

Editorial : Reflections on the VPO amendments proposed by the City of Monash.

The conservation-minded members of the Friends of Damper Creek Reserve (hopefully all of us) may feel that we (and the environment) were victims of some fancy political footwork when the amendments sponsored by Cr Lake were passed by Council. In truth, the process is far from over as the amendments now have to be submitted to the State Planning Minister who requires an additional 28 days for community submissions to an independent planning panel. This panel would then recommend amendments which then have to be passed by Monash Council (and so forth). This process could go on for quite some time before a final decision is made. Members of FODCR should, therefore, be prepared to make more submissions to support their positions on the Council's VPO policy.

As I drive (walk or ride) through Mount Waverley I have lots of opportunity to observe the contribution trees make to our environment. Before settlement, our area was heavily treed. However, looking through the book "THEN AND NOW A Pictorial History of the City of Monash" it is evident that, post agriculture, much of our city was completely cleared of trees and could properly be described as "bleak". Trees planted in commercial and residential properties, together with those planted to line our streets, have given our city a comfortable, refined air which will only increase as those trees mature. The "anti tree" lobby threatens our progress towards a mature "leafy suburb".

I recently visited an "Open Garden" in nearby Malvern. The property was located in a classic green and leafy street with mature Plane trees arching over the roadway, retained and treasured in defiance of damage to footpaths and other infrastructure. As expected, the property in question displayed a wide range of carefully selected trees and shrubs planted in an informal but complimentary pattern. The rear of the property featured an extensive vegetable garden protected by a border of trees and shrubs. The owner admitted to struggling to maintain the garden after several neighbours cleared their rear yards of mature trees to install swimming pools, creating a wind tunnel which threatened the viability of this garden. Gardens, therefore, do not exist in isolation. They contribute to an overall environment and, in a sense, they are community property. By promoting an appropriate tree policy for Monash, we are defending the rights of the wider community.

Meeting Frequency In order to reduce the burden on committee members and to improve transparency of FODCR processes, it was resolved at the February meeting to reduce the frequency of meetings to one per month. (Previously committee members met on the second Wednesday each month with General meetings on the fourth Wednesday.) General meetings would occur every other month, with speakers in between. Additional meetings could be called at any time for extraordinary purposes / issues. Both Alvie Hall and the Youth Centre rooms would be retained for these purposes.

It was proposed that the format of the meetings would also be less formal with a

circular audience seating arrangement to promote inclusion.

Battle for Healesville Freeway Reserve

Environmental battles frequently take place on areas of land out of sight to the general public. Sadie Street was one of those instances where a small, out of the way parcel of land was about to be sacrificed for an inappropriate development. I recently had the opportunity to wander along part of the route of the Healesville Freeway, a project that has been abandoned by Vicroads. From 1966 to 1986 land was purchased for this freeway and it has since languished, with parts being leased for agriculture and other purposes. Various sections of the reserve have been allocated to other purposes (Wurundjeri Walk Blackburn South and other reserves now managed by City of Whitehorse) but Vicroads plans to sell as much as possible of the remainder as housing to "maximise their return".

The section under threat stretches from Springvale Rd. (near Wobbie's World) to Boronia Rd., around 5 kms. At its midpoint the reserve crosses Bellbird Dell, a high value remnant ecosystem similar to Damper Creek. The Vicroads proposal would result in the sale of the middle section of this reserve for housing. The DSE classification of Bellbird Dell is "Valley Heathy Forest" and only 470 Ha of this bushland type remains in the bioregion (2% of the original cover). There were 94 indigenous plant species recorded in the area, of which 45 were of regional significance. The site is the only one supporting a population of Sugar Gliders in the City of Whitehorse. The remainder of the freeway reserve is mainly farmland although some quite

significant patches of remnant vegetation remain which have been conveniently ignored by Vicroads, as has the capacity of the area for regeneration.

The freeway reserve represents a magnificent opportunity for creating:

- 1/ A Wildlife corridor (biolink)
- 2/ Parks for passive recreation
- 3/ An off-road cycle path
- 4/ Sporting grounds

The City of Whitehorse ranks poorly for public open space with 4.3 Ha per thousand people (Monash has 4.6 Ha/1000).

Vicroads proposal risks the loss of this value to Whitehorse, the fragmentation of Bellbird Dell, overloading stormwater systems, and social disruption caused by increasing population density and lack of recreational space.

For more information see:

www.friendsofthehealesvillefreewayreserve.org

Guest Speakers

March: Mark O'Loughlin of the Museum of Victoria will talk in the topic "Discoveries in Marine Biology", Mark is an expert in echinoderm marine animals ... sea stars, sea cucumbers, feather stars, sea urchins and brittle stars and will make special reference to his research work in Antarctica.

May

Robin Drury. "The activities of the Fauna Survey Group of the Field Naturalists Club." Robyn's special areas of interest are frogs and the use of remote cameras.

Working bee March 31st

We will be working near the Tarella Dr bridge.

Note that this is Easter Sunday

Important dates to remember:

	March	Notes
Meeting:	Wed27th - 7:30pm	Alvie Hall
Working Bee	Sun Mar 31st 10-00 am to 1-00pm	Tarella Dr Bridge
April		
Meeting:	Wed 27th- 7:30 pm	Alvie Hall
Working Bee	Sun Apr 28th 10-00am to 12-30 pm	TBD

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Damper Creek Bushland Reserve: part of the Yarra Catchment.

Please address all mail to:

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The Newsletter of

**FRIENDS OF
DAMPER CREEK RESERVE INC.**

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DAMPER CREEK DOINGS

March 2013

