

**Date:** Saturday, 27 May 2023

**Time:** 9.30am

**Location:** National Office, 60 Leicester Street, Carlton, Vic, 3053

**Chair:** Martine Maron

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### **Present**

26 voting members

### **Apologies**

Ken Armstrong | Barry Baker | Gavin O'Meara | Prue Wright

### **Proxies Received**

Valid proxies were received from 291 members.

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## **1. Welcome**

The President, Martine Maron, opened the meeting and welcomed members and supporters who were attending at National Office and who were watching the 2023 Annual General Meeting of BirdLife Australia via the livestream webinar. She acknowledged the Traditional Owners of the land.

There being a quorum, the meeting was declared open at 9.30am.

The Board asked that proxy forms should be given to the Chair. The Board supported the proxy approach by establishing an AGM section on the BirdLife Australia website, as well as a designated email address where members could email in or post their own questions related to the business of the AGM, including questions to the Auditor, the Board or senior management.

Where possible, answers were provided on the website before the AGM for all members to see. Questions received immediately before the AGM will have the answers provided on the website in the days following the AGM.

The Chair reported that 291 of BirdLife's members had agreed to participate by proxy. Comments from members continue to be extremely positive.

In their proxies, members directed the Chair how to vote on each matter to be resolved, including adoption of the Financial Accounts, the Auditors' Report and the Annual Report. Members also sent in their votes for the election of three Directors, as well as for Fellows and Honorary Life Members.

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The Chair affirmed that all member proxy votes would be included in the conduct of the AGM.

## 2. Meeting Apologies

Apologies were received from Ken Armstrong, Barry Baker, Gavin O'Meara and Prue Wright.

## 3. Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting held on 28 May 2022

The minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting held on 28 May 2022 were published on the BirdLife Australia website and available to members on request.

The count of proxy votes was in favour of accepting the minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting.

The Chair **moved** the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 28 May 2022 be adopted as a true and correct record of that meeting, **seconded** Brian Boyd. **Carried**

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

## 4. Presentation of the Annual Report of Directors for the Year Ended 31 December 2022

The Annual Report was available to all members on the AGM section the BirdLife Australia website and available on request.

The President thanked fellow Directors and acknowledged the work they all do and their commitment to the success of the organisation and the achievement of BirdLife's goals.

Last year, the Board approved an ambitious new 10-year Bird Conservation Strategy, and a 5-year business plan, which will guide the organisation in conserving Australia's birds and their habitats.

BirdLife will continue its commitment to science and community by combining the best available science with the passion and commitment of its many members and supporters. BirdLife's monitoring and research partnerships provide a strong evidence base for effective on-ground conservation action and advocacy.

Governments have a critical role to play in protecting our natural environment, and so BirdLife has advocated for stronger government action on biodiversity, and much-needed reform of Australia's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act. BirdLife is fighting hard for better recovery planning, regional planning and data to support on-ground conservation. And is continuing to call for increased funding for biodiversity conservation.

One of the highlights of the President's year was the opportunity to meet with many of BirdLife's branches and volunteers, and seeing first-hand the dedication and passion of BirdLife's volunteers, and everything that they achieve for Australia's birds.

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Date Approved: [TBA]

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The President thanked members and volunteers for all the important work they do, proud of the work that BirdLife Australia has achieved over the past year, and excited about what the future holds for the organisation. With the new strategy and business plan in place, and a growing supporter base, she was confident that BirdLife can continue to make a real difference for birds and the wider environment.

The Chair introduced the Board members attending the meeting.

The President extended her heartfelt thanks to Duncan MacKenzie as he steps down from the Board, for his decades of dedicated service to BirdLife Australia and its predecessor organisations, and his lifetime of service to Australian's birds. She also thanked Alanna Vivian as she completes her term on the Board as well, also having given enormously to the organisation in many ways, drawing from her legal expertise and providing wise advice and governance.

She thanked Chief Executive Officer, Paul Sullivan, his Leadership Team, and all BirdLife staff and volunteers for their dedication and hard work through challenging times.

The count of proxy votes were in favour of accepting the Annual Report of Directors.

The Chair **moved** the 2022 Annual Report of Directors be adopted **seconded** John Barkla.

**Carried**

## **5. Presentation of the Financial Accounts of the Company and the Auditors' Report for the Year Ended 31 December 2022**

Gary Nelson, Chair of the Finance & Audit Committee, presented the Financial Accounts and the Auditors' Report for 2022 on behalf of the Board.

A concise Income and Expenditure Statement and Balance Sheet was published in the Annual Report and full copies of the Financial Accounts were published on the BirdLife Australia website and available on request.

The Consolidated Financial Statements for BirdLife Australia includes the operating results for the National Office and the BirdLife Network of branches, special interest groups, reserves and observatories.

The external auditor, RSM, provided an unqualified opinion that BirdLife's financial statements are fairly and appropriately presented, without any identified exceptions, and in compliance with accepted accounting principles.

Revenue in 2022 decreased to \$12.8m against \$16.1m in 2021. This includes a decrease in the fair value of investments of \$3.43m (2021 increase \$1.97m). There were significant bequests received and a significant increase in grant income.

The investment performance includes Gluepot endowment and funds set aside to manage for 'tough times'. BirdLife performed below benchmark return (27.7% below over the last 12 months).

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Total expenditure increased to \$13.7m. Administration costs reduced to 15% of overall expenditure, excluding one-off costs associated with the Digital Engagement Project. Project delivery costs, including employee costs, increased resulting in the completion of grant funded projects.

The operating deficit is \$0.9m compared to a surplus of \$4.1m in 2021. Strong cash reserves will help BirdLife weather further uncertainty and begin implementation of the Bird Conservation Strategy, ensuring BirdLife's conservation programs continue to save birds and their habitats.

Net assets remain strong at \$19.5m, decreasing from \$20.4m at the end of 2021. The value of investments is \$3.8m and cash on hand \$7.2m. Net contract assets and liabilities are in line with the balances at the start of the year. Cash reserves remain strong in National Office operations and across all parts of the Network.

The Chair **moved** the Financial Accounts and the Auditors' Report for the year ending 31 December 2022 be adopted, **seconded** Alex Morgan. **Carried**

## 6. Presentation of BirdLife's Achievements in 2022

Chief Executive Officer, Paul Sullivan, addressed the meeting and presented on BirdLife's Australia's achievements in 2022 and plans for the future. Highlights in 2022 included:

- A global biodiversity framework was agreed at the 15th Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity held in Montreal, Canada in December. It was the 'Paris Agreement for nature' - to stop extinctions, protect habitat and reverse biodiversity loss. BirdLife played a proactive role, with Sam Vine supporting the BirdLife International delegation. The Australian Government and Minister Plibersek worked with NGOs to secure an agreement on ambitious targets. We now need to deliver that back home through strong nature laws, nature positive policies and industry practices and more funding for species recovery.
- BirdLife Australia is embarking on the Bird Conservation Strategy 2023 – 2033, a 10-year mission to put birds and nature on a path to recovery by informing and leading action to halt biodiversity loss and restore ecosystems. The Strategy sets targets drawn from the zero draft of the UN biodiversity framework, including:
  - Vision – by 2050, birds and nature are valued, conserved and restored, sustaining a healthy planet for the benefit of all people.
  - Mission – By 2033, to put birds and nature on a path to recovery by informing and leading action to halt biodiversity loss and restore ecosystems.
  - Goals – stop human driven extinction of threatened birds by 2033; improve the status of at least 30% of threatened birds by 2033, and halt overall bird species population declines by 2050.
  - The four pillars of the Bird Conservation strategy are species, society, sites and systems.

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- BirdLife's achievements during 2022 were aligned to the strategy's nine Conservation Action Areas:
  1. **Research partnerships:** our research on Bristlebirds, which were impacted by the 2020 bushfires, has been essential to inform fire management and species recovery. This includes field surveys on the Western Bristlebird and acoustic monitoring of the southern and northern populations of Eastern Bristlebird to find new populations and fill knowledge gaps.
  2. **Sector wide tools and standards:** BirdLife supports a rapid transition to renewable energy to address the climate crisis, but if wind farms are poorly located it will accelerate the extinction crisis. BirdLife is currently working to bring the AviStep tool to inform the location of wind farms in Australia and reduce collision risk.
  3. **Empower local communities:** BirdLife's South-east Queensland branch received a community grant from BirdLife to engage landowners and survey birds in 'data deficient' areas of western Queensland. This is particularly important with a growing number of fracking and gas wells being approved, including across the Lake Eyre Basin. The same branch is also helping us to mobilise local communities to stop Lang Walker (7:30 report video) from destroying the Ramsar site at Toondah Harbour used by critically endangered shorebirds. Our campaign delivered 27,000 submissions against the development and a petition supported by 80,000 people.
  4. **Nature-based solutions:** carbon credits are funding restoration at scale, but it's a missed opportunity if re-forestation only creates habitat for pest species, or wetland restoration destroys intertidal habitat for migratory shorebirds. BirdLife is exploring two high integrity pilot projects in WA wheatbelt and a blue or teal carbon project with our partners – thanks to our generous donors.
  5. **Industry subsidies:** logging native forests for woodchips in NSW costs taxpayers \$6m a year – imagine if those funds were redirected to nature conservation. Sean Dooley took NSW Upper House Parliamentarians to Swift Parrot sites within state forestry logging coupes and presented to an inquiry on the future of the timber industry. A significant number of Swift Parrots were found at one site in 2009, but half the site was logged and the rest was destroyed by bushfires.
  6. **Nature positive policies for birds:** it's important that we hold the government accountable to Samuel's recommendations and ensure this doesn't slip down the legislative drafting priority list. BirdLife encouraged supporters to engage with local politicians to talk about the importance of strong nature laws. This included an event in Canberra.
  7. **Traditional knowledge:** we had the privilege of working with the Wonnarua People to release another 50 Regent Honeyeaters in the Tomalpin Woodlands. The release was a success. Captive birds are breeding with wild birds and offspring from a previous release were also found to be breeding. BirdLife is working with the Mindaribba Local Aboriginal Land Council to protect the Tomalpin Woodlands from industrial development.

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8. **Working with the private sector** is important to influence business practices. We are working with forest management company PF Olsen to enhance biodiversity in plantations. As part of sustainable forest certification, there is a requirement to maintain and enhance biodiversity. We are finding bird communities can be maintained within plantations, particularly along remnant habitat and creek lines. After the devastating bushfires on Kangaroo Island, many threatened bird species are using plantations as refuges.
  9. **Conservation action:** Birds on Farms is now working with landowners in WA, Southern and Central West NSW, ACT-Yass, Yarra-Yea and South-west Victoria – thanks to generous philanthropic support. The project engages landowners, develops site plans to connect remnant habitat and facilitates restoration work. In East Gippsland, we are engaging landholders to manage habitat for Glossy Black Cockatoos, with more than 1,000 nest boxes installed across more than 100 properties. BirdLife East Gippsland supports this work by surveying those properties.
- In June 2022 a second Western Ground Parrot translocation saw seven more birds released into the translocation area. There was a third release of five birds in March. In very good news, parrots continue to be detected at the translocation site. Our staff work with WA Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and volunteers from the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot to deliver this project. With fewer than 150 Western Ground Parrots left in the wild, the establishment of this second population has been a crucial step towards preventing the extinction of this beautiful bird.
  - 2022 delivered a brand refresh and technology transformation, with a new website and database. [birdlife.org.au](http://birdlife.org.au) now works in ways our old website did not – it ensures new people are more likely to find us when searching, it works on mobile devices, and it is much easier to navigate for new users. Our new database will also enable us to more easily tailor information to supporter interests.
  - Conservation is working. The South Australian population of Hoodies achieved above target breeding success due to volunteer actions at high threat sites. The Victorian population has not met target in three of the past four seasons due to a growing coastal development pressure and weak regulation. This information is invaluable so we can act and adapt our conservation strategies to ensure these populations continue to thrive.

The CEO thanked BirdLife's supporters for their continued passion and commitment to save our precious native birds.

Paul Sullivan informed members he was stepping down from his role as Chief Executive Officer of BirdLife Australia. He was proud of what BirdLife had achieved over the ten years he had been in the role and thanked the Board, the executive team and staff for their support.

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## 7. Declaration of the Election of Directors

All eligible voting members were notified and invited to submit nominations to the Board through the member magazine, *Australian Birdlife*, and on the BirdLife Australia website.

The Chair **noted** that there were three vacancies on the Board and nominations were received from David Marquard, Penny McMullin, Tuanh Nguyen, Hugh Possingham and Gordon Weiss.

Summary candidate statements had been posted to members when they received the AGM documentation, including the ballot papers for the election of Directors. The full candidate statements had been available on the BirdLife AGM website.

As more than half an hour has passed since the start of the meeting, in accordance with the requirements of the BirdLife Australia Constitution, whereupon the Chair declared the voting for Directors closed.

Following a count of proxy and attendee votes, the Chair announced that the three Directors elected to the Board were Penny McMullin, Tuanh Nguyen and Hugh Possingham.

The Chair **moved** that Penny McMullin and Tuanh Nguyen be elected to the Board and Hugh Possingham be re-elected to the Board for a three-year term commencing from the closure of the 2023 Annual General Meeting, **seconded** Judith Hoyle. **Carried**

## 8. Election of Fellows and Honorary Life Members

### 8.1 Fellow of BirdLife Australia

The Chair noted that under the BirdLife Australia Constitution, persons can be elected by the members on the recommendation of the Board as a Fellow of BirdLife Australia. Over the past year, the Board had carried out a rigorous process involving nominations from members, the Research & Conservation Committee and the Community Grants & Awards Committee. As a result, the Board recommended that members should elect Emeritus Professor Mike Clarke as a Fellow of BirdLife Australia.

The proposed citation had been posted to members when they received the AGM documentation and was available on the BirdLife Australia website.

Following a count of proxy votes, the Chair announced that Emeritus Professor Mike Clarke had been elected as a Fellow of BirdLife Australia.

The Chair presented Mike Clarke with his award.

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Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 the 2020 and 2021 Fellows were announced remotely so it was not possible to formally present the certificates. Mike Bamford attended the 2023 AGM and was presented with his certificate. Barry Baker was unable to attend, his certificate was accepted on his behalf by John Barkla.

## 8.2 Honorary Life Membership of BirdLife Australia

The Chair also noted that under the BirdLife Australia Constitution, persons can be elected by the members on the recommendation of the Board as an Honorary Life Member of BirdLife Australia. Over the past year, the Board had carried out a rigorous process involving nominations from members and the Community Grants & Awards Committee. As a result, the Board recommended that members should elect Sheena Gillman as an Honorary Life Member of BirdLife Australia.

The proposed citation had been posted to members when they received the AGM documentation and was available on the BirdLife Australia website.

Following a count of proxy votes, the Chair announced that Sheena Gillman had been elected Honorary Life Membership of BirdLife Australia.

Sheena Gillman's award would be presented at the Australasian Ornithological Conference in Brisbane, November 2023.

The Chair congratulated the new Fellow and Honorary Life Member and thanked them for their distinguished service.

## 9. Announcement of BirdLife Australia Awards

### 9.1 DL Serventy Medal

The DL Serventy Medal acknowledges outstanding contribution made to Australasian ornithology on an assessment of the nominee's published scientific contribution to Australasian ornithology.

Nominations are made by members of BirdLife Australia and are considered and recommended by the Scientific Awards Committee and the Research & Conservation Committee before being approved by the Board. This award is made by the Board and does not require confirmation by members.

The Chair announced that Professor Robert Heinsohn was awarded the DL Serventy Medal. Robert's award will be presented at the Australasian Ornithological Conference in Brisbane in November 2023.



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## 9.2 JN Hobbs Memorial Medal

The JN Hobbs Memorial Medal is awarded to an amateur ornithologist who has made a significant contribution to the knowledge or conservation of birds in Australia.

Nominations are made by members of BirdLife Australia and are considered and recommended by the Scientific Awards Committee and the Research & Conservation Committee before being approved by the Board. This award is made by the Board and does not require confirmation by members.

The Chair announced that Dr Rosalind Jessop was awarded the JN Hobbs Memorial Medal.

The Chair presented Rosalind Jessop with her award.

## 9.3 BirdLife Australia Distinguished Service Awards

BirdLife Australia Distinguished Service Awards acknowledge the enormous contribution made by members to BirdLife Australia and its predecessor organisations. Nominations for the awards must be made by three financial members of BirdLife Australia and are considered and recommended by the Community Grants & Awards Committee before being approved by the Board. These awards are made by the Board and do not require confirmation by members.

The recipients of the 2023 BirdLife Australia Distinguished Service Awards were Margaret Bennett, BirdLife Tasmania; Lachlan Garland, BirdLife Australia; Jane Robinson, BirdLife Australia, and Annette Sutton, BirdLife Townsville.

Arrangements will be made for Margaret, Lachlan, Jane and Annette to be presented with their awards at a suitable event.

The President congratulated Margaret, Lachlan, Jane and Annette for their very well-deserved recognition.

## 10. Questions and Other Matters from Members Submitted by Proxy

The Chair noted that, under the Constitution, the Annual General Meeting can only deal with matters for which 28 days' notice has been given. For this current meeting, no such notice has been given.

The Chair also noted that all questions raised by members before the AGM, together with the answers provided, will be put on the AGM section of the BirdLife Australia website shortly after the AGM and therefore available to all members.

The Chair expressed her sincere gratitude to BirdLife Australia's outgoing Chief Executive Officer, Paul Sullivan, for his leadership and outstanding service to the organisation over the last ten years.

There was no other business.

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The President thanked everyone who participated in the AGM by proxy, those who attended on the day and those who attended via BirdLife's livestream webinar. She also thanked everyone behind the scenes for their help with organising the AGM and the livestream webinar.

Mandy Bamford **proposed** a vote of thanks to Martine Maron who stepped down as President at the close of the meeting, **seconded** Alex Morgan. **Carried**

As there was no other business the President declared the 2023 BirdLife Australia Annual General Meeting closed at 10.50am.

Signed:

(Chair)

Date: