

FRIENDS OF THE MARIBYRNONG VALLEY INC.

NEWSLETTER WINTER 2004

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This year's AGM will be at the Highpoint Library Meeting Rooms at 7.30pm on Wednesday 4 August. Guest speaker (8pm) will be Jason Horlock, a Senior Environmental Officer with Vicroads who will be talking about revegetation plantings in difficult situations and selection of species.

NEWS FROM THE CATCHMENT

The Maribyrnong Catchment Committee, in synch with the other CCs of the Westernport and Port Phillip Region, has formulated its priority issues. These will form the basis for coordinated efforts over coming years to enhance the values of the river and its catchment area. Major thrusts will be centered on

1. Land Management Planning,
2. Waterway Management,
3. Protection of Native Vegetation,
4. Weed Management,
5. Re-vegetation Works,
6. Catchment Management Arrangements,
7. Green Wedge Planning,
8. Erosion Management,
9. Storm water Management,
10. Rate Rebates,
11. Salinity,
12. Community Engagement,
13. Monitoring and Evaluation
14. Education; and
15. Building Relationships.

In addition to being at the core of the Maribyrnong Catchment Action Plan, these issues are also integrated into the Draft of the Port Phillip and Westernport Regional Catchment Strategy that will form the basis of the CMA submission for Commonwealth and State funding. These hefty documents are available if anyone wishes more information.

PLANTINGS

"Friends" are now more aware than ever that aftercare is even more important than planting. In addition to yearly problems of getting young plants to become established through times of low rainfall, and often on slopes where only a small portion of the rainfall is retained, there are pests like rabbits and caterpillars that can strip off the new growth and rampant weeds to overgrow plantings. At Grimes Flat there is a wallaby that believes shrubs should be eaten down to ground level. FMV has three more plantings this season:

- **Saturday, 10 July**, Duke Street Reserve, Mel: 27B9: 10am-1pm, followed by BBQ and refreshments.
- **Saturday 31 July**, Braybrook Escarpment, Mel: 27C10: access Kannan Bvd. 1-3pm, refreshments.
- **Sunday 8 August**, McNabbs Weir, Keilor, Mel: 14F1: 10am-1pm followed by BBQ and refreshments.

FLEMINGTON RACECOURSE

Queen Mary (Delahunty) is creating a formidable track record of bowing to corporate pressure. Her decision at Flemington is in the same pattern. 'Let the development, including the 3m wall, go ahead then with any luck there won't be another flood till after she's moved on, then someone else can sort out the mess'. Understandably councils and community are incensed to having had submissions dismissed from any serious consideration.

HOW CLEAN IS THE MARIBYRNONG?

FMV has applied for a grant from the Federal Dept of Community Services in its Volunteer Small Equipment Grants to enable us to purchase a water sampling kit. This will enable us to conduct various assessments of water quality including turbidity, dissolved oxygen, coliform bacteria and the nutrients nitrate and phosphate.

PIPEMAKERS WETLAND

The so-called wetland on the southern end of Pipemaker's Park has been dry for so long. Admittedly we have had five or six years of below-average rainfall but even when it rains now, there is never any free water to be seen. FMV has approached Maribyrnong Council to utilize run-off water from Van Ness Avenue and the east of Highpoint to re-charge the wetland. There will have to be an immediate change to get water there now and a longer term system in which the water passes through a settlement and cleaning process before flowing down to the swamp.

DEFENCE LAND PETITION

The petition asking State Government to set aside the major part of the North Maribyrnong Defence Site as a metropolitan park that was decreed necessary in *Melbourne 2030* was presented to Bruce Mildenhall who then presented it to the House in mid-May. We eventually collected about 1500 signatures and FMV acknowledges the efforts of those who returned the completed petition sheets.

It would appear that, with negotiations between Defence and VicUrban continuing, that the gross land contamination (heavy metals, organo-nitrates, asbestos) that extends across the site from the burning-off area in the north east to the former sewerage plant in the southwest, will be our best ally. It is so extensive that it should prove uneconomic to move or to remediate on site. Hopefully then it may be covered and left in its inert and non-threatening form to lie beneath the parkland.

WEBSITE

In order to make FMV an effective vehicle for enabling the group to pursue its aims, we are setting up a website that can be flexible and effective in presenting information about the group and its activities including pictures of current activities and of memorabilia. We have reserved a site at www.fmvonline.com. Work on the site has just started but hopefully will develop quickly. One of its features will be that committee members will have email addresses in it.

PIPEMAKER'S PARK

For over a year now, Lorraine and others have been working to improve the outdoor conditions at PMP. Rampant weeds and overgrown shrubs and trees are ongoing problems and our efforts are only gradually making an impact. The park is clearly not receiving the support it needs from the authorities and if FMV is to continue to work for its improvement, and we will be looking into ways that we can be more effective. PMP should be a jewel in the west but it has some way to go.

OTHER THINGS.....

Greening Australia is staging another event at the Bitans property at Truganina. Under the heading Tussocks and Trees, topics will include site preparation, tree establishment, including direct seeding, species selection, native grass re-establishment, serrated tussock control and farm forestry with sugar gums for firewood and sawlogs. For details and Registration, call Jim Robinson on 9450 5320.

The next meeting of **Australian Plant Society Keilor Plains**, Friday 6 August at St Phillips Church Hall in Roberts Rd, Airport West, will deal with native plant propagation - very important for anyone interested in just growing the plants or in revegetation plantings.

Hope to see you all at the AGM. Stay Green!