

ARMIDALE TREE GROUP NEWSLETTER
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Image: Narelle Clarke

Is there a better way to say Happy Birthday than with cake?

FROM THE EDITOR

This year we celebrated the collective efforts and achievements of 40 years. This edition is dedicated to our members in gratitude for your continuing support. We are a community-based organisation and our members are the heart and soul of the Tree Group. Thank you for sharing the journey.

It has been satisfying to look back over the achievements of another decade and recognise the invaluable contributions from members, friends and the community. We will build on those achievements as we move into our fifth decade with our focus clearly on the future, as the feature article on **Koala Habitat Revegetation** by Alicia Cooper and the article by dedicated volunteers Ken and Leontine Barnett demonstrate.

David Curtis reflection on the last 40 years – Image by Terry Cooke



IN THIS EDITION

- **From the Committee** – An overview of 2023 from the President - Dave Steller
- **Celebrating 40 Years** - The arts and the environment came together to help ATG celebrate another successful decade.
- **Feature Article - Koala Habitat Revegetation** – Alicia Cooper
- **A welcome sighting down the lane** – Ken and Leontine Barnett – a recount of a rewarding wildlife encounter.

*Committee Members - Lorna Dickson and Barton Wickstead
Appreciating the many excellent art works donated for the silent auction –
image Terry Cooke*



FROM THE COMMITTEE

2022/23 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Armidale Tree Group celebrated our 40th Anniversary this year and we fittingly celebrated the event with a great dinner in November with nearly 100 past and present members and guests. Being a major landmark for ATG we honoured the contribution of many past and present members over the past 10 years but I do need to thank everyone for their massive contribution.

We finally farewelled Alicia Cooper in the role of general manager, however, she continues to ably support us as a part-time consultant. This has meant that we were successful with a Round 2 Koala Community Grant that when coupled with our round 1 grant will see 22,000 trees established for koala habitat in the general Boorolong area. We have succeeded in obtaining a grant to erect our new tunnel house that will allow us to double our propagation output.

We are still in a rebuilding stage with increased demand for our products and services. Staff turnover, especially in our key positions has created a number of challenges but after a difficult six months we are starting to stabilise an energetic and capable team. This has been coupled with some great fund-raising initiatives by the Committee with the 40,000 Club that has raised \$30,000 towards the nursery expansion and our other 40th Anniversary fundraiser, Building a Bridge in the Woodland, launched at the Anniversary Dinner.

We welcome Kim Kneebone as Nursery Coordinator, who with Ben, Sam and our band of willing workers and volunteers is propagating like mad to meet our ever-growing demand. Things were very tight coming into spring this year with a lot of stock on order but due to dry conditions and some orders being delayed to Autumn 2024 we are coping OK. The recent rains may change that situation and there is still strong interest in our services. To our volunteers, especially our Committee of Management who have kept a close eye on our operations and strategic direction in providing skills and guidance to assist our staff and the community in providing a better environment on the tablelands.

Special thanks to Chris, Dave, John, Kate, Peter and Sue for their technical, botanical, ecological and governance skills in assisting with grant application opportunities and advice to our customers and community generally. Thanks to Narelle for taking minutes and keeping our recording of important events up to date and Kerry as our education and Public Officer. Both Narelle and Kerry have put together some great newsletters this year and with Paul MacFarland and long-term member Jeremy Smith have put together a great program of events for our 40th anniversary especially the dinner.

Our New nursery co-ordinator - Kim Kneebone



Thanks to our new members Lorna Dickerson and Barton Wicksteed for their valuable contributions. A very special thanks to Garry Slocombe, who has continued his great work as Honorary Treasurer. Garry has taken on other office roles that see him regularly working behind the scenes with day-to-day office administration. Thanks must also go to Carla for her efforts in keeping the books and payroll up to date. Not to forget Greg Clarke who again has taken on the role to audit our financials it is very much appreciated.

After many years on the Committee we are saying farewell to both Garry Slocombe and John Lemon from the Committee but they will continue as active and helpful volunteer members and we hope to utilise their many skills. I am confident that there will be new members putting up their hand to help out and join the Committee.

Thanks to members for their continued support of our business and spreading the word. Our membership is increasing which speaks volumes for the value people see in our work. Thank you one and all and may you have a happy Christmas and Prosperous New Year.

David Steller

President - November 2023



Outgoing Treasurer Garry Slocombe with Chris Nadolny – Treasurer from 2024

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS!

The Birthday Dinner

The evening commenced with Welcome to Anaiwan Country by Steve Widders. 88 members, staff, supporters and friends joined the birthday celebration dinner on the 13th October 2023 followed by dancing to the music from the band **Trelos Lantana**. Many of the band members are also foundational members and enduring supporters of ATG. The synergy between the arts and environment was a theme of the evening as it has been from the beginning for the ATG.

The silent auction of environmentally themed artworks generously donated by local artists and organised by Shirley Cooke from the Armidale Art Gallery contributed to the ambience of the evening and, thanks to the generosity of the guests, was also a successful fundraiser with sales over \$3000.



Image Armidale Express 13/10/2023

From left, Patsy Asch, Liz Ellis, Kel Hughes, Maria Eveleigh, Chris Everleigh, Callum Clayton-Dixon, Andrew Fuller, Steve Widders and Bar Finch



Image Terry Cooke



Images - Terry Cooke



THE AWARDS

Recognising significant contributions to Armidale Tree Group was an important part of the celebrations.

Rob Davidson award – Recipients Chris and Maria Everleigh

Rob Davidson had a vision that inspired the Armidale Tree Group to form in 1983. He provided an intellectual framework for the group, emphasising the restoration of natural control agents and encouraging natural regeneration. The Rob Davidson Award recognises a person/people who see rural landscape as diverse ecosystems full of ecological interactions to encourage what we might now call ecologically regenerative land management for many benefits including wildlife but also for economic productivity.

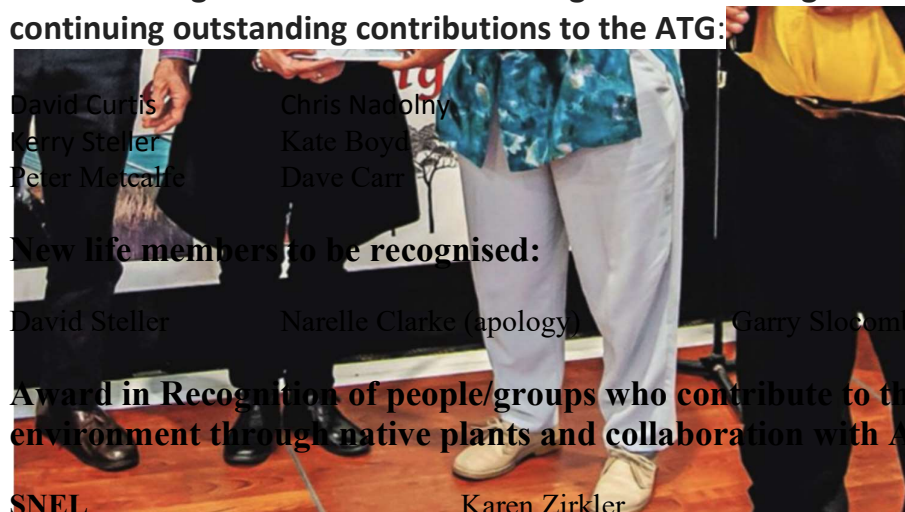
Kath Wray Award – Recipients Ken and Leontine Barnett (Ken and Leontine were not able to attend the dinner)



Kath Wray OAM formed the Citizens Wildlife Corridors (CWC) network in 1991, connecting hundreds of landholders through the Northwest region with extensive maps, empowering people to act together, not in isolation, in environmental conservation and restoration.

The Kath Wray award recognizes a citizen or citizens who has demonstrated outstanding commitment to conserving wildlife habitats on their private land in the New England region, or to promoting conservation and connection of habitat patches and corridors to enable all types of wildlife to survive throughout the region.

The following Life Members were recognised on the night for their continuing outstanding contributions to the ATG:



David Curtis
 Harry Steller
 Peter Metcalfe
 Chris Napolny
 Kate Boyd
 Dave Carr

New life members to be recognised:

David Steller Narelle Clarke (apology) Garry Slocombe

Award in Recognition of people/groups who contribute to the environment through native plants and collaboration with ATG

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| SNEL | Karen Zirkler |
| Armidale Urban Rivercare | Angus Adair |
| Lands Dept | Rod O'Brien |
| Sustainable Living Armidale | Helen Webb |
| Australian Plants Society | John Nevin |
| Armidale Regional Council | Susan McMichael |
| Starfish enterprises | Adam Blakester |
| University of New England | Trevor Brown |
| Ecoarts Australis | David Curtis |
| Backtrack | Lynda Lynch |
| Northern Tablelands Wildlife Carers | Garry Slocombe |
| Armidale Central Rotary Club | Greta Williamson |

The Launch of “Bridging The Woodland”

In 2023 during some difficult times the committee turned its attention to fundraising and, as ever, the community responded generously as noted in the President’s report. \$30,000 has been donated towards the necessary expansion of the nursery. Thank you again to those who donated to the **40,000 Club Appeal**. In our determination to keep looking to the future we ventured (with some trepidation and no experience) into the world of on-line crowdfunding.

It must be acknowledged that this project would never have been realised without the expertise and generous donation of time and effort by **Iain Mackay** which resulted in the wonderful video he produced for our “Chuffed” fundraising page. **Thank you Iain!** Thank you also to **Callum Clayton-Dixon** and the Newara Aboriginal Corporation for inspiring us to ‘have a go’ by sharing their “Chuffed” experience. Thank you also to **Terry Cooke** for providing these wonderful images of the Michael O’Keeffe Woodland.





Celebrations continued with planting tours, more cake, music and a big Koala at the Black Gully Festival

Liberty Plains



Before - 2011



After - 2023



ATG tour of plantings

Selwyn's Wood



Before - 2017



After - 2023



Thank you to Paul McFarland and Jeremy Smith
for opening their farms to us to tour their
extensive plantings over many years.



Image: Garry Slocombe. Greg Auert (one of the artist involved) and a young helper from the Ezidi community after finishing installing the Big Koala at the Armidale Tree Group. The koala also featured at the Black Gully Festival.

KOALA HABITAT REVEGETATION PROJECT

Alicia Cooper

Our project will revegetate 40 hectares of koala habitat in the Armidale region; an Area of Regional Koala Significance (ARKS) as identified by the NSW Government in their Koala Strategy. The Strategy also dubbed Armidale as a koala stronghold, which should be “the focus of intensive intervention and investment” (NSW Koala Strategy). Armidale Tree Group (ATG) will work with the not-for-profit organisation Kindly Animal Sanctuary (the Sanctuary) to fence and plant 40 acres of land adjacent to existing key koala habitat, increasing both available habitat and improving corridor linkages in the immediate area for existing koala populations.

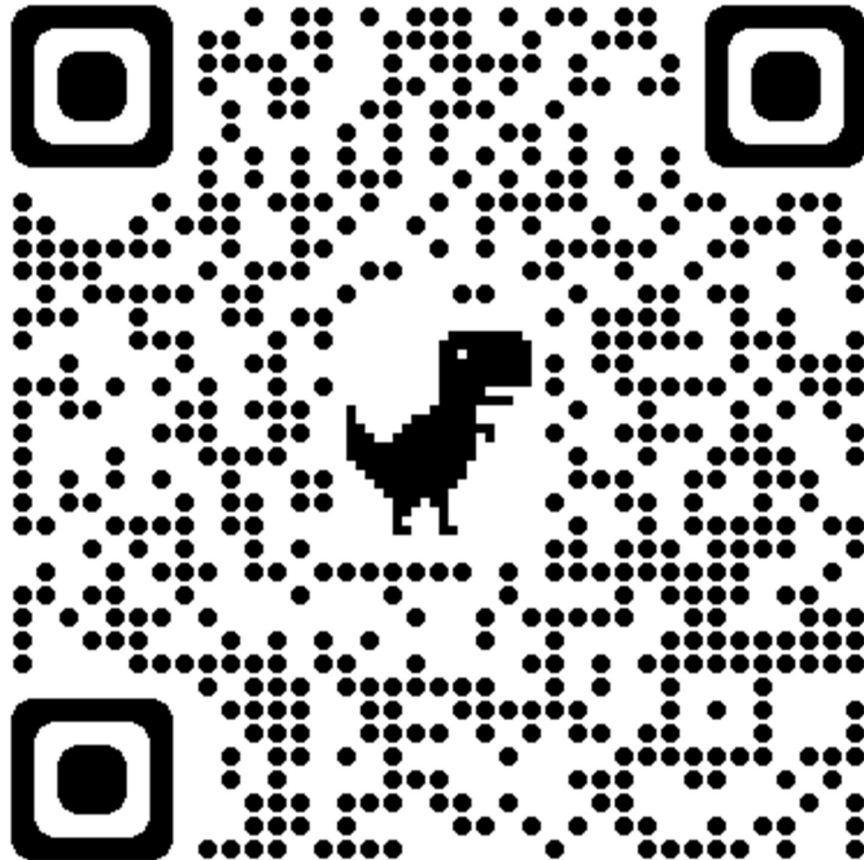
Using ATG funds, we will subcontract a local, not-for-profit rural youth organisation to install approximately 1500 metres of wildlife-friendly fencing, to exclude the planting area from grazing/browsing rescue animals which would otherwise feed on and damage the seedlings. We have managed to keep the total length of the fence to a minimum by utilising pre-existing fencing on the western and northern sides of the property. We will use mechanical weed control methods in keeping with the landowner’s wish to maintain a chemical-free site. The planting lines will be deep ripped with a tractor, followed by mounding to give a friable soil that will ensure quick establishment by the seedlings. The seedlings will be grown from local provenance seed stock collected by the Armidale Tree Group. To inform our decision as to which koala use tree species to plant, we will undertake vegetation surveys of the remnant vegetation in and around the planting site and cross check this with the koala use species identified in the State Environmental Planning Policy (Koala Habitat Protection 2021). We believe any planting for koala habitat should plan for the long-term viability of the project. To this end, we will plant a mid-storey canopy of locally appropriate medium - large shrubs, which will enhance the structural composition and increase and support biodiversity by providing resources (food and shelter) to small mammals and birds, including the locally occurring Brown Treecreeper (*Climacteris picumnus victoriae*) and Hooded Robin (*Melanodryas cucullata*), both of which are listed as vulnerable in NSW, and declining woodland birds including the Spotted Pardalote (*Pardalotus punctatus*).

All plants will be protected with fully biodegradable “Green Guards” which can withstand extended field use but do not contain plastics. This is an environmentally friendly alternative to the commonly used milk carton guards which have a plastic lining, or the plastic corflute guards, which require additional labour, and therefore expense, to remove them from the established seedlings. Sturdy bamboo stakes will be used to hold the Green Guards in place. Bamboo is a renewable, environmentally sustainable product. The seedlings will be planted by the ATG’s experienced revegetation team, using handheld potti-putki planters with each seedling watered in at the time of planting. These methods have been extensively applied with great success on the New England Tablelands.

Koala researchers believe the Northern Tablelands will play a key role in the conservation of koalas. Climate change pressures on the North West of NSW are heavily impacting koala populations, with population losses of possibly 75-80% in the Gunnedah region. With the cooler temperatures experienced on the Tablelands, it is projected that our region will provide long-term climate refugia for climate-stressed

koala populations. Additionally, local Tablelands wildlife is under less pressure from development, an issue currently facing koalas on the coast. As the pressures of development increase, with loss of habitat and associated increases in vehicle strikes and dog attacks, the coastal populations may shift towards the tablelands as they seek out new habitat. Current DNA research with the Australian Museum is assessing this possibility.

Help us Build a Bridge to complete the track around the dam at Mike O’Keeffe Woodland:



You can use this QR code to link directly to the ‘Bridging the Woodland’ fundraising site.

A welcome sighting down the lane...

Ken Barnett

Here's a photo of a koala recently sighted over a few days in the unnamed laneway between Blue Wren Rd and Arundel Drive. I claim no expertise in koalas but it looks to be a healthy individual. We have had recent sightings reported by walkers from the more wooded area Blue Wren Roads that has been more grazed. If the area is seen as an biodiversity then make a difference.

The December attended – eight we achieved a good Blue Wren Rd gate the west found a problem plants that clung obstinately to some that had been months. We also spraying St John's to that before it goes there isn't much weeds but if you that we are making a where we've area of Arundel Stoney Ridge Rd

At the working bee or not to hold consensus was that weather is hot we'll up with morning tea. I'll send out a notice closer to the date of Sunday 7th January.



between Trelawney and but not from this area extensively cleared and presence of koalas in an indicator of Wildlife corridors do

working bee was well participants in all – so deal. A sweep from the to well up the lane to surprising number of had been missed (or life), together with obvious for many made a start on Wort. I hope to get back to seed. I know that glamour in removing need to be convinced difference, compare worked with, say, the Drive North between and the locked gate.

we discussed whether another in January. The we might as well. If the keep it short and finish



Membership Application/Renewal

Date: _____ / _____ / _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

*Email (Required): _____

Please indicate your preference, you will receive an email when membership is due:

- \$5.00 for 1 year
- \$10 for 2 years
- \$25 for 5 years
- \$50 for 10 years

Donation \$ _____ (Donations over \$2 are tax deductible)

Total Payment \$ _____

Payment method: EFTPOS / cash / credit card below / direct credit / cheque

Cheque – Please make cheques payable to Armidale Tree Group Inc.

Credit Card –	Card type:	Visa / Mastercard only
	Card number:	
	Expiry date:	
	CCV number:	
	Name on card	
	Signature	
Direct Credit -	Please remit payment to BSB: 932000 Account No: 10016306 Detail: "Subs <Name>"	

You may email this form to accounts@armidaletreegroup.org.au or post to Armidale Tree Group, 80 Mann Street, Armidale NSW 2350

Office use _____

Date processed: _____/_____/_____



Volunteer Registration

Date: _____ / _____ / _____

Name: _____

Telephone: _____

*Email (Required): _____

<p>I am keen to help out the Armidale Tree Group, on a volunteer basis, in any of the following (ticked) areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Propagation• Planting (Field Days)• Gardening• Media• Grant Applications• Cleaning• Office• Wildlife Corridors - mapping, planning and landholder communications• Seed and Cutting Collecting• Other - Please specify <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>I would like to help out on the following basis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weekly• Fortnightly• Monthly• Occasionally• Other - Please specify <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
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Thank you so much for your offer of help. The Armidale Tree Group provides a lot of value to the community and it will be greatly appreciative of your efforts. Together we will make a difference.

Office use _____

Date processed: _____ / _____ / _____