



# Annual Report 2024



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# CONTENTS

President's Report	2
Advocacy Report	5
Activity Report	8
Governance	10
Membership	10
Financial Report	11
Marketing, Communications & Engagement	12
NPAQ People	14

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**Below:** Hinchinbrook Is NP, *Brunnerch/Dreamstime*.

**Back cover images (L to R):**

Carnarvon NP, *Rafael Ben Ari/Dreamstime*; D'Aguilar NP, *Karin Cox*. All other images are NPAQ's or credited in captions.

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It has been another positive year for NPAQ, with several new ventures adding to the core elements of our Association's purpose of 'Connect and Protect', a motto that maintains our focus, energy and connection with members.

We welcomed our new Marketing and Communications Manager, Karin Cox, in April. Karin initiated changes to our social media, communications, publications, and website, and we have already seen a substantial increase in the reach of our social media posts and subscriptions.

Advocacy continues to be a key focus for NPAQ, especially with the upcoming election and with opportunities to advance nature conservation outcomes as planning for the 2032 Olympics begins.

Alliances formed with key groups - including the Queensland Tourism and Conservation Alliance and our active involvement with Protect Beautiful Queensland and Friends of Parks Queensland - have also effectively promoted key issues. Our connection with the Qld Ranger Association continues to prove useful in developing constructive relationships with park rangers and giving us a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities inherent to their work. NPAQ's regular meetings with senior members of QPWS are instrumental in developing a constructive relationship based on trust and a desire to work towards positive outcomes.

NPAQ presented a budget submission and saw several positive outcomes from the recent state budget. Overall, this year has seen some positive results, with more than 1 million hectares added to the Protected Area Estate. However, there is still a way to go to achieve the hoped-for 17% objective, and the lack of resources for appropriate park



management remains a significant issue.

We initiated a meeting with three State Ministers of Environment, Recreation and Tourism and Transport to outline an opportunity to locate outdoor recreation hubs in three state forests within South East Queensland, all three of which lack significant conservation value. The proposal has generated interest, and we anticipate further progress this year. QPWS has also agreed to make a substantial grant to NPAQ to develop and deliver a structured program that connects youth (ranging from kids to young adults) with nature. We are excited about the potential of this program and will be making further announcements soon.

An annual highlight of the NPAQ calendar is the Romeo Lahey Memorial Lecture. Due to moving the event to April this year, two such lectures occurred during the 23–24 financial year. In 2023, former Queensland Chief Scientist Professor Hugh Possingham delivered a memorable lecture on ‘The Future

of Biodiversity Conservation’ – a topical issue that included national parks as well as other mechanisms for nature conservation. This year, the current Queensland Chief Scientist, Professor Kerrie Wilson, presented on ‘Climate Change: How should national parks prepare for the changes and challenges this will bring?’ Our lectures typically attract a broad audience, and these two were no exception. Held in Brisbane’s City Hall – the venue of the inaugural meeting of NPAQ in 1930 – Romeo Lahey Memorial Lectures have positive links to NPAQ’s history and often tease out solutions to future issues.

In addition, NPAQ ran three Members Meetings and a seminar on mountain biking, titled ‘Should we be pedalling in national parks?’ Representatives from NPAQ, QPWS, Griffith University and Bicycle Queensland all gave informative and constructive presentations at the seminar.

The Annual Dinner in June 2023 was an enjoyable event, with former NPAQ presidents



Susanne Cooper, President

Graeme Bartrim and Tony O’Brien as guest speakers and a mix of attendees, including members, supporters, senior staff from QPWS with whom we interact regularly, as well as Pat Comben – the former Labor Minister for the Environment and Heritage (1989–1992). An enjoyable part of the evening was mixing with guests and chatting about a range of issues for NPAQ – past, current or emerging.

We received generous bequests from two longstanding members – Brian Egan and Ruth Read – the latter of whom was posthumously named runner-up in the 2024 Queensland Philanthropic Awards (Environment). NPAQ developed the submission for this award with input from Ruth’s family and friends. ➔



Kids in Parks

A significant addition has been the expanded Kids in Parks program, with 11 activity sessions run mainly during school holidays. Activity days were organised for numerous locations across Brisbane and South East Queensland, offering practical activities designed to connect children with nature, whether creative art, understanding fossils, exploring marine environments, or birdwatching. Samantha Dickson, NPAQ's Operations Manager, was the key person delivering this program, and we see opportunities for its expansion in the coming year.

NPAQ's Conservation Manager, Simone Maynard, has been busy researching, writing and fine-tuning key reports

on mountain biking, ecosystem services and user-pays programs in national parks – all reports that will help inform our policy and influence decision makers.

Our CEO, Chris Thomas, has been instrumental in overseeing NPAQ's activities, deepening relationships and alliances, and initiating new opportunities. His energy and passion for protected areas and his commitment to seeking positive outcomes have been a key factor in our work this year.

Of course, NPAQ could not function, nor have the impact we do, without the ongoing support and extensive input of our volunteers. Volunteer Councillors, Committee members, activities coordinators, archivists and active supporters all generously contribute their time, expertise and resources without seeking any recompense. Their positive contributions are highly valued and make a substantive difference to our work and our impact. Volunteers whom I

would especially like to recognise for their ongoing generosity and efforts are listed below.

**Activities Coordinators:** Angus McElnea, Frank Freeman, Mary Ann Ryan, Len Lowry, Laurelle Lowry, and Ian Peacock.

**Councillors:** Rod Diaz, Simon Cavendish, Joanna Osborn, Clare Birnie, Russell Watkinson, and Glenn Tozer.

**Advocacy Committee members:** Alan Chenoweth, David Morgans.

A genuine thank you for your commitment and energy, which is central to our success and effectiveness.

Finally, our End of Financial Year appeal raised just over \$7000, a sum gratefully received to offset some costs for our Kids in Parks Program. We have also developed a new membership model for 2024/25 that will streamline and simplify the membership process.

Overall, it has been a productive twelve months, and I anticipate many positive opportunities over the next year.

# ADVOCACY REPORT

NPAQ's Advocacy Committee has reviewed its work program, as it became clear it was over-committing limited staff. A critical review has set some clear priorities, focused on park management/resourcing, park connections/volunteers, ecotourism/recreation opportunities, park expansion/PPAs, and mountain biking pressures. The annual Advocacy Program is being updated to reflect these priorities.

The Advocacy Committee has continued to advocate for accelerated implementation of the Protected Areas Strategy. While the State Government has made some progress, Queensland still lags behind other states with only 8.5% of the land mass secured as protected area, and progress continues to be slow towards achieving the government's target of 17% of Queensland as protected area.

With Brisbane hosting the Olympics in 2032, the committee is working with our associates through the Queensland Tourism and Conservation Alliance to argue for an enhanced program so the state can showcase our marvellous national parks to international visitors during and post-Olympics.

The committee has maintained effective relations with the Minister and her office through President Susanne Cooper and CEO Chris Thomas. We believe we are viewed in a positive light and seek to provide constructive criticism and input, especially through our work in developing initiatives such as the Yabba Links and Granite Belt proposals.

Strengthening our relationship with the tourism sector, through the



K'gari, Great Sandy NP  
Nick Dunn/Unsplash

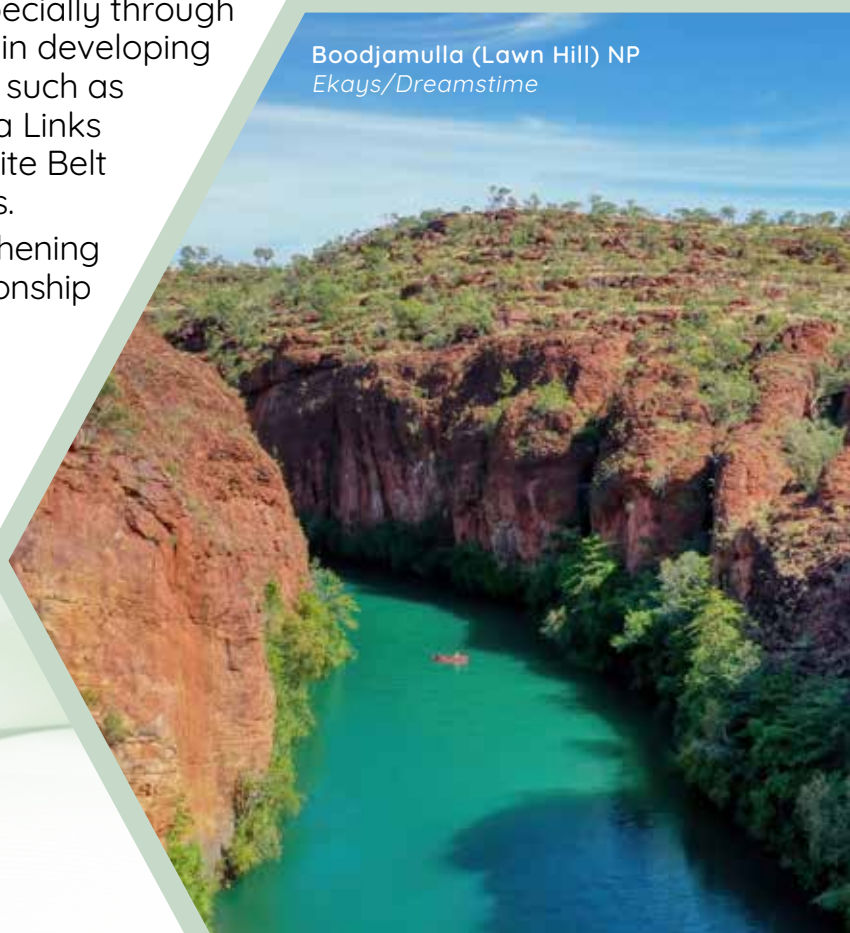


Eungella, Qld  
Vecteezy

## Committee

- Simon Cavendish
- Alan Chenoweth
- Susanne Cooper
- Simone Maynard
- David Morgans
- Chris Thomas
- Russell Watkinson (Chair)

Boodjamulla (Lawn Hill) NP  
Ekays/Dreamstime





Beerburrum State Forest  
Victor Diola Jnr/Dreamstime

Queensland Tourism and Conservation Alliance, has enhanced our ability to influence Government, and we believe that has had a positive effect on the Department, achieving a better budget outcome for national parks.

While we recognise that some members remain wary of such a relationship, we have common goals in wanting to see additional and improved management of national parks. We have agreed a joint position on the 'Adjacency Principle', whereby accommodation proposals should be outside of park boundaries rather than inside.

So far, there has been limited expansion of membership of the Queensland Tourism and Conservation Alliance to include a wider representation of members.

Keen to build on the concept of ecosystem services in national parks, the Committee initiated an NPAQ project to document the estimated economic benefit of three Queensland national parks, including ecosystem services, to demonstrate that national parks provide a good return on investment and will attract votes. We intend to use this report to advocate for improved funding for the state's national parks.

The push to allow mountain biking into national parks continues as this sector grows in numbers, and the Committee has actively resisted this as initiatives come to our attention. The Wangetti Trail in Tropical North Queensland is an

example of where we have argued that cycling in national parks must be aligned with seeking an appreciation of nature; that is, 'nature-based cycling'.

We have taken the lead in developing a national policy position on mountain biking in national parks on behalf of the National Parks Australia Council (NPAC). This will shortly be put to NPAC for approval and will form the basis for state national park associations to resist the numerous initiatives seeking to bring mountain biking into national parks.

We continued to participate on the Native Timber Advisory Panel, although the process was disappointing as the Government wound the panel up before completing its task. There has since been some transfer of native timber forestry areas to some form of protected area, and we continue to advocate for this as part of expanding the Protected Area Estate within Queensland.

## Initiatives

- » We have initiated a study on 'User Pays' within national parks and are developing a policy position, having assessed the research that was undertaken. In summary, we believe the tourism sector should make a greater contribution to the building and maintenance of visitor infrastructure, releasing national park funds for conservation works.
- » We continue to engage with DESI on its Values Based Management Framework for developing, implementing and monitoring park management plans. We now have some understanding of priorities for developing management plans across the state and will continue to seek members' input to assist in commenting on management plans as DESI prepares them.
- » Discussions with the government on progressing the Granite Belt Regional Protected Area have continued. Progress has been slow, but we remain optimistic that the project can be brought to fruition, as there continues to be ministerial support.
- » Progress with the Yabba Link proposal is awaiting the outcome of the Borumba Pumped Hydro proposal.
- » We continue to support Friends of Parks Queensland, an initiative developed by Jessica Lovegrove-Walsh, which now has government funding. We are active on the organising committee.

## Submissions

- » We continue to make submissions on the Wangetti Dual Trail project, pushing for an emphasis on nature-based cycling rather than mountain biking. Significant cyclone damage to the route will result in 'hardening' of new infrastructure and is likely to be intrusive within this World Heritage and national park setting. We will maintain a careful watch on developments.
- » Following concerns regarding a campsite alongside the Noosa River and accommodation at Lake Poona as part of the Cooloola ecotourism proposal, the Government has withdrawn the accommodation component.
- » We continue to monitor the draft Boodjamulla Management Plan, with input from NPAQ members.
- » We responded to the second Protected Areas Strategy Implementation report, noting some progress and seeking better reporting against key objectives.

Mountain biking  
Dorothy Castillo/Pexels



## Committee

- Frank Freeman (Convener/Activity Leader)
- Len Lowry (Equipment Manager/Activity Leader)
- Laurelle Lowry (Treasurer/Activity Leader)
- Ian Peacock (Bird Outing Convener/Activity Leader)
- Mary Anne Ryan (Secretary/Activity Leader)

## Activity Leaders

- Geraldine Buchanan (Bird Activity Leader)
- Angus McElnea (Convener Vegetation Management Group)

# ACTIVITY REPORT

Twenty-eight activities were completed for the 2023–2024 year. Several other proposed activities were cancelled because of the weather or too few attendees. In total, 184 members and 15 non-members attended the activities.

## Day Walks

Five Day Walks went ahead as planned, of which four were in national parks. Twenty-seven members and 10 non-members attended. Venues included Lamington NP, Main Range NP, D’Aguilar NP and Glass House Mountains NP.

A walk along Wynnum–Manly foreshore was the only social event (Day Activity) held, which three members attended.

Five members attended the only bike ride, which was held on the sealed Caboolture–Wamuran

section of the Caboolture–Woodford Rail Trail.

## Camp at Killarney

Campers were based in Queen Mary Falls Caravan Park. Nine members attended and were treated to a variety of activities, including walks in national parks, drives to various attractions, and Happy Hour each evening. The leader’s knowledge of the area led to many unexpected attractions, including the old Border-Keeper’s house, a barn mural and historical bridges, revealing the historical significance of each attraction. It was a great camp enjoyed by all who attended.

## Bird Activities

Ten birding activities were held, including an extended outing in the Maryborough region. One activity was cancelled due to weather. In total, 100 members and five non-members attended these events.





So far, 179 checklists have been submitted to the eBird register covering the area from Yeppoon to Barraba in NSW. In total, 290 bird species were sighted and recorded on eBird, an international register run by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology in keeping with the citizen science objective of the group.

## Revegetation

Ten revegetation activities were held around Jollys Lookout in D'Aguilar NP. The objective is to rid the area of exotic weeds such as lantana. Fifty-one members attended during the year.

## Thanks

Sincere thanks to the leaders who organised these activities, giving generously of their

knowledge, time and resources to raise awareness of national parks.

Thanks also to those who attended the activities, making the leaders' efforts worthwhile.

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



Springbrook NP  
*Alexander Cimbali/Dreamstime*



D'Aguilar NP  
*Karin Cox*



Fungi, Lamington NP  
*Karin Cox*

# GOVERNANCE MEMBERSHIP

## Committee

- Clare Birnie (Chair)
- Simon Cavendish
- Joanna Osborn
- Chris Thomas

The NPAQ Council suspended the Finance & Governance Committee indefinitely on 27 October 2023, in line with Action 26 in NPAQ's 2023 Business Plan.

\*The annual Romeo Lahey Memorial Lecture will now fall in April to align with NPAQ's anniversary.

NPAQ has 278 active financial members after moving to a simplified membership model.

As part of our new membership payments model, memberships will now all be due on the 31st of August annually, to avoid confusion of renewal due dates.

NPAQ has a total of 2076 audience members in Mailchimp (including 1783 *Connected/Protected* subscribers), which is a 2.3% increase over 12 months.

\*It is important to note that the total number of supporters may include duplication across platforms and may not be an accurate indication of overall supporter numbers.

The NPAQ social media channels have a total of 9724 followers divided as follows:

- » Facebook has 6927 followers (an increase of 4.73%)
- » Instagram has 1776 followers (an increase of 4.84%)
- » LinkedIn has 1021 followers (an increase of 40.05%).

By combining the social media and mailing list supporters, the total number of online supporters has been calculated to be 11800, which is an overall increase of 8.68%.

## Life Memberships

NPAQ was pleased to award 7 new life memberships this financial year:

- Ann Ingham
- Don Marshall
- Athol Brown
- Beverley Brown
- Elizabeth Jarvis
- Lorna Williams
- Patricia Lawton

Life membership is awarded to those members who have been members with NPAQ for 50+ years.



Romeo Lahey Memorial Lecture, NPAQ

Annual Dinner 2024  
NPAQ



Ecotourism Seminar  
NPAQ



Kids in Parks  
NPAQ



## Engaging Members

Several in-person events were hosted or attended this financial year.

- » Romeo Lahey Memorial Lectures in September 2023 and April 2024
- » Annual Dinner in June 2024
- » Logan Environmental Action Fair (LEAF) in June 2024
- » Members' meetings in July and December 2023 and February 2024
- » Kids in Parks Activity Days
  - 3 in Sept 2023
  - 2 in Dec 2023
  - 2 in Jan 2024
  - 2 in April 2024
  - 1 in May 2024
  - 1 in June 2024

## FINANCIAL REPORT

Accompanying this Annual Report is the audited financial report for the past financial year (2023–24).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the NPAQ Staff, Board and members for their support and contributions. I look forward to the positive changes we can make as an association over the next year.

Thank you,  
CLARE BIRNIE,  
Treasurer



# MARKETING, COMMS & ENGAGEMENT (MCE)

## Committee

- Karin Cox
- Rodrigo Diaz (resigned Oct 2024)
- Samantha Dickson
- Emily Griffiths (resigned Feb 2024)
- Leilani Johanson (resigned Oct 2023)
- Peter Klein (resigned July 2023)
- Chris Thomas
- Glenn Tozer (Chair) (resigned Jun 2024)

Targeted, effective and engaging communication with members and supporters is fundamental to achieving NPAQ's purpose. Strengthening our public profile, by ensuring issues affecting Queensland's protected areas reach a wider audience, is essential for building a sustainable organisation. This year, we continued to review and improve our communications, working within the available time and budget.

## Connected (Neck of the Woods)

Our monthly eBulletin, now titled *Connected*, is distributed monthly by email, reaching a growing number of subscribers.

Now available to anyone interested, it includes up-to-date information on issues relating to protected areas, highlights items of interest in the news, and features upcoming activities, Association news, and events.

## Protected

Our magazine, *Protected*, has thrived this year, offering in-depth articles on national parks and nature conservation issues, along with reflections on the importance of valuing natural treasures.

It regularly features scientific insights and contributions from a diverse group of experts, including ecologists and scientists, as well as from staff, members, and supporters. In mid-2024, our Marketing and Communications Manager undertook a full review of the publication, resulting in a fresh new look and the migration to an online flipbook format. More than 2000 recipients receive a digital copy quarterly and 137 members get a print edition.



Flipbook or Print

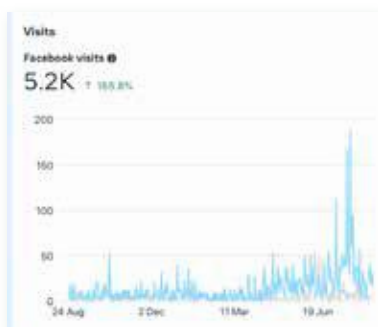
## Social Media

Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube followers have continued to grow, although our analytics reflect interrupted posting schedules during the gap between outgoing and incoming Communications Officers, as well as differences in the dates of reporting.

The Facebook page has seen a follower growth of 4.73%. Instagram followers have grown by 4.84% and LinkedIn followers by 40.05%.

NPAQ's reach has also expanded across most of these platforms, as reflected in analytics. Due to an increased rate of posting video content (nearly doubling the videos on the platform), YouTube content views have increased 200% over the 23-24 FY period.

## FACEBOOK VISITS & REACH

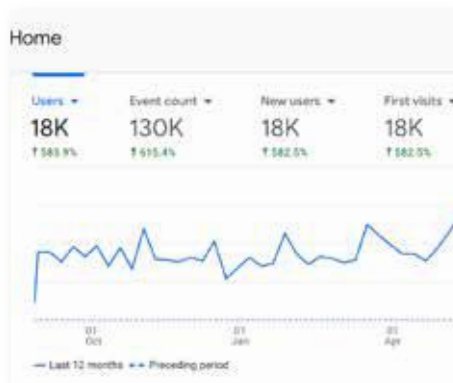


## Website

NPAQ's website has also had a slight design refresh this financial year, with updated banners, colours and pages to simplify it and improve functionality. This has resulted in a general upswing of views, with Google Analytics showing a 582.5% increase in users over a twelve-month period.

[Note: Google Analytics was not set up until late 2023, so this rise reflects some missing data.]

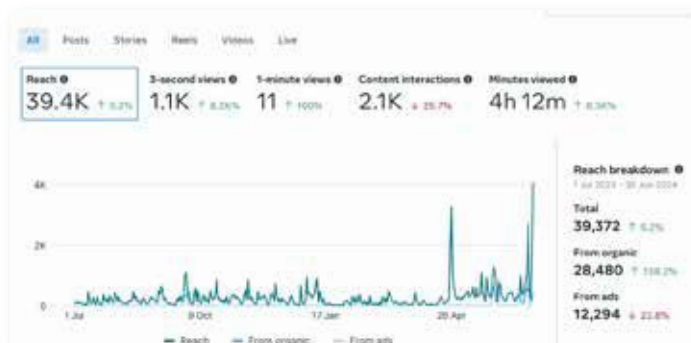
## WEBSITE VISITS & USERS



## INSTAGRAM REACH



## LINKEDIN REACTIONS



# NPAQ PEOPLE



Chris Thomas  
NPAQ CEO

## Staff

In line with strategic and financial goals, our staffing structure ensures that all resources expended achieve the greatest possible outcomes and are maximised in priority areas. Although what is achieved depends on staff numbers, the organisation also has a responsibility to manage its budget.

Staff numbers have remained the same this year and include a Chief Executive Officer, Operations Manager, Marketing and Communications Manager, Conservation Manager and Contract Accountant.

COUNCIL	POSITION
Susanne Cooper	President
Steven Noakes	Vice President (resigned 28/10/2023)
Glenn Tozer	Vice President (appointed 28/10/2023 and resigned 06/06/2024)
Clare Birnie	Treasurer
Joanna Osborn	Secretary (appointed 28/10/2023)
Simon Cavendish	Councillor
Rodrigo Diaz	Councillor (resigned 19/10/2024)
Russell Watkinson	Councillor (appointed 28/10/2023)
Glenn Tozer	Councillor (resigned 28/10/2023)
Emily Griffiths	Councillor (resigned 28/10/2023)
Christine Hatton	Councillor (resigned 28/10/2023)
Peter Klein	Councillor (resigned 23/07/2023)

STAFF	POSITION
Chris Thomas	Chief Executive Officer
Glenys Wilkinson	Contract Accountant
Simone Maynard	Conservation Manager
Samantha Dickson	Operations Manager
Dania Pearson-Adams (resigned 2023)	Marketing & Communications Manager
Sara Byers (resigned Jan 2024)	Marketing & Communications Manager
Karin Cox (started April 2024)	Marketing & Communications Manager

CHAIRS	POSITION
Frank Freeman	Activities
Russell Watkinson	Advocacy
Glenn Tozer (resigned 06/06/2024)	Marketing, Communications & Engagement
Clare Birnie	Governance & Finance

## Conservation Partners

- Sarah Bradley
- David Cassells
- Charles Curry
- Perry Finn
- John Frois
- Linda Groom
- Adam Kilvert
- Vaughan Kippers
- Athol & Maria Lester
- Susie Love
- Mary Maher
- Joyce & Robert Newell
- Simon O'Brien
- Mary Petr
- Richard Riles
- Kenneth & Lesley Sampson
- Marilyn Shrapnel
- Kenneth & Susan Sketcher
- Glenn Tozer
- Ross Webster

## Donors

- C Bean
- Monique Bond
- Patrick Bond
- Sarah Bradley
- Donald Carlson
- CMDT Groups
- Russell Gardner
- Zigrid Georges
- Linda Groom
- Nanette Hansen
- Bruce Hoad
- Debra Huntley
- Elizabeth Jarvis
- Vaughan Kippers

- Andrew Knowles
- Andrew Lahey
- Peter Lello
- Helen Lucas
- Eberhard Moll
- Tony O'Brien
- Judy Somerville
- Glenn Tozer
- Alan Watkinson
- Russell Watkinson

## Volunteers

Our volunteers generously contribute thousands of hours in activity leading, conservation management, technical or professional support, library and archive organisation, governance or strategic support, advocacy, event support, or on Committee or Council roles.

- Clare Birnie
- Geraldine Buchanan
- Simon Cavendish
- Alan Chenoweth
- Susanne Cooper
- Rod Diaz
- Frank Freeman
- Laurelle Lowry
- Len Lowry
- Angus McElnea
- David Morgans
- Joanna Osborn
- Ian Peacock
- Mary Anne Ryan
- Glenn Tozer
- Russell Watkinson



Kids in Parks  
NPAQ



NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION  
OF QUEENSLAND



Sam Dickson  
Operations  
Manager

Brian Egan

## Vale

NPAQ is saddened by the passing of Brian Egan. We send our heartfelt condolences to Brian's friends and family.



## NPAQ

ABN 60 206 792 095

Unit 9/36 Finchley St,  
Milton QLD

Phone: (07) 3367 0878

Email: [admin@npa.org.au](mailto:admin@npa.org.au)



[npa.org.au](http://npa.org.au)