



THE WATZON

Newsletter of the Watson Community Association Inc.

Issue 115 – Autumn 2023



The Watson Community Association Inc. acknowledges and pays respect to the past, present and future Traditional Custodians and Elders of this nation and the continuation of cultural and spiritual practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Eastern Long Necked Turtle. Photo courtesy John Harding.

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The Watson
Community
Association Inc. wishes

to thank the Australian Catholic
University (Signadou Campus, Canberra)
for printing the WATZON newsletter as a
community service.

Welcome to Watson!

By Geoff Murray-Prior, Chair of Watson Community Association

I recently thought about issues facing our suburb only a few years ago. At that time, there was an unsolicited proposal for the full urbanisation of Section 13 (the old Watson High School site on Windeyer Street). As I recall, some local residents were protesting, and proposing that some part of this Section be retained as a recreational area. Also, at that time the ACT Government were starting their plans for the development of Section 76 (on Aspinall Street opposite Negus Crescent). A Tree Assessment, released in June 2020 but containing data produced in July 2018, proposed the removal of almost 450 trees, from a total tree count of just under 670.

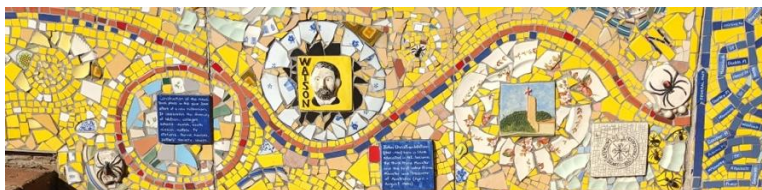
It was in this environment, back in early 2019, that the WCA, through its Planning Group, developed its “Plan for the Sustainable Development of Watson.” At that time the unsolicited proposal for Section 13 was active, and the WCA Plan proposed that “Any development should be limited to the footprint of the existing building to preserve the green space.” A simple but powerful statement setting out the WCA’s position that the entire area should remain open space.

Fast forward to now, and, for Section 13, Minister Steel has announced the ACT Government would be retaining the Section 13 open space and developing a destination-style playground and recreation park of over two hectares at a cost of about \$2.6 million. Regarding Section 76, we now know that all tree lines will be retained, and although a small number of trees may be removed, the canopy area will be largely retained. There will also be one hectare set aside as a public recreational area.

So how did we arrive at these new positions? Whilst many people and organisations made representations and submissions to the ACT Government, much credit must go to the outstanding work of Simon, and his Planning Group, and Cathy and Belle and the Living Streets youths. There can be no doubt that the work of these two groups has played a major role in influencing these desired outcomes. Simon, on behalf of the WCA, was methodical and persistent in developing reasoned proposals and submissions, and maintained excellent relationships with Planning bureaucrats, relevant Ministers, and other parties. His work helped maintain, and even enhanced, the respect I believe those people have for the WCA.

The Living Streets youths were similarly energetic and resourceful in their proposals. They held public consultations, developed an excellent video, and submitted numerous options for recreational facilities in our suburb. In my view, they do not get the recognition they so surely deserve. We are indeed lucky to have youths like this in our suburb. Welcome to Watson*

¹ Subsequent to the activities described above, Geoff's wife, Gillian, was appointed a Director of Living Streets Association.



Watson Community Association Incorporated (WCA) Preliminary Notice - Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The AGM of the WCA will be held on Tuesday 18th April 2023, commencing at 7:30pm. The meeting will be held at Youth With A Mission (YWAM); entrance via Zelling Street near the intersection with the Federal Highway, then follow the signs.

In addition to the statutory matters to be considered, members have an opportunity to submit business they may wish to raise. Should you wish to raise any business, please draft a formal motion, with proposer and seconder, and forward it to the WCA Secretary, by email to watsoncommunityassociation666@gmail.com.

One important component of the AGM is to elect members of the committee, including office bearers. Please give serious thought to how you can serve your community by being involved with the WCA. Nomination forms are on the Facebook page, or can be requested from the Secretary, at the email address above.

Our **guest speaker** at the AGM will be a lawyer from the Environmental Defenders Office (EDO), who will talk about the EDO and its ACT Practice, as well as the work they are doing and how to request legal advice from them. This should be of widespread community interest.

*Finally, please ensure that the WCA has your correct email address; if in doubt please send an update to the Secretary, as above. If you did not receive an email advising you of our February meeting then we do not have your correct email address. Please update by notifying us at the email address above. Thank you**



WELCOME TO WATSON

**Please
join us**

The Watson Community Association Inc. invites newcomers to Watson to a casual, free event!

Friendly locals are also invited to welcome our new neighbours

Sun 16th April at 2 to 3:30 pm
**The Knox Cafe, Watson Village
Shops**

Local groups, organisations, businesses, sporting & hobby clubs have been invited

More information:

watsoncommunityassociation666@gmail.com

Majura Café Poets

sunshine days still here
bees buzz lavender delight
amazing nature

kids climate action
Majura Primary takes prize
climate heroes all

David Turbayne

cockatoos wrangle
at night time over who's
right and who's wrong

a silver lining
clouds gather to thunderous
applause at curtain fall

Fiona McIlroy

The Friends of Mount Majura - Working in Watson

By Margy Burn, Secretary of the Friends of Mount Majura



*Blue devils (Eryngium ovinum)- a lovely wildflower which grows at The Fair.
Photographed by Jenni Marsh.*

The Friends of Mount Majura (FoMM) is a volunteer Park Care Group working to protect and enhance the natural environment of Mount Majura and its surroundings. Since its foundation in 2003 FoMM has worked on five project sites across the nature park, weeding, planting appropriate local native species, improving the soil by spreading mulch, mapping and monitoring. We also run guided nature walks for local residents to see and learn more about the trees, wildflowers, birds, even ants which live and grow on Mount Majura.

Since 2012 an important focus has been working at The Fair site in North Watson. This site, accessed from the nature park entrance at Tay and Ian Nicol Streets, was seriously degraded when our work began, infested with weeds and the soil heavily compacted. It is an important grassy woodland remnant site with high biodiversity, including many bird species and rare and endangered flora.

In the past ten years FoMM volunteers have removed introduced weeds such as Briar Roses, Hawthorn, St John's Wort, Paterson's Curse, Thistles and Chilean Needle Grass. We've also removed non-local native species which are colonisers, such as Blue Gum seedlings, Cootamundra Wattle, and Grevillea species which have jumped the fence from plantings along the Federal Highway.

In their place we've planted thousands of trees, shrubs, flowers and grasses, sometimes at popular events such as National Tree Day, or with community groups like the Majura Mountain cubs and scouts. The landscape at The Fair has been transformed by this work.

Most recently we've been concentrating on removing St John's Wort growing near dense patches of wildflowers including Clustered and Sticky Everlasting daisies, Blue Devils and Hoary Sunrays. St John's Wort is highly invasive, with each plant setting thousands of seeds and also producing new plants which shoot from underground stems (rhizomes). We pull up these stems as we take out the plants and we bag the flowerheads to stop seeds setting. People who walk at The Fair will have seen large bales of removed weeds, which are collected by Rangers and destroyed. Unfortunately, we've seen some recent dumping of garden waste near these bales, which is dispiriting for hard-working volunteers and risks introducing more weeds to the nature park. We hope the addition of new signage about dumping will be a deterrent.

Anyone can join in FoMM activities: no experience is necessary. Newcomers will be introduced to the work by experienced volunteers.

We work at The Fair every Monday morning from 9.30am and also on some of our Sunday working parties, held on the third Sunday of each month. FoMM's webpage <https://majura.org/> provides information about all our activities and if you sign up to our email list you will receive an informative monthly newsletter.

If you love having the bush as your backyard, do join us in giving something back to nature ✿

The Friends of Mount Majura welcome all to events at Mt Majura – see <https://majura.org/> for details of what's coming up soon

Raw Shorty

By Julie P Smith

After 30 years as a committee member of the Watson Community Association, and in this year of the 60th birthday of the suburb of Watson, I have decided to call it day.

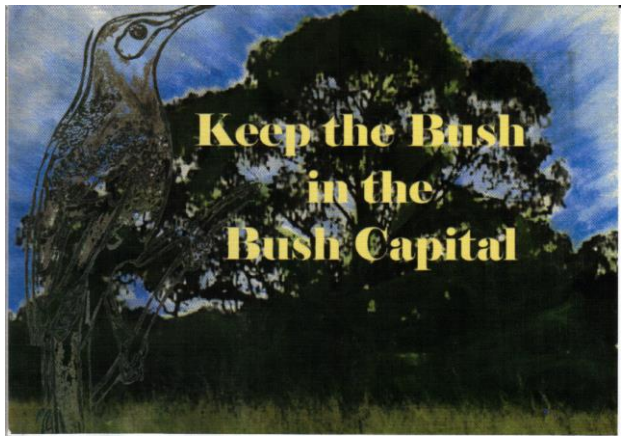
The Watson Woodlands, now known as the Justice Robert Hope Park, remains as a testament to our successful efforts to protect an important remnant of native bushland. A decade on, this type of woodland was declared an endangered ecosystem. Our icon was the Regent Honeyeater, an endangered native bird that had successfully nested in the vicinity in 1996. In January of the Black Summer of 2020, I sat in the Watson Woodland and took comfort from watching a single Regent Honeyeater darting back and forth as it fed in an very old, prolifically flowering Yellow Box tree. Outlined against the densely smoky sky at that time, its rare presence seemed to represent a kind of Phoenix rising from the ashes of south-eastern Australia.



Photo by Raw Shorty, January 2020

The campaign to save the woodlands began in 1992, and culminated a decade later when the ALP Environment Minister Simon Corbell implemented a 2001 election promise to preserve 15 hectares of this Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland. Over that time, I was chair or deputy chair of the Association, and led the campaign against building on the woodland. Dozens of people participated in that work, and I am proud of the strength of the evidence that we put together for the case to preserve the woodland. The WCA's 'Planner Speak' send-up of planning jargon was cited in an urban planning book. We were even awarded the ANU's Peter Harrison Prize on town planning for our research, which culminated in a judicial inquiry and an ACT Auditor's inquiry into whether Canberra's public land was being properly managed.

From 2002, Martin Grace then led the WCA's practical efforts to repair decades of damage to the woodland's grassy understorey as Convenor of the WCA Woodlands Working Group, a role taken on by Richard Larson after Martin's untimely death. John Briggs led preparation of the influential 2000 report *The Ecological Values of the North Watson Woodland*, and continues to contribute to WCA work on the Woodlands.



WCA 2001 Election Campaign Postcard

The work of the volunteers of WCA has contributed to a friendly, welcoming atmosphere in this suburb which I am proud of. The memorable Watson Birthday Parties in 2003 and 2013 were organised by the WCA Committee and were a huge success.

One role I played was as editor of the *Watson* newsletter, which is the longest running community newsheet in Canberra. A team of volunteers has maintained its continuity, and ensured it is delivered to most homes in Watson. I would especially acknowledge Liz Grace and Carrie Wright for this sustained and important effort.

I leave the Committee at a time when it is on a very sound financial basis, and with a strong network of volunteers active in pursuing various projects which are of interest to the larger Watson community.

I wish them well, and urge all Watson residents to consider a role, large or small, in the work of the Association.

You never know what you can achieve until you take on more than you think you can achieve*
* ❁

A Word from the Director

By Carmel Richardson, President of the Living Streets Association (LSA)

I was recently invited to become the President of the Living Streets Association (LSA). LSA is a volunteer group of like-minded people working hard to create a place and sense of belonging in Watson neighbourhoods. LSA has been reporting in this publication for some time and I'm always impressed by the wide-ranging activities and events the members organise, predominantly for local children and young people.



We had our board meeting on the 5th of February. The meeting was small and focused and the members had a real sense of purpose. I was deeply impressed with the warmth and welcome extended to everyone present.

The youngest members of the board are Cathy and Mia, both studying at uni and both passionate about LSA. Their enthusiasm and dedication are infectious!

LSA's primary goal is to bring people together and in so doing, to improve the well-being of young people who we know are increasingly experiencing feelings of isolation and disconnection from their communities. LSA wants to address this concerning issue through warm, purposeful engagement. Young people are its focus, its work engine and its strength.

The LSA has already won several awards for its work and this is a testament to the worthiness of this community focussed, people-centred project of belonging.

The important next step for LSA is to reach out to other neighbourhoods to offer support in establishing similar projects. They have a lot to share regarding making those tentative first steps of connection. They also have a broad swath of tips about creating welcoming outdoor spaces and organising small local events.

Initiating a neighbourhood group takes time, effort and dedicated teamwork. But the payoffs are well worth the personal investments of shared skills, talents and interests and there are many benefits for all from the connections involvement in this sort of group inevitably brings.

LSA hopes to win a local grant this year to support sustainable activity and to advance the work they'd like to do in helping others to establish similar projects. Writing grant applications is a skill set LSA has yet to secure and we'd like to invite anyone reading this article who may have some experience in this area, and who'd like to offer us the welcome gift of shared knowledge, to contact us.

Likewise, if you'd like to learn more or come along to an upcoming event please see the LSA webpage, Facebook or Instagram for further details or contact us on one of the contact avenues listed below *



Website: living-streets.com
Email: livingstreetsassociation@gmail.com
Facebook: Living Streets Association
Instagram: livingstreetsassociation

Website

Watson Buzz

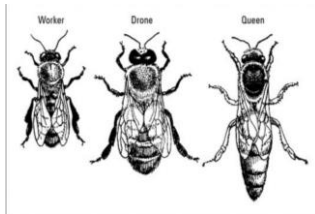
By Aileen Conroy

🐝 We need pollinators -including honey bees- to grow our food.

🐝 Honey bees are particularly effective pollinators because a forager bee has “floral fidelity” and visits many flowers on one species of plant during each flight. This spreads the pollen via the hairs on the bee, resulting in fertile seeds and fruit.

🐝 Flavours of honey (such as “Yellow Box” when that eucalypt is flowering) result from concentrated nectar.

🐝 It takes 40,000 bees and 2 million flower visits to collect 1kg of nectar and reduce the water content to less than 18% to fill a 250gm jar of honey !!



🐝 Each hive has 1 Queen (who lays eggs for 2-3 years), 2% male Drones (who only eat and mate with a queen once) and 98% female Workers (who do **everything** else).

🐝 Saturday 20th May is World Bee Day. Farmer’s Market at EPIC and the Parliament House Beekeeper organise programs to educate and celebrate.

🐝 A Honey Bee foraging on Eucalyptus flowers at Majura Primary in February 🌸



Quiet locally but busy in the wider ACT!

By Simon Clarke, WCA Planning Group Convenor and NCCC representative

A very quiet few months in terms of the major sites in Watson. On Block 76 we are told that construction of play space is to commence soon. The access road is planned to be constructed late 2023. There is little movement on any of the other major sites in Watson.

But we have a **Proposed New Planning Bill** which is causing enormous angst among Community Councils, Associations and interest groups. It seems to favour developers and further inhibit residents from lodging any meaningful objections. The response from CPAG (Canberra Planning Action Group) seems to sum up the feeling.

“What does one think when a 3-month long review of the new ACT Planning Bill by the tripartite ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services (the committee) results in a report with 49 unanimous amendments relating to that Bill, including one recommendation that any Assembly consideration of this ACT Planning Bill acknowledge the Inquiry outcomes?”

The obvious answer to this rhetorical question is that the proposed Bill must be either withdrawn or substantially re-drafted in line with the Inquiry report.” (CPAG newsletter 2/23.)

There is also a (so far unconfirmed, but NOT denied) report that the Greens have been excluded from the process because they were asking too many difficult questions. The North Canberra Community Council has sent a letter to the Greens urging them to continue to oppose the current bill.

Among the concerns are that there is no provision for an overarching mechanism that is transparent, that conducts reviews and evaluates planning, such as an Independent Planning Commission. All states except Qld have such a body.

CPAG’s conclusion is that *“failure to either reject the present Bill or genuinely and substantially amend it hands over the future of Canberra to a limited cartel of developers, and the chief planner, at the expense of the majority of Canberrans.”*

On another front, we have the continued acquiescence from the ACT Government to the **Takeover of Public Land**. Canberra Grammar School has submitted an application for a private school car park on “protected” public green space in South Canberra. This has implications for Lyneham (Brindabella Christian College) and is a further erosion of the concept of protected public space. One does wonder where it will end?*

Watson Property Sales

Publicly available, kindly supplied by Mark McReynolds, from home by holly

16 Field Street	\$2,650,000	2 Whitmore Crescent	\$740,000
37b Molesworth Street	\$1,350,000	16/7 Shewcroft Street	\$685,000
54 Cullen Street	\$1,287,000	17/7 Shewcroft Street	\$685,000
28 Phippard Court	\$1,280,000	47 Ian Nichol Street	\$680,000
34 Negus Crescent	\$1,240,000	25/23 Aspinall Street	\$600,000
36 Kilduff Crescent	\$1,200,000	172/395 Antill Street	\$595,000
44 Phippard Court	\$1,080,000	35/21 Aspinall Street	\$515,000
28 Ehrlich Circuit	\$1,075,000	18/20 Federal Highway	\$470,000
71/395 Antill Street	\$1,050,000	87/20 Federal Highway	\$470,000
4 Stow Place	\$1,050,000	28/28 Beechworth Street	\$459,000
35 Knox Street	\$1,005,000	11/35 Tay Street	\$438,500
5 Bettie Mcnee Street	\$1,000,000	26/20 Federal Highway	\$430,000
11 Bettie Mcnee Street	\$980,000	44/23 Aspinall Street	\$421,000
3/5 Phippard Court	\$905,000	30/25 Aspinall Street	\$395,000
7 Bettie Mcnee Street	\$895,000	14/156 Knox Street	\$272,000
81 Phillip Avenue	\$840,000		
21/45 Negus Crescent	\$820,000		
93/395 Antill Street	\$800,000		

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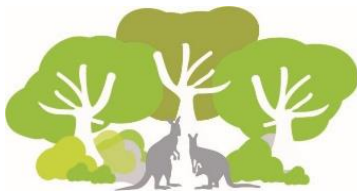
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WATSON
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION INC.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act 1991

I / We,
(full name of applicant/s)

of (address)
.....

hereby apply to become a member/s of the above-named incorporated Association.
I / We agree to be bound by the rules of the incorporated Association for the time
being in force.

Email

..... Date
(Signature of applicant 1)

..... Date
(Signature of applicant 2)

Note:

Information provided by the applicant is used to confirm Watson residency and to enable the Watson Community Association (WCA) to communicate with members regarding upcoming meetings and matters of interest. Information provided is not shared beyond the purpose of WCA information distribution.

Please return completed form to:



watsoncommunityassociation666@gmail.com

