

Blackburn and district Tree Preservation Society Inc.



NEWSLETTER No 244
March 2017

Blackburn & Heatherdale Level Crossing Removals (BLXR & HLXR)

The railway cutting works have been completed and Blackburn and Heatherdale Roads are open to traffic again after a month-long closure in January and early February this year. However there is still much to do to reverse Blackburn Village looking like a building site with drainage works and landscaping yet to be completed.

Many local Blackburn residents and traders have been left wondering whether it was worth it with promised benefits for the local community yet to be proven in the face of the almost complete destruction of the landscape and local amenity of the area. The Blackburn railway station remains in its long-time shabby state with a narrow and dangerous subway (that flooded in January – yet again!), third-world standard toilets and no roof over the central ramp leading to the station platforms. It is still unclear whether the access ramps comply with standards for disabled commuters with 'improved' entry ramps and lifts the only concessions made by the state government and CPB Contractors.

The good news is that the LXR authority has decided, after much advocacy from the tree society and others, to remove the weed species from the proposed planting list for the Blackburn Station precinct. The species in question were *Cordyline australis*, *Knipofia uvaria*, *Phormium tenax* and *Aspidistra elatior*. Collectively they represented over 10% of the plants to be planted in the precinct and, if planted, there would be a high risk of their 'escape' into the local bushland parks including Blackburn Lake Sanctuary, Blackburn Creeklands and Wandinong Sanctuary.

A fifth 'dubious' species, *Calamagrostis X acutiflora* 'Overdam' (Feather Reed Grass), was also removed from the list because species of this genus show high weed potential. The tree society suggested that the LXRA refer to the Whitehorse City Council publication *Indigenous Gardening in Whitehorse* for further details on suitable local grasses that would suit as replacements. The tree society argued that the deliberate planting of known weeds on public land under the auspices of the government authority managing the land sends the wrong message to the public about the use of these plants in the landscape.

We also presented scientific evidence for the weed potential for these species via forwarding an excerpt from the CRC (Cooperative Research Centre) for Australian Weed Management – *The Introduced Flora of Australia and its Weed Status, 2007*, R. P. Randall, Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia.

Other tree society comments on the authority's proposed planting schedules included:

- Plant indigenous eucalypts and wattles instead of the native eucalypts on the list for the Blackburn car park and corridor near the library, tennis courts and in Morton Park (northern perimeter).
- Plant Blackwoods and/or Lightwoods in place of the 'Little Spotty' Eucalypts to the north of the Blackburn tennis courts. These acacias are compact and dense and will help screen the ugly, graffiti-covered factory walls on the other side of the railway line. This theme should be continued along the northern perimeter of the two ovals in Morton Park with a mix of indigenous eucalypts and acacias in place of the native species. This battle is ongoing and at this stage it looks like the local *Allocasuarina* will be planted instead of the dwarf Eucalypts.
- The planting scheme along the shared use path bordering Glen Ebor residences is boring (2 x *Lomandra* species throughout!) and would soon look very untidy and rubbish-strewn. The strip needs small shrubs, ground covers, native grasses, flowering tufties (e.g. native daisies) and the odd small tree/large shrub to lift this area. Climbers on the fences or trellises were also recommended here.
- The society advised against planting native eucalypts (in this case *E. Leucoxyton var. megalocarpa* 'Rosea') along the northern border of the Seventh Day Adventist land. These species don't complement the indigenous trees within the adjacent conservation areas that contain rare and endangered Valley Heathy Forest. In addition the risk of hybridization with the indigenous eucalypts is a risk not worth taking. Indigenous tree species, predominantly eucalypts must be planted here to enhance the natural amenity of the site and reduce the risk of hybridization.
- Heatherdale car park and Corridor Planting Schedule - a number of trees (4-6), including indigenous eucalypts will be removed in the western section of Brunswick Road Reserve in Mitcham to make way for the shared use path. An area containing native grasses and *Gahnia* spp. will also be lost. The Heatherdale LXRA must 'make good' this incursion into this council-owned park by sponsoring the planting of suitable indigenous eucalypts and native grasses back into the park near where the losses will occur. The reserve also lends itself to the 'off-set' planting of indigenous trees and shrubs to partly compensate for the large tree losses (over 200!) resulting from the LXR and shared use path works zone in Mitcham and Heatherdale.
- To the immediate west of Cochrane Street in Mitcham - replace the *Corymbia maculatas* with suitable indigenous eucalypts (e.g. *E. cephalocarpa*, *E. melliodora*, *E. radiata*), i.e. similar to trees already removed and plant a copse (15-20) Blackwoods in this area to replace the young Blackwoods removed to construct the shared use path.
- Heatherdale Station Precinct Planting Schedule - the inclusion of only 8 trees in the station precinct needs to be questioned, particularly as 6 of them could be considered large shrubs (i.e. being of less than 6 metres in height). The local community deserves a softer and more appealing landscape in this area.

Local State politician Shaun Leane and the LXR authority have reiterated their promise to implement an 'offset' planting program of indigenous trees and lower storey vegetation within Whitehorse on State-owned land in the Nunawading Parklands, between Junction and Springvale Roads and the Eastern Freeway in Nunawading.

At this stage over 20,000 indigenous plants including ~1,300 trees will be planted on this land over the next few years to help compensate for the loss of so many trees and shrubs along the railway corridor between Blackburn and Heatherdale.

The committee urges members to keep up the pressure on the BLXRA, HLXRA and state Labor politicians to mitigate the damage caused by this project.

The Proposed Shared Use Path through Laburnum and Blackburn

For well over 6 months now the fate of the shared use path (SUP) through Laburnum and Blackburn remains a mystery. VicRoads did conduct and publish the results of a very dodgy community survey that only considered possible routes on the south side of the rail corridor, whilst completely ignoring the preferred northern community path route.

Locals need to be very wary of VicRoads as the VicRoads-preferred route for the cycleway is through Elmore Walk and the Laburnum Station Gardens. This will be to the detriment of locals, walkers and commuting pedestrians using the parks and will result in the unnecessary loss of trees and diminution of the natural amenity afforded by these lovely linear parks. We urge our readers to lobby their Ward Councillors in opposition to the construction of a three metre-wide concrete cycleway in Elmore Walk and the Laburnum station gardens. Likewise using Laburnum Street as part of the 'rail' trail will cause more traffic and safety problems than it attempts to resolve. VicRoads is seemingly faced with an impasse in the face of community opposition in Laburnum and Blackburn.

As stated previously, the tree society opposes the loss of trees & neighbourhood character in Laburnum and Blackburn that will result from the construction of a southern 3-metre wide concrete path through these suburbs. The society advocates for the northern community-preferred path that will result in minimal tree and vegetation impacts, will more closely follow the rail corridor, and will better provide for the increasing need for access to Laburnum and Blackburn by residents of the high-density housing developments between Whitehorse Road and the railway line.

Nunawading Parklands Development Update

Nunawading Parklands (Melway 48 F/6) is an 11-hectare open space in Nunawading bounded by the Eastern Freeway, Springvale Road and Junction Road. As stated previously, a binding commitment by the state government and the Blackburn and Heatherdale Level Crossing Removal Authorities will result in the planting of over 20,000 indigenous plants in the Nunawading Parklands. This is a component of an offset planting program to help account for the massive loss of trees and vegetation due to the Blackburn and Heatherdale level crossing removal works.

On National Tree Day, (on Sunday 30 July 2017 from 10am to 12noon), Whitehorse Council will be sponsoring a community planting activity in the park near the intersection of Junction and Springvale Roads. The tree society and local Friends of the Park will be involved in the activity and more details of this activity will be published in the near future.

VCAT Hearing – Construction of a Childcare Centre at 25 Holland Road Blackburn South

The tree society, along with Whitehorse Council and many local residents, gave presentations opposing the construction of the childcare centre during a four-day VCAT Hearing in December 2016. The society specifically objected to the removal of a large number of mature, significant trees and vegetation from the land.

A well-organised and coordinated community response resulted in upwards of a dozen individual resident presentations that encompassed all of the community's concerns about the development proposal. These concerns include the overdevelopment of the site, the loss of trees on site, the threat to neighbouring trees and shrubs, excessive traffic and noise, safety concerns on what is already a busy suburban thoroughfare and the overall unsuitability of the development in a residential location.

No VCAT decision has been published as yet.

Major Works Planned for the Masons Road Retarding Basin Reserve in Blackburn

Late last year Melbourne Water peremptorily announced that up to twenty-five healthy mature trees and other native and indigenous vegetation must be removed from the Masons Road Retarding Basin/Reserve embankment in February-March 2017.

The main reason given was to safeguard the integrity of the embankment as a functional floodwater-retarding wall. That means that any tree located on a levee bank must be removed. The reference Melbourne Water staff cited for this requirement was the ANCOLD Guidelines for the structural integrity of dam walls. ANCOLD is the Australian National Committee on Large Dams (ANCOLD), the industry body *providing guidance in achieving excellence for all aspects of dam engineering, management and associated issues*.

The local community was angry at the short notice and less-than-ideal community consultation process undertaken by Melbourne Water in December and January. However, following a good deal of community lobbying, a number of meetings have been held including a properly constituted community stakeholder meeting in February. It turns out that Melbourne Water commissioned the development of an Environmental & Landscape Management Plan for the Masons Road Retarding Basin in 2004, complete with mass tree plantings, wetlands construction, pathway installation and minimal tree removal. This plan gained widespread community support at that time; however, nothing more has been heard about this plan since the mid-2000s. In fact the Melbourne Water team dealing with this latest project had no knowledge that the 2004 draft Master Plan even existed!

The latest information is that Melbourne Water are developing another plan that will include the planting of a large number of indigenous trees and associated vegetation, the removal of environmental weeds and path upgrades. Hopefully a couple of ephemeral wetlands can be created and the number of trees slated for removal minimized. Another community stakeholder meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 8 March.

Healesville Freeway Reserve Linear Park

The main objectives for 2017 include the final consolidation of land parcels on the reserve, the transfer of land ownership and management to Parks Victoria and the finalisation of a concept plan for the land. All community stakeholders have been actively involved in the consultation process culminating in the development of a draft Concept Plan that has been well received by locals. The reserve will have a network of walking paths, with plenty of open spaces and all of the critical remnant vegetation protected. The state Department of Environment, Water, Land & Planning and VicRoads plan to hand the reserve over to Parks Victoria in early 2018.

The tree society's primary interests for the reserve are:

- The preservation and enhancement of the remnant vegetation in the reserve
- The removal of environmental weeds and
- The protection and expansion of Bellbird Dell as a bushland park much loved by the community.

Informal community working bees will be continued in 2017 targeting the removal of environmental weeds in the reserve between Davy Lane Reserve and Terrara Road.

The Tree Society's 50-Year History Book

The publication is now in the final editing stage.

It will be over 200 pages in length with ten Chapters, seven Appendices and 100s of reproductions of photos, newspaper clippings, notices and leaflets.

In fact the book will be much larger than the original 60-page A5 booklet originally imagined back in 2009-2010 when the project started.

The plan is to launch the book on the afternoon of **Saturday 3 June or Sunday 4 June 2017**, the weekend prior to World Environment Day on Monday 5 June. We will also be celebrating the 50th anniversary of Les Smith's active membership of the tree society and the conferring of Honorary tree society memberships to founding members Bea Hamilton, Laurel Jones and Joan Satchwell who have all played an important part in providing material for the book.

An invitation with a firm date will be sent out in April but, in the meantime, please keep this weekend free for the book launch and celebration of the pioneers of the tree society.

Tree Society President Sally Kaptein and seven past Presidents of the tree society, 1984 (Nunawading Gazette)



Tree Society Meeting Times

The tree society committee meets every 2nd Wednesday of the month from 2-4 p.m. in February, March, May, July, September and November. General meetings are scheduled for June and October. The AGM is held (as always) in November. The location is Bungalook Nursery in Fulton Road Blackburn South. Tree society members and the general public are most welcome to attend tree society meetings.

Tree Society Website and Email Address

Website: <http://www.bdtps.wordpress.com> for information on tree society activities.
 Email: Contact the tree society on <mailto:bdtpsociety@gmail.com> .

<u>COMMITTEE</u>	Secretary	Ann Clayton	9878 6585
	Treasurer	Mary Crouch	9894 3025
	Members	Anne Payne	9878 1152
		David Berry	9890 7915
		Les Smith	9874 2641

**BLACKBURN & DISTRICT TREE PRESERVATION
SOCIETY INC.**

- Aims to:**
- **Promote and improve the natural environment
in the City of Whitehorse**
 - Promote an understanding of indigenous plants and the
natural environment

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'Gardens for Wildlife' Talk 20 March at 7 pm – Yarran Dheran Visitors Centre

You are invited to an information session on the 'Gardens for Wildlife' program, which has been running for 10 years in the City of Knox.

Irene Kelly from The Knox Environment Society, who along with Nadine Gaskell from Knox Council were the creators of this successful and well-supported program.

Irene has agreed to talk to the Whitehorse community about the program, how it is run and what the achievements have been, so we can evaluate it for possible introduction in Whitehorse.

The Yarran Dheran Advisory Committee has kindly agreed to make the Visitor Centre available for the information session.

Talk on 'Gardens for Wildlife' by Irene Kelly

**When: Monday 20th March
Time – 7pm**

**Where - Yarran Dheran Visitors Centre
Ashburton Drive
Mitcham.**

RSVP- bellbirdell@yahoo.com.au by 15th March