



Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc.

Summer 2011

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT, AGM 2009-10

This is the fourth FSLP annual report that I have presented. When I reflect on the year since the last annual report, I would have to say that in some ways it has been a less satisfactory year than the previous three that I reported on. Thankfully, in some other ways it has been as satisfying as previous years.

In this report, I will depart from the approach of previous reports and begin with some comments on Council decisions.

I would like to briefly refer to two related Council decisions made late last year since our last AGM: dog off/on leash areas and the review of revegetation in Stirling Park.

Dog on/off leash areas

I will not discuss this subject at length as it has already been well canvassed but will comment on specific issues. Before doing so, I will just reiterate FSLP's position that firstly, SLP is a park for the whole community and secondly, we remain of the view that dogs should be on leash at all times for the protection of both the community who use the park and of its valuable habitat.

Some comments on the process by which Council reached its decision about on/off leash areas: the SLP Advisory Committee made recommendations to Council which represented an improvement on the status quo but these recommendations were amended by Council members before being considered at a Council meeting. I and other 'interested parties' were invited to make a presentation to Council on behalf of FSLP on this matter. However, further significant amendments were proposed immediately after the presentations. This meant that I and others who made presentations did not have the opportunity to address the significantly altered proposals that Council voted on.

I will not comment further on this subject apart from noting my concern that one of the amendments proposed after the presentations and passed by Council was based on inaccurate information. If implemented, this would have resulted in a dog off-leash path through good bush in Hender Reserve in what was proposed as a dog on-leash area. I refer to this matter as I have been pursuing it, on behalf of FSLP, since late last year and it is still unresolved.

Revegetation

A few comments on Council's decision to stop revegetation in Stirling Park while a review is undertaken: this has meant that we have not been able to plant seedlings grown in advance for this purpose. These seedlings were of species specified in the existing approved revegetation plan and were grown to backfill existing revegetation areas in accordance with the plan.

Growing seedlings for revegetation involves considerable lead time on the part of volunteer growers: planning, submitting orders for materials from Trees for Life and then a lot of propagation work. While FSLP understands concerns about fire risk management, we would like to have been consulted or at

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least advised before this decision was made as a lot effort on the part of volunteer seed growers could have been saved or redirected elsewhere.

A further consequence of the decision on revegetation in Stirling Park was that we decided not to supervise a Green Jobs Corps team in FSLP this year whereas in each of the last two years we supervised Green Corps teams on average around one day a week for six months. This decision was made because the team would not be able to undertake the primary activities of planting seedlings in Stirling Park and clearing extensive areas of dense gorse in preparation, as had been done in previous years.

Advisory Committee

The second Council-appointed Stirling Linear Park Advisory Committee commenced meeting in late 2009 and has continued to hold monthly meetings. The Committee includes two Council representatives: Councillor Ron Nelson (chair) and Councillor John Kemp, and six members of the public.

The Advisory Committee is working on a wider range of issues than the first Advisory Committee. Sub-committees have been formed to consider revegetation and fire management. Advisory Committee members have sought information from FSLP on other subjects including grant funding opportunities.

FSLP accepted an invitation to address the Advisory Committee in June. I outlined FSLP's role and ongoing activities in the Park, highlighting our ongoing bushcare and revegetation work, and future infrastructure priorities. Brian Donaghy, who is also a member of the Aldgate CFS, discussed fire management related activities that he has undertaken in the Park on behalf of FSLP. The FSLP members then raised questions and discussion points on subjects including revegetation in Stirling Park and the route of the Hender Trail, already referred to.

Advisory Committee members indicated that they expected to seek input from FSLP as they considered particular subjects, including revegetation and fire management.

Bushcare and Weed Control

Bushcare and weed control in the park have continued to be our major focus. Over the last year we have maintained our program of monthly bushcare working bees in Woorabinda,

Stirling Park and Madurta. They have been attended by from three to twelve people, with the main reason for numbers on the lower side on a few occasions being members away on holidays. Unfortunately, two consecutive working bees were washed out. A few regulars were able to compensate for this by doing weeding after the weather fined up. The details of each working bee are set out in our periodic Newsletters.

Once again, I would like to thank Bob James for continuing his role in organising our monthly working bees and also for his ongoing daily work in Hender. As in the last few years, we have not been scheduling working bees in Hender as a result of the progress made over a long period by Bob in clearing a large proportion of the good bush of major weed threats. While there are still significant areas of weeds to be cleared from Hender, these are mainly large infestations of weeds that need to be worked on by dedicated teams or under Council supervision.

I would also like to thank Jane Schoettgen for her valuable work on removing weeds from areas of Madurta and Woorabinda as well as her effort in coordinating a recent working bee when Bob and I were away.

Our working bees have continued our overall long term strategy of working outwards from areas of good bush. At times over the last three or four years we have modified our approach to working bees to focus on specific weeds at particular times of the year such as *Watsonia* in Woorabinda and Madurta during the period from August to October and blackberries in Woorabinda in Autumn. We have made good progress using this weed targeting approach but have tried where possible to follow a broader approach covering a wider range of weeds in a given area of bush. Apart from anything else, this is often a more satisfying approach for our volunteer weeders.

Contractors employed by the Central Hills Green Web (of which FSLP is a member) are again undertaking work on swabbing *Watsonia* infestations in and around the margins of the good bush in Woorabinda. This includes follow-up work and work in new areas and is funded through the NRM. This year they have also started working with us on another long term project which we have been keen to start for

some years: controlling a large infestation of periwinkle and other weeds encroaching on good bush in Hender.

In June FSLP received a second consecutive Community Grant for Land Care, Coast Care and Water Care of \$5,000 for removal of *Watsonia*. The grant is being supplemented by an amount of \$500 from the Friends of Stirling Linear Park Public Fund, following larger expenditure from our Public Fund for this purpose in the previous two years. It is again being used to employ specialist contractors to work on the large *Watsonia* infestation in the area of good bush on the western side of the lake.

FSLP volunteers have made good progress in working in from the edges of this area of *Watsonia* in the last four years but do not have the resources to eradicate it. The grant funded work will complement work on other large areas of *Watsonia* in Woorabinda already referred to and is enabling FSLP working bees to concentrate on targeting other smaller areas of *Watsonia* in Woorabinda.

Early this year Council allocated \$5,000 through the Central Hills Green Web to fund work on weeds in SLP. It was used for contractors to work on removing blackberries in high profile areas near the Woorabinda Lake, complementing FSLP's work over the last few years on blackberry regrowth in good bush areas between the lake and the railway line. This funding was most welcome and followed representations from FSLP to Council highlighting the reduction in Council resources used for weed control in SLP and noting that blackberries were one of the weeds that Council had put resources into controlling in the past. Our thanks to Steve Brooks, AHC Natural Resources of Officer, for his efforts in arranging for this funding.

Once again, it is fair to say that we have continued to make good progress in some areas although elsewhere particular weed species continue to spread into the margins of good bush.

Revegetation

This year's revegetation program turned out to be lower key than anticipated because, as already noted, we were not able to undertake our planned Stirling Park plantings.

I will now turn to what we did do this year. After confirming that Council's revegetation decision applied only to Stirling Park, we proceeded with our planned revegetation work

in Madurta Reserve. This consisted firstly of small scale backfill plantings in areas already planted in accordance with existing Council-approved revegetation plans using plants grown for Madurta. We then planted those understory seedlings grown specifically for Stirling Park which were suitable for reallocation to Madurta. These seedlings were planted by FSLP members in a series of small scale plantings.

Unfortunately, at the end of this process, we still had seedlings grown specifically for Stirling Park with Trees for Life materials paid for by FSLP that could not be reallocated to Madurta. In addition, we were not able to use any of the seedlings grown by one of our regular growers under a separate arrangement.

Environmental Monitoring

Over the last year we continued a range of programs which included:

- regular water sampling and testing from the lake and creek
- bushcheck bird observations from 16 sites eight times per year.

Our long term photo monitoring program from sites in each of the four reserves is behind schedule and is being rationalised as it covers too many sites including some set up to monitor successful revegetation areas. We had reduced the monitoring frequency from quarterly to annually and have planned to review and reduce monitoring sites and spread the workload but need to follow through on this to maintain continuity.

Publicity

In recent years FSLP has participated in selected local events with displays and members on hand to publicise the park and highlight our activities. The main objective has been to raise community awareness of our role and increase involvement in our activities, ultimately leading to increased membership and participation in our core roles of bushcare, revegetation and monitoring.

This year we again had a stall and display at the Autumn Garden Festival in Druids Avenue, Stirling and once again Marilyn Forward put together a very impressive photographic display, plus samples and information on garden plants that become invasive in parks. This attracted a lot of interest from passers-by.

We have continued our seasonal newsletter to members. This year we issued a Summer newsletter in January and a Spring newsletter in August, again expertly edited by Merilyn Browne.

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Working with AHC

FSLP has continued to work closely with AHC staff who have roles relating to SLP. As mentioned, we have worked closely with the Natural Resources Officer, Steve Brooks. We have also worked closely with Rod McBeath, the AHC person mainly responsible for 'on the ground work' in SLP. Rod has once again done an excellent job in providing and maintaining the equipment used for our working bees, including the substitute trailer, while the main trailer awaits maintenance. Our thanks to these two and other AHC staff

Meetings

Over the last year, the Committee has met on a monthly or bi-monthly basis.

Volunteer Resources Used

During 2009-10 about 1,600 volunteer hours were donated to the Park. This was down on the 2008-09 figure of about 2,200 volunteer hours (and the figures for previous years) mainly because in 2008-09 considerable volunteer resources were applied towards supervising and working with Green Corps teams on revegetation and removal of gorse in Stirling Park.

Contributions

Thank you also to all of those who contributed to FSLP during the year. This includes all of the Committee and other members, particularly:

- Bob James for his support as Deputy Chairman, convening working bees and work in Hender.
- Brian Donaghy for his high quality minutes and work on fire planning.

- Ian Perrin for his efficient work as Treasurer.
- Merilyn Browne for editing and compiling our newsletter.
- Lorrie Ragless, Marilyn Forward and Jane Schoettgen for their Waterwatch work.
- Kath Bowman for maintaining our membership list and website.
- David Ragless for his contribution as a Central Hills Green Web (landcare group) committee member.
- Rob Tanner for his work on analysing the Bushcheck bird survey information from SLP.
- All others who contributed to our activities such working bees and stalls and who carried out individual bushcare/weeding work.

Future Role of FSLP

Over the last few years there has been an awareness of the changing role of FSLP. This follows from, amongst other things, Council's decision four years ago to implement changes in the management of the park, including the formation of an Advisory Committee. Although we have been considering the role of FSLP for some time, in the light of these changes it is something that I expect that we will pay renewed attention to in the near future, particularly if the role and activities of the Advisory Committee continue to evolve.

Philip Hicks

Chairman, Friends of Stirling Linear Park

26 October 2010

2010 Annual General Meeting

The FSLP Annual General Meeting for 2010, held on Tuesday 26 October, was well attended as usual. The guest speaker was Councillor Ron Nelson, Chair of the Stirling Linear Park Advisory Committee, who provided an outline of the Committee's activities. Councillor John Kemp, the other councillor on the Committee, also attended.

Cr Nelson said that sub-committees were working on a bushfire mitigation plan including a 20m protection zone around the park and a revegetation plan which he considers will remove uncertainty about revegetation. He also mentioned that funding had been allocated for a

bridge over the creek on the main path between Stirling Park and the Woorabinda Lake, that there will be a study on the environmental impact on fish in the creek and that there will be consultation with FSLP.

Cr Nelson advised that the designated off-leash trail through Hender Reserve would follow the path through the grassy area, skirting the bush rather than following the Hender Trail which passes through a large area of good bush. Cr Kemp said that the off-leash section of Keroma Trail in SLP had been reduced.

Working Bee Report

Our December working bee was almost washed out, continuing the unprecedented run of wet-weather-affected working bees following the July and August wash-outs reported in the previous Newsletter.

When the weather has permitted, our working bees this year have continued our overall long term strategy of working outwards from areas of good bush and have been well attended. In the period from August to December we concentrated on:

- Woorabinda – at our September working bee we swabbed *Watsonia* in areas between the lake and the path around it, complementing work done by Green Web and Grant-funded contractors referred to in the Annual Report. At our December working bee it was too wet to use poisons so we pulled isolated *Watsonia*, small gorse and broom from the northern end of the area between the boardwalk and the fenceline. We also pulled isolated patches of *Watsonia* and other weeds from the areas between the lake and the railway line that were outside the designated contractor work areas.
- Madurta – at our October working bee we swabbed *Watsonia* regrowth, working systematically through much of the good bush area in the south western end of the

reserve and making very good progress. We also cut and swabbed or pulled other weeds we encountered while working through this area. Jane Shoettgen has continued valuable work on *Watsonia* and other weeds in the revegetation area.

- Stirling Park – at our November working bee we made good progress cutting and swabbing mainly smaller gorse regrowth in a limited area on the western slopes.
- Hender – Bob James has continued his solo weeding effort. As a result of the progress he has made in clearing the good bush of weeds we have continued our policy of concentrating on the other reserves.

Our working bees over the next three months will concentrate on removing blackberries and other weeds from within and towards the margins of the good bush in Woorabinda. Please consider joining us on the third Sunday of the month at 9:00am.

A reminder that the Working Bee reminder notices are sent out by email to the 'regulars'. If you send your email to Bob James at bobjames@chariot.net.au he will include you on the list for working bee reminder notices.

FUTURE WORKING BEES 2011

Date	Location	Meeting Place
February 20	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
March 20	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
April 17	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
May 15	Madurta	Madurta Avenue
June 19	Stirling Park	Branch Road
July 17	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
August 21	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
September 18	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
October 16	Madurta	Madurta Avenue
November 20	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
December 18	Stirling Park	Branch Road

Time: 9.00 am – 11 am

Recent Fauna Sightings



Jack Benlow recently took this photo of a Murray Turtle in the Woorabinda Lake.

A relatively uncommon Bassian Thrush was seen before 8 am on 29 December 2010 on the south eastern side of Woorabinda Lake. It was seen at close range on the path where it froze in Bassian Thrush manner. After a while it resumed foraging in the vegetation on the lake side edge of the path and came even closer to the observer. Eventually it was frightened into dense bush by two other walkers and a dog and was not seen again.

This is the first time the observer has seen a Bassian Thrush in SLP for five years. Maybe coincidentally, the last sighting was within a few metres of this sighting and on that occasion, the observer frightened the bird into the bush. Bassian Thrushes were seen more frequently in SLP up until about ten years ago, mostly in the area near what is now the southern end of the Woorabinda Lake boardwalk and occasionally in

Hender Reserve. It would be interesting to know more about whether the quiet and unobtrusive Bassian Thrushes are still regular visitors to SLP, just occasional visitors or move between SLP and surrounding areas. A few months ago two Bassian Thrushes were reported along the Waterfall Track in nearby Mark Oliphant CP.

At least two Sacred Kingfishers have been seen on occasions over the last few months, as at this time in most years in Woorabinda, Hender, on the edge of the revegetation area in Stirling Park and in adjacent properties.

As for most of the last year or so, water birds seem to have been relatively scarce on the Woorabinda Lake. This may be related to the amount of water in dams around the State following the good rains over the last two years. In addition to the long term regulars, Purple Swamp Hens were resident for most of the year and on occasions Hardheads (ducks) and a Little Pied Cormorant were seen.

Waterwatch 1995 – 2010

The Friends of Stirling Linear Park have been involved in testing water quality in the Aldgate creek since 1995 when Waterwatch was run from Arbury Park Outdoor Education Centre, with many schools in the Upper Onkaparinga Catchment area taking part.

David Ragless was the first participant and worked with Aldgate Primary School to 'waterwatch' the Aldgate creek. Lorri Ragless then took over for the next 15 years with support from other members of the Friends group: Shirley Benlow, Merilyn Browne, Jane Schoettgen, Ina Mattingly and Marilyn Forward.

By the year 2000, Waterwatch was looking for a new home and after much physical and advocacy work by FOSLP (particularly Alistair McHenry and David Ragless) Waterwatch moved into the Woorabinda building.

Since then records have been kept of the water testing for the Woorabinda Dam and the creek. The creek has been of a more variable standard as the water comes from Waverley Ridge and passes through a variety of properties.

The water quality has remained relatively stable although *E. coli* was found in the dam in 2003 by a local student. The macro-invertebrate population, which indicates the level of pollution, has been slightly disappointing as it shows a downward trend in its quality.

The State Government organisation, Natural Resource Management, took over Waterwatch, which now has the title **NRM Education**. NRM

Education is working in schools on a broader ecological front with water testing one option among many.

It is an appropriate time for FOSLP to also re-focus and leave the water testing at Woorabinda to NRM Education as one of the options for schools. The education of the young people in our schools as to how the real world works is incredibly important for the future of our society. We hope our 'waterwatch' efforts over the last 15 years have added, one way or another, to this education.

Lorri Ragless



Revegetation

We plan to continue our plantings in Madurta by backfilling the existing revegetation area around the *Eucalyptus dalrympleana* regrowth with more small plants, subject to additional Council approval being granted. Seedlings are already being propagated in anticipation.

As noted in the annual report, we are not currently undertaking any plantings in Stirling Park.



Bassian Thrush
Merilyn Browne

Friends of Stirling Linear Park Committee 2010-11

Kathy Bowman	8370 9177
Merilyn Browne	8339 6839
Brian Donaghy	8339 2033
Marilyn Forward	8339 3162
Phillip Hicks	8339 3156
Bob James	8339 1903
Ian Perrin	8339 3262
David Ragless	8339 1038
Lorri Ragless	8339 1038
Alistair McHenry (Advisor)	8339 5114
Russell Seaman (Advisor)	8398 0626

Web address: <http://esc.net.au/~slp/>

Affiliations

The Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc. is a member of Friends of Parks Inc. We are also a registered Landcare Group and a member of both Greening Australia and Trees for Life.



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 Stirling Linear Park Inc. **Contributors to this issue** include Philip Hicks, Lorri Ragless, Jack Benlow and Merilyn Browne.

Friends of Stirling Linear Park Membership application/renewal

I/we would like to join/renew membership of the Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc. (strike out words not applicable)

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

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

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

Name.....

Address.....

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

Email address for sending Newsletter.....

Please return to: Kathy Bowman, Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc., 2 Bogaduck Road, Aldgate 5154