Tree Society Annual Report 2016-2017

A list of the activities and issues with which the tree society has been actively involved during the reporting period appears below. For further details please refer to the society’s newsletters for the period November 2016-November 2017 and the tree society website http://home.vicnet.net.au/~bdtps/.

- Completion of the Level Crossing Removal Project at Blackburn. The new Blackburn station environs landscape is best described as ‘concrete grotesque’
- Completion of the Level Crossing Removal Project at Heatherdale. Over 250 trees and shrubs (many indigenous) were removed from this site
- Construction of the Box Hill to Ringwood Rail Trail through Laburnum, Blackburn and Nunawading and the Mitcham to Heatherdale shared use path link. The routing of the Laburnum section of the shared use path remains unresolved and somewhat contentious*
- Development of the Nunawading Parklands as a major Community Park. Over 24,000 indigenous plants will be planted in this green-field site over the next few years with 18,000 planted in 2018*
- Healesville Freeway Reserve land development into a major, bushland-themed park and biolink for Whitehorse. Work to consolidate the land and develop a concept plan has been slow however we hope that 2018 will be a year of on-ground action for this exciting project*
- Childcare Centre development proposal at 25 Holland Road Blackburn South. The development application was knocked back at VCAT in May 2017. The developer subsequently cut down all trees on the property within three weeks of the VCAT decision. The society is managing a neighbourhood project to replace this wanton canopy destruction. The project aims to plant over 100 trees and shrubs in residences around 25 Holland Road in 2017-18*
- Masons Road Retarding Basin works by Melbourne Water and the revegetation project involving the local community, Melbourne Water, the Tree Society and the Blackburn & District Environment Protection Fund. A major community planting was held in August 2017 at three wetland sites within the reserve
- The official Tree Society History – ‘Fighting for the Trees’ was launched in June 2017
- The tree society made a submission on Amendment C175 to the Whitehorse Planning Scheme: Box Hill Municipal Activity Centre in July 2017. Planning Panels Victoria subsequently conducted a Public Hearing in July/August 2017. The society along with a few other community groups and individuals and many developers gave presentations at the hearing. See the November 2017 newsletter for the most recent update*
- Blackburn & District Environment Protection Fund. The Fund is officially sponsored by the tree society and financially supports worthy environmental education and ‘on-ground’ activities within Whitehorse. Refer to the November newsletter for a full report on the Fund activities*
- Forest Ridge Development Plan for the former ATV-0 TV studio site in Forest Hill. The society made a submission to council regarding this application citing a number of built-form and natural landscape issues. Council subsequently rejected the development plan application (refer to the November 2017 newsletter for further details)
- Development applications for yet another childcare centre at 199 Canterbury Road Blackburn are still before Whitehorse council*
- Citywide Tree and Vegetation Controls for Whitehorse*
- The Tree Society has enthusiastically supported Council’s ‘Gardens for Wildlife’ project and the recently published book ‘Indigenous Gardening in Whitehorse’.

(* NB Activities and Issues before the tree society committee that will continue into 2018 are marked with an asterisk)

Tree Society Submissions and Presentations throughout the year:
- Objection to council concerning a residential development proposal at 21 Laurel Grove Blackburn with associated tree and vegetation loss (November 2016)
• Submission to VCAT opposing a childcare development proposal at 25 Holland Road Blackburn South with the associated loss of 25 mature trees (November 2016)
• Formal presentation at VCAT in opposition to the childcare development proposal at 25 Holland Road Blackburn South (December 2016)
• Objection to Whitehorse City Council (WCC) on yet another childcare development proposal for 199 Canterbury Road Blackburn (April 2017)
• Statement of Grounds submission to VCAT opposing the development at 21 Laurel Grove (North) in Blackburn (April 2017)
• Central Road, Blackburn Lake frontage - formal response to council regarding the proposed landscape works and parking upgrade (June 2017)
• Final report to the Public Record Office (Victoria) on the development, publishing and printing of ‘Fighting for the Trees’ (June 2017)
• Letter to council objecting to the impact of construction works at 20-24 Masons Road Blackburn on a significant Eucalypt on the adjacent property at 18 Masons Road (July 2017)
• Submission to WCC on the Forest Ridge Development Plan for the former ATV-0 TV studio site in Forest Hill (July 2017)
• Submission to VicRoads with concerns about the proposed route of the shared use path through Laburnum and Blackburn (August 2017)

Three Newsletters have been produced and distributed over the past year.

The Tree Society was awarded the inaugural Urban Landcare Award by the Governor of Victoria at a lavish ceremony at Government House in September 2017.

Long-time Tree Society stalwart Les Smith was honoured for his environmental advocacy with an OAM in the Queens Birthday Honours in June 2017. Les was awarded the medal in an official ceremony at Government House in October. Congratulations to Les from the Tree Society.

The tree society welcomed long-time Life Member Anne Payne onto the committee at the AGM in November 2016.

Thanks to tree society member Sally Polack for maintaining the society’s website (see http://home.vicnet.net.au/~bdtps/). Members are urged to check out the site for the latest campaign details, recent newsletters and submissions, historical material and photos.

The tree society committee of David Berry, Mary Crouch, Ann Clayton, Anne Payne and Les Smith continues to be an important advocate for the environment in Whitehorse. We lobby council, provide advice to residents, respond to the many issues involving the natural environment and liaise with like-minded environmental groups to fight for the protection and enhancement of our natural landscape.

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
Check out http://www.bdtps.wordpress.com for the latest information on tree society activities. Contact the tree society committee on mailto:bdtpsociety@gmail.com for any tree-related matter.

David Berry
November 2017