

## **2016-2017 GVEG President's Report**

GVEG's 2016-17 activities can be described as continued partnership building, protective environmental activism, political advocacy and the acknowledgement of past members and their efforts.

Partnerships include Greater Shepparton City Council, (GSCC) Goulburn Broken CMA (GBCMA), Rushworth Action Group (RAGE) , Environment Justice Australia (EJA) and the Goulburn Murray Landcare Network (GMLN).

GVEG has supported Rage in its efforts to influence Vicroads roadside native vegetation policy and DELWP's actions and policies managing Whroo State Forest tracks.

GVEG has new membership appointments on the GSCC Calder Woodburn Memorial Advisory Committee (Ian Christoe), the GBCMA's Broken River Committee (Louise Costa-Pelle), GBCMA's Drainage Committee (Terry Court) VicRoads Roadside Environmental Committee (Louise Costa-Pelle) and various State Government water reviews.

Key meetings during the year include Lilly D'Ambrosio (Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change.), Damian Drum (Member for Murray) Peter Harriot (CEO GSCC), Chris Norman (CEO GBCMA), Sam Birrell COE Committee for Greater Shepparton and Rebecca Coates SAM project.

Advocacy has continued policy surrounding the feral horse issues in the Barmah National Park which has seen Sharon Terry sitting on a DEWLP Roundtable and meeting the Minister, Lilly D'Ambrosio in Shepparton with myself. I can report no progress on the removal of these horses to date with GVEG still awaiting a decision by the Minister. This is frustrating as wetlands in the Park are being seriously damaged and the value, and effectiveness of environmental flows being diminished.

The implementation of the Murray Darling Basin Plan has met with resistance from many irrigation and industry groups across the basin and our area has been no exception. GVEG has continued to support the Basin Plan with most of our efforts channelled through our association with the Lifeblood Alliance, a grouping of environmental and indigenous organisations from across the Basin. The most contentious issues now remain the final volume of water retained for the environment and how this water is to be delivered. The efficient and most effective delivery of these environmental flows rely on the removal of "constraints" which includes the inundation of low lying private property which is currently being held up by landholders affected. GVEG believe these actions to be unreasonable and continues to press the Victorian government to resolve this impasse.

Objections lodged by GVEG to applications to clear native vegetation in GSCC planning processes have met with mixed success. Improved outcomes were secured in McKenzie Rd Ardmona and Riverwood Park Kialla but efforts to save some 30 trees on a Boundary Rd Congupna property failed. Current Victorian Government vegetation removal regulations offer little protection.

Many of these policies have connections to the Flora & Fauna Guarantee Act which GVEG partnered a forum with EJA to promote submissions to a review being undertaken by

Government.

GVEG continues to push the CFA and GBCMA to develop post bush fire best practice guidelines that protects vegetation and avoid the opportunistically removal that has been seen in many past experiences.

GVEG partnered GSCC Activities in the Park to stage the Ramble the Reedy event. This event was also supported by the GBCMA and involved a walk expertly led by Steve Wilson around the Reedy Swamp and followed by a BBQ.

The Shepparton By-Pass northern Goulburn River crossing has received initial design funding. This crossing has been supported by GVEG and is deemed essential however GVEG continues to have real concerns regarding the Southern crossing which has severe impacts on the Goulburn floodplain in the Toolamba/ Arcadia area.

GVEG has with support from GSCC arts grant commissioned local author Pat Patt to produce a history booklet on the group's history. This is an important project to both record our groups past and also recognise those who over past years contributed so much to the group and our natural environment. A strong supportive committee comprising Louise Costa-Pelle, Ester Costa and Mel Stagg have driven this project which is due to be completed with a launch of the booklet later this year.

I would like to thank all committee members and those other members who have assisted GVEG in all the above areas of action throughout the year. GVEG is fortunate to have such a dedicated and enthusiastic leadership group which I believe have achieved positive outcomes for our regions in our many and varied areas of influence.

John Pettigrew, President.