



Friends of Woorabinda Bushland Reserves

NEWS LETTER

Number 59, February 2017

Chair's Annual Report, AGM 2016

Presented by Brian Donaghy

Good evening and welcome to everyone.

A special welcome to Councillor John Kemp, to the CEO of the Hut, Deb Bates, and to Steven Brooks. Steve is the Natural Resources Officer with the Adelaide Hills Council. He has attended I think every evening meeting of our committee throughout the year. It is much appreciated Steve, we are very aware of how little spare time council staff sometimes get. And a belated welcome to Councillor Nathan Daniel, who was on our apologies list, but who is sitting near the back of the room with several hands pointing to his presence.

And of course last but not least welcome to our guest speaker, Mark Richardson, and his wife Nikki. We will be hearing from Mark as soon as we get through the formal business of the meeting.

It has been a good year, and a busy one. The monthly working bees led by Bob and Jane continued and attracted some new participants, who are always very welcome. Despite some weather interruptions, Bob reckons his group put in 220 hours of work, and he himself did another 470 hours. Including work with the CVA, Jane's tallies come to 340 hours.

Together that is over 800 hours, which at \$30 an hour would cost out at more than \$24,000.

But that is only part of the story. There is also the work that Phil and Anne do on their own, including keeping an eye on the regeneration of the burnt bush. Both CVA and Green Army teams have been working in the park at various times, and Janet, David, Phil and Bob in particular have given a lot of time and effort into helping to organise and supervise these.

Add to that the various meetings, the publicity, the correspondence, liaison with the high school, including two education sessions - one of them in appalling weather - on the environmental importance of the

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Annual Report continued

reserves. And then there is the general admin and consultations with council, and you get an impressive total.

David has actually tried to work it all out, and in round figures he reckons the grand total is around 1,400 hours – but I reckon that is an underestimate.

But we wouldn't do it if we didn't enjoy it and think it worth doing. We are, of course, always looking for more people to join the party, particularly by joining the committee. We meet monthly and finish with an informal session over a glass or two. So please consider nominating yourself: special preference will be given to those under the age of ninety, but anyone can apply.

We again sponsored a category in the Stirling Rotary photographic competition, but the response was poor, and I doubt if we will do that again.

We also took part again in the Stirling Laneways market, and as usual did generate a certain amount of interest, but I personally am not convinced that it is worth the time and effort involved.

During the year we had a number of other major items on our agenda: new council signage, the new disabled toilet, the fate of these buildings, and a push to get Natural Heritage listing for the reserves.

I am happy to say that since the end of the financial year the toilets have been finished, complete with an impressive wheelchair slalom run.

The Hut's Deb Bates, who is here tonight, seems confident that the Hut will be able to take over the management of these buildings in the new year. She is meeting next Tuesday with Natalie Westover from the council to go over the repairs the council needs to make before the Hut takes over.

The Natural Heritage Bid was to go to the council on next Tuesday but it was bumped off to a special meeting on December 7 because of the number of reports the council has to deal with before Christmas.

When council staff realised we wanted to mount a deputation in support of the bid, they moved the item to the next regular meeting so that we could do so, which was very nice of them.

That meeting will be in the Stirling Chamber on Tuesday, December 13 at 6.30pm. It would be nice to see as many of you as possible there in support. Deputations are taken first, so you don't have to commit to staying for the whole evening.

Any questions?

AGM Message from Chris Daniels, our Patron

To the Friends of Woorabinda Bushland Reserves,

First let me say how honoured I am to be patron of this extraordinary group. I try to visit the reserve at least 5-6 times a year across all seasons, and each time I visit I am impressed by the quality of the ecosystem, the breadth of the fauna present and the floral treasures that occupy this special piece of land. It is truly remarkable.

Earlier this year I took a 3rd year environmental science class to the reserve to demonstrate just how a piece of vital remnant bushland could be maintained within a growing urban community. The students were amazed at the environmental quality of this gem. However, they were also impressed by how many people use the park, for running, walking, relaxing and for connecting their small children with nature. It was also great to see most dogs on leads (sadly not all, but at least most!). So Woorabinda fulfils three vital functions. It is first and foremost a wildlife and botanical preserve. Second it provides an educational setting enabling the community and especially children to (re)connect with nature and

thirdly it improves both the physical and mental wellbeing of its users by providing a safe and enjoyable place to exercise, relax and get away from the daily grind.

I know that this place would not survive without the hard work of this Friends group who not only maintain the natives and weed out the invaders, but also keep a vigilant eye open for vandalism and damage by criminal or uncaring elements of society. The work of Friends groups generally are rarely recognised, but without them these reserves would simply disappear under the continual waves of weeds and ignorance. I am really pleased to be part of this Friends group and champion you all and the reserve everywhere I go. You do yourselves and your community great honour, but most importantly you provide opportunities for bandicoots and reed warblers, golden whistlers and antechinus to survive and thrive. It is their voiceless thank yous that shout the loudest.

Best wishes
Chris Daniels

A new Botanic Garden?

Should the Woorabinda Bushland Reserves include a Hills Regional Botanic Garden?

The idea was floated last year by Mark Richardson, a professional botanical consultant and co-founder of the Australian Network for Plant Conservation.

A regular volunteer with one of the Friends' monthly working bees, Mark elaborated on the idea as guest speaker at the Friends' AGM in November.

Such a garden would be an integral part of the park, focusing on local indigenous plants. It could deepen the general public's appreciation of the reserves by providing both general and scientific information about what is around us, and would be a valuable education resource for local schools and conservation groups.

Mark has been commissioned by the Adelaide Hills Council (AHC) to prepare an initial feasibility study which is expected to go to AHC staff in late February.

"The study is looking at what such a garden would be worth, is it something that the council should take on as a project, how does it fit in with what is already there, and what would be the benefits," he said.

"I think there is worth in looking at that further, so I would suggest putting in some very basic planning, for example, the area that it would cover, what it would be trying to achieve, and how they would be looking at managing and financing it."

He is keen to consult further with the Friends and other potentially interested volunteer groups on what role, if any, they might play in helping to establish or maintain such a garden.

Mark has worked on planning, reviewing or assisting botanic gardens in a dozen locations around the world including the Middle East, Africa and Indonesia. In Australia his c.v. includes the Alice Springs Desert Park, the National Arboretum in Canberra and the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide.

You can see some of his work at www.planningforplants.com.au.

Hut expected to run Woorabinda buildings

The Hut Community Centre in Aldgate is expected to take over the management of the Environment Centre buildings, overlooking the lake in Woorabinda.

At the time of writing, the Hut's CEO, Deb Bates, was waiting for the Adelaide Hills Council to provide a final draft of a lease, which will then be put to the Hut Board for approval.

The council has already agreed to carry out repairs to the main building to bring it up to the standard required by the Hut.

It is envisaged that the Hut will use the buildings for some of its own meetings and education courses,

and will also make the buildings available to other community groups for a modest fee.

The buildings have in the past been threatened with demolition. At present they are used mainly by the Friends, and by Green Army teams when they are working in the reserves, but they have been underutilised since Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) moved out some years ago.

The council initially offered to lease the buildings to the Friends, but the Friends' committee decided reluctantly that they did not have the time or expertise to manage the buildings on a permanent basis.

Luxury Loo

An all-purpose, state-of-the-art toilet has now been installed in Woorabinda, complete with wheelchair ramp and a disabled car parking space.

The new unisex toilet, which also has a baby-changing facility, is sited just below the Environment Centre buildings, as part of the existing toilet block.

The new loo is open from 7.30 am to 5.30 pm.

Disabled access is from Woorabinda Drive, just past the pedestrian entrance to Woorabinda.

The ramp



2017 Working Bee Timetable

SUNDAY Working Bees 2017 - 9 am to 11 am		
Date	Location	Meeting Place
February 19	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
March 19	Stirling Park	Branch Road
April 9 *	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
May 21	Madurta	Madurta Avenue
June 18	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
July 16	Stirling Park	Branch Road
August 20	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
September 17	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
October 15	Madurta	Madurta Avenue
November 19	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
December 17	Stirling Park	Branch Road
* Moved to the second Sunday in April to avoid Easter		

Working Bees

You are invited to join our working bees at any time. Wear sensible protective clothing, boots and gloves. The Park has a variety of terrain, and can be wet underfoot. Gloves are provided for people using herbicide (swabbing the stumps of woody weeds).

To receive reminder notices for the working bees, or to find out more about them, send an email to Philip Hicks, lhicks@chariot.net.au.

If you are interested in the Thursday working bees, call Jane Schoettgen on 8339 7245.

THURSDAY Working Bees 2017 - 9 am to 11 am (last Thursday each month)				
MEET AT WOORABINDA DRIVE				
February 23	April 27	June 29	August 31	October 26
March 30	May 25	July 27	September 28	November 30

Natural Heritage bid

The Adelaide Hills Council has voted unanimously to apply for Natural Heritage status for the Woorabinda Bushland Reserves.

A Heritage Agreement is a conservation agreement between a landholder – in this case the AHC – and the State Environment Minister, under the Native Vegetation Act.

It is now up to council staff and the Department of the Environment, Water and Natural Resources to negotiate the details and seek the approval of the Minister, Ian Hunter.

Heritage status would not only give official recognition to the value of the reserves, but would also provide certainty and security into the future.

Heritage agreements are ongoing and perpetual, and are binding on future landholders, so that even if the property is sold in the future, the conservation status of the land under the agreement will continue.

The unanimous vote at the council meeting in December came after Professor Chris Daniels argued strongly in favour of the application.

Professor Daniels, who is the chair of the Natural Resources Management Board for the Mt Lofty

Ranges, and patron of the FOWBR, highlighted the quality of the native flora and fauna in the reserves. He also quoted research from around the world which underlined the importance of passive recreation in natural surroundings in an increasingly urbanised world.

There was general agreement at the council that the granting of heritage status would not change the current access to the reserves, including dogs on lead.

Earlier it had been feared that the application might be deferred or rejected on the grounds that the council's animal management plan bans dogs from heritage areas.

However, the management plan is up for review. Moreover, the council, some months earlier, had already agreed to apply for heritage status for a number of other reserves where dogs on lead are also allowed. There was no suggestion or intent at that time that dogs would be banned from those areas either.





Above and below: untangling the mess



Right: Coot and chicks about to be re-united



Monitoring our wildlife

The Friends group has, in collaboration with the Adelaide Hills Council, purchased a wildlife camera.

The camera will enable monitoring of wildlife within the Reserves. The use of similar cameras in other reserves has shown the presence of foxes and deer, as well as native species.

A test setup of the camera

A tangled story

A Friends member and two other residents came to the rescue of a Eurasian Coot in January. It had become entangled in fishing line.

Despite the bird's initial unwillingness to co-operate after being caught, it calmed down and allowed the three to remove the line, which took about half an hour. Once freed, the Coot went back to the lake and was reunited with its two hungry chicks.

Shortly before the Coot was first noticed, two young men from Coromandel Valley had been fishing nearby. They had packed up and left after being politely told that fishing in the lake is prohibited.

This was not the first instance of wildlife injury from fishing in the lake. Last year two tortoises were found dead. Both had fish-hooks in their mouths.

If you see people fishing in the lake, please point out to them that Council prohibits this activity. Lost or discarded fishing tackle is a serious danger to wildlife and to other park users, not to mention the problem for the local fish.



Collaborative Bandicoot habitat project update

The first phase of this project, in which a number of different groups are involved, was completed in November last year. The project area stretches from Mitcham Hills to Bridgewater and is intended to improve the quality of and linkages between wildlife habitat areas.

The first of two Green Army teams, nine people under the leadership of Conservation Volunteers Australia's Gemma Farrow, spent some time in Woorabinda Bushland Reserves (WBR) in 2016. They concentrated on removing large gorse on the western side of Stirling Park, clearing an extensive area of this prickly pest. Other weed control work by the team included cutting and swabbing *Watsonia* and follow-up work on small gorse regrowth in adjacent areas.

All of this work represents a major contribution to the long term improvement of the habitat within Reserves. It also allows Friends working bees to concentrate on other areas.

Another activity undertaken by the first project team was to collect seeds from local provenance indigenous plants and to propagate them at the Arbury Park Outdoor School nursery so that seedlings would be ready for planting by the second project team in revegetation projects at a number of locations including WBR.

The second Green Army team came together under the leadership of Ute Grehn at the end of January 2017 and has already begun work in the Reserves.

Overall, the two teams are expected to have spent around seven weeks working in WBR by the time the second team completes its work in June 2017.

One of the reasons for setting up this project was the hope that we would be able to build on it by being successful in further rounds. However, since the project began the Green Army scheme has been discontinued by the Australian Government.

FoWBR Committee 2017		
Kathy Bowman	8370 9177	Public Officer, membership, website
Merilyn Browne	8339 6839	Newsletter
Brian Donaghy	8339 2033	Chairman
Marilyn Forward	8339 3162	Displays
Philip Hicks	8339 3156	Treasurer, Working Bee Coordinator, Past Chair
Bob James	8339 1903	Deputy Chair
Janet Pedler		Volunteer support
David Ragless	8339 1038	Past Chair, Historian
Lorri Ragless	8339 1038	Minute Secretary, publicity

The committee can also be contacted at woorabinda@internode.on.net

Conservation Volunteers and the weed war

Teams from Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) worked in Woorabinda Bushland Reserves on ten days last year.

Each team comprised up to ten volunteers under the supervision of a qualified team leader.

They worked at eradication of woody weeds in Stirling Park, Madurta and Hender Reserves. Volunteers from the Friends worked with the teams on each day.

Large areas of gorse have been controlled as well as broom, blackberry and *Watsonia*.

Adelaide Hills Council funded the employment of the CVA volunteers and usually arranged delivery of the Landcare trailer as part of their ongoing support for Reserve management.

CVA teams have been visiting the Reserves for many years and provide us with excellent ongoing support. Again many thanks, CVA.



Around the Reserves

The wet winter combined with spring and summer storms has seen the toppling of a number of trees in the Reserves. One of the saddest losses was that of the huge Candlebark (*Eucalyptus dalrympleana*) beside the track leading from the dam wall to the railway line. This came down in September. Some seed was collected from the fallen giant, so we may be able to propagate some young Candlebarks to take its place.

Native orchids again flowered well in spring and summer. Pink Hyacinth Orchids (*Dipodium roseum*) can still be seen amongst the Stringybarks. Earlier, Sun Orchids (*Thelymitra* sp.) put on a good show in Madurta Reserve. King Spider Orchids (*Arachnorchis tentaculata*) could be seen near the burnt area at about the same time.

The heavy winter rains caused much erosion of paths in the Reserves. Council has done an excellent job of resurfacing the path from the lake to the ford and parts of the Branch Road fire track.



Peppertop, *Thelymitra brevifolia*



Pink Hyacinth Orchid, *Dipodium roseum*



King Spider Orchid, *Arachnorchis tentaculata*

Stirling Laneways display

The Friends group organised a Laneways display on Sunday October 23 last year. Many people stopped to look at the beautiful photography showing many aspects of the Reserves: the scenery, birds, wildlife, walkers, wildflowers and working bees. There was also plenty of information available about the Reserves.

People showed particular interest in the display of freshly picked samples of invasive weeds and the further information about these for the Hills area.

The Walker's guide to Woorabinda Bushland Reserves was popular, especially for those who did not already know about the Reserves.



Lorri Ragless and Mark Caldicott ready to help at the Laneways display

Contributors to this issue include Brian Donaghy, Kath Bowman, Jane Schoettgen, Philip Hicks, Lorri and David Ragless, Marilyn Forward and Marilyn Browne.

Affiliations: The Friends of Woorabinda Bushland Reserves Inc. is a member of Friends of Parks Inc. It is a registered Landcare Group and a member of Greening Australia, Trees for Life and the Central Hills Green Web.

Disclaimer: Contributors' views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of the editor, the committee or the general membership of the Friends of Woorabinda Bushland Reserves Inc.



Friends of Woorabinda Bushland Reserves Membership application/renewal

I/we would like to join/renew membership of the Friends of Woorabinda Bushland Reserves Inc. (Strike out words not applicable)

Membership fee for both individuals and family: 1 year, \$10.00, 5 years, \$40.00

\$.....membership fee is enclosed.

\$.....donation is included. (Donations of \$2.00 or more are tax-deductible. A separate receipt will be issued.)

Name.....

Address.....

.....**Phone**.....

Email address for sending Newsletter.....

Please return to: Kathy Bowman, Friends of Woorabinda Bushland Reserves Inc., 2 Bogaduck Road, Aldgate 5154