

The Kara Kara Conservation
Management Network Inc.

2018

Year in Review






The Kara Kara Conservation Management Network Inc.

(ABN 54 518 202 935, Vic Registration No. A0056235M)

PO Box 174,
St Arnaud, Victoria, 3478

 0419 550 226

 www.karakaracmn.org.au

 karakaracmn@gmail.com

Publication date: 23 November 2018

President's Report



Welcome to the *2018 Year in Review* for the Kara Kara CMN. This Review is our primary communication with our members, but it is also important at another level. It gives us a chance to pause, look back at what we've done well – and not so well – during the year, celebrate our strengths, and identify and address our weaknesses as we prepare for the year ahead.

At 30 June this year, the Network completed Year One of projects associated with our three-year Biodiversity On-Ground Action – Community & Volunteer Action Grant. This saw us undertake autumn revegetation works to create or improve habitat in bio-links on five private properties to the east and west of the St Arnaud Range, and continue our threatened and declining species nest-box program.

If there were two main themes that characterised the Network's activities in 2018 aside from our on-ground projects, they would be *community engagement* and *building capacity*.

Engaging the community

The emphasis on community engagement arose out of recognition by the Committee that the Kara Kara CMN was not well known locally, which isn't really surprising given that we are still a relatively young organisation. So, our community engagement activities over the past year were a deliberate strategy with two key aims: firstly, to increase community awareness of our organisation; and secondly, to significantly strengthen the Network's volunteer base both at an individual level and through community partnerships. This is essential if we are to undertake projects and programs at a landscape scale.

These two aims, while discrete, are intrinsically linked. They are also ongoing.

On the community awareness front, we hosted seminars and field trips, kept our growing list of 'friends' informed through regular eNews and Facebook updates, apprised the local community about Network news and events through local and regional print media, and in turn, supported other community organisations through our sponsorship of community events.

After receiving expressions of interest from attendees at our community seminars and field trips earlier in the year, we also constructed a batch of 'general species' nest-boxes with assistance from the Avoca Men's Shed. These boxes, mostly for birds, will be installed over the coming weeks on landholdings in the district.



Shoring up our volunteer base – our second community engagement objective – called for a slightly different approach. Most people are busy and have little time to give to volunteering. This is an issue affecting all community organisations to some degree. However, there are opportunities at an organisational level, particularly when we can leverage off our potential partners' existing programs and provide them with something in return for any volunteer assistance they can give.



For example, the Network's classroom biodiversity discussions help put the environment into context for the secondary school students constructing nest-boxes for our threatened species program; our education modules help students of all ages to understand how the natural environment is organised and what happens when these natural systems are disrupted; and our revegetation projects provide students and community groups with practical on-ground experience, and opportunities for networking and social interaction.

So, what has been the result? Pleasingly, there are signs that community awareness and recognition of the Kara Kara CMN is on the rise. This is manifest primarily through the steadily increasing number of landholders expressing interest in participating in our revegetation and nest-box programs.

Building Network capacity

During the year a significant amount of behind-the-scenes work was undertaken to improve Network governance and address Facilitator succession.

In April, the Network took advantage of an unexpected opportunity for a free 'Governance Health Check' delivered through a Melbourne-based not-for-profit law centre. The prospect of free legal advice doesn't come along very often, so this was an opportunity we grasped with 'both hands'. To our delight, the Kara Kara CMN was deemed to be in good shape from a governance perspective. The Health Check did identify some minor issues; however, these were subsequently addressed by the Committee through a tightening of our policies and procedures, and through a minor amendment to the Network's Constitution.

A significant change to the Network's administration during the year was the retirement, on 31 October, of John Boadle. John had been our Facilitator and the Network's key contact since early 2012 and was instrumental in helping the Kara Kara CMN to establish itself in Victoria's north-central region. On behalf of the Committee and our members, I would like to thank John for his efforts and wish him and his wife Anne a very long and happy retirement.

In the lead up to John's retirement, a sub-committee ably led by Vice-President, Helen Yuille, was charged with finding his replacement. The upshot of this process was that the Committee recently announced the appointment of Deb Saxon-Campbell as the Network's new Facilitator, effective from 1 November 2018.

Strategic Plan delayed

Last year, I foreshadowed a review of the Network's current *Strategic Plan 2013-2018*, which we had hoped to launch at this year's AGM. However, the additional work associated with our governance Health Check and the need to secure a new Facilitator has, of necessity, delayed this review, which will now become the Committee's first priority in the New Year.

The year's challenges

The year has had its challenges. Top of the list was climate change. South-eastern Australia's once reliable rainfall patterns are now a thing of the past. The new climate regime, characterised by rainfall that is intermittent and well below the long-term average, is creating difficulties for our revegetation programs. Determining the right time to plant and the need to provide follow-up support for young seedlings is an issue facing many environment conservation organisations and it's something we all just have to get used to as we learn to adapt our procedures to the new climate conditions through trial and error.

Another challenge has been managing the mismatch between the grant funding cycle and our delivery of planned works. This mismatch is particularly noticeable with grants covering a period of more than one year, such as the Network's current three-year Biodiversity On-Ground Action Grant. The delay between making our application and learning it was successful, and the lead times of six months or more associated with school curricula planning and nursery propagation of seedlings for our revegetation projects means that activities planned for delivery over three years must, in practice, be delivered in two. This cycle mismatch isn't about to change any time soon and is another reason why the Network has put so much work into shoring up its volunteer base for a big year of activities in 2019.

A sincere thank you

Of course, my Report would not be complete without expressing my sincere appreciation to the Committee, our Facilitators and the broader Kara Kara CMN family for your efforts and support during what has been another busy, but successful year. This includes the individuals and community groups who generously donated their time to assist with our programs, and the landholders who provided venues for our seminars and field trips. With your continued support, together we can work to build on this success in the year to come.

In closing, I invite you to continue reading this *2018 Year in Review* for more detail on all of the topics I've touched on above.

With best wishes for a happy and safe holiday season,

Chris Campbell

President

Management and administration 2017/18

Committee:

President: Chris Campbell

Vice-President: Helen Yuille

Treasurer: Russell Steel

Secretary: Brenda Proctor

General Committee member: Jeroen Van Veen (Bush Heritage Australia)

Facilitators: John Boadle and Debra Saxon-Campbell

2018 Scoreboard

Activity type	Corresponding Strategy*
On-ground projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivered the first year (of three) of Biodiversity On-ground Action (BOA) – Community & Volunteer Action Grant activities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nest-box installations and construction (underway) of 80+ nest-boxes to improve habitat for threatened and declining species; Construction of 0.7 km of grazing exclusion fencing and ~11 ha of revegetation works on five private properties. Commenced planning for delivery of Year 2 BOA Grant activities. 	2 1 1,2
Building partnerships/relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established new working partnerships with the Bendigo TAFE, Conservation Volunteers Australia and the Avoca Men's Shed. Maintained and expanded relationships with local landholders, regional schools (primary and secondary) and community organisations. Consulted with regional landholders as part of the Silver Banksia project. Maintained dialogue with Forest Fire Management in relation to regional controlled burns. Worked with Amaryllis Environmental Consulting on environment education activities and annual native orchid surveys on public land. Provided input to the Dja Dja Wurrung Aboriginal Corporation for their <i>Country Plan 2014-2034</i>. 	1,2,10 1,2,10 2,10 7 6 All
Engaging the community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hosted a 'Farms for Wildlife' seminar at Tottington and related field trip to two private properties at Serpentine and Bear's Lagoon. Hosted a 'Gardens for Wildlife' day tour to the Australian Garden at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne. Developed an 'Interpreting the Environment' education module targeting secondary school students. Hosted two days of education-related activities for Donald High School students during the School's 'Green Week'. Delivered a 'Habitat for Wildlife' classroom discussion to students at Navarre Primary School. Delivered biodiversity-related classroom discussions to students at three regional secondary colleges. Sponsored the photographic competition at the St Arnaud Agricultural Show. Distributed/posted regular eNews and Facebook updates. 	2,5 2 2,10 2,6,10 2 2,10 2,10 All
Public advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Made submissions to the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senate Inquiry into Australia's Faunal Extinction Crisis; Northern Grampians Shire Planning Scheme Review; and VEAC's Central West Investigation. 	All All All

Activity type	Corresponding Strategy*
Monitoring and evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed monitoring of past Kara Kara CMN projects. 	10
Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued quarterly woodland bird surveys. 	1,2
Building Network capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participated in governance training session for Incorporated Associations. Undertook a review of Network governance. Reviewed and updated the Network's Constitution, and working policies and procedures. Appointed a new Network Facilitator. 	10 10 10 10

*** Key to strategies (as specified in the Kara Kara CMN Strategic Plan 2013-2018):**

- 1: Maintain and increase landscape connectivity
- 2: Protect, maintain and increase quality habitat
- 3: Manage invasive weeds
- 4: Co-ordinate control of introduced predators
- 5: Manage total grazing pressure
- 6: Protect native orchids
- 7: Influence appropriate fire regimes
- 8: Firewood management
- 9: Reduce impacts from inter-specific competition
- 10: Secure the ongoing viability of the Kara Kara CMN

Images

Page

- (i) The lush three-hectare wetland on Bill and Gwen Twigg's property at Bear's Lagoon, near Serpentine.
- 1 Landcare Award winner, Bill Twigg, explains how he used natural farming methods to nurture soils and care for livestock while creating habitat for wildlife.
- 2 Committee member and volunteer, Jeroen Van Veen, talks 'biodiversity' to Donald High School students.
- 6
 - a) Bendigo TAFE horticulture students assist with revegetation works at Paradise.
 - b) Committee member and volunteer, Brenda Proctor, installs a nest-box near Tottington.
- 7
 - a) Historic Tottington woolshed was a fitting venue for the Network's 'Farms for Wildlife' seminar.
 - b) A 'behind the scenes' tour at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne, with ecologist Terry Coates.
- 8
 - a) Facilitator, Deb Saxon-Campbell, helps students understand how to interpret the environment.
 - b) Ecologist, Julie Radford, shows students how to identify native orchids.
- 10 A remnant population of Silver Banksia near Emu.
- 11 Eastern Yellow Robin; a species commonly seen during the Network's woodland bird surveys.
- 13 'Gardening for wildlife' means incorporating structural elements such as logs, rocks and 'hollows' into garden design, while providing wildlife with access to fresh water and food resources (e.g. nectar and seeds).

Images by D Saxon-Campbell and H Yuille.

Our on-ground projects

Last year, the Kara Kara CMN was successful in attracting funding through a Biodiversity On-ground Action Grant for a three-year program of activities. The program had two key conservation objectives: (i) to improve landscape connectivity; and (ii) expand and enhance habitat for selected threatened and declining species in our region. Target species included the Brush-tailed Phascogale (*Phascogale tapoatafa*), Laughing Kookaburra (*Dacela novaeguineae*), Southern Boobook (*Ninox novaeseelandiae*), Blakely's Red Gum (*Eucalyptus blakelyi*), Buloke (*Allocasuarina luehmannii*), Silver Banksia (*Banksia marginata*) and Deane's Wattle (*Acacia deanei* ssp. *paucijuga*). Our third objective was to engage with, and educate, the community about our region's biodiversity.



June 2018 marked the end of the first year of this program, which saw the Network revegetate almost 11 hectares of land across five private properties to the east and west of the St Arnaud Range. On properties to the west, the focus of works was on understorey plantings within existing bio-links, while efforts in the east focussed on creating new, or extending existing, landscape connections. The works also included the provision of materials for some exclusion fencing to be erected by landholders.



The Network also installed a small number of Phascogale boxes on private properties at Moonambel and Tottington as part of our nest-box program. This fell short of the installations we had hoped to achieve by this stage of the project. School curricula are determined well in advance, so gearing up for the bulk of nest-box constructions has taken us longer than anticipated. Nonetheless, construction is currently underway and we anticipate taking delivery of about 80 nest-boxes prior to the end of the 2018 school year for installation over the summer months.

We could not have done this work without assistance from a variety of community groups. Students and teachers from the Pyrenees Cluster of Primary Schools and Bendigo TAFE gave generously of their time to help with understorey plantings, while students from regional colleges at St Arnaud, Charlton and Donald are currently assisting with the construction of nest-boxes for our target fauna.

Building partnerships/relationships

As alluded to in the President's Report, the Kara Kara CMN's growing network of community partnerships has been pivotal to the successful delivery of our programs in 2018, with new partners including Bendigo TAFE, Conservation Volunteers Australia and the Avoca Men's Shed. Regional colleges have also figured highly in Network activities during the year and discussions are underway with School Principals with a view to expanding their involvement in 2019.

The increasing awareness of the Kara Kara CMN arising from our community engagement activities and the positive word-of-mouth these activities have generated has seen the number of landholders keen to participate in Network projects continue to grow. Participation can take a number of forms; from having one or more nest-boxes installed on their properties, to granting the Network property

access to monitor Silver Banksia populations or making land available for the creation of bio-links and shelter belts.

Other activities undertaken by the Network included our continuing support of the ongoing native orchid recovery work by Amaryllis Environmental Consulting, providing input to the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation in relation to their *Country Plan 2014-2034*, and maintaining dialogue with the Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning's Forest Fire Management Division about controlled burns planned for our region.

Engaging the community

'Habitat seminar series' concludes

In our *2017 Year in Review*, we reported on the series of seminars and field trips being hosted by the Network with a view of educating the local community about native wildlife habitat, and specifically, what people can do to create a wildlife-friendly environment where they live. The first of these seminars, held in October 2017, focussed on creating habitat in the home garden.

These community events continued into 2018, when the focus shifted from home gardens to improving wildlife habitat on farms and other rural properties.

Our second and final seminar, *'Farms for Wildlife'*, was held at the historic Tottington woolshed in mid-March; a character-filled heritage venue that attracted a good turnout of farmers and other landholders despite atrocious weather conditions. A mix of science and practical experience, the program highlighted the benefits of habitat creation/improvement for both wildlife and humans. For farmers, revegetation works provide shelter for stock and improve yields and property values, while also being beneficial to their personal wellbeing and mental health.



As valuable as hearing about the latest science and people's practical experiences can be, there's nothing quite like seeing habitat creation projects for oneself. That's why our seminars were supported by two field trips.



In April, we journeyed to Serpentine and Bear's Lagoon in northern Victoria to visit properties owned by Landcare Award winners, Bill and Gwen Twigg. Participants heard first-hand how Bill and Gwen had used natural farming methods to nurture soils and feed and shelter their livestock while creating habitat for wildlife, including a lush three-hectare wetland.

Our second field trip, in June, saw a busload of participants tour the Australian Garden at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Cranbourne to see how wildlife habitat could be successfully created in the home garden using native plants combined with structural elements, such as rocks and logs.

The tour concluded with a 'behind the scenes' look at how the RBGC's in-house ecologist works to monitor and protect a local population of Southern Brown Bandicoot.

Schools' program

A key element of our community engagement activities in 2018 has been our schools program, which aims to nurture future generations of conservationists. Largely informal and not supported by a particular funding stream, this program involves the development of environment-related education resources for delivery to students at regional schools, both in the classroom and in an outdoor setting.

Education module trialled during 'Green Week'

In mid-September the Network again played host to a group of about 20 Year 9 students from Donald High School for several days of activities as part of the School's 'Green Week'. An annual event, this year's program gave us the perfect opportunity to trial our new 'Interpreting the Environment' education module, which was developed by the Kara Kara CMN to help students of all ages better understand the natural environment and how it's organised. It also complements our 'Monitoring' module developed in 2017 to teach students about the role of monitoring in environmental science.



Growing up in rural Australia, it can be easy to take our native woodlands for granted; to see them as just patches of vegetation and 'scrub', when in reality, they are complex ecosystems full of intricate and fascinating species interactions. The education modules were developed to help students learn about these interactions first-hand and in a fun way, outside of the classroom.

Held in the Kara Kara National Park and nearby Stuart Mill and Dalynong Nature Conservation Reserves, the two days of activities saw students work in teams and compete for points as they

identified the biological, physical and chemical features within the landscape. They explored food webs, examined species' relationships and undertook habitat assessment exercises using some basic scientific monitoring techniques. Judging from teacher and student feedback, the program was a great success.

Assisting native orchid ecologist Julie Radford to undertake a heathland survey to seek out some of the region's rare and endangered spider orchids was a particular highlight.



Biodiversity talks

Delivered by Kara Kara CMN Facilitators and volunteers, these informal talks take place during class time and are designed to help students – both primary and secondary – better understand the natural environment. They also provide context for the students involved in constructing boxes for our threatened species nest-box program. Students learn about wildlife habitats, the habitat needs of various species, and the role nest-boxes play in supplementing wildlife habitat in areas where natural tree hollows are in short supply.

Other community engagement activities

October saw the Network continue its sponsorship of the photographic competition at the St Arnaud Agricultural Show. Our sponsorship covered two sections – *Australian Native Wildlife* and *Australian Native Wildflowers* – with a senior and junior category in each section. A condition to entry was that images had to be taken within 60 kilometres of St Arnaud. While photos were of a high standard, the number of entries was considerably down on last year, possibly due to the unusually dry spring and lack of subject matter.

The Kara Kara CMN's regular eNews and Facebook updates continue to be appreciated by our growing list of 'friends'. Our Facebook page, in particular, is proving to be a useful tool for posting quick and succinct updates about Network activities.

Public advocacy

The Kara Kara CMN is focussed on protecting our region's biodiversity through a variety of on-ground projects; however, in the complex and often bureaucratic regulatory environment in which we operate, public advocacy can be just as important in helping to improve the lot of our native flora and fauna. Recognising this, the Network made a number of submissions to public Inquiries during the year.

Review of Northern Grampians Planning Scheme

After the implementation of a number of planning reforms by the Victorian government, early in 2018 the Northern Grampians Shire announced a review into its own Planning Scheme, ostensibly to simplify the planning permit process for existing and potential residents.

The Kara Kara CMN made a submission to Council in an effort to have the region's environmental assets recognised in the Shire's amended Planning Scheme. Our comments focussed specifically on the environmental values of the region and the need to protect significant flora and fauna from the impacts of development.

*...public advocacy can be just as important
as on-ground works in helping to improve the lot
of our native flora and fauna...*

Inquiry into Australia's Faunal Extinction Crisis

In June of this year, the Australian Senate instituted a Federal Inquiry into Australia's faunal extinction crisis. The Inquiry's Terms of Reference were broad. Key themes included investigating the declines and conservation status of Australia's threatened faunal species; the wider ecological impact of faunal extinctions; the adequacy of Federal laws [such as the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity (EPBC) Act 1999]; and the adequacy of existing funding streams, monitoring practices and assessment processes.

This is a huge topic that cannot hope to be fully and effectively investigated within the six-month timeframe allotted for the Inquiry; nonetheless, it was an investigation worthy of our input.

The Kara Kara CMN's submission focussed on providing a regional perspective around specific aspects of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference. These included identifying the drivers of species decline in our region; the significant gaps in, and inconsistencies between, the threatened species lists attached to both Federal and Victorian legislation; and the progressive erosion of management resources (funding and staffing) within the National Reserve System.

VEAC's Central West Investigation

Last year, the State Government requested the Victorian Environment Assessment Council (VEAC) to carry out an investigation into public land in the Wombat, Wellsford, Mount Cole and Pyrenees Range Forests. The aim? To identify the current land uses in these forests and their 'values' from a biodiversity, cultural, social and economic perspective. In August 2018, VEAC released draft recommendations for 'the balanced use and appropriate management arrangements to conserve and enhance natural cultural values' and invited submissions from interested parties.

The public land covered in VEAC's investigation is outside of the Kara Kara CMN's primary area of operation; however, we made a submission on the basis that the future management and land uses of forests within the Pyrenees Range is of considerable importance to the Network's activities at a landscape scale. Specifically, VEAC's proposal to create a Pyrenees National Park and Pyrenees Regional Park has the potential to create an environmentally-significant connection through to the Kara Kara National Park via existing bio-links on private land. This connection is important to the ability of species to disperse through the landscape as they struggle to adapt to the changing climate.

Monitoring and evaluation

Late in 2017 the Network completed a project funded by the Norman Wettenhall Foundation which saw us revisit and evaluate over 20 of the Network's past projects; from erosion and weed control programs to revegetation works. A Report outlining the project's findings and recommendations was presented to the Committee early in 2018. There were successes and some failures, but that was no surprise. What was surprising, and of considerable concern to the Committee, was the greater-than-anticipated detrimental impact that the drying climate was having on our past revegetation projects.

Under climate change, rainfall was becoming increasingly unreliable and when it did occur, falls were unsustained and insufficient. Long dry spells were becoming the norm. The effect on our projects was that small seedlings, both tube-stock or young plants that had germinated after being direct seeded, soon withered and died. If this new climate regime was the 'new norm', then young plants would require additional support in they were to have any chance of surviving.

The Committee immediately set about instituting some changes to the Network's procedures. Primary among these was that works previously scheduled for spring would, in future, be brought forward to autumn to give young plants the benefit of any winter rainfall and a better chance of becoming established before the heat of summer. Additional support, such as follow-up watering and mulching, were also considered.

It is too early to tell whether these procedural changes improved the success rate of our 2018 plantings. What we do know, however, is that the unusually dry winter of 2018 has once again reduced the survival potential of many young seedlings. From a procedural perspective, managing this issue is clearly a work in progress.

Research

Silver Banksia genetics

In last year's *Year in Review*, we referred to our partnerships with several other conservation groups in a regional Silver Banksia project to help save this iconic species. We outlined the work we had done to identify remnant Silver Banksia populations in our region and take leaf samples for genetic testing by Deakin University.



The test results, released earlier this year, yielded no real surprises. The main findings were:

- All of the Silver Banksia populations in central Victoria are genetically isolated from one another, indicating that no cross-pollination is occurring;
- All populations sampled were still quite healthy genetically, with no evidence of inbreeding. However, the isolation of these populations makes them increasingly vulnerable to inbreeding in the future;
- Managed intervention is needed, and quickly, to prevent inbreeding from occurring and stop these populations, many of which are ageing, from disappearing; and
- Restoration efforts should focus on bolstering the genetic variability of local populations by introducing plants from other regional populations to facilitate cross-pollination and gene flow.

These results confirmed what we had suspected. Action must be taken now if the Silver Banksia is to be saved.

Woodland bird surveys

The forests around St Arnaud are widely recognised among ecologists as being rich in biodiversity. Contributing to the long-term survival of the diverse array species that call these woodland ecosystems home is fundamental to the Kara Kara CMN's vision and conservation objectives, and monitoring the health of our region's woodland bird assemblages is an ongoing priority. We do this by carrying out quarterly bird surveys at woodland sites on both public and private land.

Of course, data is effectively useless unless it is put to use. So, at the completion of each survey round, the data we collect is immediately logged into BirdLife Australia's Birdata database. It is also entered into the Victorian Government's Biodiversity Atlas, which helps guide State-government decision making in relation to public land.



Building Network capacity

One of the crucial roles of any Committee is to ensure the ongoing viability of their organisation, financially, legally and physically. In this context, quite a bit of work was undertaken by the Kara Kara CMN Committee during the year to maintain and build Network capacity.

Improving Network governance

In April, Network representatives travelled to Euroa to participate in training relating to the governance of incorporated associations. Hosted jointly by the North Central and Goulburn-Broken CMA's and delivered by Melbourne-based not-for-profit law centre, JusticeConnect, the session addressed topics that, while rather dry, were pertinent to effective Network governance. Topics covered included the legal status of our organisation; the legal role and primary duties of Committee members; other laws the Committee needs to be aware of; and how to protect the Network and individual Committee members from potential liabilities.

Like many community-based organisations, the Kara Kara CMN is managed by a small group of individuals who often have no choice but to perform multiple roles if the organisation is to achieve its objectives. Some of these individuals also have familial and/or social connections outside of their organisational roles. In this context, the governance training was also useful in helping the Committee to understand how to correctly and appropriately manage the conflicts of interest that inevitably arise as a result of these multiple roles and relationships.

The timing of this training was also advantageous in that it coincided with JusticeConnect's Governance Health Check Project which offered incorporated associations the opportunity to have

their governance reviewed, free of charge, by a lawyer trained in this specialised field. At the end of the process which involved an online survey and several teleconferences, the Network was presented with a list of potential issues and recommendations. The most pressing of these was a rule amendment in relation to the Network's Public Fund; an issue that is being addressed by Special Resolution at our 2018 Annual General Meeting. Other recommendations were intended to protect the Network from potential liabilities and were easily addressed through the development and adoption of new internal policies and procedures. Apart from these minor issues, the governance of the Kara Kara CMN was deemed to be in good health.

*...governance of the Kara Kara CMN was
deemed to be in good health...*

Facilitator succession

Another important aspect to maintaining and improving organisational capacity is succession planning. This issue was top of mind for the Committee this year after John Boadle's indication, in late 2017, that he wished to scale down his day-to-day Network responsibilities with a view to retiring towards the end of 2018.

The Committee's first response was to appoint Debra Saxon-Campbell as Joint Facilitator from 1 January 2018. Deb had been working for the Network in a casual capacity on communications and community engagement activities since 2013. Her sharing of the Facilitator role jointly with John would, in the short-term, ease some of his responsibilities and facilitate knowledge sharing. It would also give the Committee time to consider how best to deal with the appointment of a new incumbent whilst ensuring that any internal conflicts of interest were appropriately managed in the process.

With John's retirement due at the end of October, a subcommittee was appointed to manage the appointment process led by Vice-President, Helen Yuille. This subcommittee comprised a mix of members representing the interests of small and broad-acre landholders together with member agencies, as well as one person who was independent of the Kara Kara CMN. The position was advertised at the end of August 2018. Key requirements for the role were that the person must be local and have demonstrated experience in natural resource management and community engagement, and in developing strategic partnerships.

With Deb Saxon-Campbell being the only applicant, the Committee subsequently appointed her to the Facilitator role on a contract basis with effect from 1 November 2018. Deb brings to the role skills and experience gained from a long career in marketing communications combined with over three decades as a volunteer for a range of conservation and environment organisations. She also has tertiary qualifications in Business and Applied Science (Environmental Management and Ornithology).

Reviewing our Strategic Plan

Summer and the holiday season is, of necessity, a quiet time for the Kara Kara CMN, particularly for our on-ground programs. However, this seasonal lull also provides a perfect opportunity for the Network to focus on reviewing its Strategic Plan – the formative document that will help shape the Kara Kara CMN's activities for the next five years.

One of our new Facilitator's first priorities will be to get this process underway by developing a strategic draft with associated recommendations for presentation to, and discussion by, the Committee in the New Year. This draft document will be developed with reference to the latest-available science, particularly with regard to potential climate change impacts on regional biodiversity, and be in sync with the NRM policies and strategies of government and other conservation organisations who are active in our region.

We look forward to launching our new Plan in 2019.



To find out more

If you'd like to know more about the Kara Kara CMN's projects and programs:

- **Visit** our website at **www.karakaracmn.org.au**;
- **Like us** on Facebook @KaraKaraCMN;
- **Email us** at **karakaracmn@gmail.com**; or
- **Call** our Facilitator on **0419 550 226**.

You can also join our mailing list for regular updates on our activities throughout the year.