



ANNUAL REPORT 2026



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FRONT COVER IMAGES (L TO R):

Wildflower walk in Glass House Mountains National Park, *NPAQ/Parks Connect*; Common fringe myrtle, *Albert Wright/CanvaNFP*; Dingo, *Andrew Haysom/CanvaNFP*

BACK COVER IMAGES (L TO R): NPAQ Activities Committee Day Walk; Parks Connect Cadet Rangers revegetation session.

BELOW: President Susanne Cooper with Professor James Watson, who presented the 2026 Romeo Lahey Memorial Lecture. *NPAQ*



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It has been a year of positive growth for NPAQ. Growth doesn't mean just getting bigger—for us, it has meant developing new and diverse programs and increasing our social media profile, memberships and reach; all indicative of a broadening of NPAQ's ability to connect the community with nature and with National Parks.

The Parks Connect program has flourished over the past year, and we're excited about opportunities for future expansion. Kids, teenagers, adults and families have all been involved, demonstrating the thoughtful planning and design of these monthly activities, many of which are tailored to specific ages and interests, especially the Junior Ranger and Cadet Ranger programs.

We have delivered 72 Parks Connect events in National Parks or conservation parks since the program began in July 2025. Our grant from the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation to run the program over the next year has been renewed and increased, enabling us to make use of additional resources.

As usual, the past year has seen several successful events that are now a regular part of NPAQ's annual calendar, despite the decision not to hold the Annual Dinner this year due to rising costs.

Our 2026 annual Romeo Lahey Memorial Lecture was an outstanding success and was again held in Brisbane City Hall—the same venue where NPAQ had its first meeting in 1930. Professor James Watson, from the University of Queensland, shared his extensive experience in global biodiversity planning in his lecture "Beyond area—Why Australia's protected areas aren't delivering for biodiversity, and what needs to change". His speech addressed

how Australia is going with setting aside more protected areas, what has been working well, and what we still need to change and why. The lecture was relevant, well-presented and shared useful data. It's impressive to see such interest from leading scientists in the conservation area, and their commitment to giving this weekend lecture, even during hectic periods.

NPAQ's advocacy work remains a core focus. One major achievement, following on from effective advocacy, was the State Government's funding commitment of \$84.6 million over 5 years to include an additional 150 Park Rangers, which is now starting to show on the ground in the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS). Additionally, NPAQ's leadership and participation in two alliances: the Queensland Tourism and Conservation Alliance, and Protect Beautiful Queensland, helped sway the government's decision to cease logging in native state forests in South East Queensland after the expiration

of the South East Queensland Forest Agreement. We continue to advocate to ensure that native SEQ state forests with significant conservation values are transitioned to Protected Area tenure.

NPAQ's long-term relationship with Binna Burra Lodge, a friendship that has held since our foundation, continues. We have been jointly exploring the opportunity to establish a Ranger Station there, with government support and involvement. We acknowledge that recruiting and retaining Park Rangers underpins effective National Park management, and that much more investment is still required in this area.

Our constructive, trusted relationships with QPWS and The Honourable Andrew Powell, Minister for the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation, also continue, with meetings involving senior executives every 6-8 weeks. Throughout these productive meetings, we have been encouraged to highlight priority issues and opportunities and to present constructive ways forward.



President Susanne Cooper at the July 2026 Members Meeting. NPAQ



Susanne with NPAQ Councillors and delegates from the September 2025 NPAC Conference. NPAQ



Attending the July Park of the Month open day at Fort Lytton National Park. NPAQ/Parks Connect



Lamington National Park.
Maximilliane Wagner/Dreamstime.

Three Members' Meetings were held during the 25–26 Financial Year, including the Christmas gathering at Covent Garden in West End, which was an enjoyable occasion. Our July meeting was a Special General Members Meeting, where a rule amendment was passed to remove the six-year maximum

term of office for the President, resulting in the President now being eligible for nomination and re-election every two years.

NPAQ's viability as an association is directly connected to the active engagement and support of our members, especially those who volunteer to run committees and activities. This positive legacy—from not only years, but also decades of active leadership and commitment from those listed here—is remarkable and is highly valued by NPAQ.



2025 Christmas Party at Covent Garden, West End. NPAQ

Revegetation Group at Jolly's Lookout (D'Aguilar NP): Angus McElnea. This program has been going since 1990, and is now in its 36th year!

Activities Committee: Frank Freeman (Chair), Mary Anne Ryan, Len Lowry, Laurelle Lowry, Ian Peacock, and Heather Stuart.

Advocacy Committee: Russell Watkinson (Chair), Simon Cavendish, David Morgans, Alan Chenoweth, Mimi Dona, Susanne Cooper, Keith Twyford.

Fundraising Advisor: Alan Watkinson—a professional fundraiser who has given us pro bono, insightful advice.

Councillors: Susanne Cooper (President), Ben Richardson (Vice President), Mimi Dona (Secretary), Clare Birnie (Treasurer), and Councillors Simon Cavendish, Russell Watkinson, Liz O'Rourke and Christian Bowman.

Thanks to you all for your input and ongoing enthusiasm. We have a strong foundation for further growth and achievements next year.

Susanne Cooper
(President)

ADVOCACY REPORT

The Advocacy Committee has maintained an active role this year, having met five times online: in July and November 2025, and February, April and June 2026. Good relations have been maintained and enhanced with the Minister's office and the Department executive, thanks to the efforts of President Susanne Cooper and CEO Chris Thomas. These relationships are important for effective advocacy.

Following NPAQ's new Strategic Plan, the Advocacy Committee's annual program was reviewed. The Committee is now focused on five priority areas:

1. Progressing the Yabba Links initiative
2. Progressing the Granite Belt project
3. Encouraging the SEQ Forests transfer process
4. Pushing for up-to-date Management Plans
5. Connecting with the health sector.

Policy work

NPAQ policies on Cycling in National Parks (promoting nature-based cycling rather than mountain biking),

User Pays, and Tourism in Protected Areas are proving a sound basis for advocacy to government; in particular, strong advocacy to promote the new Wangetti Trail being constructed in Far North Queensland for walking and nature-based cycling, rather than the current promotion for mountain biking. The policies have also helped, in cooperation with the Respect Springbrook Mountain Alliance, in rejecting the Gold Coast City Council's Springbrook Cableway proposal.

New policy position statements were also finalised for Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity, and these will enhance NPAQ's advocacy work to protect the natural and cultural values of our National Parks and other protected areas.

Alliances

The Queensland Tourism and Conservation Alliance continues to function well and has proved an effective voice to Government. We believe advocacy through the alliance had a positive role in achieving a better



Mt Kiangarow, Bunya Mountains NP
Adam88/Dreamstime

Advocacy Committee

- Simon Cavendish
- Alan Chenoweth
- Susanne Cooper
- Mimi Dona
- David Morgans
- Chris Thomas
- Keith Twyford
- Russell Watkinson (Chair)

budget outcome for the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation this year.

Working with sectors that share our interests is proving more effective than advocating alone. This coming year, more effort will be made to connect with the health sector. Initial ideas are to consider expanding the successful Parks Connect program to attract hospital outpatients and NDIS participants, building on research that shows connecting with nature aids recovery from illness and supports improved mental health. ➔



Windy Hill Wind Farm, near Ravenshoe.
Rafael Ben Ari/Dreamstime

Issues

The current push for renewables is a cause for concern, with wind turbines and associated transmission lines being located in and close to sensitive natural areas that have high ecological values. While supportive of renewable energy, we must resist habitat degradation resulting from the construction of turbine platforms, roads, and transmission corridors that dissect intact natural areas. NPAQ will advocate for proper assessment of environmental impacts to minimise disruption to National Parks and other protected areas.

There is also concern about the Government's reluctance to update ageing park management plans. With the emphasis

on developing tourist attractions, especially for the Brisbane 2032 Games, park management plans are necessary to guide appropriate developments and to ensure park values aren't compromised by increased visitation and the construction of associated infrastructure. In some areas of high visitation, there is a good case for clustered management plans, where several parks are considered as a whole to protect sensitive areas. NPAQ's Advocacy Committee will work with DETSI to prioritise parks that need updated management plans. There is also an important opportunity to engage NPAQ members to contribute to a review of management plans.

The Government's focus on tourism opportunities presents the need for more investment to preserve the natural values that visitors come to experience. We've had some success advocating for more Park Rangers, but more work is needed to ensure Rangers have adequate budgets to maintain parks and find the proper balance between managing natural features and managing visitation.

Some work went into collaborating with DETSI to conceptualise a Ranger Training Academy to be based at Binna Burra. Unfortunately, this has been put on hold, pending further discussions on its viability.

Opportunities

The Advocacy Committee has considered whether some stock routes could serve as key connectivity corridors for National Parks. They could also potentially serve as "tourism corridors" for walkers and cyclists. If possible, the Advocacy Committee will seek to allocate time to further investigate this potential.

We believe the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games present an opportunity to persuade the government to increase investment in National Parks as part of a package to attract visitors to Queensland even after the Games' completion.

Our advocacy will focus on our five priority areas, ensuring visitors have the opportunity to experience a well-managed, well-resourced National Parks system as part of the post-Olympic legacy.

Russell Watkinson, Chair

MARKETING, COMMS & ENGAGEMENT

NPAQ's 2025–26 communications and engagement focus was on continuing to expand our social media reach, improving our ability to connect with members and supporters via our customer relationship management system, encouraging presenters and participants to engage with Parks Connect Programs, and better digital asset management of content to allow for more streamlined use and storytelling.

Our brand look and feel has also altered slightly to integrate partner logos and needs, and we have been putting in the back-end work for a broader website update, following on from our EOFY appeal. Overall, NPAQ's comms and marketing continue to trend well above the industry average when benchmarked against other not-for-profits of a similar size.

Protected

Protected magazine was released in three issues: Issue 47: Winter/Spring 2025 "Corridors", Issue 48 Autumn 2026 "Hidden", and Issue 49

Winter/Spring 2026 "Collaboration". The online flipbook format has been popular, with more than 1320 combined views this financial year.

Connected

Our monthly eBulletin, *Connected*, is distributed via email to 2200 subscribers. Recently, we have changed how we report news from our CEO, linking to a monthly CEO Report on the website to keep *Connected* concise. NPAQ's Electronic Direct Mail rates continue to exceed industry standards, with an average 37.2% open rate. Link clicks are typically 1–5%, with peaks of 8–15% on Parks Connect/Junior & Cadet Ranger events (for benchmarking, NfP averages sit around 2.6–3.3%).



NPAQ's website active users are also tracking upwards, with a 82.8% increase in views (39K), and first visits up 81.6%.

NPAQ's subscriber and follower growth has also increased as seen below.

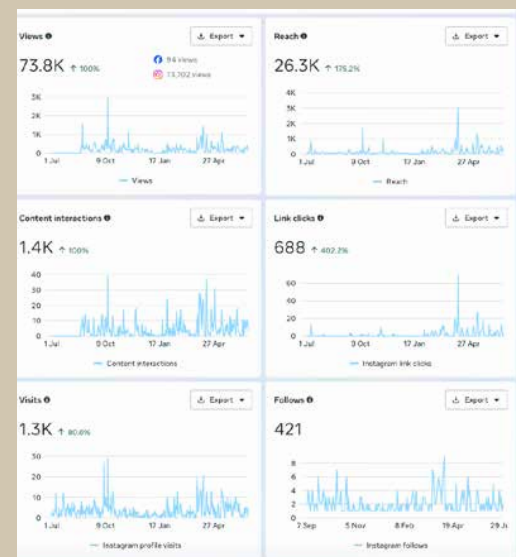
LinkedIn: 1468 followers.

Mailchimp subscribers: 2356, Including 342 Parks Connect subscribers.

Eventbrite followers: 276.

Facebook: 8.2K followers —growth is up 126.2%, with interactions up 78.7% and views of 602,000. Meta advertising has helped us book out most Parks Connect events, with an average Meta cost per click of just 0.08c, much lower than the not-for-profit industry benchmark of ~0.55c–\$1.65.

Instagram: 2.5K followers —reach increased 175.2%, with content interactions up 100% and link clicks up 402.2%.



In March 2026, NPAQ's Council approved the establishment of a Fundraising Committee, which held its inaugural meeting in late June. The Committee's focus for the coming financial year will be on attracting corporate sponsorship and strategising to generate more fundraising opportunities in line with the funding goals of NPAQ's Strategic Plan.

Fundraising Committee

- Christian Bowman (Chair)
- Susanne Cooper (President)
- Karin Cox (Marketing & Communications Manager)
- Liz O'Rourke (Councillor)
- Chris Thomas (CEO)

NPAQ hosted the National Parks Australia Council conference in September 2025, which included a day spent with DETSI staff, a field trip to Bribie Island National Park (below) and an informal dinner (right). NPAQ/Parks Connect



MEMBERSHIP

NPAQ had 277 members in the 25-26 FY, comprising:

3 Honorary Life Members (Individual)
 35 Individual Life Members
 26 Household Life Members
 157 Individual Members
 56 Household Members

Memberships now renew on the 31 August annually to avoid confusion of renewal due dates.

Life Members

No new life memberships were awarded over the 2025-26 FY.

Contacts over time

Jul 28, 2025 - Jul 27, 2026 • Compared to previous 365 days

Total contacts

2,356

▲ 242 (11.4%)

Net contact growth

242

▲ 185 (325%)

SUBSCRIBERS

NPAQ ended the year with a total of 2356 Mailchimp subscribers (an increase of 325%). Our unsubscribe rate was also down 56.3%.

The combined total number of NPAQ's social media list and supporters is 14,800—an increase of 12.49%.

APPEALS

Our members are generous with their time and their donations, with the EOFY "website mending" campaign raising \$7,071, and the overall amount donated for this financial year totalling \$35,222.





Forests for Everyone launch, with Protect Beautiful Queensland. Pat Woods

EVENTS

NPAQ hosted or attended several events in the 2025–26 financial year, including:

- » Forests for Everyone, Aug 2025
- » NPAC Conference, September 2025
- » David Fleay Wildlife Park Open Day, October 2025
- » Romeo Lahey Memorial Lecture, May 2026
- » MERT, May 2026
- » Brisbane West Eco Fest, May 2026
- » Queensland Environment Day, June 2026
- » 54 Parks Connect Events
- » Members' Meetings in October 2025, Dec 2025 (Xmas party) and March 2026.

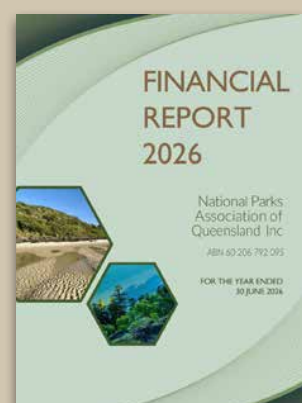


TOP TO BOTTOM: CEO Chris Thomas with Minister Powell at the announcement of Qld State Forest transitions; Queensland Environment Day forum 2026; Brisbane West Eco Fest. NPAQ

FINANCIAL REPORT

Accompanying this Annual Report is the audited financial report for the financial year 2025–26. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the NPAQ staff, Council and members for their support and contributions. I look forward to the positive changes we can make as an association over the next financial year.

Thank you,
CLARE BIRNIE, Treasurer



Click on the cover to read the flipbook.

Activities Committee

- Frank Freeman (Convenor/Activity Leader)
- Mary Anne Ryan (Secretary/Activity Leader/Bird Outing Leader)
- Laurelle Lowry (Treasurer/Activity Leader)
- Len Lowry (Equipment Manager/Activity Leader)
- Ian Peacock (Bird Outing Convenor/Activity Leader)
- Heather Stuart (Committee Member/Activity Leader)
- Angus McElnea (Convenor: Vegetation Management Group)

BELOW: Revegetating Jollys Lookout in D'Aguilar NP has been a long-term commitment for Angus McElnea and NPAQ volunteers. NPAQ



ACTIVITIES REPORT

Thirty activities were completed for the 25–26 financial year. Several other proposed activities were cancelled because of the weather or too few nominees. In total, 199 members and 37 non-members attended the activities.

Feedback from participants was very positive, as shown by the number of participants who returned to take part in further activities.

Activities

The only Social Activity for the year was the Twilight Walk, which was very popular. In addition, ten Day Walks went ahead as planned, of which the majority were in National Parks.

Bird Activities

Nine bird outings were held at various locations, as well as a five-day bird camp at O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat. Birds seen or heard are counted, and the totals are entered onto the eBird website. eBird is an international register run by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, in keeping with the citizen science objective of the group.

Revegetation Activities

Nine Revegetation activities were held in the Jollys Lookout area of D'Aguilar National Park, in conjunction with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

The objective is to rid the area of exotic weeds, such as lantana, and plant native species to revegetate the area.

Thanks

Sincere thanks to the leaders who organised these activities, giving generously of their knowledge, time and resources to raise awareness of National Parks and outdoor activities. In turn, the leaders appreciate the attendance and support of a range of participants, making the leaders feel their efforts are valued. We were fortunate to have one new, younger leader join us during the year, who has extensive experience bushwalking.

Unfortunately, the number of activity leaders is declining as they age and find the task more onerous. Younger members are encouraged to become activity leaders, so that a strong activities program will continue well into the future.



NPAQ Activity Leaders exploring the trails of Girraween National Park. NPAQ



Frank Freeman led a group on the Trachyte Circuit, Glass House Mountains National Park, in 2025. Frank Freeman/NPAQ

PARKS CONNECT PROGRAMS

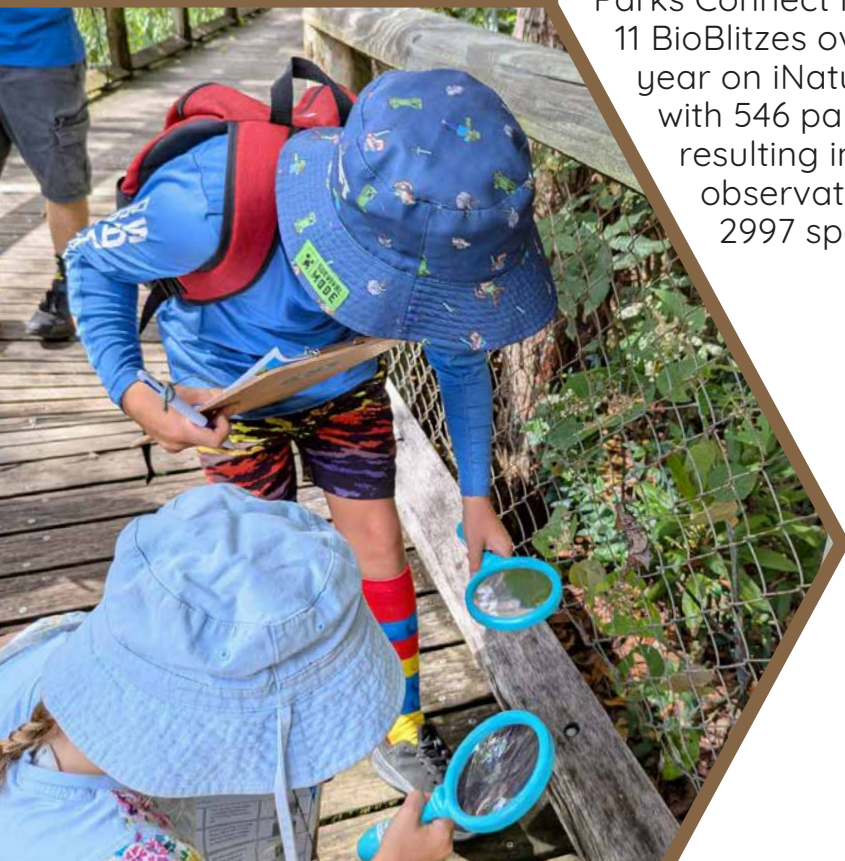


ABOVE: Several of our Parks Connect Cadet Rangers attended 8 sessions to graduate in 2026. NPAQ/Parks Connect



ABOVE: Junior Rangers honed their nature noticing skills and their creativity over the course of the year. NPAQ/Parks Connect

BELOW: BugsEd challenged our Insect Investigators to look closer in February 2026. NPAQ/Parks Connect



NPAQ's Parks Connect Program, operating in collaboration with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, continued to expand in delivery and participation over the course of the 25–26 financial year and attracted more than 1010 participants to various Parks Connect events.

During this financial year, the Parks Connect Mailchimp subscription pop-up was shown to 1335 people, and 58 new sign-ups asked to receive news about Parks Connect Programs, increasing the Parks Connect subscription list to a total of 342 contacts.

BioBlitz

Parks Connect hosted 11 BioBlitzes over the year on iNaturalist, with 546 participants resulting in 8154 observations of 2997 species.

Junior Rangers

The Junior Ranger Program has seen steady growth at both Walkabout Creek Discovery Centre and David Fleay Wildlife Park. Across 22 events this year, 161 Junior Rangers booked to attend, enjoying sessions on food chains, basic bush first aid, botany and plant ID, insect identification, nature journaling, and more. Four Volunteer Assistants were recruited and trained to engage and assist with the Junior and Cadet Ranger programs, with one more beginning the onboarding process in June 2026.

Cadet Rangers

The Cadet Ranger program teaches real-world outdoor and conservation skills to teens aged 13 to 17, putting them on the path to a role in conservation management or park rangering. Over the 2025–26 FY, 21 Cadet Ranger sessions were held, engaging 92 teen participants overall.

'A fantastic way to reconnect with nature.'

Park of the Month

Eleven Park of the Month open days were held in 25–26, attracting a total of 757 participants. Over the December/January school holidays, a single combined event ran at Lamington NP. In March 2026, the open day ran alongside the World Science Festival, hosted by Queensland Museum (Kurilpa), offering a well-attended fungi walk and native wildflower walk, both highly praised. Other popular sessions ranged from conservation talks to survival skills, barefoot opera, birdwatching, botany, fungi finding, spotlighting and nature-based wellbeing and creative writing or drawing pursuits.

Volunteer Rangers

Eleven Volunteer Rangers were assigned to support the Park of the Month events, providing critical on-ground assistance and community engagement. Volunteer Rangers will continue to support Park of the Month events while broader deployment opportunities are scoped with QPWS.

Campground Hosts

Due to QPWS operational constraints and site availability, Campground Host recruitment ceased and enquiries received were directed to the QPWS website to apply for park-specific programs.

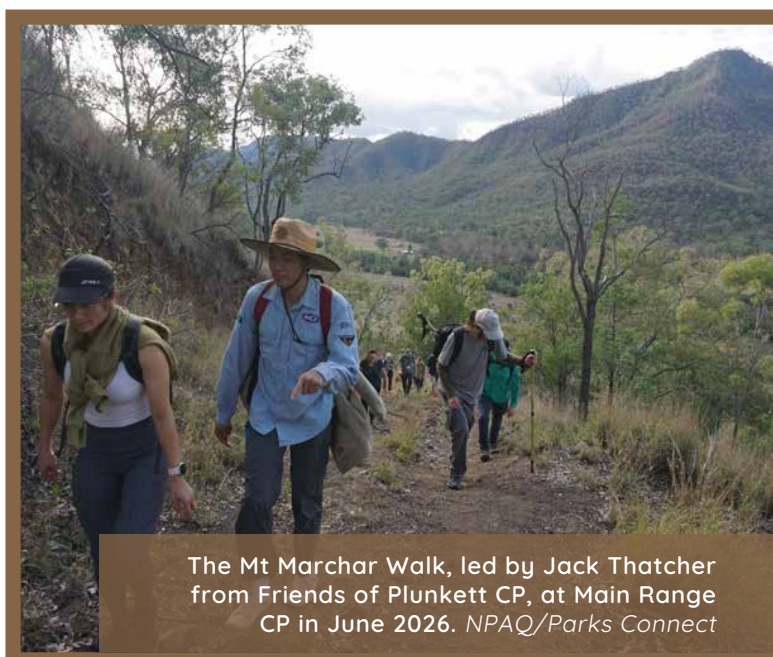


ABOVE: Attendees learned basic bush survival skills with Scott from ReWild at Tamborine National Park (The Knoll) in April 2026. NPAQ/Parks Connect

‘Very good presenter and awesome support was given by the volunteer crew.’



Wildflower Walk & Draw with Sue Davis from Wild/Flower Women at Currimundi Lake (Kathleen McArthur) CP in February 2026. NPAQ/Parks Connect



The Mt Marchar Walk, led by Jack Thatcher from Friends of Plunkett CP, at Main Range CP in June 2026. NPAQ/Parks Connect



ABOVE: Donna McCosker, Alina Crosbie, Amelia Nikles-Ralph and Chris Thomas celebrate 50 years of QPWS with Herbie. NPAQ/Parks Connect

Our staff

As at 30 June 2026, NPAQ had a full-time CEO (Chris Thomas) and Marketing & Communications Manager (Karin Cox) and three part-time staff: Donna McCosker (Operations Manager); Lauren Hicks (Parks Connect Programs Coordinator); and Amelia Nikles-Ralph (Parks Connect Marketing and Engagement Officer). It is vitally important that such a small group works well as a team, and we're fortunate to have positive attitudes and constructive working relationships that combine various areas of expertise.

NPAQ TEAM

COUNCIL	POSITION
Susanne Cooper	President
Ben Richardson	Vice President (appointed 25/10/2025)
Clare Birnie	Treasurer
Joanna Osborn	Secretary (resigned 25/10/2025)
Mimi Dona	Secretary (appointed 24/03/2026)
Simon Cavendish	Councillor
Russell Watkinson	Councillor
Mimi Dona	Councillor (resigned 24/03/2026)
Graeme Bartrim	Councillor (resigned 25/10/2025)
Christian Bowman	Councillor (appointed 25/10/2025)
Liz O'Rourke	Councillor (appointed 25/10/2025)

STAFF	POSITION
Chris Thomas	Chief Executive Officer
Glenys Wilkinson	Contract Accountant
Karin Cox	Marketing & Communications Manager
Samantha Dickson (departed Jul 2025)	Operations Manager
Donna McCosker	Operations Manager
Alina Crosbie (departed Jul 2025)	Parks Connect Program Manager
Lauren Hicks (commenced Aug 2025)	Parks Connect Programs Coordinator
Amelia Nikles-Ralph	Parks Connect Marketing & Engagement Officer
Ally Cheeseman (departed Nov 2025)	Casual Social Media & Engagement Officer

CHAIRS	POSITION
Frank Freeman	Activities Committee
Russell Watkinson	Advocacy Committee
Christian Bowman	Fundraising Committee

Donors

Kim Brownsey, Geraldine Buchanan, Donald Carlson, Susanne Cooper, Colin & Roslyn Diachkoff, John Dutton, Public Trustees for the Estate of Brian Egan, Kathy Faldt, Perry Finn, Shaun Fowler, Bruce Gall, Russell Gardner, Good2Give, James Goodman, Mark Graham, Linda Groom, Tony Groom, Murray Haseler, Jankees van der Have, Debra Huntley, Clayton Ive, Peter Kennedy, Darren Kindleysides, Andrew Lahey, Athol and Maria Lester, Laurelle & Len Lowry, Helen Lucas, Estate of Joyce Markwell, Simone Maynard, Robert McDowall, Kay McIntosh, Joyce & Robert Newell, Andrew Noble, Tim O'Rourke, Paddy Pallin, Kerriane Peacan (Craft for Smiles), Mary Petr, Play for Purpose, Martin Rady, Richard Riles, David Rounsevell, Koert Rozenveld, Ken and Lesley Sampson, Jacquie Sheils, Judy Somerville, Bryan Steel, Clarissa Tedder, Glenn Tozer, Alan Watkinson, Russell Watkinson, Ross Webster, Dianne Maclean/Mrs Whiting, The Curavis Fund-Desmond Whybird, Hans Willemsen, Russell Willis, Phillip Windle.

Volunteers

Each year, NPAQ's volunteers generously contribute thousands of hours, whether in technical or professional support, image library assistance, governance and strategic support, advocacy, event support and activity leading, or on the NPAQ Council and Committees. Thank you:

- Clare Birnie
- Christian Bowman
- Geraldine Buchanan
- Simon Cavendish
- Alan Chenoweth
- Susanne Cooper
- Mimi Dona
- Cathy Duffy
- Frank Freeman
- Penny Hoffman
- Laurelle Lowry
- Len Lowry
- Angus McElnea
- David Morgans
- Liz O'Rourke
- Ian Peacock
- Ben Richardson
- Mary Anne Ryan
- Jillian Santry
- Ben Teschner
- Russell Watkinson

We're grateful for the ongoing assistance from the many Parks Connect Volunteer Assistants who led Junior and Cadet Rangers, as well as our fantastic Volunteer Rangers and Park of the Month Volunteers.

NPAQ Activity Leaders. NPAQ



Anne Neale (left) with Beverley and Athol Brown. NPAQ



Vale

NPAQ was saddened to hear of the passing of Anne Neale, Margaret Moorhouse, Mike West, Michael O'Reilly and Beverley Brown this year. We send our sincere condolences to their friends and family.



Staff and Volunteer Rangers at Moreton Bay MP, Nudgee. NPAQ/Parks Connect

Volunteer Rangers at Currimundi Lake (Kathleen McArthur) CP.





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