

Annual General Meeting – Planet Ark Environmental Foundation Tuesday 24th November 2009

Chairman's Address

Welcome to the 2009 Annual General Meeting of Planet Ark Environmental Foundation.

Thank you in particular to those of our members, and supporters, who have been able to join us today, as well as to those members who have sent in their apologies and proxies.

My name is Gillian Turner and I'm the Chairman of the Foundation.

Before we begin the formal business of the meeting I'd like to introduce my fellow directors to you. Those of you who attended the meeting last year will be familiar with most of our directors, but am I delighted also to be able to introduce some new faces to you.

On my left/right is Michael Coleman, who is also the Deputy Chairman of the Foundation

Next to Michael is Lyndell Fraser, and next to Lyndell is Andrew Johnson.

On my other side, seated two along, is Paul Klymenko and next to him is Peter Shenstone.

Seated directly on my right/left is Sean Barrett, the CEO of the Foundation. And at the far end of the table is Wayne Foster, our Company Secretary.

I would also like to introduce Phil Vernon to you. Phil is seated in the audience. Phil's appointment to this Board is one of the items on which Members will be asked to vote at this Meeting.

At last year's AGM I advised that the Foundation was at a strategic crossroads and had gone through a number of changes at both Board and operational level.

I am delighted to report that the changes in governance, the reaffirmation of our strategic direction and the consolidation of our business plan and operations have resulted in a focussed and effective performance by the Foundation during the year under review.

I would like to make a few comments about Governance, and Financial and Operational Performance.

There have been some changes in the membership of the Board during the year under review.

At least year's meeting I advised that after preparation of the Annual Report, but before the AGM, two members of the Board had stepped down. These were Jon Dee and Mike Archer. As both Jon and Mike were directors for part of the 2008 to 2009 year their details are included in the current Annual Report.

Last year I also advised that your Board would be considering the appointment of additional directors and that this would be a staged process.

To ensure that we appointed the most appropriate candidates we undertook a review of the skills and experiences of existing directors. We also undertook a careful assessment of the needs of the Foundation going forwards.

This allowed us to identify gaps in the skill set of existing directors, as well as areas that needed strengthening. It is an ongoing process.

We appointed the professional non-executive director search firm Boardroom Partners to help identify and recruit suitable candidates to the Board.

While no new directors were appointed during the year under review, Andrew Johnson was appointed to the Board at its meeting in September this year.

In October this year the Board also agreed to extend an invitation to Phil Vernon to join the Board. As the Board has not met since October, Phil's formal appointment to the Board has not yet been made, which is why he is not seated at the table with us.

One of the most important tasks for a Board is to appoint and oversee the performance of its Chief Executive.

Sean Barrett, our CEO, was appointed in early 2007 on an interim basis. Since his appointment Sean has worked closely with the Board in recommending and driving organisational change and performance. However the extension of Sean's contract had not been formalised.

I am very pleased to advise that Sean has accepted the unanimously endorsed offer of the Board to formalise and extend his contract. The contract is for two years with an option for renewal.

Changes resulting from an operational restructure, which included the sale of the consumer products business AWARE, make it difficult to compare this year's results with last year's results. Our operational income is significantly down while our capital base is stronger. We continue to work towards increasing operational income and strengthening our balance sheet.

There will be opportunity to ask questions relating to the financial performance of the Foundation when we receive and consider the Annual Accounts. Suffice it to say that the Foundation is in a sound financial position.

Our major physical asset remains the property at Wentworth Falls. The directors assessed the value of the property at 30 June 2009 as \$850,000. Our major intellectual assets are the Planet Ark brand, our campaign processes and the accumulated wisdom and experience of our staff. We do not record a financial value for our intellectual property assets.

During the year Planet Ark was granted Direct Gift Recipient Status. This means that funds donated to Planet Ark are tax deductible. Much remains to be done in planning and developing an effective approach to capitalise on this new status. We are always open to suggestions from Members and Supporters of good ways to fundraise on behalf of the Foundation.

As we are all aware this last year presented significant financial and business challenges to most organisations. Planet Ark Environmental Foundation and its sponsors were no exception. Despite the withdrawal of over \$530,000 in major sponsorships, Planet Ark was able to deliver on its agreed program of campaigns and services. We are also taking vigorous steps to recruit new financial supporters.

The financial challenges did not stop the development of new programs. In early 2010 Planet Ark will launch a new information service for businesses with the working title 'Business Recycling Near You.' This program is based on our successful 'Recycling Near You' for households. It will be a national data base and represents a policy shift towards encouraging recycling by business. It is a timely resource.

The Planet Ark brand remains strong. Broad community awareness of the brand supports and encourages individual involvement in our environmental campaigns. The Foundation has also developed a sound reputation for its ability to offer thought leadership on major environmental issues.

Members of our executive team are increasingly invited to participate in private and public sector policy discussions and standards setting around the significant environmental issues our community faces.

Paul Klymenko is a member of a committee for Standards Australia that is looking at the use of plastic, and Sean Barrett was an invited participant at the 2020 Summit. Sean was also one of two NGO leaders participating from Australia in The Economist Magazine high level discussion 'Beyond Copenhagen.'

Dr Sean O'Malley, head of Technical Consulting at Planet Ark, is a regular contributor and speaker at the Innovation Sessions at the Hargraves Institute. The Hargraves Institute is a think tank which focuses on Sustainability, Leadership and Innovation. Its membership includes some of Australian's major corporations.

Sean Barrett attended the Living Landscapes Summit, along with Federal and State senior public servants. Planet Ark was one of a limited number of environment groups invited to participate in the Summit. Minister Garrett opened the Summit. Based on the quality of the participating organisations the Minister has requested a personal briefing on the outcome so that it may inform his policy development and decision-making around conservations issues.

The Federal Government sought data from our Recycling Near You information base when drafting the national waste strategy.

One of the areas in which we believe we have been remiss is in our communication to Members.

We value your Membership and, as you will have seen from the newly launched communiqué to members from the CEO, we are working to address this situation.

Through regular updates from the CEO we will provide short updates on new developments for the Foundation as well as insights into the shaping of policy initiatives. We anticipate that communiqués will issue broadly on a quarterly basis.

We encourage you to visit our Website, which is updated regularly and contains information on current programs. However, we welcome your feedback on the kind of information that you, as a Member, would like to receive directly from the Foundation. Without your support it would be difficult to deliver our program of campaigns and services.

We wouldn't be able to continue to run our campaigns without the support and funding of our sponsors. We have many sponsors and we appreciate the support of each and every one of them. They are all named and thanked in our Annual Report.

During the year Corrs Chambers Westgarth provided valuable legal advice on a pro bono basis. I would like to record our thanks for their contribution towards our work.

I would also like to publicly thank our CEO and staff, and my fellow directors, for their commitment and hard work on behalf of Planet Ark Environmental Foundation. Without their ongoing contributions, many of which extend beyond the normal call of duty, the Foundation would not be where it is today.