

Annual Report for the Year to October 2024

Welcome to the annual report on the 46th year of operation of STEP Inc. Last year's report was optimistic about the future of the environment following changes in government at federal and state level. However, the implementation of the necessary changes is not happening despite statements that legislation will be 'nature positive'.

At the federal level the legislation to revise the EPBC Act in accordance with the recommendations of the Samuel Review is being held up by big business interests so that the new EPA will not have standards to guide its executive actions.

The future for biodiversity in NSW is being overwhelmed by the housing proposals to build thousands of new homes in response to the huge increase in population since the COVID pandemic. The planning law changes ignore existing environment controls and will obliterate high proportions of urban tree canopy in areas like Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby.

At both state and federal level coal and gas projects are still being approved like there is no tomorrow of serious climate change.

Activities

Talks: Our post AGM talk in 2023 was given by Ian Dunlop about climate change and the urgent need to change the paradigm of growth and capitalism that underpins our economic systems.

Also we held talks on biodiversity conservation in Ku-ring-gai, weedy sea dragons, the impact of fire retardants on the environment and management and the nutritional needs of wildlife. Our AGM speaker will be Nicolette Boele, independent candidate for the Bradfield electorate, about democratic engagement on climate change issues.

Walks: We scheduled 5 walks that featured the great diversity of bushland and birdlife that can be encountered within and near Sydney. We thank our volunteer leaders, John Martyn, Wendy Grimm and Ross Rapmund who shared their local knowledge and Beverley Gwatkin who organised the walks.

Publications

We are still offering a year's free membership to anyone who buys a book or map.

John Martyn's new book is about to land on our shores. It is an expanded version of his Rocks and Trees book, a brilliantly illustrated exposé about the Geology and Flora of the Sydney Basin. Details will be provided in an email to members.

A revised reprint of the Lane Cove Valley map is also about to be released. There is still a demand for paper maps that give a big picture for planning of potential walk itineraries.

Committee

The STEP committee has, as always, been a great group of people to work with. We owe a huge thank you for all their efforts.

We thank Jim Wells for keeping track of our finances and compiling monthly finance reports. Trish Lynch continues to keep Facebook up to date and find news of local activities and wildlife discoveries.

The committee members work well together in organising activities and writing submissions. We have been undertaking an investigation, led by Robin Buchanan, on the proliferation of Spanish Moss and its potential consequences, in the long term, on our urban tree canopy.

Newsletter

We are continuing to publish five issues of the newsletter each year. Links to individual topics are also included in the email and are on our website so anyone can pick out particular articles of interest. These articles also have links to previous articles on related topics and all our past newsletters are on our website.

While the newsletter concentrates on local issues and events we also cover broader national environmental issues that affect us all. We aim to be educational but not too technical. We welcome feedback and articles from members about topics related to STEP's areas of interest. You may also advise us about local events and developments that can be published in the newsletter or on Facebook. If you have read a book that you think will be of particular interest to our members, please send us a review.

Accounts

The net cash balance at the end of the financial year reduced compared to last year because of some grants and donations (see more detail below).

The Environment Protection Fund (EPF) balance is on hold in case a major issue arises. We need to maintain this separate fund that is part of our deductible donation status. The Fund's purpose is to support our environmental objectives. We received a total of \$3,736 in donations in the past financial year which included transfers from the wind up of two local environmental organisations.

Our general fund can be used to support educational projects as well as the EPF. We donated \$4,000 towards a student biodiversity camp held at Muogamarra as well as donations to some environmental organisations.

We thank Allan Donald, Chartered Accountant for his completion of the audit on a *pro bono* basis.

Education and research grants

The John Martyn Research Grant supports student research in an area relating to the conservation of bushland. The grant for 2024 was awarded to Solomon Maerowitz-McMahan to support his research on the role that mycorrhizal fungi play in fire-affected ecosystems.

For many years STEP has been donating a prize in the Young Scientist Awards run by the NSW Science Teachers Association. The selection of a winning project out of a wide range of ecological issues is an interesting exercise. We appreciate the assistance of Syd Smith and Gaye Braiding with the judging.

Advocacy

There have been several issues to review this year. The major local issue is the debacle of flooding in Quarry Creek that has occurred during the construction of a new stormwater system in preparation for the synthetic surface.

Two years ago, the Chief Scientist's published the review on the design, use and impacts of the use of synthetic turf in public open spaces. It is very frustrating that we are still waiting for a promised response from the NSW Department of Planning that will provide guidance for future decisions on its use that take into account the Review's recommendations.

There has been some good news with the refusal of development applications at Lourdes in Killara and Eden Gardens on Lane Cove Road but, no doubt there will be new plans submitted in the near future.

We have made submissions on the interaction of planning system with the need to respond to climate change and the disastrous impacts of the new housing proposals.

We are supporting Ku-ring-gai Council and Voices of Ku-ring-gai initiatives to try to halt the loss of our tree cover, particularly large trees that are essential habitat for our wildlife.

Conclusion

A community group like STEP works best with many lines of communication. We enjoy a good relationship with other community groups and local council staff. Information sharing is an important part of our work. To that end we appreciate feedback from our members and reports on local issues that we may not be aware of. It is becoming harder to keep track of local developments as the local newspapers provide limited coverage.

Jill Green
President

26 October 2024

Step Inc, ABN 55 851 372 043

Financial Statements for the 2023/24 Year

GENERAL ACCOUNT

	2024	2023	2022	2021
	\$	\$	\$	\$
Income / Expenses for the year ended 30th June				
Publication sales	5,229	5,654	11,036	10,277
Interest	1,314	162	394	537
Member subscriptions	3,561	3,712	3,164	1,444
Total revenue	10,104	9,528	14,594	12,258
Cost of sales	4,250	3,499	5,625	5,938
Newsletters	89	375	449	472
Insurance	415	455	441	441
Web Site	52	724	45	297
Subscriptions	640	570	570	500
Meetings	900	644	373	70
Fees / Admin	385	332	329	297
Prior Period adjust.	-	-	-	(441)
Total operating expenses	6,731	6,599	7,832	7,574
Operating surplus / (deficit)	3,373	2,929	6,762	4,684
Grants and Donations	7,250	14,250	3,900	4,783
Surplus / (deficit)	(3,877)	(11,321)	2,862	(99)

Financial Position as at 30th June

ASSETS (current)

Cash at Bank	2,458	8,036	18,658	15,338
Term deposit	53,878	52,564	54,087	53,693
Prepayments	-	-	-	-

CURRENT ASSETS

56,336	60,600	72,745	69,031
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TOTAL ASSETS

56,336	60,600	72,745	69,031
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LIABILITIES (all current)

Subscriptions in advance	1,087	1,474	2,298	1,446
TOTAL LIABILITIES	1,087	1,474	2,298	1,446

NET ASSETS

55,249	59,126	70,447	67,585
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ACCUMULATED FUNDS

55,249	59,126	70,447	67,585
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Step Inc, ABN 55 851 372 043
ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION FUND

	2024	2023	2022	2021
	\$	\$	\$	\$
Income / Expenses for the year ended 30th June				
Donations	3,736	365	530	417
Interest	2	1	-	-
Total revenue	3,738	366	530	417
Grants	-	-	-	2,500
Other expenses	-	-	-	-
Total expenses	-	-	-	2,500
Surplus (deficit)	3,738	366	530	(2,083)

Financial Position as at 30th June

ASSETS (all current)				
Cash at Bank	5,473	1,735	1,369	839
TOTAL (NET) ASSETS	5,473	1,735	1,369	839
ACCUMULATED FUNDS	5,473	1,735	1,369	839

Step Inc

Notes to the Financial Statements

For the year ended 30th June 2024

NOTE 1: Statement of significant accounting policies

This financial report is a special purpose financial report prepared in order to satisfy the financial reporting requirements of the Associations Incorporations Act (NSW) and other regulatory authorities. The committee has determined that the association is not a reporting entity.

The financial statements are based on historical costs, and on an accruals and going concern basis.

The following material accounting policies, which are consistent with previous periods unless otherwise stated, have been adopted in the preparation of this financial report:

(a) Tax The Association is not liable for income tax, and is not registered for gst.

(b) Inventories are measured at the lower of cost and net realisable value.

(c) Revenue from the sale of publications is recognized upon delivery to customers. Grants are recognised as associated expenditure is incurred. Other revenue is recognised when the right to receive the revenue is established.

(d) Type of Organisation STEP Inc is an incorporated association (incorporated on 18th August 1986) and is subject to the Associations Incorporation Act of New South Wales by virtue of which the members have limited liability.

Resolution of the Committee

In the opinion of the members of the committee:

- (a) the accompanying financial statements give a true and fair view of the Association's financial position as at June 30th 2024 and for the year ended on that date.
- (b) At the date of this declaration, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Association will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the committee



J Green

B Gwatkin

Turrumurra, 5th September 2024



Independent Audit Report to the Membership of STEP Inc

Scope

I have audited the attached financial report, being a special purpose financial report comprising the Statement by Members of the Committee, Balance Sheet, Income Statement and Notes to the Financial Statement for the year ended 30 June 2024 of STEP Inc. The Committee is responsible for the financial report and has determined that the accounting policies used and described in Note 1 to the financial statements which form part of the financial report are appropriate to meet the requirements of the Association Incorporations Act (NSW) and are appropriate to meet the needs of the members. I have conducted an independent audit of this financial report in order to express an opinion on it to the members of STEP Inc. No opinion is expressed as to whether the accounting policies used are appropriate to the needs of the members.

The financial statements have been prepared for the purpose of fulfilling the requirements of the Associations Incorporations Act (NSW). I disclaim any assumption of responsibility for any reliance on this report or on the financial report to which it relates, or for any purpose other than that for which it was prepared.

The audit has been conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. The procedures included examination, on a test basis, of evidence supporting the amounts and other disclosures in the financial report, and the evaluation of significant accounting estimates. These procedures have been undertaken to form an opinion whether, in all material respects, the financial report is presented fairly in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1 so as to present a view which is consistent with my understanding of the association's financial position and performance represented by the results of its operations. These policies do not require the application of all Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements in Australia.

The audit opinion expressed in this report has been formed on the above basis.

Audit Opinion

In my opinion, the financial report presents fairly, in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements, the financial position of STEP Inc as at 30 June 2024 and the result of its operations for the year then ended.

Signed on: *29th August 2024*

ALLAN WILLIAM DONALD
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT