

CHAPTER 18

CELEBRATING A CENTENARY

'We have developed a full Centenary year program to mark this special year in the life of our Society.'
National President Patrick Medway, 2008

The Wild Life Preservation Society of Australia was established in 1909 as the first wildlife conservation body in Australia, not the first in the world as this distinction belongs to the Sierra Club of the United States of America which was established in 1892. Many years of lobbying and action on behalf of wildlife were to follow from that beginning in 1909 before other conservation bodies like the Australian Conservation Foundation were established in Australia. It was therefore fitting that appropriate celebrations should take place in 2009.

The Society of the 2000s endeavoured to involve every member in the 2009 Centenary celebrations. The Centenary Committee, chaired by member Noel Cislowski, organised civic receptions with the Lord Mayors of Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Hobart and Darwin to mark the Centenary. The Minister for the Environment in South Australia also agreed to host a reception in Adelaide. Invitations were distributed to financial members and representatives of similar conservation groups in each state to attend these receptions.

A special Centenary Membership Certificate was made available for all members on application to the National Office in Sydney. Dr. Joan Webb, who wrote the earlier history of the Society – *Conserving Australia's Wildlife* - was commissioned to review and write up the full 100 year's history of the wildlife conservation work of the Society in time for the celebrations in 2009.

CENTENARY PROGRAM

Noel Cislowski, Chair of the Centenary Committee, wrote the following words on the Centenary program:

'Looking ahead and making plans and predictions can be fraught with difficulties. But it often pays to be bold. One of the issues for the future of WPSA is its national identity. This was one of the factors that influenced the planning of the centenary year - how to establish and maintain a 'national' identity. We operate for national benefit in so many ways and yet the awareness throughout Australia is far from uniform. Our regional advisory services are impressive with outstanding personnel but more needs to be done. This is a future challenge. One of the heartening Centenary activities is the series of civic receptions held in each state and territory in the company of like-minded organisations and our members to celebrate our 100 years.'

The 100th Annual General Meeting with the Deputy Premier and Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Carmel Tebbutt MP, as guest speaker; the Centenary luncheon in the presence of Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC, Governor of New South Wales, who unveiled a Centenary

plaque to mark the occasion; and a special launch of the book covering our 100 years of action, prepared by Dr. Joan Webb, will be highlights of this special year, along with all of our on-going activities and the special issues of *Australian Wildlife*.

While ‘the future is with the young’ is a rather hackneyed statement, we all know the importance of education. It is with this in mind that we must continue our emphasis on a range of educational strategies. These need to be directed at all levels and at all ages in our communities.

The Board’s decision to expand and extend the highly successful University Wildlife Research Grants Scheme is seen as one of the powerful forces in spreading the benefits of research into the community.’

The Centenary Committee made a submission to Qantas to donate two flights to each of the capital cities featured in the Centenary celebrations. Qantas very generously agreed, much to the delight of the WPSA Council.

DIARY OF EVENTS

Date	Function	Attendees
11 February	Centenary Sydney Mayoral Reception - The Right Hon. The Lord Mayor of Sydney, Clover Moore MP	Directors and members
Wednesday 25 February	Centenary AGM and morning tea, Sydney	Members. Deputy Premier and Minister for the Environment, Carmel Tebbutt MP Guest of Honour
Sunday 22 March	Centenary Ice Breaker Reception at ARAZPA conference, Gold Coast, Queensland	Patrick and Suzanne Medway, conference delegates and members
Friday 22 May	Centenary Luncheon, Sydney, and unveiling of a Centenary plaque	Members and guests. Professor Marie Bashir AC, Governor of NSW Guest of Honour
Monday, 25 May	Centenary Melbourne Mayoral Reception – The Right Hon. The Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Robert Doyle	Patrick Medway, David Murray and members
Friday, 12 June	Centenary Darwin Mayoral Reception – The Right Hon. The Lord Mayor of Darwin, Graeme Sawyer	Noel Cislowski, Ken Metcalfe and members
Wednesday,	Centenary Brisbane Mayoral Reception - Councillor Peter Matic represented the Lord Mayor	Clive Williams, Noel Cislowski and members
Thursday 3	Centenary Ministerial Reception	Patrick and Suzanne Medway and

September	Adelaide - The Hon Jay Weatherill MP, Minister for Environment and Conservation	members
November	Hobart Lord Mayor's reception	Clive Williams, David Murray and members

MAYORAL MORNING TEA IN SYDNEY

The first Centenary function for 2009 was held on 11 February at the Reception Room, Town Hall House, Sydney, when a number of members and visitors responded to an invitation from the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Clover Moore MP. Unfortunately Ms Moore was unable to be present on the day, but proceedings were conducted by Councillor John McInerney, one of Clover Moore's Independent councillors. Katherine Christian, Protocol Project Coordinator in the Office of the Lord Mayor first welcomed everyone and introduced Councillor McInerney. An excellent video presentation prepared by Suzanne Medway was on view in the Reception Room.

Councillor McInerney, in his remarks, said that we must hope that the next one hundred years will see a reversal of the losses we have been observing in recent years. President Patrick Medway, in response, reminded everyone of the early days of the Society when members fought battles over the use of bird plumage for headwear, and tried to save the koala from near extinction. A Centenary membership for Clover Moore was presented to Councillor McInerney, who in turn handed over a Certificate of Achievement to the Society from Clover Moore. Refreshments were offered at the close of the proceedings and those attending mingled to celebrate and, in many cases, renew old friendships.

THE 100TH AGM

The 100th Annual General Meeting of the Society was held on Wednesday, 25 February 2009 in the Adam Room of the NSW Masonic Club, 169 Castlereagh Street, Sydney. Noel Cislowski, as chair of the Centenary Committee, opened the meeting and invited President Patrick Medway to conduct proceedings. The invited guest speaker was Deputy Premier and Minister for Climate Change and the Environment, Carmel Tebbutt MP.

National President Patrick Medway, in introducing the Minister, said that today we are looking back and looking forward. Ms. Tebbutt, in her presentation, referred to the Society's long history, a history to be proud of, yet challenges still lie ahead. 'Your passion', she said, 'drives Governments to do bigger and better things and the Society has played a role in influencing Governments in the past.' The Minister referred to the need for good private land management as part of good conservation management; careful assessment and review is now on the agenda for marine parks. Climate change is another major challenge because of its impact on biodiversity. 'We need your passion', she concluded, 'to conserve wildlife in changing times.'

Patrick Medway invited the Minister to unveil a plaque and she was presented with a Centenary membership. She was also invited to present Suzanne Medway with a Life Membership Certificate. As the Minister left the meeting, the President addressed himself to the AGM agenda.

The Annual Report for 2008 was briefly outlined by President Medway. An important change for the Society was referred to, the move to make the Society an Australian Public Company by Limited by Guarantee, a move which necessitated changes to the Constitution. Mr. Tony Cornell then presented the Treasurer's report for 2008.

Election of Officers of the Society appointed Patrick Medway as National President/Chairman, Dr. Clive Williams and Dr. David Murray as Vice Presidents, Tony Cornell as Treasurer, and Suzanne Medway as Executive Director/Secretary.

Five Directors were elected for the next twelve months in accordance with the Constitution: Noel Cislowski, Peter Hardiman, Dr. Richard Mason, Judith May and Vanessa Wilson.

Noel Cislowski, Chair of the Centenary Committee, reported on arrangements that had been made for receptions in other capital cities through the year, events which would be attended by the Lord Mayor and/or an Environment Minister. Two Officers or Directors of the Society would attend each reception, courtesy of the sponsor Qantas, who would provide air fares.

The meeting closed with the cutting of the Centenary cake, and refreshments for those present.

CONGRATULATIONS

In *Australian Wildlife*, January 2009, National President Patrick Medway expressed congratulations which are no doubt felt by many people who have been associated with the Society at some time in its history:

‘I sincerely congratulate all members of the Society across Australia, who have supported the Society in our conservation work, on reaching our Centenary in 2009. It is a remarkable milestone for an all volunteer organisation such as ours. Formed in May 1909 by a small band of dedicated and enthusiastic nature lovers, the Society has evolved into a national conservation body with a sound financial foundation and a wide membership base right across Australia - with some international members. The Society remains totally dedicated to the preservation of our native wildlife in all its forms - as we were in 1909 and I am sure we will always be so committed to such a worthy cause.’