



Zero Emissions Byron Limited

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Chair's Report to the
Fourth Annual General Meeting
November 2020



Community planting at The Farm September 2020

Hello!

What a tumultuous year we've lived through!! From relative stability to downright horror! So many people, plants and animals were impacted by unimaginable burning, only to be followed by severe storms and floods. It was hard to avoid the climate change wake-up call! Now our island nation is in lockdown, with overseas travel off the agenda for the foreseeable future. One strong message emerging from the disasters is use of the phrase 'zero emissions.' After years of struggling to establish its message, ZEB should benefit from better community understanding of the importance of emission reduction.

Here is ZEB's year in essence. I've stretched it beyond the financial year to October as the news will be outdated by next year's report.

Northern Rivers EV Forum & Expo was understandably cancelled as a live event, replaced by 8 x 1 hour webinars on a variety of EV-related topics delivered by experts in their fields. MC'd by Mick O'Regan, the EV Revolution webinars air the first Tuesday of the month with a break in January 2021. Past webinars may be viewed on the website zero Byron.org/webinars. Bank Australia as principal sponsor and NRMA as major sponsor of the EV Forum are acknowledged visually and we thank them each webinar along with community sponsors Enova Community Energy, Club Car and Light Touch Solar & Electrical for their continuing and invaluable support.

ZEB was pleased to be at the launch of two EV charging stations, NRMA's chargers at The Farm and the EV chargers under the solar roof of Council's carpark, a landmark project launched last year.

18,000 trees planted to drawdown carbon. RePlant Byron (a project of Zero Emissions Byron) has planted 18,000 trees on private properties since October 2019, to restore habitat and help towards carbon sequestration (drawdown). These plantings were supported by generous private donations and grants from the

Federal Government's Communities Environment Programme, Northern Rivers Community Foundation (NRCF), Bank Australia, Stone & Wood's Ingrained Foundation and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW),

Byron's first community forest. Byron's first community forest at The Farm. Is RePlant Byron's most visible and accessible planting. An inspired fundraising campaign on social media by Kate Walsh secured matching funds from The Farm's current owners, the Lane family. More than \$30,000 was raised towards purchasing and maintaining the trees. RePlant was pleased to welcome over 60 students from Byron High's Year 12 to complete the planting.

A **social dimension** was introduced into RePlant Byron's plantings by engaging with women and children from the SHIFT project for homeless women, and workers from the Byron Bay Herb Nursery and their supervisors. RePlant Byron linked with the Indigenous Firesticks Alliance, whose plans to demonstrate indigenous firestick methods were thwarted by weather conditions. Community planters at the Bangalow planting enjoyed a talk from CEO Oliver Costello on firesticks management.

Project Coordinators. RePlant Byron welcomed Sandi Middleton and Vanessa Smith who each spent 3 months working a few hours a week. In October Wren Mclean joined RePlant for 1 day a week. Wren's work includes collaboration with local planting organisations and private landowners in gathering carbon drawdown information.

Community engagement was identified in the August 2019 strategic plan update as a key element in ZEB's zero emissions goal, to inform and educate people about ways they can help reduce carbon emissions. One strategy aims to celebrate the 'Bright Spots' in our community who come up with imaginative ways to reduce their carbon footprint.

ZEB's outreach is growing. During the year, 166,200 people were reached via Facebook with 806 followers and 728 'likes'. The EV webinars are attracting strong interest; for example, the 4th webinar reached 4,090 people, 24% from Sydney, 9% from Melbourne, 3% from Byron with a sprinkling of overseas interest.

This year, ZEB has more than doubled its database numbers from 342 in November 2019 to 796 in October 2020.

ZEB was thrilled to participate in the NRMA's Bright Futures rollout in celebration of its centenary over a weekend at North Byron Parklands. It was a great opportunity to engage with a different audience. Other venues for this imaginative event were sadly cancelled due to COVID.

Community Engagement Officer. Sasha Mainsbridge has joined ZEB as Community Engagement Officer for 1 day a week with responsibilities for community engagement and social media. Based on the ABC's *Fight for Planet A*, Sasha created a competition to engage the community in sharing their carbon reduction solutions. Sasha will be hosting stalls throughout the Shire to encourage people to take action.

Emissions reduction starts with energy efficiency yet despite obvious savings it's still proving difficult to raise community enthusiasm. ZEB's leaflet 'Changes You Can Make' has wide appeal, detailing actions individuals can take.

Energy projects.. With the help of Point Advisory, ZEB keeps a watchful eye on energy emissions, noting the modest falls in coal-fired grid energy may be offset by increasing numbers of people calling Byron home. Matt Kendall and I held a productive meeting with Felicity Stening and Bec Talbot of Enova Community Energy. That meeting was the catalyst for starting a community energy group drawn from the Shire's best energy leaders. The group is led by Matt who also heads up Resilient Byron's energy team.

Former ZEB director Craig Johnston's Coolamon Energy is well down the planning track for its 5MW solar farm with battery storage. Along with Byron Shire Council's 5MW Dingo Lane project., there's about 12MW of solar in the pipeline. Another 20MW would take Byron Shire close to replacing its current grid usage with renewables.

A Buildings team was formed this year. Initiatives include engagement with architects to highlight low carbon designs, contacting people who have purchased land in the Tallwood Estate in Mullumbimby and planning for a local Sustainable House Day.

Regenerative agriculture. ZEB joined RAIN (Regenerative Agriculture Information Network) whose aim is to educate and engage with farmers on regen ag practices. Our representative, Duncan Dodd, attended one meeting; subsequent meetings lapsed due to COVID. Moving out of the time frame of this report, a regen ag panel discussion led by Damon Gameau will follow screening of the film 'Kiss the Ground' planned for 7 December at The Byron Theatre.

Finance. ZEB's fundraising appeal in June provided some welcome dollars but fell short of our target. This financial year was the best since ZEB incorporated in 2016. The healthy surplus in the financial report indicates the level of fundraising activity but, as most funds are earmarked for projects, the Board must seek ways to raise substantial funds. Financial management is under the care of volunteer Treasurer Rob Goodwill who came to ZEB with a strong track record in the public sector.

Governance. An area of Board activity often overlooked, the Board's governance meeting during the year including a review of its Code of Conduct and Risk Management Plan. Board meetings held by Zoom due to COVID had a mixed reception, some preferring live meetings.

Memberships. We welcomed Resilient Byron as an organisation member and Matt Kendall as an individual member. There are now 32 members of Zero Emissions Byron Limited.

ZEB representation. ZEB was ably represented on Council's SERAC committee and on Sustain Northern Rivers by Katrina Shields. ZEB is a member of the 100 strong Zero Carbon Communities initiative of BZE – in fact, ZEB was the first such community organisation. Matt Kendall and myself made presentations to this group's Zoom meetings.

Directors. At the 2019 AGM, Christobel Munson, Katrina Shields and Vicki Brooke were elected to the Board (Christobel and Vicki having completed a three-year term), joining continuing directors John Taberner and Nik Midlam. Matt Kendall was appointed director at the meeting following the AGM.

Farewelled but not forgotten! In April, John Taberner resigned from the Board. We thank John warmly for his work in many areas of ZEB's activities, notably RePlant Byron and Emissions Monitoring, and for his expertise, enthusiasm and dedication to ZEB's objectives. We welcomed John to the Advisory Panel, as well as former director Craig Johnston.

Company Secretary. Liam Rogers of Marque Lawyers in Sydney ably served as Company Secretary since 2017. Liam resigned as he decided to return to England. The Board welcomed local solicitor Ian McKay of Byron Legal as its Company Secretary.

Some big thank yous. My first thanks go to the Board – Christobel Munson, Katrina Shields, Nik Midlam, Matt Kendall - for their unwavering dedication, support and hard work, and to Treasurer Rob Goodwill, Company Secretary Ian McKay and Honorary Accountant John Robinson. Special thanks to Bridie Schmidt,

Muriel Watt and Christobel Munson for their outstanding work on the EV webinars. Thanks to key volunteers Jason Lasky, Glenn Todd, Perlin Earth, Alice Moffett. For their continuing support, my thanks to Point Advisory, Habitat, Rosasco Faithfull, Dave Rawlins, Kate Walsh, Mick O'Regan, Wren McLean, Sasha Mainsbridge, Imogen Jubb. I warmly thank major donors Mark Tidswell and the Diversicon Environmental Foundation, and ZEB's many community donors.

And lastly, this is my final year as a Director and Chair of the Board. It's been a privilege working with ZEB volunteers and staff and a wide variety of people and organisations. Over the past four years as a founding Director and Chair, I've learnt much and enjoyed many wonderful experiences. Thank you for the opportunity of sharing time with you.

When ZEB started five years ago, the ambition was large – achieve zero emissions by 2025. With publication of the Baseline Emissions Report for the Shire in 2016, the goal seemed distant but somehow achievable. We hadn't appreciated the hurdles, including community apathy and complacency and government indifference to climate change.

In June 2018, ZEB staged 'The Big U-turn' with Professor Will Steffen. His message was clear: the world had only two years left to make serious emissions cuts. The longer the delay, the harder it would be to reverse climate change impacts. The world has passed that target and the turning points are slipping away, exacerbated by fires burning in so many countries, de-forestation, melting of ice, release of methane and so on. The world is heading for unprecedented warming.

How often must experts point out that cost of inaction is higher than the cost of action? How often must scientists call for urgent programmes to tackle climate change? I hope fervently the Biden presidency's climate change stand will force the Federal Government into significant action, including support for renewables. The NSW Government's recent announcements give cause for hope. We are the generation that must act for the sake of our children and their grandchildren. It's our responsibility to start the journey back to a safe, liveable planet.

ZEB is regarded as a lighthouse community, paving the way for others to follow. Please help support ZEB's work in any way you can. Your support will also help other communities around Australia.

Warm regards

Vicki Brooke