



# Newsletter

## Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc. Summer 2006-07

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### Chairman's Report 2005 - 2006

I can not believe that a year has passed since our last AGM - it has been a particularly busy year - but as they say, time flies when you are enjoying yourself! I shall now report what seems to have kept us so busy.

#### *Our On Ground Works*

**Weed Control to improve the habitat, biodiversity and visual amenity of the park has again been our top priority.**

We have continued our monthly working bees rotating around the four reserves and the Madurta walkways. These were attended by an average of nine volunteers each month. Individuals, led by Bob James, have also worked on their own at other times.

We have also had continuing support from ten staff of the National Australia Bank who worked with us for two other days. This equates to about 120 hours of labour.

It is pleasing to report that the good remnant bushland in Hender Reserve is now virtually free of environmental weeds and the efforts of monthly working bees can now be focused in other high priority parts of the park.

We are very pleased with the support received from the *Green Web Project* to employ skilled bushcare contractors (**totalling \$6000**) to undertake priority weed control in the park.

**Revegetation work to improve habitat, weed control and visual amenity has continued.**

**This has followed our long term plan approved by Council.**

On National Tree Planting Day in September, 36 people planted 987 tubestock of grasses, ground covers, understory and canopy plants - all of local species. As a follow up, another 300 were planted a few days later.

Our thanks go to Anne Hicks, our Trees for Life volunteer grower, and to Adelaide Hills Council which produced tubestock for our plantings.

It is pleasing to report that the local seed collection and propagation of tubestock for the forthcoming Madurta weed control and revegetation project is progressing to plan.

**Repairs and upgrading of park infrastructure to maintain and improve park amenity has also been continued.**

We supervised the outstanding community service work of energetic members of the Mt Lofty Scout group and International Baccalaureate students from Pembroke School. They improved over one kilometre of trail and repaired a trail severely damaged by unseasonal heavy rainfall.

Friends funded the construction of jarrah benches for use by primary school students at the

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### What's Inside

Natural Resource Management and Climate Change	4
Council News Relevant to Stirling Linear Park	5
Working Bee Calendar	6
Working Bees	6

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## Chairman's Address, continued

Woorabinda Environment Centre. These benches were made and installed by the 'Men's Shed'.

### Environmental Monitoring of the Park.

We continued our previous range of programs, which included:

- Annual photo monitoring from 34 sites
- Bi monthly *water sampling and testing* from the lake and creek
- Bushcheck *monthly bird observations* from six areas of bush.
- An annual *frog census*.
- Mapping of known *Monadenia* weed orchid infestations.

Environmental monitoring observations of the Park were also carried out by the *Southern Brown Bandicoot Recovery Program* (from the Dept. of Environment) and *Conservation Volunteers Australia* as part of the Birds Australia Program.

A program of monitoring visitor numbers in the Park has been made possible with an infra-red 'Traker' on loan through *Walking SA*. This has been rotated around the different Park entrances and elsewhere in the Park. Sadly, some results have had to be discarded due to vandals interfering with the installation of the device.

For much of the year our member, Paul Hannon, has monitored graffiti in the Park and undertaken prompt remediation. Paul is no longer prepared to continue with these efforts due to Council zoning parts of the Park for other than conservation status.

### Monitoring Results

It is pleasing to report that monitoring indicates:

- That weed control is now getting on top of most weed problems. Concerns do, however, exist for the spread of *Monadenia* and for delays (due to a shortage of approved contractors) in getting the *Watsonia* program up to speed.
- Water quality is stable - but nitrogen levels in the creek vary, and sometimes

verge on being unhealthy.

- The authentication of Southern Brown Bandicoots being present in all sections of the Park except Madurta Reserve.
- The number of visitations to the park is of the order of 1000 per week.

### Planning for the future

The year has been dominated by meetings regarding the Council's Management Strategy Process for the Park. Council released a Consultant-prepared draft for public consultation in October 2005. This contained an excellent ecological assessment of the Park's value compiled by independent scientists.

Following widespread community consultation the final report was tabled by Council staff in April 2006 with the recommendation that it should be passed by elected members of Council. Members of the Friends committee fully supported this final report.

Elected members of Council accepted the final report but staggeringly voted 7 to 4 to alter the report's recommendations in two key areas. These were firstly to downgrade the conservation status of half of the park (both the report and staff actually recommended upgrading the conservation status of half the park!) and secondly to change the report's recommendation of dogs on-lead to dogs off-lead albeit with some restriction on off-lead times at Woorabinda.

In an about-face in August Council again considered the classification of reserves making up Stirling Linear Park, and **ignored the consultant's 2 year long investigation and recommendations**. This investigation involved public consultation and scientific assessment.

On behalf of the committee I express deep disappointment that Council did not adopt the final report without major modification. To those who now regard the whole Strategy process as a waste of time, effort and money (\$25,000 ), I say, 'Don't despair'.

## Chairman's Address, continued

Most of the report has been adopted, and if followed, should provide a good basis for sensitive future management of the Park.

Council's final strategy plan terminates the Friends of Stirling Linear Park eleven year partnership with Council as joint managers of the park and vests future responsibility solely with Council. It provides for a new Management Advisory Committee to make recommendations to Council. Membership of the Committee will not be on the basis of representatives of interest groups, but on the basis of individuals with appropriate skills. Advertisements calling for expressions of interest in membership appeared this week.

### *Funding*

While the Park management strategy process was taking place, the Friends group was instructed by Council staff not to apply for further grant funding or commence any new projects, so sadly we have had to let a number of opportunities pass us by this year.

However, during this period our public support has continued. During the financial year of this report we received \$5,246 in public donations and \$94 from the Autumn Gate Cafe as part of its 'Back Scratcher' program. We express our grateful thanks to these generous people. These funds will be used for on-ground works.

Council has previously provided us with some support such as photocopying and postage for working bee notices but withdrew this support during the year. This has increased our overheads and will necessitate an increase in our membership fees.

### *Awards*

We were awarded the *Science and Environment Award* at the 2005 SA Great Adelaide Hills Regional Awards for the extent and quality of our park work. We are proud to have accepted this prestigious award on behalf of the large number of

volunteers who have worked for us over a long period.

The Green Web project, of which we are an integral part, was awarded a *Catchment Ambassador Award* by the Onkaparinga Catchment Water Management Board for 'an innovative and resourceful approach to improving catchment health'.

### *Publicity*

We have continued our seasonal *newsletter* to our membership and also mounted a number of displays publicising the Park and our community volunteer work. These included:

- The Stirling Library on three occasions.
- The Mt Lofty Summit Tourist Centre.
- The Park notice boards
- Isabel Redmond's office
- Matilda's Bookshop
- Woorabinda Environment Centre

I express thanks to all those involved with these displays, particularly Shirley Benlow, who has been the curator of our display material. During the year she has undertaken a large job of upgrading the resources with new enlargements, captions, laminations and storage facilities. Shirley has advised that she will retire at this AGM. We will miss her - but she leaves us with a wonderfully organised resource for the future.

### *Meetings*

Your Committee has continued to meet on a monthly basis, and members and other supporters have attended a large number of other meetings, mostly to do with Council's Management Strategy process. There have often been several of these meetings per week.. This has been reflected in a record number of volunteer hours having been spent during the year at meetings. We particularly thank Andrew Murray and Rob Tanner for their work.

### *Ombudsman supports us*

Members will recall that in 2004 Council

## Chairman's Address, continued

described a leaflet prepared and distributed by Friends as giving 'inaccurate information' and because of this, the 95 letters from the community calling for the Park to be classified as Conservation, could be ignored by Councillors.

You will also recall that your committee did not believe that the leaflet was inaccurate when it was written and distributed, and that Council, in suggesting that the letters could be ignored, was blatantly disregarding the results of community consultation.

This issue has been investigated by the State Government Ombudsman who, following a year of investigation, concluded: *'I do not consider that the leaflet, in any material way, gave information which was inaccurate at the time it was written. ... I consider that it was wrong for the report which went to Council to simply state 'There have been 95 letters regarding the plans .The majority were regarding Woorabinda and Hender Reserves following an extensive*

*letterbox drop giving inaccurate information'*

Other information in the Ombudsman's report expresses '*surprise and regret*' that Council could not resolve this issue by adopting a letter of apology drafted by his office, to be sent to representatives of the Friends.

### Conclusion

We continue to be members of Trees for Life and Friends of Parks Inc, we are a partner in the NRM Green Web and a registered Landcare group and continue to have Income Tax Deductible Gift Recipient Status.

There were 3732 volunteer hours donated to the park in 2005-06. I express thanks to everyone who has worked or supported us this last year, and look forward to your continued support of this beautiful piece of water catchment and wildlife habitat, so needed for the future.

David Ragless

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## Natural Resource Management and Climate Change

Following the October 2006 Annual General Meeting, Dr Douglas Bardsley of the SA Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation gave a very interesting presentation on 'Climate Change Impacts on Natural Resource Management in the Adelaide Mt Lofty Ranges'.

The presentation outlined some of the information in the report prepared by Dr Bardsley for his Department, entitled *There's a Change on the Way – an Initial Assessment of Projected Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation Options for Natural Resource Management in the Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges Region*.

The report covers flood management, ground and surface water, coastal management, biodiversity conservation, invasive species, parks and gardens, revegetation and forestry, agricultural production, land management, bushfires and air quality, identifying climate change impacts and adaptation responses for each.

Regarding projected climate change for the Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges region (AMLR) the report states:

*'A warming/drying trend is projected for the AMLR, as well as less reliable rainfall, later breaks in the winter growing season, more extreme weather events and hotter, longer, hot spells. The AMLR region is in effect an 'island' of cool moist environmental conditions in a 'sea' of relatively arid conditions. Such islands are shown to be highly vulnerable to rapid environmental change.'*

The full report can be found at:

[www.dwlbc.sa.gov.au/assets/files/ki\\_dwlbc\\_report\\_2006\\_06db.pdf](http://www.dwlbc.sa.gov.au/assets/files/ki_dwlbc_report_2006_06db.pdf)

## **Council News relevant to Stirling Linear Park**

### **New Mt Lofty Ward Councillors**

Mr Jeff Purdie and Mr John Kemp were elected to the Mt Lofty ward at the recent Council elections. Both have already shown an interest in a broad range of issues of concern to residents and are most approachable.

### **Advisory Committee for Stirling Linear Park**

Last spring the Adelaide Hills Council called for expressions of interest from appropriate people to form an Advisory Committee to advise Council on management of Stirling Linear Park. Those expressing interest could not represent any interest groups and should have skills and experience relevant to managing the Park.

We understand that about thirteen people expressed interest, and that Council has nominated a Council Selection Panel to make recommendations on who should be on the Advisory Committee. Due to Council elections and the Christmas break this has not yet happened. We hope the appointments will be made soon because for several months the Park's management has effectively been in limbo.

### **Farewell to Glen Williams**

At the end of last year *Glen Williams*, the Natural Resource Officer with Council, resigned to take up a job in Western Australia with a community Landcare project focusing on dryland salinity abatement.

Glen will be missed. After more than a decade with our Council his knowledge and experience will be hard to replace. He will particularly be remembered for his major contribution in establishing the Central Hills Green Web project, which includes SLP.

We understand that his position will be filled (not abolished as happened to the other Council Natural Resource Officer position when *Ray James* resigned.)

Glen was appointed to act as liaison

officer between Council and community environmental groups. He was a stalwart and worked endlessly to help people, often in frustrating circumstances. We wish him well in his new job.

### **New Council Director of Engineering**

Following the resignation of *Mr Robert Harris*, Council has appointed *Mr Howard Lacy* as his replacement. As the Council Director responsible for Stirling Linear Park we are pleased to report that *Mr Lacy* is seeking dialogue with the community and is also seeking accurate information on environmental issues from independent professionals.

### **Australia Day Awards 2007**

Council awarded Civic Awards to both the *Green Web Project* and to Friends member *David Ragless*.

The *Green Web* award was for service to the environment in establishing a district-wide collaborative project to link up and expand fragments of remnant native bushland. This award was accepted by *David Mussared*, Chair of the group's management committee. The project includes over 50 properties, both public and privately owned. Stirling Linear Park is a member of the *Green Web*.

The award to *David Ragless* was for almost 20 years local volunteer work for the Stirling Linear Park as well as volunteer work over 25 years at local, state and national levels for Oxfam (previously Community Aid Abroad).

### **Ombudsman rejects Council claim**

In 2005 over 90 people wrote letters to Council, expressing fears that the Park could be opened up to a range of more active uses, recommending that this not happen and that the Park remain primarily for conservation and continue to allow appropriate passive use.

Council staff discounted the value of this display of public concern, saying that the

## WORKING BEES, 2007

Date	Location	Meeting place
February 18	Walking Trails	Cnr Bogaduck & Linwood Ave
March 18	Madurta	Madurta Ave
April 15	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
May 20	"	" "
June 17	Stirling Park	Branch Road
July 15	Madurta	Madurta Ave
August 19	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
September 16	"	" "
October 21	Stirling Park	Branch Road
November 18	Madurta	Madurta Drive
December 16	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
<b>Time: 10.00 am-12 noon</b>		

## Working Bees

Hender Reserve is looking good at the moment with several troublesome weed species such as *Acacia longifolia*, *Acacia decurrens* (black wattle) and *Pittosporum* virtually eliminated, and blackberry well under control. It has been decided that no more monthly working bees need be held there; rather an additional working bee will be held at Woorabinda where there is a higher priority of weed removal.

Consequently, two of the last three monthly working bees have been at Woorabinda, removing weeds in the area adjacent the railway line track, where broom, gorse etc. had started to come back. We cleaned out much of this. However, blackberry and watsonia still remain. These working bees were not well attended with only six and four members respectively. The December working bee was held in Stirling Linear Park. Eight people attended

and removed gorse from the northern slopes.

The decline in the number of Working Bee volunteers is giving the Committee some concern, and we are considering what we can do to attract more each month. 12 to 16 members make a good number for a working bee. A suggestion is to place a sign in the area last worked on to focus people's attention on the positive work being done, which may encourage them to join us.

The monthly Working Bee program is included in this newsletter: please consider if you are able to attend on the third Sunday in each month at 10:00 - 12:00 am or part thereof. Tools are provided, but it is best if you bring your favourite strong gardening gloves.

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## Ombudsman rejects Council Claim, continued

letters were a result of a letterbox drop by Friends which gave inaccurate information. Following suggestions from non-involved and concerned people, a complaint was lodged with the State Government Ombudsman by two members of the Friends. (Complaints must be from individuals.)

After more than a year of investigation the Ombudsman concluded that the Friends leaflet was **not inaccurate** at the time of its distribution as claimed by Council. We are pleased to be able to report to you that our claim to have provided **accurate information** has been officially vindicated by the State Government