

FRIENDS OF THE MARIBYRNONG VALLEY

NEWSLETTER - SUMMER 2006

The Friends closed the year 2005 with a number of ongoing issues so it is timely now to present a revision statement on each. The range of subjects and the nature of the collaboration with other agencies serve to indicate how the FMV serves the community in the wellbeing and enhancement of the areas surrounding the Maribyrnong River.

RETIREMENT COMPLEX AT CANNING STREET

The developers of this project, Retirement Services Australia have a proposal with Moonee Valley Council to develop a 96-bed nursing home with 80 serviced apartments and over 100 individual living units at the site between Canning Street and the river. The works include some re-profiling of the floodplain to provide landscaped water frontage and enhanced floodwater flow. It was the change to the floodwaters that caused the committee most concern, together with the overall height of the 4-storey residential block and the choice of trees and shrubs for landscaping. At a meeting with the developer and partners, the committee expressed its concerns and some compromises were suggested. FMV was invited to provide input to the selection of types in a revised revegetation plan.

MVCC expects to announce its decision soon.

AFTON STREET CONSERVATION PARK

FMV lauded MVCC for their sterling efforts in purchasing the Afton Street land then committing it to a conservation park. Community meetings and public consultation provided all the right messages but after having committed to a plan of action, it was not taken to a reasonable conclusion. Even now there are no notices to identify it as a Conservation Park. Owners of dogs are not to know that their pets are not welcome either on or off leash. Cyclists are not advised to of any restriction. Pedestrians are not told to keep to paths. Cyclists and motor cyclists drive wherever they choose. Dogs are free to wander anywhere. Public access is no different from any other piece of mown grass in the urban area. What hope for the nesting wildlife or regenerating flora?

The consequences are that the so-called Conservation Park is deteriorating for lack of identification and direction. Moonee Valley must act fast, if it is not already too late, so that respect for the project as something special and community discipline are not totally lost. It will be hard to make good the deficit.

MARIBYRNONG BLACKSPOTS

At the November meeting, long-time member Jack Sheridan gave an interesting presentation about issues concerning him, particularly in the Keilor area. He spoke of illegal dumping, roadworks and bulldozing. He described an 18inch pipe that appears likely to cause erosion. In the discussion, the committee agreed that we should examine the sites to get first hand impressions prior to any action.

Fred then offered the suggestion that we might prepare a list of river "blackspots" that we can monitor. This could become a feature in the FMV website.

COMMUNITY FORUMS

FMV continues to be active when authorities hold meetings to get community input.

Maribyrnong Council is conducting two projects: the Municipal Strategic Statement - Our Vision Towards a Sustainable Maribyrnong and the Highpoint Area Structure Plan. In the Highpoint meeting it appeared that many of the proposals were following obvious needs and looked at various alternatives for development 'styles' for adjoining areas with due regard for pre-existing local requirements and expectations. Perhaps a major overriding factor to the future development of the area is public access. Car access is limited by the condition of the main roads that are already pressing capacity. There were some radical schemes for revision to road conditions, public transport and further urbanization that will be considered on their merits and reviewed later. The "Sustainable Maribyrnong" meetings generated the Issues Paper Outline in July which presented a detailed review of the social commercial and environmental conditions of the City with indicative statements on the measures that Council would be following to achieve the perceived measures. In a brief submission FMV stressed the overwhelming need for quality parkland in the western suburbs and the last opportunity for the provision of this, as indicated in Melbourne 2030, at the north Maribyrnong Defence site which is being negotiated for now by VicUrban.

Maribyrnong also operates a Clean and Green scheme and Moonee Valley has its Environmental Forums and is setting up a Neighbourhood

Environment Action team. FMV is diligent in keeping in touch with these activities.

Delfin, the developers of Edgewater has been conducting public forums to sound feeling for the future use of Jacks Magazine. Regardless of the ultimate commercial application of this heritage site and I get the impression that future operations will be in keeping with respect for the colourful history of the site, FMV has been interested in assessing the present botanical status and the possible future improvements to the steep batters that surround the buildings. Karen Woo, Delfin's Community Development Manager will be meeting the committee in February to further explore collaborative efforts.

Parks Victoria has its "Two Rivers Project" which "aims to bring together key management agencies to develop a shared vision for access to and on the rivers; and seek to resolve a range of strategic policy and operational issues in a coordinated and holistic way." Peter and Fred have attended early meetings and are hopeful of positive outcomes.

NEWS FROM THE RIVERFRONT

Since our last newsletter 'the crew' have been beavering away at all sites in an endeavour to encourage our plants to grow. Grimes flat was almost free of weed due to a very concentrated effort from Ian in spraying and slashing. A return visit to this site recently was shattering. The heavy rains of recent months have the weeds towering well above the tree guards we will continue to monitor this site and when the weed is reduced we will cover with mulch courtesy of a grant from Parks Victoria.

Our Educational site has been mulched thanks to a concentrated effort by students of St Columbus school in Essendon who helped spread 35 metres of mulch in readiness to plant out 700 plants next year. A b/que lunch supplied courtesy of Moonee Valley Council followed and was very much appreciated.

We held 2 community plantings days this season at Grimes flat. With members of Ascot Vale Lions Club and FMV participating. A b/que lunch followed courtesy of the Lions Club.

On our other planting day we were joined by several local residents who saw our advertising sign on the tree at the Barbara Crescent carpark

Due to developing a friendship whilst working along the river we are now the proud owners of a large plastic water container thanks to a donation

from DSL. This has been a very positive acquisition as it makes our job that much easier when watering is required

We would like to welcome MVCC new environmental officers Damien Conner and Margaret Brennan to the team

Just a reminder if you can spare some time on a Wednesday morning we would love to see you just give us a call. Ian 9336 1550, Bron 9317 8819, Lorraine 9317 7718

MY VISION MY PASSION OUR RIVER

FMV member Simon Purves has put his devotion to the Maribyrnong River in print in the form of a review. He considers the physical and social aspects of a river in the urban situation, observes the pressures and potentials and concludes the possible measures to achieve best outcomes for the future.

In useful appendices, he presents his observations of wildlife at the Afton Street Conservation Park and compares the relative amounts of open space on the Yarra and Maribyrnong.

Simon plans to present copies to local Municipalities and copies are available on request from him.

CHRISTMAS BREAKUP

FMV celebrated its end of year with a night out at Woodlands Homestead. Approaching at dusk we were fortunate to see several dozen wallabies in a paddock by the drive. In different rooms of the homestead we were treated to an entertaining re-enactment of the history of the Greenes who brought the pre-fabricated home out from Britain. We saw their lives and emotions through to the time when the following generation disposed of it and went their different ways. A most enjoyable supper with the cast concluded a pleasant outing to finish a busy year.