

## Brendan Foran Parting Reflections

There are many things that people say to you at the start of your executive and board director journey that only make sense with the benefit of experience and time.

Of these, the saying “your job is to put yourself out of a job” is the one that I've come to understand most during my time as the Chair of the Australian Land Conservation Alliance (ALCA.)

ALCA was an established but informal alliance when I first joined towards the end of 2017. Not long after, when I was approached to become the Chair, I was apprehensive about taking on the role. The key task (as described by the then Directors) was not to be the next person to facilitate the groups' meetings but to lead the process to legally incorporate ALCA, appoint a full-time CEO and establish a strong governance environment that would enable the organisation's objectives to grow and to expand the membership in unison.

This was quite the list even before we experienced a summer full of bushfires and the global pandemic that followed, but I do love an organisation with a vision and a plan so from the moment I accepted the invitation, I knew I had to get it done and put myself out of a job.

Five years later, that time has come and on 24 February I will officially step down as Chair and Director of ALCA. The process to appoint my successor has been a joint effort of the Board Directors and CEO, following a carefully developed and thought out plan to recruit the person who would best lead ALCA through its next phase of growth.

ALCA exists to grow the impact of its members. To do this it needs a clear, strategic plan that contemplates the policy, development and financial needs of the private land conservation sector as part of the growing global movement towards a nature positive future. To grow impact overall we need to grow the number of members. To grow both impact of and the number of members, we need a board and management that embrace diversity - of members, culture and geography - as a core value. Up until now, the directors of ALCA have been representatives of the founding members of the incorporated entity but as we look ahead with my successor in place, ALCA's new chair will be neither a Director, Executive or representative of any current or future member. Continuity and momentum are vital, so the capacity to act with independence - albeit with a demonstrated track record in and understanding of private land conservation - were the primary attributes we felt were necessary in the new Chair.

In parallel, we have embarked on the process to grow the membership across 2023 with a focus on diversity, engagement with ALCA and alignment to purpose. Once more, this was a carefully considered plan with a focus on diversity, engagement with ALCA's objectives and alignment to purpose, and we needed to ensure we could resource an expanded membership all while maintaining momentum.

In reference to another one of those sayings: “being a member of ALCA is not just about what you get, but what you give.” ALCA seeks to be not just a, but the voice for private conservation in Australia. Put simply, together we are stronger than we are individually, and whilst Chair I have also been the CEO of member organisation Greening Australia. In both capacities I have been genuinely

surprised and impressed by the ability of ALCA management and the policy and sector development committees to glean and elucidate an impressive number of positions and submissions that truly are in the best interests of our sector as a whole. Equally and for almost 10 years, ALCA has always hosted one of the most engaging and informative conferences on the annual calendar, but it is only as good as the platform that we create for the talented and inspiring staff members and leaders from individual organisations and institutions that participate.

And so here we are.

As a global society we are on the precipice of change from a destructive relationship with nature towards a positive one. There is growing recognition and understanding that nature underpins our wellbeing, our food security and our economies. Private land conservation provides a significant opportunity to deliver a solution that is good for the environment and for people.

As I sign off, I would like to say a particular thanks to the Board of Directors who have shown leadership, commitment and passion that has always been directed towards the best interests of ALCA and the private land conservation sector as a whole. I also thank and acknowledge our diverse group of supporters and stakeholders who have always willed ALCA forward and supported us in the best way possible - by getting involved. My final and most important message of thanks and gratitude goes to the staff of ALCA. While growing at present, it has always been a small team who have gone above and beyond what is expected to embrace the vision and purpose of ALCA (which is the easy part) and implement it (the hard part). As Chair, the credit for any achievements or success belongs to the staff and in particular the two outstanding CEOs Nerida Bradley and Jody Gunn, plus one acting CEO Joanna Osborn, all of whom I have had the absolute privilege and pleasure of working closely with as Chair.

I welcome and congratulate our incoming Chair Victoria Marles and our first round of new members Odonata, WWF Australia, East Gippsland Eco Trust and GreenCollar, and wish them all the best in their contribution to ALCA and the private land conservation sector.