



# Friends of Woorabinda Bushland Reserves

# NEWS LETTER

**Number 72, October 2023**

## Annual General Meeting

6.30 pm, Friday 17 November 2023  
Environment Centre, Woorabinda

All members of the Friends of Woorabinda Bushland Reserves and the general public are warmly invited to attend the AGM.

Our special guest this evening will be Emeritus Prof. Michael Thompson, who will give a talk on the "1 Million Turtles Community Conservation Project", which recently won the Eureka Citizen Science project award. Mike will give us the background as to how this project came about, the universities & community organisations right across the Murray Darling Basin who are partners in the project, and talk about how people can get involved.

As a field naturalist himself from a very young age in SA, Mike's & his students' research over many years identified the dire straits our turtles were in, and led to this project where we can all help by reporting sightings & helping to protect nests. Extremely enthusiastic, he will talk about turtles in the Murray Darling Basin, how to identify them, and how to be part of the project. He will answer any questions you might have on everything turtles! Mike's talk will follow the formal business of the meeting.

A BYO barbecue will follow Mike's talk. This is a very social occasion and is always enjoyed by everyone who attends. Bring your own meat or vegetarian option and your tipple of choice. Bread, salads and sauce, as well as tea and coffee, will be provided. Everyone is welcome, including people who are not yet members.



*A basking turtle  
on the lake*

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## Saved from Subdivision - Often

It is a surprise to many people that all of the four reserves that make up Woorabinda Bushlands Reserves have been threatened by subdivision or development at some time. They have only been saved as public open space through concerted efforts by the community each time. This article chronicles the history and what happened to each reserve.

### **Stirling Park 8.3 ha.**

This was a market garden owned by the Halliday family from the 1850s until the early 1960s when it was sold to the Bonython family.

**1972** The State Government compulsorily acquired the land intending to build a primary school.

**1978** The Government abandoned the school idea and sold the land to the Council for \$40,000. Council hoped to develop it as a sports park. Due to its terrain and winter wetness Council gave up the sports park plan despite a large amount of soil from the redevelopment of the Stirling supermarket being trucked in to make a level area for an oval.

Over the next ten years the area was used by Council as a pound for wandering livestock; local residents also used it to graze pet sheep, goats and horses. And of course it was used by local children for adventures.

**September 1989** A confidential Council document was leaked to a Branch Road resident. It proposed to alter the area's zoning from 'rural fringe' to 'country living' to allow subdivision for housing. Initial plans cited up to 20 blocks but soon up to 27 blocks were suggested.

The community did not support the loss of this public open space and mounted a vigorous campaign of opposition spearheaded by the Stirling Park Action Group (SPAG), forerunner of today's Friends group.

Initially SPAG met weekly with 40 to 50 people attending meetings to plan and carry out letter-writing, lobbying, organising a petition, deputation and plans for the area. This huge effort resulted in the following:

- **December 1989** A petition with 989 signatures opposing rezoning and subdivision was presented to Council.
- **February 1990** Council shelved the rezoning plan.
- **March 1990** Funding of \$18,000 for tree planting and associated development was applied for, and obtained by SPAG, from Greening Australia.
- **July 1990** Council approved SPAG plans for tree planting – subject to further discussions with Council staff.

□ **September 1990** A SPAG working bee attracted over 80 people, including the State Minister for the Environment, Anne Levy; State local member, David Wotton; two Councillors; State Manager of Landcare SA; CEO of Greening Australia, State Manager of Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers and the Kiwanis who provided a sausage sizzle. Over 800 tubestock were planted as phase 1 of the SPAG revegetation plan.

**April 1994** Council resolved to subdivide the western side of Stirling Park and sell five 4000 m<sup>2</sup> blocks (2 ha) for housing. Friends organised further protests and Council did not then proceed with this subdivision.

This was a difficult time for Council because of high interest rates, a bushfire debt and their wise, far sighted decision to buy Woorabinda from the Department of Community Services. This purchase linked Hender Reserve on one side with Stirling Park on the other.

Council had planned to sell property on Wright Road to raise all or part of the \$350,000 cost of buying Woorabinda. However this sale could not be made for legal reasons and so Council was looking for alternative places to sell.

**May 2000** A Council (Woorabinda) Review Committee presented two options to fund the refurbishment of the existing Woorabinda buildings to: 'provide education, training and interpretation on Aboriginal matters and for general community use'.

Options were to: 'either subdivide and sell two housing blocks from Stirling Park (0.8 ha) or refurbish the buildings gradually through grants and voluntary labour.'

The options were considered by a public meeting of about 100 people who rejected the sale option and moved a motion that: 'no part of Reserves be sold for any purpose – ever.' The second option was supported by the meeting.

### **Woorabinda Reserve 10.25 ha**

From the 1850s part of the Halliday family property was known locally as Halliday's gully.

**1922** The lake was built by SA Railways Department to provide water for steam trains and piped to Aldgate railway station.

From **1960** until the mid **1990s** the area was owned by Family and Community Services Department and used as a camp-site mostly for disadvantaged children and families.

**1993** The District Council of Stirling leased the reserve and in **1995** purchased it.

**August 1993** Council investigated the rezoning and subdivisional potential of Woorabinda Reserve and concluded that six 4000 m<sup>2</sup> blocks (2 ha) could be created and sold on the western side of Keroma Drive. After consideration and community feedback they did not pursue the idea.

**August 1995** Friends organised a petition calling on the State Government to transfer Woorabinda Reserve to the District Council of Stirling without cost. This petition attracted 2500 signatures and was presented to Heysen MP David Wotton. (It did not happen!)

Over the years some Council staff have from time to time highlighted the amount of money Council could make from selling for housing the land the buildings are on. It is hoped that this will not become an issue in future.

#### **Hender Reserve 7.4 ha**

**1879** Hender Reserve was proclaimed as a large public reserve. The area is now only a fraction of its original size due to developments including a school, ovals, tennis courts and water storage tanks which have taken place on it.

**1883** Council given care and control of Hender Reserve by the State Government who own the land.

**1995** Without community consultation Council offered part of Hender Reserve to Masonic Homes Inc. on which to build a nursing home. Council stated that the Hender vegetation was 'poor quality and part of the area had been a rubbish dump'. There was an outcry from the Friends group and the general community. Masonic Homes declined the Council offer.

**2003** Council considered building an oval in Hender Reserve and undertook detailed costings. This new oval was to replace the oval being lost when the new sports centre was built at Heathfield High School. The idea, opposed by the Friends, was soon abandoned by Council due to the very high costs involved.

**2004** Council supported the proposal to build an access road into the proposed new sports centre though part of Hender Reserve.

Friends vigorously opposed this with the help of the Friends of Parks Inc group.

The plan was eventually dropped when the Native Vegetation Council said they would prosecute Council

if the vegetation was cleared without approval and if approval to clear was sought it would be refused.

#### **Madurta Reserve 3.1 ha**

In the early 1970s the Madurta area was subdivided for housing and 12.5% was left as public open space – as development rules dictated. The reserve is not as big now because Council subdivided and sold off a housing block in the 1980s.

**1983** A group of local concerned local residents started weeding and revegetation work and also saved the reserve from inappropriate development. This group merged with the other Friends group when Council bought Woorabinda Reserve in 1995.

**1992** Council proposed to develop a BMX bike park but abandoned the idea due to local opposition.

**1995** Council suggested to Masonic Homes Inc that part of the reserve could be made available to them for a nursing home.

Masonic Homes were not interested in this offer and asked instead for the Aldgate oval on which to build. Council, initially sympathetic to this idea, dropped it when there were howls of rage from the general community and instead offered Hender Reserve. (The Masonic Homes eventually found a private property on Longwood Road.)

#### **The Councils involved:**

Until 1993 The District Council of Stirling.  
After 1993 The Adelaide Hills Council.

#### **The Friends group name changes:**

1989 Stirling Park Action Group Inc  
1990 Stirling Park Landcare Action Group Inc  
1995 Friends of Stirling Linked Parks Inc  
1996 Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc  
2014 Friends of Woorabinda Bushlands Reserves Inc

#### **Today**

All reserves are covered by a Natural Heritage Agreement between the State Government and Council.

This preserves them from future development and dictates that they must be managed for protection of native flora and fauna in perpetuity.

## Artists in the Park

A group of en plein air artists who will be exhibiting in Gallery M at the Marion Cultural Centre in March-April 2024 chose Woorabinda as their subject for this exhibition.

They plan that the exhibition will be a cohesive and thought provoking personal response to Woorabinda Reserves.

The group made several visits to the park in July - August to paint, draw, photograph and respond to the location and its history.

Members of Friends met up with them during one visit and were impressed by the works in progress.

This promises to be a must-see exhibition for the Woorabinda fraternity.



*Enjoying the ambience*

## A New Sign for Stirling Park

In 2001 funding was granted by the Onkaparinga Catchment Board to the Stirling Park Committee for interpretive signs in each of the Reserves. The signs were appropriately and beautifully designed by Janet Pedler.

Twenty-one years later the sign at the Woorabinda gate was renewed with AHC funding, and now Stirling Market has made funding available for a new, updated sign in Stirling Park.

This sign concentrates on plants and animals in the valley in a very visual interpretation, with the story of the change from old market garden to forested valley in print. Our ideas for the sign were skillfully interpreted by a very local artist, Tess Malpas.

The Council is also working on new directional and information signs for the Reserves.

Our new sign be installed very soon. We hope you enjoy it!

## Recent Working Bees

### Thursday Working Bees

The Thursday group have continued work in Madurta for much of this year. Main focuses have been Watsonia along the creekline and ivy on the hill slope behind the pines. Despite some wet days considerable progress has been made.

### Sunday Working Bees

Working bee numbers have ranged from seven to fourteen. Three reserves have had attention in the last three months. Wet weather influenced what could be done on two of the three days.

**Stirling Park** – Watsonia, gorse (including some very large bushes) *Acacia longifolia* and *Erica* were cut and swabbed.

**Woorabinda** – the area of good bush between the lake and railway line was weeded, removing *A longifolia*, Watsonia, Pittosporum, blackberry and isolated onion weed. Patches of both blackberry and onion weed are expanding towards the good bush from the railway side.

**Madurta** – broom, Pittosporum, Watsonia and a large amount of onion weed were removed. Arum lilies along the creek were cut.

### Future Working Bees

Woorabinda November 19  
Stirling Park December 17

## Around the Reserves

### Small, furry and fierce

These yellow-footed antechinus were photographed by the former SA Greens Leader Mark Parnell in the Woorabinda Bushlands last year.

A keen bird photographer, Mark became a regular visitor to the Reserves once he had retired as Leader of the SA Greens and a Member of the Legislative

Council. He and his wife Penny Wright have now moved to a rural property in Victoria, where they are busy planting lots of trees.

The Friends of Woorabinda Bushland Reserves wish them well.



*Patersonia occidentalis*  
photo from iNaturalist, © Isaac

### Native Iris

A keen-eyed member spotted a seedhead of the relatively uncommon native iris, *Patersonia occidentalis*, at the recent working bee in Madurta Reserve.

The small patch of bush on the corner of Madurta and Linwood Avenues is home to some lovely wildflowers. If you are nearby on a sunny day soon, look for Sun Orchids - they are flowering now.

### Council Update

Background work to prepare for rebuilding the boardwalk around the end of the lake has begun. Because the Reserves have Natural Heritage listing and are part of the water catchment, additional permits are needed and have been obtained. The area has been tested for *Phytophthora* (a fungal disease) and equipment used in the work will be sanitised beforehand.

Council staff have investigated methods for reducing the fuel load resulting from the fallen trees in Stirling Park. This work is expected to begin soon.

Work has begun on replacing the railing around the 'sitting spot' alongside the lake.

*New posts for the retaining wall are in place*



## Committee, 2023

Kath Bowman	Public Officer, membership, website	0459 291 777
Merilyn Browne	Newsletter	8339 6839
Brian Donaghy	Chairman	8339 2033
Philip Hicks	Treasurer, Working bee coor- dinator, Past Chair	0437 812 870
Bob James	Deputy Chair	8339 1903
Janet Pedler	Volunteer support	
David Ragless	Past Chair, History	8339 1038
Lorri Ragless	Minute Secretary, publicity	8339 1038
Jan Walker	Committee	

Contributors to this issue include Brian Donaghy, David Ragless, Lorri Ragless, Kath Bowman, Philip Hicks and Merilyn Browne.

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.



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.

### 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.)

\*Payment included / Bank transfer made (\*please circle your payment method)

**Name**.....

**Address**.....

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

**Email address for sending Newsletter**.....

**Please return this form to:** Brian Donaghy, Friends of Woorabinda Bushland Reserves Inc., 3 Branch Road, Aldgate 5154

Bank transfer details:

BSB: 105-079

Account: 040748240

**Please include your name and "Subs" or "Subs/Don)" for identification of your payment.**