or student members where:

- practicing members shall comprise ecological consultants;
- non-practicing members shall comprise people other than practicing members and students;
- Student members shall comprise students training in disciplines relevant to ecological consultancy but are not practicing ecological consultants.

All interested persons are invited to join the Association. A membership application is appended to this newsletter for this purpose. All consultants who wish to join the Association including those present at the

foundation meeting in Sydney and any previous Steering Committee meetings will need to complete and submit a membership form. This newsletter has been mailed to the 60 consultants who attended the meeting of 24 September 1998 at the Australian Museum in Sydney and registered their addresses and approximately 40 additional consultants who forwarded apologies or are on the original Steering Committee mailing list. Attendees at the meeting at The Australian Museum (who paid \$10) will retain interim membership until June 30, 1999. The Steering Committee is aware that it lacked the time and resources to contact all ecological consultants in NSW with a potential interest in the association and is relying on your support to ensure that all interested persons are contacted and encouraged to join. Council has set membership fees at \$160 for the 12-month period ending 30 June 2000.

Upcoming Events

ECA Ecological Forum

Date: Friday, Sept. 17, 1999

Time: 9 am to 5 pm

At: Taronga Zoo

Topics to be discussed:

- Survey Guidelines and Standards
- Threatened Species: Assessment and Role of Local Government

More information in next newsletter

Membership Application for Ecological Consultants Association of NSW Inc.

Applicant's family name	Given names
Personal address	
State	
Postcode	
Contact telephone number	Mobile
Current business name/employer	Nature of business
Business address	
State	
Postcode	
Business telephone number	Business fax
e-mail	
Postal address if different from any of above	
State	
Postcode	
Qualifications	

Membership Application for Ecological Consultants Association, Page 2/3

Experience

I, _____ hereby apply to be considered for the following membership of the Ecological Consultants Association of NSW Inc. (hereafter referred to as "the Association") as set down in Rule 4 of the Constitution of the Association (attached).

Please tick one:

Practicing member (\$160) (practicing ecological consultants)

Non-practicing member (\$160) (non-practicing ecological consultants and all others except students)

Student member (\$80) (students training in disciplines relevant to ecological consultancy but who are not practicing ecological consultants)

Annual subscription \$_____ Enclosed_____

I agree to abide by the Constitution and Rules of Association at all times and to conduct myself and my business in accordance with the Constitution and Rules.

Signed_____ Dated_____

Membership Application for Ecological Consultants Association, Page 3/3

REFEREES: your application must be supported by two practicing members of the Association

1. Name _____ Signature _____ Date _____

2. Name _____ Signature _____ Date _____

After completing the first two pages of the application form, obtain the signatures of two practising members of the Association on the form above. If prospective members have difficulty finding two practicing members to support their application, please contact the membership officer (details below) for assistance or a list of members in your region. Note that attendees of the meeting at The Australian Museum on 24 September, 1998 are members until June 30, 1999.

Make your cheque for membership fees payable to Ecological Consultants Association. Send the cheque and all three pages of the completed application form to:

Ecological Consultants Association

Membership Application

C/O Conacher Travers Pt Ltd

PO Box 9, Wyong, NSW 2259

For membership inquiries, contact Craig Anderson: wildthing@infoserv.net.au

Members or prospective members may obtain a copy of membership rules by contacting Geoff Winning: wetlands@dragon.net.au