

**PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS TO THE MONARO ACCLIMATISATION SOCIETY INC
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, BIDGEE LODGE, COOMA ON 2 FEBRUARY 2019**

Once again it seems that the year has flown by and the issues continue to pile up. What would we all give for a year or two where we did not have to fight to keep the fishing we have, let alone try to improve it? It seems that in this day and age "change" is the constant process, but sadly a lot of that change is to the detriment of fishing and fish across NSW.

Snowy 2.0

Members will be aware that last year I met with the CEO of Snowy Hydro, Mr Paul Broad and in December I signed the "Heads of Agreement" at the invitation of Snowy Hydro. Also, in December the Snowy Hydro Board approved the scheme. With the NSW Government's truncating of the approvals process it is clear that this scheme is well on its way. We are all aware of our concern over redfin and this is the basis of our "Heads of Agreement". I hope that Snowy Hydro will sign the document soon and we will be able to get on with our plan to future proof the trout fishery of Tantangara Dam.

Lake Wallace

The Snowy Monaro Regional Council held a vote in March 2018 on allowing recreational fishing in lake Wallace. As members are aware this was a blow to us, but the vote was only lost on the casting vote of the Mayor. The principle at stake for us over Lake Wallace is one worth continuing to fight for. The council has plans to re-develop other water storages across the shire. If we allow the fiasco of Lake Wallace to go unchallenged, we will face the same anti-fishing approach to these other re-developments. Over December I have spoken to the Councillors who supported us in March and two who did not. While I cannot make any public statement at this time, I am confident we should continue to push ahead to get angling allowed on the lake – we still have a chance, and we must make the Council aware of the importance of fishing to the region.

I also launched the "Fish lake Wallace" Facebook Page, which has proven very valuable in getting our message out to other anglers we would not normally communicate with. While we have been hesitant to jump into the social media

space this experience has indicated to me that it is not that bad and has many benefits. It is my belief that the MAS needs to invest more in social media.

Trout Strategy

The Trout Strategy had a start in May 2018 with a number of workshops held across the State to give anglers the chance to communicate their desires for the trout fishing to NSW Fisheries. As you will be aware it was the MAS that proposed the need for this Strategy to emulate the good work done in Victoria and the start was quite heartening, but from there it has stalled. It is disappointing that while I was given and iron clad assurance that the Trout Strategy would be out for comment before Christmas, I have to report to you at this February AGM it is nowhere to be seen.

Brumbies

Next, I must thank Kerry Pfeiffer for taking on the daunting task of representing the MAS in the campaign to over-turn John Barilaro's Brumby legislation. It is still a mystery to me how brumbies could be given more status than native species in our national parks. While we are not totally anti-horse, those of us who have ventured up to the high country and seen the damage caused by the horses cannot help but come to the conclusion that something needs to happen now. The farcical non-lethal removal program has stalled and there is no way that this fairy tale policy will have any impact on the horses or the damage they are doing. I recently met with the Shooters Fishers and Farmers party candidate for Monaro Mick Holton and I stressed to him that his party has let fishers down by supporting Barilaro's bill. We expect more as I cannot see the word brumby in the Party's name.

Snowy River Alliance

In November 2018 I was invited to give a presentation to the Snowy River Alliance on the importance of river connectivity to riverine environment. At this presentation I mentioned how the environmental flows for the Snowy have transformed the fishery in to one worth casting a line on. I also noted that fish moving up the Snowy would all bump into Jindabyne dam wall. Opening up the Moonbah River to re-connect with the Snowy would provide a headwater

environment and would help bring the Moonbah back to a first-class trout fishery if fish were free to travel up and down stream. This was well received, and I have had subsequent discussions with the SRA on the possibility of the MAS engaging more on this issue.

Also, at that meeting I revived an earlier MAS concept of creating a fishing trail from Dalgety to Jindabyne along the Snowy river. What a wonderful project it would be if it ever came to fruition. We dare to dream.

NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers

As I will explain in general business, I have asked Bill Blair to step into the role of MAS delegate to the CFA. I have found that over the last 18 months I have not been able to devote enough time and energy to the CFA as it warrants. It is a stressful time for the CFA. Its membership is failing, and its relevance is being questioned. As a founding member it is important that we stick with the CFA and we show a high level of support at this time where the CFA is questioning its own existence. We need to be there to participate in this important discussion.

The drought

And now to mother nature. This current drought is one that has made strong demands on some sections of the State, but left others relatively unscathed so far. We were enjoying another magnificent Monaro stream season. Big browns dominated discussions from the opening of the season through to early December. A fifth straight year of good water and big fish. But now it is crunch time. The recent fish kills in the west of the State highlight the grip of the drought and water mis-management that sees the riverine environment trashed. But it is starting to bite here. There have been a number of reported fish kills in the recent weeks, mostly small numbers, but the most concerning is the losses at the Gaden Trout hatchery. A significant number of adult fish and fingerlings have died due to heat stress. The Thredbo river reached 27 degrees for three consecutive days, but it hovered at 25 for a few more days before. According to records this has never happened before. I visited the hatchery and saw dead fish in the river and the hatchery staff working on days off to tend the hatchery fish in an attempt to keep them alive and save as many as possible. I came away from the hatchery buoyed

by the display of dedication and commitment from the staff. I also came away thinking that this is probably the new normal.

While on Gaden, NSW Fisheries have lodged an application to the NSW Government for \$3 million to revamp Gaden Hatchery. The plan is for a new shed to house 4 heater / chiller units which will allow the staff to manipulate the water temperature as required to grow bigger, healthier fish. The MAS has supported this application and the recent hot water event has made this more important than ever before.

Bill Rushton

We lost another of our pioneering anglers with the passing of Bill Rushton. As time passes the ranks of our fore-fathers pass into history. They were men like Bill who built a fishery, built this lodge, developed a culture. It is our duty to keep their vision alive, we have some work to do. Vale Bill Rushton.

Lastly, I would like to thank the members of the Executive for their work during the past year. To Rod Whiteway thanks again for organising our stocking and keeping me and many of the words I write civil. To Noel Buckland thank you for keeping the books and looking after our accounts – without you we might have to store the money in a hidden sock. And to Libby Hovisapian thank you for continuing to provide auditing services to the MAS each year.

To all the members of the MAS I wish you a good fishing year regardless of the perils we all face.

Steve Samuels
President
Monaro Acclimatisation Society Inc