



BUSHWALKING AUSTRALIA INC  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING for 2006  
by Teleconference on 22 MARCH 2006

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MINUTES

Meeting began @ 8.06 pm Eastern Summer Time

- **Attendance**

*Delegates:*

Bill Gehling (BWA President - SA), Marianne Watt (BWA Treasurer - VIC), Hecate Jay (BWA Secretary – WA), Stuart Braid (TAS), Wilf Hilder (NSW), John Campbell (QLD)

*Deputy Delegates:*

David Atkins (TAS), John Rees (WA)

*Observers:*

Ian MacDonald (WA President), Margaret Covi (NSW President), Howard Tooth (NSW)

- **Apologies:**

David Reid (VIC)

- **Minutes June 2005 AGM**

The minutes of the 2005 AGM held in Melbourne on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> June 2006 were accepted.

- **Business Arising from Minutes**

None

ANNUAL REPORTS

- **President's Report** – *Bill Gehling* - See Appendix A

Motion: "that the President's Report be tabled"

Moved: Marianne Watt

Seconded: Howard Tooth

Outcome: Carried - Wilf Hilder congratulated Bill on an excellent Report

- **Insurance Report** – *Howard Tooth*

The Insurance Report covering the renewal of our Policies for the 2006/07 period of insurance still stands. (See Appendix B). The insurance renewal process for the current year is underway and Howard is awaiting each States' Insurance Officer to collate their composite returns so that he can begin talking to underwriters.

David Atkins (TAS) questioned if they are covered for liability and personal accidents for Track work being undertaken on behalf of the Parks & Wildlife Service. Howard

assured him that they are covered under our existing policy and arranged to forward David a Certificate of Currency.

Bill Gehling thanked Howard for his hard work and diligence.

- **Treasurer's Report** – *Marianne Watt*

Balance Sheet to 30/09/2006 (Attached)  
Profit & Loss to 30/09/2006 (Attached)

Motion: "that these financial statements for the BWA 2005/2006 financial year be approved"

Moved: Marianne Watt

Seconded: Bill Gehling

Outcome: Carried

### **BUSINESS ARISING from the Annual Reports**

#### **Treasurer**

Marianne noted that she has received subs from all States except Victoria & Tasmania.

Action: Marianne to email David Reid (Sec. VicWalk) about the non-payment of Victoria's subs and Stuart Braid to follow up with the Tasmanian representative.

### **ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

Bill declared all BWA positions vacant.

The elected office bearers are:

- President - Wilf Hilder
- Secretary - Hecate Jay
- Treasurer - Marianne Watt
- Insurance Officer - Howard Tooth

### **GENERAL BUSINESS**

- Discussion ensued regarding the position of Vice-president. There isn't currently a formal position for Vice-President but it was suggested that there is a need for someone to assume the President's mantle when the President is away or unable to fulfil their duties for other reasons. It was noted we would have to change our Rules to formalise the position of Vice-President.

Motion: "That we look at changing the Rules to incorporate the position of Vice-President"

Moved: Marianne Watt

Seconded: Wilf Hilder

Outcome: Carried

It was noted that WA is next in line to provide a President. Ian McDonald offered to take on an informal role as Wilf's understudy over the next year.

- Nomination of Auditor

Motion: “that Peter Barr continue to be our auditor”

Moved: Marianne Watt

Seconded: Bill Gehling

Outcome: Carried

Action: Marianne to express our thanks to Peter for his past and future role as auditor

- Discussion ensued regarding the BWA web site.

Motion: “that Bill Gehling, Marianne Watt and Hecate Jay establish a Communications sub-committee to look at upgrading the web site”

Moved: Wilf Hilder

Seconded: Marianne Watt

Outcome: Carried

Action: Sub-committee members to meet and report back to delegates.

- Discussion about the benefit of a face to face meeting annually and how to fund interstate travel for delegates. NSW nominated to host a face to face meeting towards the end of the year.  
Action: Wilf Hilder & Margaret Covi to begin the process of gaining NSW support for a face to face meeting towards the end of the year.
- Discussion regarding the need for BWA to have delineated goals and a shared vision.
- Discussion about bushwalking access issues and the need for BWA representation at conferences over the coming year.  
Action: Ian McDonald and Bill Gehling to co-author a report on access issues for the National Tracks & Trails Conference 2008.
- The need to hold the 2007 AGM by mid-year was discussed. Late June/early July nominated.  
Action: Hecate Jay to organise the 2007 AGM for late June/early July.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING** - Late June 2007 – Exact date TBA

**MEETING CLOSED @ 8.48pm**

## APPENDIX A

### **Presidents Report 2005-06**

This year has been the most significant yet, something which is to be expected for an organization which is still in its early stages of development. The last report I prepared was in June 2006 for our face to face meeting, only 4 months before the end of the BWA year in September. Rereading that report in the last few weeks, I was struck by the fact that even 9 months later, most of the things mentioned are still highly relevant. Rather than rewrite everything again from that report, and subject everyone to it, I have reproduced it below. For now, I propose to refer to the developments between June and September.

The June meeting in Melbourne was a great success, though most of us would of course have much rather been out walking. What I found interesting was that those who came together shared very similar experiences. What were issues in one state were invariably echoed in other states. Organizing the June meeting was a huge effort, and I particularly want to thank Marianne for her great work making that happen. It is perhaps understandable that quite a few of us were “BWA’ed Out” afterwards as we had to deal with other things that had been put aside. The fact that most of us are heavily committed at state, club and local level as well as in our personal and professional lives, means that BWA commitment comes on top of other responsibilities, and is often at the expense of what we would rather be doing – walking!

The June meeting did affirm that BWA had strong reasons for existence, and that disbanding it now was not an option. It was preferable that BWA keeps going at a reduced or even minimal level as we have done, rather than have to start over from scratch. Much of the point of BWA is to have an authoritative voice for bushwalkers, when something of national importance comes up to need our response. As well as being the vehicle for the national insurance scheme, having BWA ready and able to respond is something of an insurance policy in itself.

In my own case, I have been more involved with state issues as we have been without a president in Walking SA until recently for about 6 months. An upshot of that is that I have become Grants Convener for Walking SA, and discovered that having BWA in existence, and being a member of it, is essential if Walking SA is to receive its triennial grant. Another learning for me came from the exercise of applying for the grant, and considering our value in the community. Club bushwalkers comprise only a small percentage of the total bushwalking community. State Federations and BWA itself have to find ways of representing all bushwalkers if we are to maintain credibility and influence.

On that note I would like to congratulate VicWalk on achieving the recent constitutional change. For those who weren’t aware they are now called Bushwalking Victoria, which now has a real focus on individual members in and through the club system, rather than as a collection of clubs which just happened to have bushwalkers as members. When in America in 2005, I spent some time with the New York New Jersey Trails Conference which made a similar constitutional move some 15 years earlier, and has made impressive achievements since.

I would also like to thank the NSW confederation for agreeing to nominate the next President and to Wilf Hilder for agreeing to be their nominee. I have mentioned before that the BWA presidency can take as much time as one is prepared to give. If one can criticize BWA for being too low key or ineffective, it is largely because of the fact that all the work has so far fallen on few shoulders. I feel that we can only achieve more (and expect someone to take over in 2 years time) if we divide BWA responsibilities more amongst ourselves. I for one would be prepared to take on a Policy Convener role, and perhaps retain an active interest in website and communications. One of the first tasks of the new Council must be to appoint convenors and maybe set up sub-committees and working groups.

The coming year will see a federal election, more activity on the AAS front, and more threats to areas we walk in. These are both threats and opportunities. We all need to work together proactively to minimize the threats and make the most of the opportunities.

I would also like to thank Hecate for volunteering as secretary and helping Marianne organize the AGM. Thanks also to Marianne for shouldering both the Treasury and Secretary jobs, when no-one else was available, and given her obviously limited time, doing an excellent job of both.

Thanks also to Howard for keeping the insurance ship afloat and steaming ahead. An experienced captain who knows all the reefs and currents, and knows where and how to dock his ship safely at the end of each annual voyage!

Finally thanks to all who are doing their bit at BWA, state and club level.

Let's Keep Australia Walkable!

*Bill Gebling*  
*President*

## President's Report to June 2006

It is a pleasure to be able to report to the first ever face-to-face meeting of representatives of all the peak bushwalking bodies in Australia. This report covers the year to September 2005, as well as the following 8 months.

When I took this job on several years ago, I did not realize how difficult it would be just getting this far.

It's now time to take stock of where we are now, and gather a realistic view of what BWA is and needs to be. I don't want to elaborate too much at this point because I really feel its time for us to do this collectively, not just as one person's vision. However I will say that my enthusiasm for BWA, and determination to see it succeed is stronger than ever. If we fail, it will put bushwalking back decades, even further than it would have been had a couple of people (namely Bill Metzenthen and Maurice Smith) not had the foresight to float the idea, and the determination to get it off the ground.

Why do I feel this way? As soon as I assumed the chair, I was immediately aware that we were stepping into a vacuum. There had never been a national body for walking, yet just about every other sporting or recreational activity has one. Different aspects such as conservation, outdoor recreation, leadership training and so forth had peak bodies, but walking didn't. For all its appeal, and the huge number of people who regard themselves as bushwalkers (or simply walkers), there was no-one to champion walking as the thing to do, and to defend our rights to do it. Little wonder that the initiative appeared to be taken from us on so many issues. For instance, one extreme element of conservation seeks to ban walkers from particular environments. Another seems to want to load clubs and leaders with all sorts of bureaucratic imposts in the name of risk management and safety. Plenty of land managers are ignorant of what real bushwalking is. All kinds of activities, from horse riding and MTB riding, through to ATV users, are also seeking rights, which can impinge on important conservation values and the safety and pleasure of others.

Whatever roles BWA seeks for itself, we need to realize that BWA exists for the benefit of individual walkers and for the environment we wish to preserve and enjoy. Our federal system in Australia means that the majority of our work needs to be at state level. For instance, all our major parks are managed by state governments, and the legal aspects of walking are under state law. This means we need strong federations as the primary force in each state. But whatever happens in one state is bound sooner or later to bob up in another. Environmental issues don't respect political boundaries. Only with a degree of national coordination and consistency will bushwalkers be heard and noticed.

Each state federation has a different history, though there are remarkable parallels between them. Some like SA and WA did not have one until a decade or so ago. Others like Victoria, NSW and Tasmania have had a Federation for the best part of a century. We have all adapted to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in different ways. Some cities like Hobart and Sydney enjoy marvelous wilderness walking on their doorstep. Others like Adelaide and Brisbane have only a few remnants nearby and walkers there have to be content with day walks and some very long drives. Attractive land is seen as valuable and walkers are having a hard time securing its preservation. Fewer opportunities exist to create new national parks. There is more competition for existing parks, and budgets to maintain them are being slashed. Whereas once we could throw all our efforts behind conservation initiative to create new parks, now we have to fight on several fronts. Winds of change are affecting different states at different times.

Another thing that affects us as state federations is our differing financial resources. Most federations have some form of per-capita levy on individual members, or are moving towards one. The fact is that we can only do as much as funds and volunteer time allows. Sadly, there are people who begrudge a few dollars to their club or federation, but happily spend thousands on the latest gear, a trip to walk in an exotic location, or a 4WD to get there. This attitude devalues the efforts of those who lobby hard to give them access to the walking areas they need. As an extension of this, BWA needs to put itself on a firm financial footing, so we can work effectively on your behalf.

For much of 2005 BWA was largely in recess, because your president was overseas, and we did not have a secretary. Thanks to Howard Tooth though, our insurance kept going. The system that Howard initiated, also means that the scheme requires little input from us except when renewals are being negotiated. Well done Howard.

I also want to specifically mention Marianne's great support in accepting the role of acting secretary when it was needed, on top of her job as treasurer. She has also done a sterling job in organizing this weekend. I also want to thank various others who responded to particular issues. Thanks also to Colin Wood for agreeing to be webmaster, and setting up our website. I personally could not have done my bit without the support of my family, especially my wife Kerry and daughter Annalise who created our logo free of charge, and puts me up whenever I come to Melbourne. The support of David Reid and the executive of VicWalk has been invaluable. Also to June at the Walking SA office and to my SA colleagues who have kindly relieved me of most of my local responsibilities in SA.

During my time overseas, I was able to experience the way bushwalking works in the USA and Britain. I met leaders of the American Hiking Society in Washington DC and the Ramblers in London. I went on many hikes with the New York City chapter of the Adirondak Mountain Club, and met their leadership. I visited the office of the New York New Jersey Trails Conference which is the equivalent of a state bushwalking federation. I spent a day working on one of their local government funded trail projects, the kind of thing we could do more of here. We could learn much from their experiences, especially as regards organization and money matters.

One of the problems faced here and by our overseas equivalents is that the membership is getting older. Younger people are buying gear and seeking adventure, but are increasingly doing this informally, rather than join a club. We have to find ways of reaching this "market" or we risk becoming branded as irrelevant.

Federations are also being approached by members of the public and by small informal groups who want the benefit of our insurance scheme. Again, due to age, some of our members are tending to day walks, whereas previously they might have considered themselves overnight backpackers. All this is changing the nature of bushwalking and bushwalking clubs. Bushwalking means different things to different people, so what is a short stroll on an easy track for some, is a wilderness experience for others.

Walking in earlier generations was an accepted part of life. Today people tend to walk less, so as a society we are getting fatter. The freedom to walk and roam that many of us took for granted as children, is no longer available to modern kids. Bushwalkers have something to offer the rest of the community. If we can make our environment one in which people find walking attractive and useful, the benefits will be massive. In our document "Towards a Walkable Australia" BWA has put a bold vision. I believe we need to be promoting this concept, and securing the support of key people in the community. It's not something that BWA can (or should attempt to) do alone. Sooner or later, governments will wake up to the enormous potential for walking to solve many health, environmental and transport issues, and will start to pour money into this area. We need to make sure we are part of that.

In October, walking advocates from around the world will be coming to Walk21 the international walking conference. BWA and VicWalk will need to be involved.

One of the issues this past year has been Adventure Activity Standards (AAS). For many years, developments of this kind have appeared, though they haven't affected or been a concern of the club sector. This time however, we may not be so lucky. The crunch point is that it is increasingly hard to distinguish between volunteer bushwalking clubs, and commercial organizations wishing to set up a club, and use that as a means of avoiding AAS. Some land-managers appear to want to use AAS as a condition of entry to limit their exposure to risk.

AAS is an example of the kind of issue which we can expect to be subject to in future. There are many lessons we can learn from our experience with AAS. While some people worked hard at the time, their efforts were not appreciated, the issue itself was ignored, and messages were not passed on or acted upon. In short our action was too little, too late and too badly communicated. We cannot afford to repeat those mistakes with future issues like this.

In March, Marianne, David Reid and I met with the Outdoor Council of Australia at their meeting in Melbourne. The OCA represents a broad range of people and organizations involved with the outdoors. Their scope overlaps with ours in some areas, although they tend to involve the professionals like outdoor educators and camp providers as well as the other peak activity organizations. We definitely need to maintain a dialogue with them, and perhaps should consider a more formal relationship. The OCA is seen by some as the main proponents of AAS, a position they don't accept. Another view (which I could accept) is that they were the national organization around when AAS was first considered. They felt it was within their area of responsibility, and took it on board. Because BWA did not exist at the time, there was no national body to put the club bushwalkers perspective.

In May, I represented BWA at the 4<sup>th</sup> Tracks and Trails Conference in Hobart. These types of event are important as they are the occasion when we get a chance to put the bushwalkers perspective to people who are keen to establish trails for horses, bikes, tourists and bushwalkers. Unfortunately, they often have very little idea of bushwalking and what bushwalkers want. I presented on the topic "Trail Diversity" in which I argued that bushwalkers did not all want the same kinds of trail. We needed long and hard as well as short and easy ones. We do not want one "size-fits-all" tracks. I also tried to explain why the best walking tracks were not multi-user trails. My trip to Tasmania was also the chance to meet some local bushwalkers outside the conference.

...

These and other things will no doubt be discussed at our meeting in Melbourne, and some will need decisions to be made. We will have some housekeeping matters to consider, which may involve amendments to the constitution, or the formulation of BWA policy.

In closing, I want to thank everyone who has supported BWA in some way or other in the past 2 years. I also want to pledge my support for the new committee to be elected in September.

Bill Gehling  
President  
June 2006

## APPENDIX B

### **Insurance Officer's Report Insurance Renewal 2006 – 2007**

I submit my report detailing the result of negotiations by our Insurance Broker, Marsh Australia, with prospective Insurers for the renewal of our insurance program expiring 30 June 2006.

We have again been fortunate to have as our client service consultant Fred Grima who has been involved in outdoor activities and a bushwalker for many years. Consequently he has been able to put our case to Underwriters in a positive manner and I am sure that what we have again achieved would not have been achieved without his assistance.

The Insurance Policies arranged provide Liability and Personal Accident cover for 192 clubs Australia wide with a combined membership of 21,643 members (22,084 -2005). Generally all clubs affiliated with the State Federations are insured under the Liability Policy whereas only 85% of clubs provide Personal Accident insurance for their members.

There has again been some improvement in insurance market conditions which has resulted in insurers adopting a more conservative underwriting approach. This has resulted in a combination of rate reductions and increased cover as evidenced in the Terms offered by Liberty International Underwriters for the renewal of our Liability Policy.

#### **Premium and Remuneration Summary**

Class of Insurance	Current Premium	Renewal Premium
	\$	\$
Liability	124740 (21870)	95920(21343)
Personal Accident	64979 (17860)	65154 (17251)
Brokers' Service Fee	5500	6600
<b>Total</b>	<b>195219</b>	<b>167674</b>

*The figures in brackets represent the number of members on which the premium is based.*

All premiums are inclusive of Stamp Duty based on the NSW rate of 9% (previously 5%) and Goods and Services Tax.

#### **Renewal Terms**

These are the terms offered by our existing Insurers on policy wordings and endorsements which have been tailored to our specific needs.

**Liability Insurance** – Liberty International Underwriters have acknowledged our excellent claims history and have reduced their premium by approximately \$27,000 when compared to that required last year.

The **activities** for which cover is provided will be amended to include **Caving** provided the activity is led by a qualified person and that the club has received a signed Waiver or Acknowledgement of Risk from members participating in the activity.

In addition the claims **Excess** has been reduced from \$2000 to **\$1000** and the **Errors and Omissions** cover increased from \$250,000 to **\$1,000,000**.

**Personal Accident** - Accident & Health International Underwriting have held this policy for a number of years providing an excellent claims handling service. Despite our claims history and a reduction of approximately 600 members they have continued to maintain the same premium rate as last year.

In addition the Insurer has agreed to amend the **Age Limit** to **85 years**.

### **Renewal Premium**

In order to recover the premium (including the brokers' service fee) it will be necessary for the cost to be recharged to Clubs on the following basis:

Liability	\$ 4.75 per member (\$5.85 – 2005)
Personal Accident	\$ 3.90 per member (\$3.80 – 2005)

This represents a reduction in insurance costs of \$1.00 per member for those clubs providing both Liability and Personal Accident Insurance for members.

The renewal premium will be apportioned to the States in accordance with the number of Members declared by Clubs on the Renewal Questionnaire as requiring insurance under the respective Policy. Invoices will be issued by Marsh to each State Federation and will be payable within 30 days of receipt of invoice.

### **Insurance Marketing**

The policies were marketed with current Underwriters, Sportscover Australia and Chubb Insurance. Other insurers were approached verbally, but indicated they could not offer the scope of cover required.

Sportscover Australia who provide cover for a wide range of sporting clubs have again expressed a keen interest in our account and quoted on the condition that both policies are placed with them. Although the premium required was competitive their terms applying to the Liability Policy were subject to conditions which are unacceptable. Further policies issued by Sportscover Australia are underwritten by The Hollard Insurance Company Pty Ltd and neither Sportscover Australia nor their security, The Hollard Insurance Company Pty Ltd meet the minimum financial guidelines set by our Insurance Brokers (Marsh) for approved Insurers.

Chubb Insurance provided an alternative quotation for the Personal Accident Policy but the premium required was not competitive with that required by our existing Insurer.

### **Renewal Recommendation**

**Based on the information provided in this Report I recommend acceptance of the Terms received from existing Insurers as detailed and explained in this Report and that the premium inclusive of the brokers service fee be recovered from member clubs on the following basis:**

Liability	\$ 4.75 per member (\$5.85 – 2005)
Personal Accident	\$ 3.90 per member (\$3.80 – 2005)

### **Claims Experience**

In the past two years there have been a number of claims reported under the Personal Accident Policy as a result of falls, slips etc. In the year to 30 June 2005 there were 18 claims at total cost of \$26,721 which represented a 48% Loss Ratio to Insurers for that year. A further 7 claims

have been reported this year to 24 April 2006 with a potential cost of \$19,400 which will represent a Loss Ratio of 34% for the current year.

Claims are processed by Marsh on our behalf with the Insurer who has consistently provided a fair and efficient claims service.

There have been no claims reported under the Liability policy.

## **Summary of Policy Coverage effective from 30 June 2006**

### Liability Insurance

#### *Activities*

The list of **activities covered** will be clearly stated in the definition of the Insureds "Business" on the Policy Schedule and will include Bushwalking, Track/Hut Construction and Maintenance, Caving, Canyoning, Liloing, Abseiling, Alpine Walking (summer & winter), Skiing, Canoeing, Kayaking, Boating, Rafting, Swimming, Cycling, Rock Scurrying and use of hand held ropes as part of a Bushwalk, Orienteering, Rogaining, Leader Training and other related instructions where no fee is charged other than to recoup expenses (Errors & Omissions), Voluntary Work for various Charities and not for profit organisations.

***It is important that member clubs understand that Liability cover for any club activities which include Abseiling, Snow Skiing and Caving are subject to the member club arranging for members participating in the activity to sign a Waiver or Acknowledgement of Risk in relation to that activity***

The activities which are **not covered** under the Liability Policy include Rock Climbing, Mountaineering, Water Skiing, and Animal Riding.

#### *Limit of Liability*

##### General Liability

\$10,000,000 any one Occurrence

##### Product Liability

\$10,000,000 any one Occurrence and in the aggregate

##### Errors & Omissions

\$1,000,000 Each & Every claim and in the aggregate

The Policy also includes sub-limits of liability in some cases.

#### *Deductibles*

##### General & Product Liability

\$1000 any one Occurrence

##### Errors & Omissions

\$2500 Each & Every claim

### Personal Accident Insurance

The Policy provides cover for members of Insured Clubs who sustain injury whilst engaged in an authorised activity of the club or in direct travel to or from that activity.

*Schedule of Benefits*

Capital Benefits (Death & Permanent Total Disablement) \$50,000

Weekly Benefits – Injury (Loss of Income)

(Benefits payable are subject to 80% of pre-injury earnings to a maximum of \$500 per week- Period of Benefit – 52 weeks)

Sub-Limits of Liability apply under the Policy and include –

Out of Pocket including Injury Assistance Expenses

(Reimbursement of expenses is subject to 80% of expenses incurred to a maximum of \$150 per week following an Elimination Period of 7 days)

Non Medicare Medical Expenses Reimbursement \$2,000

(Non Medicare medical expenses reimbursement is subject to 80% of expenses incurred and an Excess of \$100 per claim)

*Age Limit* - 85 years

**Policy Documentation**

Policy documentation detailing changes in cover from 30 June 2006 will be issued as soon as possible and will be forwarded to each State for distribution to member Clubs. However it should be noted that there will be no significant changes to the current policy wordings..

In addition arrangements have been made for Certificates of Insurance to be made available where required on or before 30 June 2006.

**Conclusion**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the State Insurance Conveners, Administration Officers and all others with whom I have regular contact for your co-operation and assistance in providing information required and in meeting deadlines imposed.

Howard Tooth  
Insurance Officer  
Bushwalking Australia Inc.

# Presidents Report

**2005-06**

*Presented at Annual General Meeting 22 March 2007*

This year has been the most significant yet, something which is to be expected for an organization which is still in its early stages of development. The last report I prepared was in June 2006 for our face to face meeting, only 4 months before the end of the BWA year in September. Rereading that report in the last few weeks, I was struck by the fact that even 9 months later, most of the things mentioned are still highly relevant. Rather than rewrite everything again from that report, and subject everyone to it, I have reproduced it below. For now, I propose to refer to the developments between June and September.

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Let's Keep Australia Walkable!

*Bill Gehling*  
*President*

# **Bushwalking Australia Inc**

## **President's Report to June 2006**

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When I took this job on several years ago, I did not realize how difficult it would be just getting this far.

It's now time to take stock of where we are now, and gather a realistic view of what BWA is and needs to be. I don't want to elaborate too much at this point because I really feel its time for us to do this collectively, not just as one person's vision. However I will say that my enthusiasm for BWA, and determination to see it succeed is stronger than ever. If we fail, it will put bushwalking back decades, even further than it would have been had a couple of people (namely Bill Metzenthien and Maurice Smith) not had the foresight to float the idea, and the determination to get it off the ground.

Why do I feel this way? As soon as I assumed the chair, I was immediately aware that we were stepping into a vacuum. There had never been a national body for walking, yet just about every other sporting or recreational activity has one. Different aspects such as conservation, outdoor recreation, leadership training and so forth had peak bodies, but walking didn't. For all its appeal, and the huge number of people who regard themselves as bushwalkers (or simply walkers), there was no-one to champion walking as the thing to do, and to defend our rights to do it. Little wonder that the initiative appeared to be taken from us on so many issues. For instance, one extreme element of conservation seeks to ban walkers from particular environments. Another seems to want to load clubs and leaders with all sorts of bureaucratic imposts in the name of risk management and safety. Plenty of land managers are ignorant of what real bushwalking is. All kinds of activities, from horse riding and MTB riding, through to ATV users, are also seeking rights, which can impinge on important conservation values and the safety and pleasure of others.

Whatever roles BWA seeks for itself, we need to realize that BWA exists for the benefit of individual walkers and for the environment we wish to preserve and enjoy. Our federal system in Australia means that the majority of our work needs to be at state level. For instance, all our major parks are managed by state governments, and the legal aspects of walking are under state law. This means we need strong federations as the primary force in each state. But whatever happens in one state is bound sooner or later to bob up in another. Environmental issues don't respect political boundaries. Only with a degree of national coordination and consistency will bushwalkers be heard and noticed.

Each state federation has a different history, though there are remarkable parallels between them. Some like SA and WA did not have one until a decade or so ago. Others like Victoria, NSW and Tasmania have had a Federation for the best part of a century. We have all adapted to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in different ways. Some cities like Hobart and Sydney enjoy marvelous wilderness walking on their doorstep. Others like Adelaide and Brisbane have only a few remnants nearby and walkers there have to be content with day walks and some very long drives. Attractive land is seen as valuable and walkers are having a hard time securing its preservation. Fewer opportunities exist to create new national parks. There is more competition for existing parks, and budgets to maintain them are being slashed. Whereas once we could throw all our efforts behind conservation initiative to create new parks, now we have to fight on several fronts. Winds of change are affecting different states at different times.

Another thing that affects us as state federations is our differing financial resources. Most federations have some form of per-capita levy on individual members, or are moving towards one. The fact is that we can only do as much as funds and volunteer time allows. Sadly, there are people who begrudge a few dollars to their club or federation, but happily spend thousands on the latest gear, a trip to walk in an exotic location, or a 4WD to get there. This attitude devalues the efforts of those who lobby hard to give them access to the walking areas they need. As an extension of this, BWA needs to put itself on a firm financial footing, so we can work effectively on your behalf.

For much of 2005 BWA was largely in recess, because your president was overseas, and we did not have a secretary. Thanks to Howard Tooth though, our insurance kept going. The system that Howard initiated, also means that the scheme requires little input from us except when renewals are being negotiated. Well done Howard.

I also want to specifically mention Marianne's great support in accepting the role of acting secretary when it was needed, on top of her job as treasurer. She has also done a sterling job in organizing this weekend. I also want to thank various others who responded to particular issues. Thanks also to Colin Wood for agreeing to be webmaster, and setting up our website. I personally could not have done my bit without the support of my family, especially my wife Kerry and daughter Annalise who created our logo free of charge, and puts me up whenever I come to Melbourne. The support of David Reid and the executive of VicWalk has been invaluable. Also to June at the Walking SA office and to my SA colleagues who have kindly relieved me of most of my local responsibilities in SA.

During my time overseas, I was able to experience the way bushwalking works in the USA and Britain. I met leaders of the American Hiking Society in Washington DC and the Ramblers in London. I went on many hikes with the New York City chapter of the Adirondak Mountain Club, and met their leadership. I visited the office of the New York New Jersey Trails Conference which is the equivalent of a state bushwalking federation. I spent a day working on one of their local government funded trail projects, the kind of thing we could do more of here. We could learn much from their experiences, especially as regards organization and money matters.

One of the problems faced here and by our overseas equivalents is that the membership of is getting older. Younger people are buying gear and seeking adventure, but are increasingly doing this informally, rather than join a club. We have to find ways of reaching this “market” or we risk becoming branded as irrelevant.

Federations are also being approached by members of the public and by small informal groups who want the benefit of our insurance scheme. Again, due to age, some of our members are tending to day walks, whereas previously they might have considered themselves overnight backpackers. All this is changing the nature of bushwalking and bushwalking clubs. Bushwalking means different things to different people, so what is a short stroll on an easy track for some, is a wilderness experience for others.

Walking in earlier generations was an accepted part of life. Today people tend to walk less, so as a society we are getting fatter. The freedom to walk and roam that many of us took for granted as children, is no longer available to modern kids. Bushwalkers have something to offer the rest of the community. If we can make our environment one in which people find walking attractive and useful, the benefits will be massive. In our document “Towards a Walkable Australia” BWA has put a bold vision. I believe we need to be promoting this concept, and securing the support of key people in the community. It’s not something that BWA can (or should attempt to) do alone. Sooner or later, governments will wake up to the enormous potential for walking to solve many health, environmental and transport issues, and will start to pour money into this area. We need to make sure we are part of that.

In October, walking advocates from around the world will be coming to Walk21 the international walking conference. BWA and VicWalk will need to be involved.

One of the issues this past year has been Adventure Activity Standards (AAS). For many years, developments of this kind have appeared, though they haven’t affected or been a concern of the club sector. This time however, we may not be so lucky. The crunch point is that it is increasingly hard to distinguish between volunteer bushwalking clubs, and commercial organizations wishing to set up a club, and use that as a means of avoiding AAS. Some land-managers appear to want to use AAS as a condition of entry to limit their exposure to risk.

AAS is an example of the kind of issue which we can expect to be subject to in future. There are many lessons we can learn from our experience with AAS. While some people worked hard at the time, their efforts were not appreciated, the issue itself was ignored, and messages were not passed on or acted upon. In short our action was too little, too late and too badly communicated. We cannot afford to repeat those mistakes with future issues like this.

In March, Marianne, David Reid and I met with the Outdoor Council of Australia at their meeting in Melbourne. The OCA represents a broad range of people and organizations involved with the outdoors. Their scope overlaps with ours in some areas, although they

tend to involve the professionals like outdoor educators and camp providers as well as the other peak activity organizations. We definitely need to maintain a dialogue with them, and perhaps should consider a more formal relationship. The OCA is seen by some as the main proponents of AAS, a position they don't accept. Another view (which I could accept) is that they were the national organization around when AAS was first considered. They felt it was within their area of responsibility, and took it on board. Because BWA did not exist at the time, there was no national body to put the club bushwalkers perspective.

In May, I represented BWA at the 4<sup>th</sup> Tracks and Trails Conference in Hobart. These types of event are important as they are the occasion when we get a chance to put the bushwalkers perspective to people who are keen to establish trails for horses, bikes, tourists and bushwalkers. Unfortunately, they often have very little idea of bushwalking and what bushwalkers want. I presented on the topic "Trail Diversity" in which I argued that bushwalkers did not all want the same kinds of trail. We needed long and hard as well as short and easy ones. We do not want one "size-fits-all" tracks. I also tried to explain why the best walking tracks were not multi-user trails. My trip to Tasmania was also the chance to meet some local bushwalkers outside the conference.

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These and other things will no doubt be discussed at our meeting in Melbourne, and some will need decisions to be made. We will have some housekeeping matters to consider, which may involve amendments to the constitution, or the formulation of BWA policy.

In closing, I want to thank everyone who has supported BWA in some way or other in the past 2 years. I also want to pledge my support for the new committee to be elected in September.

Bill Gehling  
President  
June 2006

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**Bushwalking Australia Inc A38062***PO BOX 6067**LINDEN PARK**SA 5065***Balance Sheet****September 2006**

Assets	
Current Assets	
Cash On Hand	
ANZ Cheque Account	\$3,237.34
Total Cash On Hand	\$3,237.34
Total Current Assets	\$3,237.34
Total Assets	<u><u>\$3,237.34</u></u>
Liabilities	
Net Assets	<u><u>\$3,237.34</u></u>
Equity	
Retained Earnings	\$8,624.63
Current Year Earnings	<u><u>(\$5,387.29)</u></u>
Total Equity	<u><u>\$3,237.34</u></u>

**Auditor's Report**

I have examined the records of the Bushwalking Australia Inc. No 38062 ABN 829 3472 6062 and am of the opinion that the Profit and Loss statement for the period 1 October 2005 to 30 September 2006 and the Balance Sheet as at 30 September 2006 show a true and fair view of the results of the organisation.

Peter Barr  
(Honorary Auditor)

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**Bushwalking Australia Inc A38062**  
*PO BOX 6067*  
*LINDEN PARK*  
*SA 5065*

## **Profit & Loss Statement**

1/10/2005 through 30/09/2006

<b>Income</b>	\$0.00
<b>Expenses</b>	
Website Expenses	\$144.00
Administration	
SA Office	\$1,600.00
Postage	\$10.00
Other Administration	\$47.08
Conferences	
Travel	\$1,662.35
Registration	\$725.00
Catering and Facilities	\$1,198.86
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$5,387.29</b>
Operating Profit	<b>(\$5,387.29)</b>
Other Income	
Other Expenses	
Net Profit / (Loss)	<b>(\$5,387.29)</b>