

2023 Annual General Meeting

Questions and Answers

Q1. Why can't the AGM be conducted using technology?

A1. The BirdLife Australia Constitution currently prohibits an AGM to be held fully online. It does not prohibit a meeting using some technology, but it does not expressly permit it either. BirdLife will livestream the AGM which will allow members to follow the proceedings of the meeting remotely. BirdLife Australia will continue to explore enabling technologies / opportunities to support our future AGMs.

Q2. Will an AGM by proxy be legal?

A2. Yes. Under our Constitution, the BirdLife Australia AGM can be validly held with the President in the Chair, provided there are at least 39 proxies to meet the quorum of 40 members. (Proxies are counted in the quorum.)

Q3. How can I join the AGM via a Zoom webinar?

A3. Members can register to attend via the AGM page on the BirdLife Australia website. However, members participating remotely will not be able to vote or ask questions via the Zoom webinar; these should be submitted via the proxy forms. The AGM will be recorded and uploaded to the AGM section of the BirdLife website after the meeting.

Q4. Is the BirdLife Australia Board confident that proxy votes are an effective way for members to participate?

A4. Yes. Last year the 2022 AGM was held by proxy with a very positive response from members. Our membership is familiar with the concept of proxy participation which has always been a key element of our AGMs and always features prominently in our AGM documentation. In the five years prior to the first AGM by proxy in 2022, at least 80% of membership participation in our AGMs was by proxy.

We encourage the receipt of proxies before the meeting to facilitate wider participation from all members, particularly those who are unable to attend the meeting in-person.

Q5. If members can't attend the AGM, how will members know how the organisation is going?

A5. The full documentation normally available for any AGM will still be provided to members through the BirdLife Australia's website, well before they need to cast their proxy votes. This includes:

- Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting held on 28 May 2022
- 2022 Annual Report and 2022 Financial Report
- Candidate Statements for the election of Directors
- Fellow and Honorary Life Member Awards Citations

A special AGM page has been established on the BirdLife Australia website, including Q&As. Members can email or post their own questions related to the business of the AGM via their proxy form, including questions to the External Auditor, the Board or senior management. Answers will be provided on the website for members to see after the AGM.

The CEO report, which is a highlight of AGMs, will also be available on our website before the AGM.

Q6. How did BirdLife Australia perform in the year under review?

A6. BirdLife Australia performed well in 2022 despite the challenging economic environment. The Annual Report notes significant conservation achievements and a positive underlying financial result. Total Revenue decreased by \$3.3m compared to 2021, but Underlying Revenue increased by \$2m.

Expenditure increased by \$1.6m compared to 2021. This is in part due to resources required to deliver conservation projects and programs, and also the start of the Digital Engagement Project.

Member Questions & Answers

Set out below are general comments and responses to a range of questions submitted by members on the AGM proxy forms.

Board and AGM

- Q7. Would the current executive be willing to outline (briefly) what particular areas of expertise BirdLife Australia would benefit from, for 2023 - 2024 or in next 3 years, to enable members to make prudent selection(s) of applicant Directors?**
- A7. Candidates are asked to address a Position Description in submitting their nomination. As a skills-based Board, BirdLife Australia encourages nominations from candidates with the skills to oversight implementation of the organisation's strategy. The Position Description identifies the need for expertise in the following areas:
- philanthropic networks
 - fundraising and marketing
 - digital media and communications
 - finance and governance
 - community participation/civil society leadership
 - ambassadors with a public profile.
- Q8. Are the positions of elected Board members on-going or terminated after a fixed tenure?**
- A8. Elected Directors hold office for a period of three years from the closure of that Annual General Meeting until the closure of the Annual General Meeting three years hence. Consistent with best practice charity governance Directors can stand for re-election for a maximum of three consecutive terms, with limited provision for exceptions.
- Q9. What are the impediments to BirdLife Australia changing its constitution to permit online voting at its AGM?**
- A9. The BirdLife Australia Constitution currently prohibits an AGM to be held fully online. It does not prohibit a meeting using some technology, but it does not expressly permit it either. BirdLife Australia will explore enabling technologies / opportunities to support our future AGMs and amend the Constitution accordingly.
- Q10. What efforts to date have been taken to "explore enabling technologies/opportunities to support our future AGMs? What is the timeline and target deadline for enabling online voting and participation at AGMs?**
- A10. See the response to Q1.

Website

- Q11. Staying in contact with Birdlife on the internet and with emails is very frustrating, and I imagine that many members give up. There is a multitude of web sites and different usernames and passwords have to be used for different user groups (ie BirdLife Photography and the main site). Emails appear with different headings, subject lines and "from" addresses (ie senders from BirdLife have started to use their names in the "from" part of an email), and so it is very frustrating trying to find emails from BirdLife when you are looking for something specific. The organisation gives the impression of being disjointed and uncoordinated as individuals seem to do their own thing. What is BirdLife doing to consolidate its online presence and to streamline communications so that it presents to members as a coherent organisation, that is easy to communicate with and that its members can easily find the information they need?**
- A11. BirdLife's Digital Engagement Strategy has a goal of having one unified presence, streamlining our digital engagement systems to make all services, products, information and communications more accessible and easier to use. The project started during 2021-22 with a significant investment in the first step: introducing new technology platforms which can consolidate BirdLife's 30 + websites, and introduce more user-friendly navigation, experience and communications across the organisation, including network groups. This is a significant transformation for the organisation that will occur in phases over the next few years now that the foundation technology is in place.

Research, Science and Conservation

Q12. BirdLife Australia should be strongly committed to the danger posed by global warming, why isn't this the case?

A12. BirdLife's purpose under its constitution is to facilitate bird conservation. We are, however, strongly committed to addressing both the extinction and climate crisis. Key areas of work include Nature-based Solutions to the climate crisis, with BirdLife leading pilot projects for high integrity biodiverse carbon restoration projects including the development of methodologies and standards. BirdLife is also facilitating the rapid transition to renewable energy by leading the introduction of wind farm planning tools. This will ensure wind farms are located appropriately to mitigate collision risks and help streamline approvals.

Q13. Will BirdLife Australia budget to publicise and build awareness of KBAs?

A13. Yes. BirdLife Australia increased staff capacity in its Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) program to work with our volunteer network on monitoring, assessments and advocacy. BirdLife is the pre-eminent member of the global KBA partnership in Australia. We are also facilitating the take-up of KBAs beyond our borders working with our BirdLife Partners in several Pacific countries. KBAs are enshrined in the 'Site' pillar of our new Bird Conservation Strategy. BirdLife is also working with government and NGOs to facilitate the adoption of KBAs beyond birds. KBA standards are an important conservation tool for Australia if we are to fulfil our 30x30 target commitments under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

Q14. Are there any strategies being undertaken to address feral animal control, by BirdLife Australia, and should we be increasing our efforts on this?

A14. Many of our bird conservation programs involve managing the negative impact of introduced pests on threatened birds. Just to give a few examples; we are currently working with the Western Australian Government to reduce the impact of foxes and cats on the critically endangered Western Ground Parrots, our Beach Nesting Birds program employs remote cameras to understand the impact of predation on nests to inform feral predator control, and our Urban Birds program has recently partnered with the Invasive Species Council and the Biodiversity Council to raise awareness of the impacts of pet cats on Australian wildlife and to encourage changes to reduce their impacts. BirdLife Australia will implement and/or facilitate the delivery of high-priority direct actions to reduce or eliminate threats, such as feral animal impacts. These actions are identified, together with strategic partners and key stakeholders, through conservation plans (e.g. Conservation Action Plans (CAPs), threatened species recovery plans or alternatives) for our core conservation programs and priority species. So yes, where feral animals are contributing to the decline of threatened birds increased efforts are warranted.

Q15. How can BirdLife Australia become more engaged and have more input into plans by government authorities responsible for planned burning (eg Forest Fire Management Victoria) to prevent destruction of hollow trees and burning of recently installed nest boxes (as in the case of the Glossy Black-Cockatoo in East Gippsland)?

A15. To save birds, we need reliable data. Birddata is where we collect, keep and share this information. Compiled by scientists and citizen scientists, Birddata is Australia's largest and longest running database for birds, with more than 18 million records (and counting). This information is used to inform planning, for example empowering local advocacy on issues such as fire management by staff, supporters, and other stakeholders.

We have a current project supporting the bushfire recovery of South-eastern Glossy Black-Cockatoos in East Gippsland by protecting their short-term food supply and increasing their long-term food security. We are working with communities in East Gippsland, as well as government agencies and non-government organisations, to protect unburnt stands of she-oaks and plant new trees to replace some of those that were lost in the fires. We are also identifying sites with a deficit of natural hollows, where we can install specially-made 'cockatubes' that the birds can use for breeding and collecting vital information about the birds and their habitat requirements so they can be better protected in the future.

We have developed a close working relationship with key staff at the Victorian Government Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) and use data collected through our Glossy Black-Cockatoo work in East Gippsland to influence the location of planned burns.

Finance

Q16. What is being done to further reduce the printing, stationery and magazine costs going forward?

A16. BirdLife Australia has a “digital first” policy which we continue to implement in stages across the organisation, with the introduction of new technology capability and new website during 2022 further supporting this. This includes encouraging supporters to elect for digital only communications, moving various Special Interest Group publications and WA Bird Notes to digital, and introducing a digital only membership package which includes digital only reminders and communications and digital only access to Australian BirdLife magazine.

Branch Network

Q17. Why isn't there more support for Network groups out on ground spreading message?

A17. BirdLife Australia's new Participation Strategy is being implemented with increased resourcing to support our volunteer network. The vision of this strategy is to create the conditions for anyone who wants to protect birds to be able to take part in BirdLife activities in a meaningful way to achieve the goals set out in the Conservation Strategy. The Participation Strategy Manager commenced recently, and a Volunteer Services Coordinator is currently being recruited. These new roles will help to empower volunteers to grow their groups, reduce administration, manage finances, apply for grants, and communicate with our supporters. We are also developing a new volunteer portal and improving website accessibility to further support the groups.

In addition to new dedicated resources to support volunteers across the organisation BirdLife Australia is continuing to roll out community organising strategies to support Network branches and other supporters to use their voices for bird conservation. This includes hosting online and in person workshops, printed materials and regular catch ups to support people in their advocacy efforts. Our key focus over the next 12 months will be delivering strong nature laws, but these advocacy and campaign skills are highly transferrable across different issues.

Technology

Q18. Does BirdLife Australia have adequate protection for its digital data from malicious access (hacking)? Has there been an external review of the adequacy of protection?

A18. Yes, BirdLife Australia has audited its cyber security to ensure adequate protection for its digital data and scheduled regular reviews.

Publications

Q19. Has consideration been given by Council to replacing Taylor & Francis as publisher of Emu Austral Ornithology with an Australian based publisher (eg CSIRO Publishing) in view of T&F's abysmal customer service and botched rollout of Emu V.122 print editions onwards? If not why not?

A19. As an environmental charity BirdLife Australia has a “digital first” policy for all its printed publications and newsletters. Emu Austral Ornithology is available on a ‘print on demand’ basis. It is acknowledged that the changeover to a new Customer Relationship Management system contributed to some availability issues. The publication of the journal is contracted and subject to competitive tender.

Q20. Why can't WA members who want, and are prepared to pay for, receive a printed copy of the Branch quarterly publication "Western Australian Bird Notes"?

A20. See above regarding BirdLife Australia's ‘digital first’ strategy. All Network Groups have embraced this transition, including the BirdLife WA Executive Committee.

WA Bird Notes hard copy production is being financially supported by BirdLife Australia, while the WA Committee develops a plan for moving to a fully digital model, including strategies for people who do not have access to digital technology. A free digital WA Bird Notes will reach a much wider cross section of the WA community who will learn and benefit from the wealth of bird knowledge communicated in this important publication.