

**Draft Minutes of General Meeting of Low Isles Preservation Society
16 February 2010 at Port Douglas Community Hall**

Apologies:

Rob and Sally Sutherland
Sally and Rod Sherlock
James Watson
Nicole Szalek
Steve Edmondson
Beth Hughes and Adrian

Present:

Qamar Schuyler
Lou Oliver
Valda and Barry Reynolds
Maria, Vlad and Sonny Zajaz
Karina Lund
Mark Colbridge
Patrick Lighthart
Richard Koser
Danny Vos
Carie Scott
Graeme Dudley
Heather Collins
Alex Mateer
Julia Hazel
Lee Walters

Chair:

Qamar Schuyler

Welcome and adoption of previous GM minutes

Qamar opened the meeting at 7.05 PM and welcomed all present. She requested consideration of the minutes of LIPS GM 29 Sept 2009. Acceptance proposed by Heather Collins, seconded by Danny Vos, approval unanimous.

Financial report

The expected financial report was not available due to unavoidable absence of Treasurer Nicole Szalek. Qamar indicated the current balance (all accounts combined) is approx \$24,000. Julia will circulate a summary report by email when available.

New Treasurer needed

The meeting was informed that LIPS urgently needs a new Treasurer to replace Nicole who cannot continue due to time constraints of caring for her new baby and her professional work commitments.

Qamar asked for offers from anyone able to take on the role of LIPS Treasurer until our next AGM in September. No offers were forthcoming.

Julia will send this request by email to all LIPS members.

In the interim we will try to reduce the load on Nicole. Danny will assist with banking and Julia will take care of new membership data as well as existing members. Julia will only need confirmation from the Treasurer regarding payment of fees.

Public talk on Feb 24

Valda announced that Qamar will present the public talk next week instead of Brett Leis as Brett cannot make it.

Valda has arranged the meeting hall and she will provide local media with updated information about this event.

In connection with this event Valda advised of a generous donation to LIPS by Steve Edmondson. His vouchers for two free trips to Low Isles will be offered as prizes in a raffle to raise funds for LIPS. The raffle will be organised by Valda and assisted by other committee members.

Qamar gave a brief outline of her upcoming presentation. Julia will send this information to all members by email and everyone was encouraged to spread the word about this event.

Lighthouse/History project

Valda presented Steve Edmondson's apologies that he was unable to report to the meeting in person and passed on information she had received from Steve, who is representing LIPS in discussions with AMSA.

The proposed history presentation by LIPS in the lighthouse must await AMSA approval of public access to the lower level of the lighthouse building. AMSA will need to conduct a survey of the building (requiring funding) and must stipulate conditions for public access include safety, insurance, training of guides, etc. A necessary pre-condition is clarification from GBRMPA about long term planning and commitment regarding caretaker/ maintenance presence on Low Island.

Low Isles management

Alex gave a brief history of the Ranger/Caretaker situation on the island and she explained that there is a real threat that there might not be funding to continue this position in the future. The current caretaker's contract ends on May 1st this year. Alex has been advised that Mick Bishop, the Director of GBRMPA Field Management, is going to try to have a definite answer in the next three weeks.

Alex also addressed the meeting about some of the long term management issues and possible ways for LIPS to assist GBRMPA to run the island in an economically sustainable way around a fixed budget. Members were asked if they were prepared to assist with more of the maintenance tasks, such as painting, which would help the island be less reliant on outside contractors, one of the major expenses. Everyone at the meeting responded positively, and all were willing to help in whatever ways were needed. It was suggested we all give more thought to how we can further assist GBRMPA with the funding problems.

Community education to promote turtle conservation

Qamar spoke about proposed collaboration with Jabalbina to organise an educational activity for children at Low isles. It is still very early in the planning stages and Qamar invited anyone interested in assisting to contact her.

Water quality monitoring

Alex reported on the LMAC project to monitor water quality in Dickson Inlet. LIPS is one of several groups collaborating on this project and LIPS auspiced the grant application. The project was initiated in response to local concern about a suspected decline in water quality and decreasing fish stocks in the inlet. Regular monitoring sessions have commenced and LIPS members were encouraged to assist. The data collected will provide rigorous measures of water quality so that any problems can be properly identified and resolved. In support of protecting water quality there might be opportunities in future to undertake mangrove restoration. Several people expressed interest in mangrove work but potential funding sources have not yet been found.

Research at Low Isles

Julia gave an outline of the academic research she is preparing to conduct at Low Isles. Following on from the PhD project she completed at James Cook University last year, Julia intends to pursue her interest in the behaviour of turtles within near-shore foraging grounds. An understanding of this life stage is very important for turtle conservation because green turtles spend the major part of their lives in coastal areas and many of these areas are under increasing pressure from diverse human activities. The study will involve deploying ultrasonic transmitters and submersible receivers to record green turtle movements over time. From analysis of the data Julia aims to gain new understanding about how long individual turtles remain around Low Isles and how their collective use of reef and lagoon habitat varies at different times.

Positive actions to help the environment

Members had been advised that turtle hunting was explicitly not on the agenda for this meeting and that a suggestion to the contrary in the newspaper (Gazette) was erroneous. Rather than debating what *other people* should or should not do, at this time we are seeking to identify positive things each of us can do within our own capacity and within our own responsibility, and seeking to inspire one another to undertake personal efforts to benefit the environment.

People at the meeting mentioned the following:

- picking up marine debris whenever they can
- helping with cleaning, painting etc at Low Isles to keep infrastructure in good order and reduce management expenses
- supporting organisations like Australian Marine Conservation Society to keep informed about important issues and support campaigns for better environmental protection
- educating their kids about Low Isles

- fulfilling community requests for information about Low Isles
- riding their bikes to work instead of driving

General discussion

On the topic of LIPS activities this year people favoured arranging public talks approximately quarterly, subject to availability of speakers.

Previously popular sausage sizzles are to be incorporated in LIPS events when possible.

Patrick volunteered to organise the next full moon barbecue for LIPS, provisionally in March. When details have been confirmed Julia will send info to members.

It was also suggested that we try to hold LIPS meetings in Mossman sometimes.

Lou Oliver gave an overview of a science excursion to Low Isles that she is organising for her Year 12 students at Mossman High School. She is teaching a highly motivated group who are keen to learn first-hand about the inter-related ecosystems of coral reefs, mangrove forests and mud-flats at Low Isles. Hopefully students will later allow LIPS members to read copies of their written reports about the excursion.

Close of meeting

At 8.28 PM Qamar declared the LIPS general meeting closed.

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