

Convenors Report 2024

This is my final report as Convenor after 6 years in the position, it is time to pass it on and I know there are capable hands to hold it. I will always be here to give advice and make sure that we remain true to our roots. I think that it is important to remember who we are and why we are the “Great Walk Network”. That will direct our evolution as we inevitably change into the future. This year we lost 2 of our old Great Walkers, Chris Irving and Terry Salom, both of whom will get a tree dedicated on Ancestor Hill at the Tribal Grounds.

We started as an eclectic mix of dreamers, misfits and changemakers who were passionate about the environment and our community of makers, thinkers and doers. Many of those people have gone on to achieve great positive change in our world and many of us are still standing up for the environment in the face of ignorance and greed. My children have benefited from the wisdom of their elders and community, learning to consider others, their opinions and their actions, at the same time as expressing their own viewpoints. They have grown and gone on to find their own place in the world and our new tribe of children will keep us alive. Our motto is **“Think globally, act locally. We do not inherit the Earth from our parents, we borrow it from our children.**

When we join the Great Walk we agree that we support our Objectives. These are:

- To foster a positive approach to conservation and environmental issues, within individual members and within the group.
- To balance the needs for inner transformation of individual members with the outward action required to heal our planet; and to create a peaceful, caring and supportive atmosphere in all its activities.
- To provide members and the public at large with direct participation and involvement in the environment that we are all dependent upon for our survival by forest walks and forest gatherings, and other activities that will increase awareness and enjoyment of and responsibility towards our unique Southwest environment.
- To educate and increase awareness in members and the public of the issues which threaten our environment, with particular emphasis on our remnant native forests and their associated indigenous flora and fauna.
- To promote the networking and better communication of various conservation organisations on local, state, national and international (global) levels by whatever means.

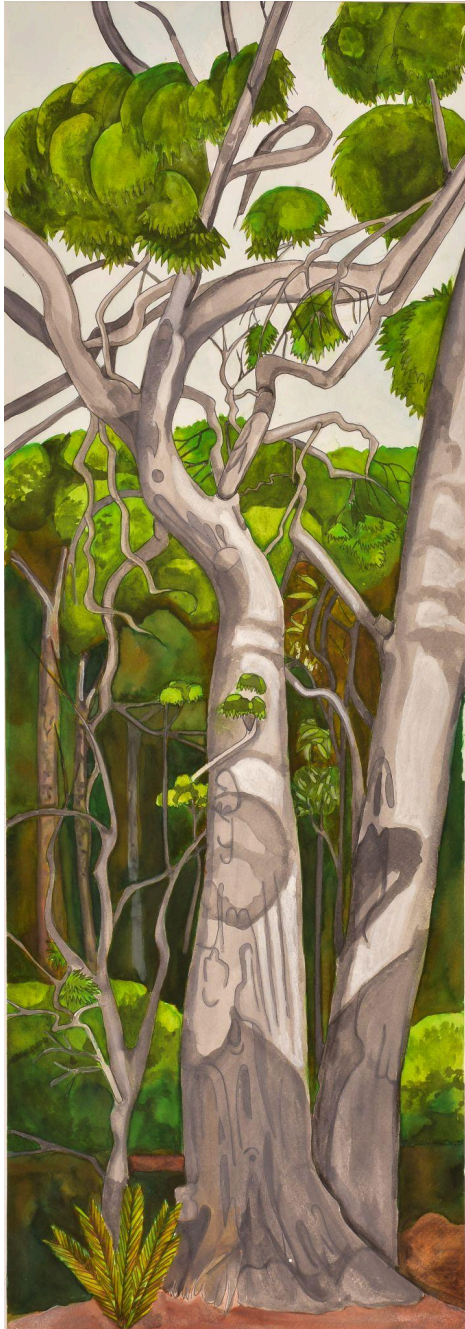
- To develop a flexible approach to the environmental issues which affect us and to be able to commit our energy and resources to whatever action is appropriate at the time whether this be:
 - Education and awareness
 - Political action
 - Artistic expression
 - Non-violent direct action.

For the implementation of some of these objectives we are a member of the Western Australian Forest Alliance, and I am a member of that Committee. I will keep the members of GWN informed of the current priorities of environmental action and we hope to form a sub- Committee within GWN, if anyone would like to join. I am also driving some of the Nannas for Native Forests actions, which is another approach to environmental activism, being respectful and dignified at all times.

We started this year at the Tribal Grounds in Nannup, a property gifted to us by John Thompson, in about 1990, as a resource to use for the development of our Community and our environmental activism. We have been caring for this property since then and many of us have memories of it as a special place. We now have a dam and we are revegetating the property with native plants. The black cockatoos love it there and feed off the pines, some of which need to be replaced (carefully and slowly) with other food sources. We have had an assessment of the property by Rod Cary, a horticulturalist and bushland management expert. His report is available and it should direct development of the property so that we have a consistent approach. We will form a Tribal Grounds sub-committee of members who are interested in this aspect of our activities as well. The Tribal Grounds belong to all members of GWN and we can all share in its protection and progress.

In April Basil coordinated a walk to Cheyne's Beach and Chingarup where we met Aunty Carol Pedersen and Eddie and Donna Wajon. We looked at bush conservation and regeneration as part of the Gondwana Link, a conservation project that Basil has been involved in for many years. Basil was another one of the original Great Walkers who is intrinsic to our development and success. Aunty Carol is a traditional owner of this land and shared her knowledge and history with us. Eddie and Donna educated us about the nuances of the land, we met a pygmy possum and were entertained by "Mal the Mallee fowl".

Our Winter Solstice Busy Bee at the Tribal Grounds attracted a lot of energy and we planted and moved rubbish, had bonfires and built our community. Anjuli did a wonderful job of directing us in the kitchen and it was lovely to have so many children there. These gatherings are another of our bedrocks and I hope the Tribal Grounds sub



committee can promote more of them. In July there was a smaller gathering for the full moon and we had a bonfire with the neighbours. In November we had a final Busy Bee and we painted the hut, directed by Sue Casey, and Marjan and I repaired the bridge and erosion from the dam. This needs assessment by an engineer to mitigate further damage.

Our Spring walk was coordinated by Helen O'Sullivan and we went to Janey and Michael's property at Noman's Lake near Narrogin. This is another conservation property that they have been working on for nearly 40 years and it is a wonderful example of the vibrant wildlife and vegetation that existed in the wheatbelt before it was cleared for farming. They hope to fence their property next, to protect native fauna from feral predators. We then moved to Dryandra where we explored the Dryandra woodlands and attended Barna Mia Wildlife Sanctuary.

Thank you to my Great Walk family, especially those who have helped me over the past 6 years: Marjan, who trusts the "pictures in my head" and helps me lift the heavy things to construct it; Helen, who keeps all the balls in the air; Chris, a "practical man"; Ian, who keeps us on the road; Andrew and Judy, literally, my life savers; Alice, Dom and Chrissy, my hopes for the future; Wally, who kept the hall at the Tribal Grounds standing and directed construction of the dam; Vera, a "business woman" whom I grew to love; Kaya, the "number cruncher"; John Vukovich, my model of integrity, and all the others who have blessed me

over the years. Let's leave a legacy for the future, of a way to live and care, for the environment and each other. I know the GWN has been a model, for me and my children, since I first came as a young woman in 1988.