

Biolinks Alliance Chair's Report, October 2018

I feel very proud and privileged to be writing this report for Biolinks Alliance first annual report. We have come a long way since the inception of the Board in Bendigo in September 2015 and the founding workshop in Castlemaine in October 2010. We now have some great events and achievements on our CV and a terrific board and staff that I love working with as we continue to develop the organisation – for which I am, just quietly, very ambitious. This last year really has been a turning point; we have moved to a new level with independent funding; a popular event with high profile international advocate for Landscape Projects, Gary Tabor; another high quality symposium Ararat; and the beginnings of our on-ground projects in collaboration with members groups – Glideways and Restoring Leaky Landscapes.

To help us reach out to the broader community, we are also ramping up our website and communications strategy – as everybody has a stake in restoring and protecting the health of our environment. But why large landscape-scale conservation? Why central Victoria? and why another organisation now? Well, firstly central Victoria is a very significant region: it is part of a broader chain of ranges extending from the Grampians to SE Queensland that is habitat for a great diversity of unique plants and wildlife that is under extreme threat from a legacy of destructive land use and climate change. Secondly, while the science of landscape-scale conservation is well known and established, there is little connection between this understanding and on-ground action, despite a broad hunger in the community to fix things properly. Thirdly, on the back of decades of government cut backs, loss of expertise and policy slides, even our overworked public sector biodiversity professionals admit that our current approach is failing. Not enough funds are prioritised for the environment and we are not using the right strategies. Frankly the old way of doing conservation is broken and the community needs to stand up and start forging a new path together. That, in a nut shell, is what Biolinks Alliance exists to help catalyse in our region. Not because we decided it might be a good idea, but because you, the community, told us we need to do it and now.

It is clear from programs like Gary Tabor's Centre for Large Landscape Conservation in North America, and Great Eastern Ranges and Gondwana-link here in Australia, that we are part of a broader grass-roots movement of 21st century conservation. I'd love to invite you to work with us any way you can – be it as a volunteer, a donor, a broad member, a local community leader, or as an advocate for the cause to your broader network of friends, family and colleagues – to help transform the way we work together, to actively conserve what is amazing and unique about central Victoria. Our very future depends on it.

Finally I'd like to warmly thank our generous donors, sponsors, other funders, board (esp. our Secretary Peter Mitchell and Treasurer Simon Cammell, our dedicated expert staff (Sophie Bickford, Linda Parlane, Tahli Tyler), Symposia and special event speakers and the many

member group volunteers and other volunteers such as Cathy McCallum who have supported us from the beginning, but especially in the past year. We are indebted to you all and hope we can continue to work with you in building the organisation into the one we all want and need it to become.



Paul Foreman

Chair / Biolinks Alliance

0429 009 743

biolinksalliance.org.au