



Friends of Woorabinda Bushland Reserves

NEWS LETTER

Number 74, November 2024

Annual General Meeting

6.30 pm, Friday 15 November 2024

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 Shawn Scott, PhD candidate, UniSA, who will talk about his research on aspects of Prescribed Burns and the health of herpetofauna (reptiles and amphibians) in Stringybark Habitat within the Upper Mount Lofty Ranges, SA. He will link various information from his study to the conservation prospects of several rare and endangered species found within the Woorabinda Bushland Reserves.

A BYO barbeque will follow Shawn'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.

We invite interested members of the Friends of Woorabinda Bushland Reserves to join the Committee. The Committee works closely with staff from the Adelaide Hills Council and provides important input into the running and maintenance of the Reserves. Talk to a Committee member if you would like more information.

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John Kemp – a tribute

Anyone who has visited or appreciates the Woorabinda Bushland Reserves owes a debt of gratitude to John Kemp. He was for many years a strong supporter of keeping and improving the reserves as a natural conservation area, particularly during his long service as an Adelaide Hills Councillor. There are mayors and other councillors who have also been, and continue to be, very supportive, but John over the years was one of the earliest and most persistent. This was particularly during the so-called dog wars.

Woorabinda Bushlands, formerly known as Stirling Linear Park, is now a natural heritage protected area. Without people like John it would now most likely be just another manicured city park with dogs off-leash, mountain bikes, fishing and perhaps even a conference centre overlooking the lake. Some of those debates got quite nasty, but John did not flinch.

When the then Council tried to sideline the Friends of Woorabinda by setting up a Council Advisory Committee for the area, John was quick to join the committee and ensure that the committee provided balanced advice.

He continued to be a friend of the reserves even after he was no longer on the council – I understand he has even left some money to Woorabinda in his will. Thanks, John – we will make sure it is well spent.

If he took on something, John worked hard to make sure he did a proper job. Just one example: not long ago I asked him to use his skills as a former cartographer to do an updated map of the fire tracks in the reserves, and to mark the nearby fire hydrants. Free of charge, of course.

The New Boardwalk at Woorabinda Lake

The new boardwalk on the western side of the lake has now been completed following delays caused by weather and the first contractor going into receivership. Well engineered, made from recycled plastics, wider than the old boardwalk, with edges and 'passing lanes' in two spots – it is most impressive. As a mature age walker commented: "It is wonderful – perhaps I will only just walk back and forth on it."

Funded by council, it cost about double the original council budgeted cost. This has meant that some other trail and step work in Woorabinda reserves has had to be curtailed until later, when more funds are available.

The new boardwalk is especially welcome because the original permapine boardwalk had been closed for almost two years after being damaged by falling trees during a storm.



*John Kemp
tree-planting*

He not only did an excellent map, but he persuaded SA Water to make public their official map showing not only all the hydrants but the mains they connect with. Thanks to John, CFS trucks responding to a fire can now jump online and see not only if and where there are hydrants, but which ones tap into the larger mains that will supply a sufficient volume of water.

He always attended our AGMs. This year, someone else will have to take the photographs.

John joined the committee of the Friends of Woorabinda Bushland Reserves almost a year ago. We were looking forward to using his skills on our committee – I even hoped he would soon take over my role as chair. He had chaired several committees in his time, and I am sure he would have done a good job, but alas, he died too soon.

Brian Donaghy

It was becoming due for replacement despite council undertaking constant minor repairs.

The old boardwalk was built in 1996 and funded by part of a grant of \$43,500 obtained by the Friends from The Regional Open Space Scheme- it had served the public for over 25 years. The new boardwalk is expected to have an even longer life.



Bushcare Working Bee Report

Sunday working bees

Since the last working bee report in our February 2024 Newsletter, and up to and including our September working bee, we have held seven monthly Sunday bushcare working bees with four in Woorabinda Reserve and three in Stirling Park. A further working bee planned for Stirling Park was cancelled due to forecast adverse weather conditions.

Volunteer numbers at our Sunday working bees have ranged from twelve down to four - on a day when many regular working bee members were away and the weather forecast was questionable. An average of nine volunteers attended our Sunday working bees and they were supported by at least two or three 'retired' working bee members who kindly provided morning tea after each working bee. During the year, a number of new volunteers have joined our longer-term working bee members and have made valuable contributions.

In our Woorabinda Reserve working bees we continued our progression around the good quality bush areas, removing emerging weeds. We also continued to push back weed fronts in areas where weeds were encroaching into the margins of higher quality bush from adjacent more weedy areas. Areas worked in included:

- around the southern end of Woorabinda, between the track along the railway line and Linwood Avenue – where we reduced the level of a range of weeds including Ivy and other weeds spread by birds under Native Cherry (*Exocarpus cupressiformus*)
- between the boardwalk around the lake and Woorabinda Drive, a relatively difficult area to access due to fallen trees after a storm around two years ago - where we concentrated on removing *Acacia longifolia* and gorse
- to the south east of the lake - where we worked on concentrations of *Sollya* (also known as Bluebell Creeper) with prolific growth in some areas, even though we have been following-up regrowth of this weed in this area for many years, and *A. longifolia*.

In Stirling Park we continued working in the revegetation and regeneration area on the western slope of the park, an area where we have concentrated our efforts over the last two years. During this time, we have worked along the length of this area, including a recent secondary follow-up of weed regrowth in areas worked on longest ago and have cut and swabbed gorse, including many very large specimens, as well as working on *A. longifolia*, *Erica*, blackberry, *Watsonia* and other weeds. We have not attempted to extend

our work very far into the large area of dense *Watsonia* adjacent to our work area but have concentrated on reducing the level of outliers of scattered *Watsonia*. Once again, it has been pleasing to see the amount of regeneration of local plant species along the western slope of Stirling Park, particularly towards the southern end of this area where we have put in our most concerted effort.

The first Sunday working bee for the year in Madurta Reserve was in October. We have not had any Sunday working bees in Madurta earlier this year as all of our Thursday working bees have been there and Council has funded bushcare contractor work there over the last two years.

Following consultation with Council staff and after taking into account recent Council funded bushcare contractor work, we decided not to extent our limited volunteer resources into Hender Reserve for the time being.

Thanks again to Jane Schoettgen for leading the July Sunday working bee, in addition to her role as leader of our Thursday working bees. Thanks also to Jane and other volunteers for their additional individual bushcare work.

Thursday working bees

Since the last working bee report and up to and including our August working bee, we have held six, monthly bushcare working bees, all in Madurta Reserve with an average of around five to seven volunteers attending.

We have worked mainly on removing *Watsonia*, Ivy and the water weed *Tradescantia* in the creek. In addition, a lot of very thick old ivy growing from the roadside down to the Creek line was taken out, along with wild rose bushes and *Watsonia*. Dense blackberry along the creek was also removed, although there is still much more to work on.

Our thanks to Sarah and Ellie from Council for leaving us the trailer each month so that we were able to load all the *Tradescantia* and blackberry to be taken out of the reserve.



SPAG to FoWBR: 35 years of achievements

Today, many people enjoy the tranquility, wildflowers, birds and other creatures in Woorabinda Bushland Reserves. But this did not 'just happen'. Forty years ago there was Hender, gifted to the State Government for recreation in the 1880s and quarried for topsoil for nearby ovals. There was Woorabinda, a Dept of Community Services residential camp for disadvantaged children. Madurta had been set aside as open space when adjacent land was subdivided for housing. Stirling Park, a former market garden, was weedy open space grazed by neighbours' sheep, horses and goats.

Beginnings

Stirling Park Action Group (SPAG) formed in 1989 when it was revealed that Stirling District Council proposed to re-zone Stirling Park to allow subdivision for housing. With staunch community opposition, Council relented and agreed to keep the area as open space.

SPAG became an official Landcare group, Stirling Park Landcare Action Group (SPLAG, 1990). The group prepared a revegetation concept plan, accepted in principle by Council, and sought grant funding from Greening Australia, receiving \$18,000 over two years. Council asked the group to liaise with Council staff on implementation.

In 1991 SPLAG produced a Management Plan for Stirling Park after much consultation with Council, Government Departments and community organisations. The group prepared planting sites and two plantings were organised, with over 80 volunteers at each. SPLAG funded fencing to protect the plantings and undertook weed control for the next six years.

After a couple of years of lobbying by SPLAG, Council purchased Woorabinda from the State Government in 1993, connecting Hender Reserve and Stirling Park. At a community forum which included the Madurta Reserve support group, the idea of managing the four Reserves as one entity emerged.

In 1994 Council asked SPLAG to form a Friends Group to help manage the Reserves in partnership with Council. The new group, Friends of Stirling Linked Parks (later Friends of Stirling Linear Park, FSLP) formed in 1995 following a well-attended public meeting. Council renamed the Reserves Woorabinda Bushland Reserves in 2014, after which the Friends group was renamed Friends of Woorabinda Bushland Reserves (FoWBR).

The main tasks undertaken by FSLP and FoWBR have been revegetation, weed control, obtaining grant funding, monitoring, promoting the conservation values of the reserves and their use, and opposing development proposals that would affect those

conservation values. The group has also collaborated with a range of other organisations as part of these activities.

Revegetation

Following the 1991 plantings, more than 40 planting events have been held, adding over 35,000 tubestock and a kilometre of direct seeding. Local seed was sourced for the tubestock and direct seeding, with FSLP members growing many of the plants in association with Trees for Life.

Weed Control

Monthly Sunday working bees have been programmed since 1995, rotating through the Reserves. A monthly Thursday working bee was added in 2010. While these efforts help keep the more intact bushland free of weeds, they can't address large weed infestations. Grant funds and FSLP funds have been used to employ contractors to work on willows, *Watsonia* and blackberry at various times. Other organisations have also contributed, particularly Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA), with FSLP members often working alongside CVA teams.

In 1997 FSLP purchased a covered trailer to store working bee equipment and donated it to Council, who provided the tools. Stirling Lions Club contributed \$500 towards the \$2600 cost. The trailer was (and is) available to all Friends and Landcare groups in the Council area.

Grant Funding

The Friends group has prepared many applications to a range of sources for grant funding and obtained many thousands of dollars for weed control, revegetation, signage and other purposes in the Reserves. Applications were always prepared in conjunction with Council staff and required FSLP to match funding or provide the equivalent in volunteer labour. This has always been achieved.

A grant of \$43,500 in 1998 by the Regional Open Space Enhancement Scheme allowed development of the connecting walkways between Madurta Reserve, Woorabinda and Stirling Park. It also funded the boardwalk by the lake.

Another large grant, \$10,640 from the Australian Government Envirofund, was obtained in 2004 for preparation of Reserves action plans, weed control and revegetation.

In the same year FSLP joined the Green Web Project. This district-wide project aimed to conserve remnant native vegetation by funding weed control and involves multiple Landcare groups and many private landowners. By 2011 the Reserves had received \$34,700 from this source, and funding has continued since then.

SPAG to FoWBR: 35 years *continued*

FSLP put considerable effort into obtaining Deductible Gift Recipient status which was granted in 2002. A Public Fund with a separate committee was established and since then over \$15,000 has been donated to support the group's work.

In 2005 Council instructed FSLP to not apply for further grant funding or begin new projects. This policy remained in place until 2009, when Council again supported FSLP in seeking grant funding. Unfortunately, opportunities for substantial funding were missed because of this policy.

Monitoring

From 1995 to 2011, FSLP members sampled and tested lake and creek water as part of the Onkaparinga Waterwatch Network. A University of Adelaide aquatic survey commissioned by FSLP discovered the rare native fish, Mountain Galaxia, in Stirling Creek in 2002, indicating the improvement in water quality through revegetation.

Also in 2002, Southern Brown Bandicoots were seen in Hender Reserve. FSLP contracted the Bandicoot Recovery Program field officer to conduct tracking tunnel tests, which confirmed their presence in Woorabinda and Stirling Park as well.

Bushcheck bird monitoring began in 1997 and has continued regularly since then. The underwater feeding habits of waterbirds on the lake was monitored for a time under the same program. Bushcheck and FSLP also mapped the lake in detail, including the sites of underwater springs.

Park Promotion

FSLP produced the first edition of *Walkers Guide to Stirling Linear Park* in 1999. The Guide has been updated and revised as necessary, with over 15,000 distributed through various outlets. Council funds the printing costs. Another promotional leaflet was prepared in 2012.

Many displays promoting the Reserves have been mounted over the years: venues have included the Stirling Library, local schools, Mt Lofty Visitor Centre, the Organic Market in Stirling, Stirling Autumn Garden Festivals and Laneways events.

Walking SA's annual Opening of the Walking Season was held in the Reserves in 2008, in conjunction with Stirling Business Association. Over 1000 people attended.

As part of the SALA Festival in 2014, FoWBR organised an event, 'The art of nature', inviting artists to the Reserves to do a painting which was then exhibited in Woorabinda Environment Centre the following weekend.

The same year the group had representatives on the Rotary Club of Stirling's Photographic Competition and funded two categories, Biodiversity in the Park and People in the Park. Some of these and other photographs then formed a travelling exhibition, shown in the Aldgate Cafe, Stirling Library, Gumeracha Library, Stirling House and Woorabinda Environment Centre over the following months.

Reserves Management

From its formation in 1995 until 2007, FSLP co-managed the reserves with Council at Council's request. Council then appointed Stirling Linear Park Advisory Committee (SLPAC) to that role. An updated management plan was prepared by SLPAC and adopted by Council.

Council wound up the Advisory Committee in 2014 and returned to direct community contact with FoWBR.

Buildings

The buildings at Woorabinda have had a varied history. In the 90s they were used by environmental groups for workshops and meetings but in 2000 Council deemed the buildings unsafe and locked them. FSLP obtained expert advice that the buildings could be satisfactorily refurbished and in 2001 Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) renovated the main building with help from FSLP volunteers. Onkaparinga Waterwatch officers were housed in that building for some years. The former bunkhouse was also renovated by CVA in 2004 and used as their headquarters. The buildings are now managed by The Hut and continue to be used for a range of activities.

Conservation Values

Reports from consultants commissioned by Council since 1996 consistently identified the environmental and conservation values of the Reserves, recommending walking and passive recreation as appropriate uses. When Council proposed new Community Land Classifications for the Reserves in 2005 and sought public comment, many responses expressed fear that more active uses might be allowed. Council staff discounted these responses, claiming they resulted from an inaccurate leaflet prepared by FSLP. The Friends group disputed this and took its case to the State Ombudsman, who found the leaflet was not inaccurate at the time of distribution.

In 2003 FSLP undertook a professionally designed survey of dog behaviour at Woorabinda. Council responded by erecting 'Dogs on lead only' signs in each reserve. By 2006 Council had revised its policy to allow dogs off lead if under effective voice control. In 2009 SLPAC recommended that dogs be on lead throughout the Reserves but extensive lobbying by Parks for Paws resulted in a complex set of rules for

SPAG to FoWBR: 35 years continued

on- and off-leash areas. Council reverted to its original policy of ‘dogs on leash and on paths at all times throughout the Reserves’ in 2011.

In 2016 FoWBR recommended that Council seek a Natural Heritage Agreement covering the Reserves. The Agreement between Adelaide Hills Council and the State Government was ratified in 2019.

Volunteer Effort

Most of the achievements of FoWBR and its predecessors have resulted from volunteer effort by many people. Volunteer hours reached a peak in 2004-5, with over 4000 hours logged that year. As with other

organisations, volunteer effort has reduced but is still significant at about 700 hours per year. At the current rate of \$47.38 per hour, this represents over \$30,000 donated to the community annually.

Conclusion

Today, Woorabinda Bushland Reserves are enjoyed by many in the community. That became possible through the hard work of a dedicated group of people over many years. This review has skimmed across the hours of discussion, negotiation, counters to threats, fundraising and physical hard work that went into achieving their vision. We thank them all.

Committee, 2024

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Contributors to this issue include Brian Donaghy, Kath Bowman, David Ragless, Philip Hicks, Jane Schoettgen 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 and Nature Inc. It is a registered Landcare Group and a member of 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.