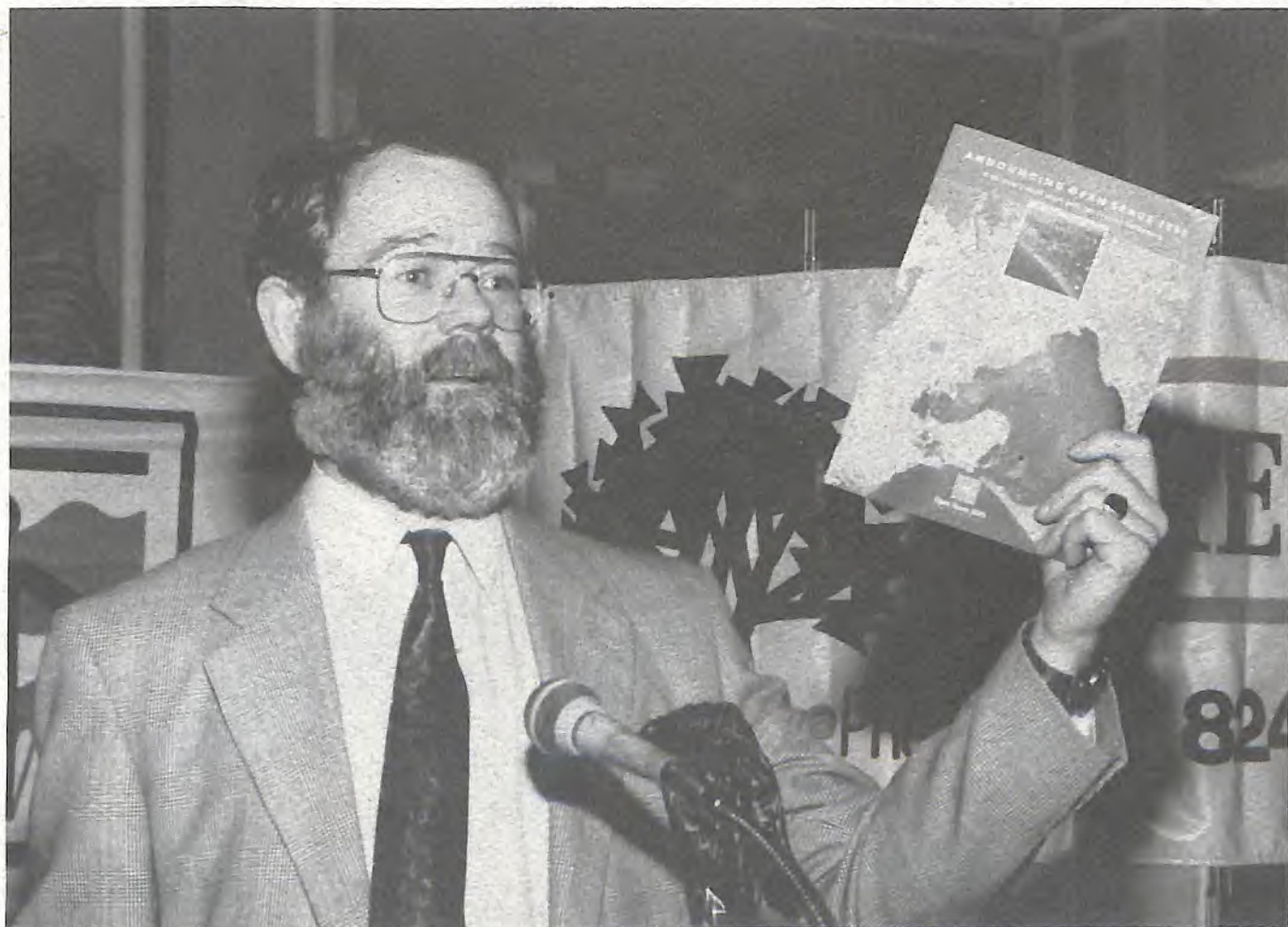

VICNEWS

WINTER - SPRING 1991

1991 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



Nigel Caswell (Metropolitan Water)
delivers dinner speech on "The Future of Melbourne's Open Space."

ISSN 1036-9775



**QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN
INSTITUTE OF PARKS & RECREATION (INC.)
VICTORIAN REGION: P.O. BOX 287, CARLTON SOUTH, 3053**

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CONTENT

INDEX

1 - 2	President's Report
3	Victorian Regional Council
4-6	"Tattle Tales"
6	Victorian Activities Program
7	1991 National Conference Update
8-12	Letters to the Editor
13	Book Review
14-20	Activity Summaries
22-27	"Formulating (Park and Recreation) Management Objectivity
28-30	"PARTICIPaction"
31	"Eastern Freeway Extension"
32-33	1990 Brens Scholar Report
34	"The Plastic Alternative"
35	"Nursery Wins Applause from Plastics Industry"
36-39	"Predators in your Park!"
40	List of Institute Publications

VicNews is produced by the Victorian Region of the Royal Australian Institute of Parks and Recreation as a benefit to its members for information and promotion of the Institute's activities.

The Victorian Region is not responsible for statements made or views expressed by individuals writing, reported or advertising in this newsletter.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



After a very dry autumn, winter has certainly hit Victoria. Many members will be able to relate to bogged machinery, sloppy sportsfields and interrupted programs and activities.

As I indicated in the last issue of VicNews, I spent some time in Europe recently (England, France, Belgium, Spain). I would like to make some comments on this "European" experience :

* Apart from the magnificent private gardens that I saw (Sissinghurst, Hidcote, Powis Castle) much of the general parkland areas in England were not to the same standard as our Victorian equivalents. London's major public gardens (St James' Park, Hyde Park, Regent Park) were a real disappointment in this "home of horticulture" and Melbourne's Fitzroy and Treasury Gardens stand head and shoulders above them.

* An exception to the last comment was the annual bedding displays, where the use of bulbs was tremendous. Mass plantings of tulips and daffodils were used to great effect in areas unseen in Australia (eg roundabouts, carparks).

* Public gardening in France was of a very high standard. Again, the use of colour in bedding displays was spectacular. However, the tendency to close off gardens to the public was disturbing. "Gardens for Gardeners", a worrying trend!

* Spanish public sector horticulture is nearly primeval! The quality was very low, and the built environment was obviously significantly more important in a "development at any cost" style. Landscape considerations took the very backseat!

* Competitive tendering in England has worrying repercussions for Australia, if Local Government here cannot become more efficient. This process in England HAS resulted in significant cost savings, but at the expense of large scale reductions in quality, service and staff morale (for those still employed by Councils). The most affected people, the ratepayers, have had no reduction in costs, and few extra services.

* Playground developments in all countries visited were of a low standard by Australian standards. The continued use of concrete and bitumen undersurfacing is hard to understand. New playground developments are based on designlements and philosophies popular in Australia in the late 1920's!

* Melbourne is a poor relation in terms of public transport systems in comparison to England. The bus, train and underground were all very efficient. Oh for an extension of the City Loop outside the City Block!

VICTORIAN REGIONAL COUNCIL 1990/91

P O Box 287
South Carlton Vic 3053

* The English love dogs! Even though most live in flats or terrace houses, they all want a dog. And don't you know it when you go for a walk in a park; dogs running riot and the constant vigil for droppings! Some Councils have even taken to putting special bins in their parks, in which owners can deposit their "puppy poopings"! This is a strange twist, considering nearly all public rubbish bins in London (especially at Tube and BritRail stations) have been removed as a result of IRA bombings.

* And a few tidbits;

- many local sporting clubs in England play on grounds denuded of grass, and with no separate changing facilities.

- new indoor Leisure Centres (up to 10 years) are very common in England.

- over 90% of all cars in Europe are four cylinders, no bigger than a Laser.

- exhaust emission controls on new cars in England will not be compulsory until 1993!

- some English cities have "Clean Air" policies, where you are not allowed to produce any smoke (including open fire places).

- Australian natives (River Red Gums and Wattles) are so common in the south of Spain, that locals think they are native to Spain!

- weeds are only weeds in the eye of the beholder! In Spain, magnificent meadows of wild turnip, wild radish, flanders poppies and mauve marshmallow grow on disturbed sites and roadside embankments, with spectacular effect.

- meadowland regeneration is all the rage in England, with spectacular results. Principles applied in establishment would have some applications in the revegetation of native grasslands in Australia.

In summary it was good to get home! For all the good things that Europe has to offer, it only makes you appreciate more that we here in Australia, live in a relative utopia (even though we are generally apathetic about it). When you can breath relatively fresh air, visit pristine natural areas within an hours drive of any residence, and live in comparative comfort on a comparatively high income, I wonder why we are a nation of knockers and whingers. Maybe the Federal Government should implement an "Australia is a Great Place to Live" awareness program, and send all Australians to England for 6 weeks on their 18th birthday, so we would all realise that we truly do live in the "Lucky Country".

See you in Summer!

Mike Hoy
PRESIDENT VICTORIAN REGION

Patron :	His Excellency The Rev. Dr. John Davis McCaughey Governor of Victoria.		
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	John Dell	7 Rose Street Altona 3018	B 398 1640 H 398 1640
	Stephen Bourke	6 Cliveden Court Laverton	B 742 0761 H 369 5216 Fax 741 6237
	Laurie Russell	39 Mamourin Street Werribee 3030	B 742 0952 H 741 5714 Fax 741 6237
	Philip Bachelor	c/- Fawkner Memorial Park 1187 Sydney Road Fawkner 3060 *****	B 359 3771 Fax 357 3006
VicNews Editor	John P. Brandenburg	78 Park Close Vermont 3133	B 262 6423 H 873 4204 Fax 872 4279 2626490

TALES AND TATTLE

What is it?

It is a no-holds-barred, free advertising, self-fulfilling, gossip ridden, environmentally friendly, members column, compiled by Ruddell Stitch.

This is how it works

If you have future events that you would like promoted, changed jobs, seen something hilarious in the industry, or just good gossip – don't keep it a secret!

Send it to :
VicNews
P O Box 287
CARLTON SOUTH VIC 3053

Name and address optional

Notice something different on the front cover? VicNews is now a registered publication with the National Library of Australia, with its own International Standard Serial Number (ISSN 1036- 9775).

The ISSN system was established within the framework of UNESCO's World Science Information Program (UNISIST), to control the registration of serials worldwide. The body which controls the ISSN system is the International Serials Data System (ISDS), which has a two tiered network with an international centre in Paris, and national centres in each member country. The Australian National Centre for ISDS was established in the National Library of Australia in October 1973.

Work continues on the Board of Works Yarra Valley Metropolitan Park Management Plan. Over 250 interested people have attended three recent meetings, and other information has been collected from 35 calls on a telephone "hotline" service, 45 written submissions, 600 park user surveys and a market research exercise.

Market research has been conducted by Morgan's Research using a telephone survey of 1,000 people. The survey was on a metropolitan wide basis, and questioned whether the metropolitan parks were used or not. A brief summary of the results showed that those interviewed felt;

- concern for the environment
- strongly about the need for community education centres in the parks
- a need to change the Yarra Valley Metropolitan Park, but found it difficult to envisage how to improve it.

An issues paper is available for people to view at Westerfolds Park, or copies are available at a cost of \$5.00 (including postage and handling).

The draft plan for the park is being written at the moment, and will be available for comment in October, 1991. A six week period for comment will be available.

For further information, contact the Board of Works at Westerfolds park on (03) 846 1338.

On 12th April, 1991, Horst Muendel retired from the position of Superintendent of Parks and Gardens with the City of Warragul, after 21 years of service to that City.

Horst has been a member of our Institute for nearly 20 years, becoming a member on 22nd October, 1971. He has been instrumental in the establishment of the Gippsland chapter of the Institute, and has been a major contributor of the continued success of this group.

On behalf of all members, have a good retirement Horst.



National President Graeme Mustow (left), congratulates Horst Muendel on his retirement at a recent windy and bleak Gippsland Chapter meeting.

PROPOSED ACTIVITY PROGRAM FOR 1991

October 30	MH/MC	Worker	One Day Seminars during National Conference
November 23-24	PB	Member	Weekend Study Tour
December 18	MH	Member	Christmas Social Function

ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

	WORK	HOME	FAX
MH - Mike Hoy (Chairman)	895 9627	870 7267	899 5817
TC- Tony Carroll 824 0199	824 0199	824 0714	
AO- Andrew O'Connell	881 7421	754 5785	800 3096
DF - David Francis 334 0202			
PB - Philip Bachelor	359 3777	359 2901	357 3006
BG - Bryan Gould 313 3288	741 7780	313 3356	
KB - Kate Blood* 62 4030	68 6236	62 4253	

* All contact numbers are (056) area code.

MEMBERSHIP PASSES 21,000

NRPA Membership continues to climb above the 21,000 mark. Total membership as of October 31, 1989, was 21,173 - the highest number of members in NRPA history.

The following is a breakdown of membership.

Professional	10,941
Associate	476
Citizen/Board Member & Friends	5,788
Student	2,223
Public Agency & Commissions	795
Organisations	345
Base/Installations	209
Universities	126
Affiliates	59
Special Population Agency	23
Commercial Firm	188

21,173

(Footnote: Somehow this article was not totally printed in the last issue, and is reprinted here to resolve the mistake).

1991 NATIONAL CONFERENCE

With only two months to go, the 1991 National Conference is only just around the corner.

At this stage of organising :

- up to 20 overseas and 100 local delegates have confirmed their attendance.
- over half the industry exhibition sites have been booked, and space is fast running out.
- 7000 registration forms were distributed throughout Australia in early August.
- Melbourne Water have confirmed their commitment to be a major sponsor of the Conference. This was finalised at the recent Annual Dinner, where Nigel Caswell, Manager of the Parks Division, presented a cheque for \$13,000 to our Regional President Mike Hoy.
- all 100 tickets to "Phantom of the Opera", for the Tuesday night of the Conference have been sold.
- a number of Poster Papers have been received, but many more are still required. Remember, a prize will be offered for this section of the Conference.
- a closing session with a difference will be held on Friday 2nd November. Speakers for the afternoon will come from major business corporations, many of whom may have no immediate involvement in our industry. Confirmed speakers for this session include Bryan Grey (Managing Director, Compass Airlines), Sir Arvi Parbo, (Chairman of Western Mining Corporation Holdings Limited), Don Deveson (Manufacturing Manager of Nissan Australia), Bruce Atkinson (Councillor - City of Nunawading) and the Public Relations Manager for K Mart Australia. These speakers will address how the Conference theme "WHO DARES WINS" has been reflected in their business operations.

Should you wish to offer your support prior to, or during the Conference, please contact the Conference Chairman, Trevor Arthur, on (03) 848 7329.

STOP PRESS!!!

Full delegates attending the Conference will be eligible for a prize draw for a trip for two to Noumea. Be there to get the chance of winning this fabulous prize!!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to inform you that the Minister for Sport and Recreation, The Honourable Neil Trezise MP, will soon be seeking nominees for membership of the Community Recreation Council (CRC).

The CRC was established under legislation in November, 1984. The legislation provides for up to 20 members who are active and knowledgeable concerning community services, programs and issues, through not necessarily within a recreational context. The Council's work is varied, consisting of advice to the Minister on both major and minor issues for which independent expertise is needed. This ranges from direct questions as to whether, say, a project should be assisted through preparation of major reports and policy documents. The CRC is also able to initiate concerns which it believes should be brought to the Minister's attention.

The Council currently meets once a month on a Monday from 12.00 noon until 1.30 pm. There are also presently three committees of the CRC which usually meet on the same day as the plenary session of the Council meeting. The Council also meet from time to time with the State Sports Council and the ALP Sport and Recreation Policy Committee. The CRC is able to draw on the resources of the Department of Sport and Recreation, with whom it has a very good working relationship.

Appointments to the CRC is classified as part time work for the Government and an annual fee of \$632 is payable to members whose income is not already derived from government sources. Reimbursements of expenses incurred in relation to Council duties, for example travel and accommodation costs, are available to all members.

In order to assist the Minister, the Council is developing a listing of potential nominees. Should you, or persons known to you, wish to be considered for appointment to the Council, would you kindly complete the nominee profile form (see over page) or forward a one page biographical summary for the Council's information as soon as practicable.

Appointments are usually either 18 months or 3 years in duration and all nominees are appointed as individuals not as representatives of organisations or particular interest groups.

If you have any queries regarding the Community Recreation Council's role or functions, I may be contacted on telephone number 666 4211.

Yours sincerely

MARK MIDDLETON
Executive Officer.

COMMUNITY RECREATION COUNCIL NOMINEE PROFILE

NAME: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

POSTCODE: _____

OCCUPATION: _____

BUSINESS ADDRESS: _____

POSTCODE: _____

TELEPHONE: _____ (HOME) _____ (BUSINESS)

FAX: _____

MEMBERSHIP OF ASSOCIATIONS:

(NAME OF ASSOCIATION)

(OFFICIAL POSITION HELD)

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

SPORT/RECREATIONAL INTERESTS/EXPERTISE: _____

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/COMMENTS: _____

6th June, 1991

The Hon. Andrew McCutcheon
Minister for Planning and Housing
477 Collins Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Mr McCutcheon

I am writing to express the Institute's opposition to the proposal for Channel Nine to use a section of parkland, the Kevin Bartlett Reserve in Richmond, which has been set aside for community use and enjoyment, as a helipad for a commercial organisation (see article on next page).

No price could be placed on the value of this land; once the land is alienated it is lost to the community forever. Parkland must not be alienated on commercial grounds.

It is not only the immediate vicinity to the helipad that is seriously affected, it is also the approach route which would probably vary according to operational needs that will intrude further into the tranquility of the area.

Technological advances are such that it is quite conceivable that electronic facilities could be provided at Olympic Park which could cost less than the money they are offering for the purchase of this parkland.

The Institute indeed would be most grateful if you would refuse the application by Channel Nine to use this parkland.

Yours sincerely

MIKE HOY
PRESIDENT - VICTORIAN REGION

Dear Mr Hoy

PROPOSED HELICOPTER LANDING SITE IN KEVIN BARTLETT RESERVE

I am replying to your letter dated 6 June, 1991 on behalf of the Hon Andrew McCutcheon, MP, Minister for Planning and Housing.

Amendment L18 to the Richmond Planning Scheme was exhibited by the Minister for two months from 10 October 1991, until 10 December 1991. During the exhibition period over 400 submissions were received.

The Panel appointed by the Minister to hear submissions to the amendment concluded its public hearings on 26 April, 1991. The Panel is now considering all the submissions and evidence placed before it, and I anticipate that it will submit its report to the Minister in the next few weeks. Departmental officers will then prepare a report for the Minister and your Association's views will be reported to the Minister at the time.

Yours sincerely

GEOFF LAWLER
REGIONAL MANAGER - CENTRAL MELBOURNE AND INNER URBAN

Channel 9 helipad bid winds up the locals

By Mischa Merz

TO residents of Richmond, the Channel Nine helicopter is a looming invader, threatening hallowed ground.

The territory in question is the Kevin Bartlett Reserve.

The station wants to use it as a helicopter landing pad, but the locals have risen up in their thousands to block the move.

Objections have come from Scotch College, St Kevin's College, Burnley Horticultural College, the councils of Richmond, Malvern, Prahran and Hawthorn and a group known as The Friends of Kevin Bartlett Reserve.

Even Kevin Bartlett himself has strongly protested against using the reserve, which is on Crown land, for a commercial enterprise. The Richmond Football Club coach said the community felt strongly about preserving the reserve as public space.

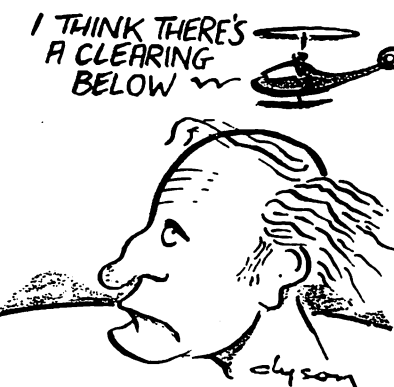
"It's primarily there for the use of people, not helicopters," he said.

The SECV has also raised concerns about safety — the helicopter would fly close to high-voltage powerlines — and VicRoads is worried the aircraft may be a distraction to motorists driving along the South Eastern Arterial.

The television station has been asked to stop using its present site in River Street, Richmond, because the Urban Land Authority wants it for a housing development.

Channel Nine's business manager, Mr Stelvio Vido, said the helicopter was temporarily using Olympic Park, which was causing difficulties because of its distance from the station.

After nearly two years of talks



with Richmond Council, the parties are now waiting for a ruling from a three-member panel set up to advise the Minister for Planning, Mr Andrew McCutcheon, on whether to introduce a planning scheme amendment allowing the station to use the reserve.

Channel Nine has already offered to pay the council \$350,000 for the land, which it manages but does not own, on top of \$50,000 annual rent. The offer has been rejected.

Residents value the land at about \$3 million.

The area is used by children as well as local soccer, football and cricket clubs. Families picnic there in summer, and residents say it is home to native flora and fauna which could be adversely effected by helicopter noise.

The mayor of Hawthorn, Ms Jane Nathan, said about 700,000 people in the suburbs surrounding the reserve would be affected if the panel recommended changes to the planning scheme.

"This could destroy the area's use as parklands and it doesn't concern me whether they get their news on time or not," she said.

A Richmond resident and member of The Friends of Kevin Bartlett Reserve, Ms Shirley Pinnell, described the bid by Channel Nine as "highly immoral". She said alternative sites were available at Olympic Park and the Carlton and United Brewery car park in Collingwood, which would add only two to three minutes to the travelling time.

She said the station's logbook showed the helicopter was used in the morning and early afternoon, countering Channel Nine's argument that it needed a landing pad close by because of the rush to get stories ready for the evening news.

"People are not prepared to have it there at any price. It would set the most horrendous precedent about what can happen to public open space," she said.

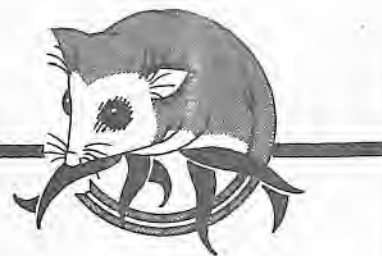
Another Richmond resident, Mr Neil Chambers, said although the station had provided an environmental effects statement to the panel, it had not thoroughly investigated alternative sites.

"They should be looking at commercial areas. There have been so many government reports and declarations about saving public open space, particularly in that area close to the Yarra," he said.

Mr Vido said there was no alternative site to the Kevin Bartlett Reserve that would be convenient for the station.

He said he did not believe a significant number of Richmond residents were opposed to the proposal, although he agreed that residents in surrounding municipalities like Hawthorn, Toorak and Malvern were against it.

He said their concerns about noise had been addressed by showing that EPA noise limits would be adhered to.



16 July, 1991.

Bryan Gould
RAIPR
PO Box 287
Carlton South 3053

Dear Bryan,

Native Grasslands

The Victorian National Parks Association and the National Trust Australia (Victoria) have recently received a National Estate grant to commence a project for native grasslands in Victoria.

This project will:

- develop criteria for nominating native grasslands and grassy woodlands to the register of the National Estate;
- make nominations of significant grassland and grassy woodlands to the register of the National Estate;
- initiate Friends groups for significant grassland sites and species;
- negotiate an agreement between landowner groups, conservation groups and the Department of Conservation and Environment on the management and protection of native grasslands;
- raise public awareness of native grasslands and grassy woodlands;
- seek protection of significant grassland and grassy woodland sites in conservation reserves.

An essential aspect of this project will be to liaise with people such as yourself who are actively involved and interested in native grassland research and management. Accordingly, I am initiating an informal Native Grasslands Liaison to raise awareness of current research and activities and to facilitate regular communication between the various organisations and individuals involved. I hope to establish a folio of current projects and a regular native grassland newsheet.

I would welcome your support and involvement in this endeavour. Could you provide a brief synopsis of your current projects and activities regarding native grasslands and grassy woodlands? Regular updates for the newsletter (by phone if you wish) would also be appreciated.

If you have any questions or ideas or wish to discuss my project further, I can be contacted at the VNPA on (03) 650 8296. Thankyou.

Sincerely yours,

James Ross
Native Grasslands Project Officer

BOOK REVIEW

THE ROSS GUIDE TO

ROSE GROWING

BY DEANNE ROSS

Rec Retail \$29.95

Deanne Ross is one of Australia's expert rosarian's and in The Ross Guide to Rose Growing he provides all the information necessary to properly grow and care for an extensive range of roses.

It covers all aspects of growing, maintaining and displaying heritage roses, polyanthas, miniatures, grandifloras, climbing roses, shrubs, species and hybrid roses.

Modern roses are dealt with in detail with recommendations for cutting, bedding and fragrance. Roses suitable for container growing and low bordering varieties are included as well as the often overlooked single flower varieties.

A chapter on garden design with roses has suggestions for both small and large garden designs as well as a section dealing with the rejuvenation of old rose gardens.

Other chapters on pest control, propagating, soil requirements, breeding and pruning give sound modern advice for any rose grower.

The book also covers the showing of roses, breeding roses, arranging and photographing roses as well as a list of gardens to visit in Australia and New Zealand.

Photographs throughout the book are of excellent quality with many hand sketches also included.

The Ross Guide to Rose Growing is reasonably priced and is published by the Lothian Publishing Company.

STEWART CAMPBELL M.R.A.I.P.R

ACTIVITIES SUMMARIES

IRRIGATION DESIGN WORKSHOP

On Wednesday 6th March, 1991, a workshop on Irrigation Design was held at the Marie Mills Centre in Maribynong. Over 70 delegates attended the workshop.

The objectives of the Seminar were :

- * Understanding of irrigation design principles.
- * Knowledge of required inputs for irrigation design.
- * Ability to use pressure/flow charts and determine pipe sizes.
- * Knowledge of selection criteria for sprinklers and other irrigation system components.

The morning program gave an overview of the principles of designing various types of systems. These ranged through Landscape, Oval, Nursery, Golf Course and Irrigation by Remote Control.

After a delicious lunch, the workshop lead by Bernard Peasley and Pieter Clarke, explored 'hands on' system design. Although the session was informative and constructive, the time allotted was insufficient. As an organiser I was pleased to receive feedback on various aspects of the workshop. The outcome of the feedback is that a one or two day irrigation design workshop will be on the 1992 activities calendar.

On behalf of the Institute I would like to thank all the presenters. Special thanks to Scott McLean and Ann Anderson, the sponsors, Rainbird Australia and Hardie Irrigation and all those involved in the trade display.

ANDREW O'CONNELL
ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE, VIC REGION

NATIVE GRASSLANDS SEMINAR

Werribee Park mansion was the venue for a seminar entitled 'Native Grasslands in the Urban Environment' held on Wednesday 17 April.

Throughout the morning four speakers each presented different perspectives discussing issues relating to aesthetic values, seed collection, propagation and establishment. The afternoon session comprised a coach tour to several significant native grassland sites within the Werribee- Altona- Laverton area.

Dr. James Hitchmough began by giving an overview of the values associated with native grasses. Here the advantages of low biomass and minimal maintenance were discussed. Tolerance to low nutrient sites and reduced fire-risk potential were also cited as reasons for their consideration as an appropriate alternative in many areas of public open space. The recreational benefits associated with native grasses centred on the diversity of experience they offered - in contrast to the ubiquitous mown turf - together with a sense of place or as a linkage with more natural landscapes. As an educational resource along the range of species once so prolific across much of the metropolitan area could be readily utilized again, given the adoption of appropriate management strategies and improved public acceptance.

The desirability of creating or conserving native grassland elements within the urban environment was stressed, in order to maintain indigenous plant populations already under increasing pressure from urban development.

Ian Chivers, the second speaker, discussed in further detail the attributes of native species together with some specific examples as to where, in the urban landscape, they might be used.

The principal methods of propagation are either vegetative by division, using tissue culture techniques, or directly from seed. Seed collection is currently the only way by which increased numbers of plants may be successfully gathered for use in large scale revegetation programs. Numerous difficulties are encountered, however, when attempting to collect seed in commercially viable quantities. Factors that have aided the survival of native species throughout the continent since evolution now serve to frustrate the harvester. Whilst conventional methods, such as baling and hand harvesting, are slow and inefficient they are currently the only means available. Developments in new machinery are ongoing to enhance the percentage of seed collected, whilst selection and 'domestication' of the most favourable genetic characteristics will improve their quality and reliability. It is anticipated seed for several species will soon be available in quantities that are clean, weed free and with a guaranteed germination rate.

Revegetation works throughout the Yarra Bend Park were described by Darcy Dugan, illustrated with numerous slides depicting the various establishment phases. Weed Control, site preparation and planting methods were shown, together with mulching techniques. Valuable information concerning optimal growing conditions was discussed. The physiology of native grasses and the essential differences between cool and warm season species was of particular interest.

As the proprietor of Bushland Flora, Andrew Paget showed a series of slides involving the nursery and methods of propagating and harvesting seed from native grasses. Slides included various landscaping projects the Company have completed using native grasses, showing the versatility of a whole range of species. Projects ranged from steep barren clay slopes to domestic front yards. Andrew clearly showed numerous applications where native grasses can be used successfully, emphasizing that native grasses are not only for the vacant paddock.

The afternoon session comprised visits to four sites in the western district to observe native grasses in natural undisturbed habitats.

1. Point Cook Metropolitan Park
A variety of grasses and native shrubs in a salt marsh and dune grassland

2. Dohertys Road Grassland
A Themeda dominated tussock grassland which is one of the largest and best in the state.
3. Laverton North Grassland Reserve
Dominated by Themeda australis and Stipa sp.
4. Truganina Cemetery Grassland
Themeda australis grassland that contains the rare herb rutidosis leptorhynchoides.

Overall the proceedings offered valuable information in relation to the use of native grasses in urban landscaping, with indications for management requirements and an appreciation of the benefits associated with the use of native grasses.

CANBERRA - COUNTRY COMFORT INN - 23,24,25 JUNE 1991.

TREES : MANAGEMENT ISSUES FOR URBAN AUSTRALIA

What is a TREE?

Obviously the question of questions to arise at the recent National Seminar held in late June. Over 290 delegates from all over Australia attended this seminar, the theme being 'Trees : Management Issues for Urban Australia'.

Proceedings opened in the midst of a cool Canberra Sunday afternoon. Delegates braved the elements to tour several of Canberra's parks and facilities to look at various aspects of tree management.

Over the next two days a diverse range of tree management issues were covered by an equally diverse range of speakers. Papers presented concerned topics such as legal issues and risk management; tree roots, their importance and management; tree establishment and maintenance; tree selection in the landscape; and the valuation and preservation for trees.

Eleven members of the aboriginal industry provided informative displays throughout the duration of the seminar. A diverse range of products, many of which are both new and innovative were highlighted.

The importance of tree management issues was clearly identified by the response to this seminar and in the quality of papers presented. This acknowledges the want for more information on topics both current and of concern within our industry. The Institute and organisers of this seminar are to be complimented for meeting this need.

So to conclude "just what is a tree?" Answers to this vexed question will be gratefully received by all seminar attendees.

STUART MAYBURY AND PAUL REEVES

City of Nunawading

(Editors Note : Proceedings of this Seminar are available by contacting the Secretary.)

COASTAL MANAGEMENT SEMINAR

What a dynamic place the coastal environment is and our program for the coastal management seminar certainly lived up to that. The seminar was held by the Victorian Region at St Kilda on Wednesday 18 May 1991.

The aims of the seminar were to provide people working in the coastal environment with an understanding of the current coastal management framework, provide ideas for overcoming existing coastal management problems, and give some inspiration for planning and designing more effectively for the future protection of the coastal environment.

Dr Geoff Wescott, head of the Department of Heritage and Resource Management with Victoria College - Rusden Campus, gave an excellent overview of the coastal development and management authorities within Victoria. Putting these many different authorities into perspective is the first step in effectively working within the coastal management network.

Richard O'Byrne is a Senior Coastal Planner with the Department of Conservation and Environment based in Melbourne but is currently working with MMBW on the Metropolitan Open Space Program with the Port Phillip Bay Environment Division. Richard outlined some of the reasons why we have so many coastal problems to overcome and how we can avoid making the same mistakes again.

Urban development pressures along our coastline were the issues discussed by Peter Bettess. Peter is the Assistant Director of Regional Planning with the Department of Planning and Housing. Peter is also the Chairman of the Coastal Management and Co-ordination Committee.

Gerry Byrne of Kinhill Engineers P/L discussed some of the controversial problems that arise from putting structures within the coastal environment particularly at the land/water interface.

Techniques for repairing physical damage to dune areas was the first of the afternoon topics. Paul FitzSimons, Acting Manager of the National Parks Branch of the National Parks and Public Land Division of DCE, outlined a number of the causes of dune and vegetation damage and methods for repairing this damage.

A stimulating talk was given by Michael Sandford, Manager of the Landscape and Architectural Services Unit of DCE, on sensitive planning and design. An excellent selection of slides was used to illustrate what is sensitive and what is not.

Impacts of coastal development do not stop at the high water mark. Garry Mahon outlined issues within the marine environment that should be considered when managing and developing along the coast. Garry is the Manager of the Conservation and Marine Reserves Branch of the National Parks and Public Land Division with DCE.

Taking into consideration the likely impacts of the Greenhouse effect is an important issue in coastal planning these days. Dr Rob Allan is a Research Scientist in the Climate Impact Group of the Division of Atmospheric Research with CSIRO and gave us some of the predictions for changes to sea levels and other climatic conditions.

About 45 people attended the day of which about 44% were from municipalities around Melbourne, 39% were from the Department of Conservation and Environment (from as far as Portland and YARRAM) with the remainder being from other authorities such as the MMBW, Committees of Management etc. About 17% of the people at the seminar were women.

It was encouraging to see that Institute members are not just interested in growing turf and annuals but are interested in wider environmental management issues.

Kate Blood
Conservation and Recreation Planning Officer
Department of Conservation and Environment
Leongatha



London Bridge – after it fell down. Some nursery rhymes do come true!

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday 14th August, 1991, the Victorian Region held its Annual General Meeting and Dinner at the Heidelberg Centre.

A total of 50 people attended the dinner, but there was a poor response from members, especially to the Annual General Meeting. Typical apathy from Victorian members!

The dinner was a pleasant evening, with good food, wine and company. During the evening Mr. Nigel Caswell, Manager Parks Division of the Melbourne Water presented his thoughts on the "Future of Melbourne's Open Space". Another presentation was made by Mr Stuart Maybury, the 1990 Brens Scholar, on his experiences in New Zealand last year.

A special thanks must go to the sponsors of the evening, The Stake Man and Valley Seeds Pty. Ltd. Also, Ausplay and Miracle Australia need to be congratulated for their strong support, having 11 of the 50 assembled attendees.

To all those who attended the evening, I would thank you for your continued support. If you were one of the members who missed this function, you missed an enjoyable evening. How about getting your act together for next year.

MIKE HOY
Chairman – Activities Committee



Stuart Maybury (left), receives his 1990 Brens Scholarship Certificate from Victorian President Mike Hoy.

Happy revellers! From the left – David Francis, Graeme Mustow, Kate Blood, Cathy Hoy, David Aldous and Nigel Caswell.



A lot of years of membership here! From the left – Horst Muendel, Frank Keenan, Eric Littlejohn, Tom Kneen and Bill Wilson.



TREE GUARDS ARE VITAL

Protecting young trees once they are planted is dismissed by many people as being an unnecessary expense.

Planting trees requires thought and planning. Where to plant, preparing the site and selecting the appropriate tree species are necessary prerequisites before planting.

"After putting the investment into the tree planting, there is little extra cost involved in providing protection for the plants, particularly as most tree guards are reusable", said Bill Sharp, Land Management Consultant, and Australian President of the International Tree Crops Institute.

"Independent research has shown that the use of tree guards is an essential ingredient for health growth and tree survival rates."

"Whole plantings can be decimated if the trees aren't protected."

Bill, trading as Bill Sharp Merchandise, supplies various types of tree guards to municipalities, land care groups and individuals. He markets Australian made treeguards of two basic types.

* Clear plastic sleeving of different weights which has proved beneficial both for promoting strong tree growth and as protection against vermin. This plastic is UV stabilised and could probably be used for up to three trees if card for. The heavier (200micron) plastic has proved to be superior, however Economy grade (120micron) is excellent value.

* Extruded plastic mesh in a variety of weights and styles from the finest stocking to heavy duty, rigid mesh. This range of meshes is cost effective being both cheap and reusable. The heavier black, UV stabilised material lasts up to ten years.

Bill is Australian distributor for Boral Cyclone mesh tree guards.

Bill's wide range of practical expertise has been developed over the years with his involvement in the farm trees movement, working with farmers, tree groups and government encouraging the wise use of trees and their protection.

He is also available for consulting in land care and planning for land degradation control although mainly concentrating his attention on the marketing of his range of tree guards and tree care accessories.

All these products can be obtained from Bill who is happy to spend time discussing any aspect of tree guarding with customers.

This includes working with customers to determine which style is the most suitable depending on the actual application of the tree guards.

Last year his contribution to revegetation was publicly recognised by Greening Australia who presented him with a plaque. This read : "to recognise your important contribution to revegetation in Australia and, particular your early work with direct seeding."

Bill Sharp – Merchandise
RMB 1285
Bransholme 3302

Formulating (Parks & Recreation) Management Objectives

Philip Bachelor

(A workshop paper presented at the Victorian Region's 'Mind your Business' seminar, October 1990.)

Introduction

Some years ago, I was at a management seminar, where the group was instructed to take the lecturer's notes, cross out the word 'manager' everywhere it appeared, and write in the word 'leader', in its place. I've long forgotten the lecturer, but not his message: *Management means Leadership.*

However, before anyone can lead, they must have a team, an overall goal, and team objectives.

In a recent business journal, Campbell points out that:

"According to a recent survey, only 5 per cent of people set goals. Another 10 per cent think about them and the remainder never even consider them.

Of the 5 per cent who do set goals, nearly all achieve what they want."⁽¹⁾

Without a goal, it is simply not possible to manage, and any organisation without objectives to strive toward, can only react to external driving forces.

If a manager is to ensure his organisation is led rather than driven, he must identify the organisation's goal and lead his staff in their endeavours to achieve their objectives.

To set useful objectives, a manager must clearly recognise what business he is in, what his product is, who his clients are, and what they want. As basic as this might sound, many managers do not have a goal, or clear rationale (ie. an understanding of their fundamental reason for being). This is often particularly so, in the public sector (including the Parks & Recreation industry).

This paper is intended to help Parks and Recreation managers identify their real business, their clientele, client's needs, company's product, marketing approach, and their rationale. (For the purpose of this exercise, we will consider our rationale to be similar to our goal). We will then examine what objectives are, and how they may be achieved.

What is your business?

Although (s)he is a public, or community, service provider, a Parks and Recreation professional is still, a business person.

Anyone in business markets a product (or range of products) to a client (or range of clients). The products which a professional markets include his own skills and time, to a client, who may well be his employer.

A manager, is responsible for ensuring his company's product is well marketed to client groups. To properly understand his business then, the manager must intimately know his company's clientele and products.

Who are your clients?

Anyone who uses services which you or your organisation provides is your company's client, regardless of whether or not they pay for such service. If your facilities or services are open to the public, then your clients are not limited to local ratepayers, or residents.

In other words, if you are in community service, such as providing public recreation opportunities, then all members of the community (including any visitors) are your company's clients.

In many situations, clients may be limited to a specific identifiable market group. For example, swimming centre clients on a Tuesday evening may be only members of the Dolphins Swimming Club, or in a memorial park, clients may typically be recently bereaved.

Within an organisation, we also have internal customers. Managers exist to lead those who serve the company's clients, and as such managers often have only internal customers. The manager's clients, in this situation, are his staff. A manager's rationale is to serve (by leading) his staff, who in turn serve the company's clients. (Staff don't exist to serve the manager, as may occur in an autocratic, petty-empire). A consultant recently advised, "If you are not serving the customers, you should be serving someone else who is."⁽²⁾

What do your clients want?

How do you know what they want? If you don't know, then it's your business to find out, and the only way to find out is to ask them!

All managers have some perception of their client's needs. Such ideas are formulated from the manager's interpretation of use of current services, contacts with clients, expressed needs (eg. complaints, requests), observations of demand in other areas, and literature. However, as most demand remains latent, the true needs of the silent majority are usually unknown to service providers. Therefore, a Parks and Recreation manager, relying on his own judgement, is not likely to be most effective in meeting his company's client needs. To reasonably understand the clientele a Parks & Recreation organisation is engaged to serve, it may be necessary to survey representative samples of all clients. Once they have been asked, and their responses analysed, the manager can adopt an intelligent strategy toward meeting his clients needs. Some form of market research is essential if you hope to provide a worthwhile service. Specialists in this field may be engaged if it is beyond the organisation's existing resources.

What is your company's product?

It may surprise some people to learn that the product which a professional parks organisation markets, is not in fact, its parks.

Clients do not choose to pay for parks to simply exist, no matter how well they may be maintained. Ratepayers pay for local government urban parks because they provide recreational opportunities to residents. The product which the clients are purchasing in this example is recreational opportunities. They are not necessarily purchasing recreational experiences, but rather the 'opportunities' to pursue these experiences.

In my own current field (ie. Memorial Parks), facilities exist to meet various cultural needs of identified clients. In this situation the main product is memorial opportunities.

Nature reserves provide conservation values, as well as recreation opportunities.

Park Managers must look way beyond their daily operations to identify their product, before they can establish objectives towards meeting the needs of their clients.

Marketing your product

Two different approaches to marketing are:

(a) product orientation, and (b) client orientation.

Product orientation is a significant contributing factor to the failure of many businesses. An example of a product approach may be seen in the following response.

"I'm a wheelwright, that's what I was trained as, and it's the product I offer. I should be employed to make wooden-spoked wheels, and people should purchase my products for their cars".

The business person with this approach is intent on providing the type of product which is most convenient to themselves, regardless of actual current demand.

If you are employed to manage other people's property (such as public parks), you do not have the right to adopt a product oriented approach, because it is not your prerogative to ignore the real needs of your clientele.

An example of a client approach to this changing situation may be,

"People want pressed steel wheels on their cars, today. Although I'm trained as a wheelwright, I must adopt new materials and methods if I'm to remain at all relevant in this industry".

Here, the smarter businessman intends to survive in business. He is aware of potential client's needs, and seeks to meet their requirements.

Too often the only answer to, "Why do you do that?", is, "Because it's my job. This is what I do!".

Why do we really maintain parks? To satisfy our clients, or perhaps ourselves?

If our business is just 'maintaining parks', then we should not pretend we do it for others. People really don't want parks maintained! They do want to be provided with leisure opportunities. How do we know? We ask!

What is your rationale?

It is important to understand the real reason for the existence of your position, and of your business? Is it just to maintain certain facilities, or is it to provide social opportunities for your client group?

I suggest that your reason for being is not simply because there ought to be someone in that position. I further suggest that the reason for your organisation's, or department's, existence is not that your employer or clients want parks. Nobody really wants parks for the sake of having them to maintain.

Typical, local government urban parks (including gardens, sportsfields & playgrounds) really only exist because residents want, and are prepared to pay for, provision of recreational opportunities. Memorial Parks exist to meet client's cultural needs.

A sound rationale for a professional, urban parks service might therefore be:

to provide social opportunities to clients;

where:

'social opportunities' includes recreational and cultural requirements, and

'clients' are those who use the facilities and services provided.

Of course, non-urban parks (including national and regional parks) also provide social opportunities, but can have additional conservation values.

Professional management

An effective, professional Parks and Recreation manager must have a customer-oriented, management philosophy. His organisation must be multi-disciplined, particularly drawing on, and applying a combination of mainly environmental and social sciences. The organisation must also be flexible enough to respond to changing environmental and social factors.

In Victoria, local government Parks & Recreation management is often significantly influenced by other disciplines, such as Civil Engineering, which involves the application of mainly physical sciences. This is to the detriment of effective customer service, as although modern civil engineering is in some ways becoming more 'humanised' it is still typically rigid and mechanical in its application, which is usually 'product oriented'. There is here, a considerable difference between disciplines, in philosophical approach and professional practice required in service delivery.

What sets apart a successful Parks and Recreation organisation is its broad role of providing social services to the community, rather than simply maintaining certain facilities. Where a simple 'grounds-maintenance' operation is usually quite introspective and product

oriented, a professional parks organisation must be outward-looking and client oriented. Parks and Recreation Managers often come from a technical background and have then been well trained as supervisors. But frequently, they are not trained to be effective managers.

In his article entitled *Bridging the gap from supervisor to manager*, Feuer suggests:

"Both psychologically and interpersonally, .. supervisors take a giant leap when they attempt to move into management."

".. supervisors operate in a short-term, problem-solution mode most of the time, ... their whole mentality is 'make it work today'. Its a Band-Aid world where you do whatever it takes to get one more turn of the wheel.

Managers, on the other hand, don't get payed for finding problems or causes, ... their job is to get things to work smoothly and efficiently. They need to look at things like the long-term effects of obsolescence, and the changing company goals and philosophies."⁽³⁾

Perhaps, within the Parks and Recreation industry there is a considerable need for 'bridging the gap' before more effective management becomes evident.

Direction

Having identified our business, our products, our clients and their needs, and having defined our rationale (which, for the purposes of this exercise, will be considered as our goal), we are in a much more enlightened position to develop sound objectives.

A story occasionally used to illustrate the value of planning, comes from Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. Confronted by the Cheshire Cat, Alice asked,

"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where ..." said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.

"... so long as I get *somewhere*," Alice added as an explanation.

"Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if you only walk long enough."⁽⁴⁾

Someone else once said more succinctly, "If you're not sure where you want to get to, then it makes no difference which bus you catch." Or, if you don't much care what your client's want, or aren't aware of their needs, then it doesn't matter which way you go about your business. However, those who know where they want to get to, strive toward their objectives.

A hastily fired shotgun perhaps has more chance of partially hitting an easy target than a rifle might have. However, a well aimed rifle will hit the target with far greater accuracy and impact. It is hardly surprising that so many who take the shotgun approach to service delivery, rarely have much impact on their target group.

What is an objective?

There are numerous ways of defining objectives, goals, aims, etc., and the terms are often interchanged, or used quite differently. However, common terminology regards a goal as being an 'end', which is always out of reach (a carrot), while an objective is an achievable step, or 'means' to that goal.

To avoid semantic difficulties, for the purposes of this paper, we will consider an objective to be something we want to achieve.

When formulating an objective, it should be seen as a statement comprising two parts:

(a) the result we wish to achieve, and (b) the resources with which it is to be achieved.

An example of an objective might therefore be:

(a) To construct two additional netball courts at the City Sports Centre, by 14 September,

(b) using day-labour, and within a budget of \$35,000.

Achieving objectives

Any objective must be both measurable and achievable.

If, in our netball courts example, two additional courts were, in fact, completed by 14 September, using current labour, but the total cost was \$37,000 then the whole objective was not achieved.

Primary objectives must be analysed, so that achievable objectives are set at each level of operation. For instance, the given netball courts example might be the Construction Supervisor's objective. However, toward reaching his primary objective the Construction Supervisor may set further, more specific objectives for his foremen responsible for earthworks, surface construction, line-marking & goal erection, and surround improvements. These further objectives may be considered 'sub-objectives' of the Construction Supervisor's prime objective, but in turn, they each become prime objectives of his individual foremen. Appropriate objectives must therefore be established at each level of operations.

Primary objectives, which have been formulated by senior management, and any sub-objectives, must be imparted to middle management, and so on. Appropriate objectives, toward the organisation's goal, must be embraced by all personnel if the organisation is to be effective.

Only a co-operative team, with all members aiming for the same goal, will effectively score.

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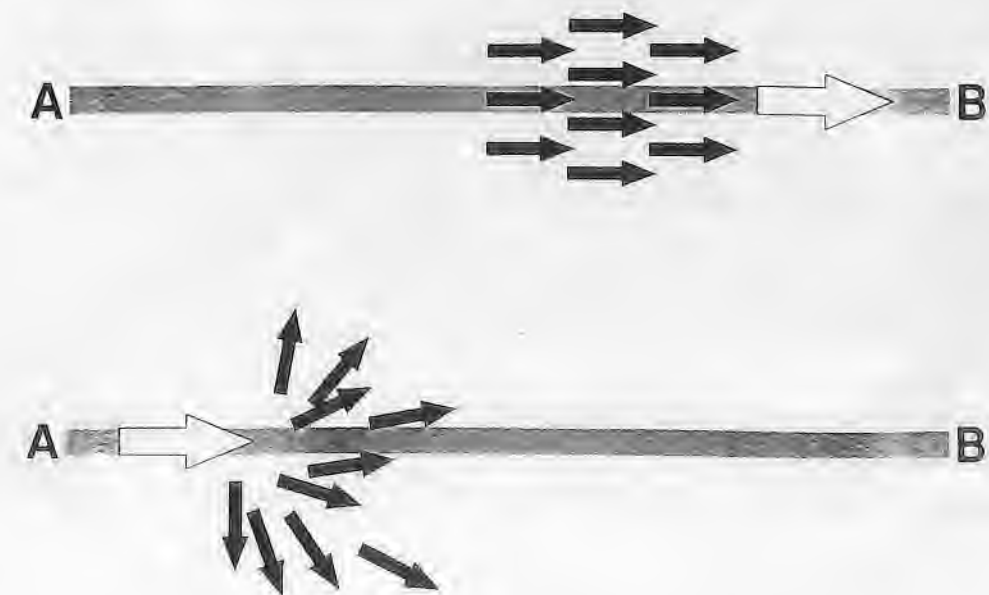
Two Shepherds

(A parable by Philip Bachelor)

Once upon a time, in a far away land, there lived two shepherds. One was called 'Leader' and the other was known as 'Driver'. They each had the task of moving their own flock of sheep from well-grazed paddocks to new, fresh pasture over the hills.

Leader called his flock together to prepare for their venture. He set off, keeping just a step or two in front of his flock, as he sought out the best route. Drawn on by his enthusiasm, the flock made good progress throughout the day. As they approached some rough country, Leader sensed their uncertainty and gently urged the flock on, showing the way around obstacles. At sundown, Leader had all his sheep safely yarded at their destination, fed and watered. His task completed, he rested with his flock.

Meanwhile, driver got behind his sheep and started shouting and waving a large stick. Unsure of which direction to go, the flock just moved away from him. Each time an individual broke away to the left or right, Driver would run around and shout louder, in his efforts to exert his role. Occasionally, individuals just kept on going. Progress was slow and erratic as Driver cursed his 'stupid sheep'. When approaching the rough terrain, Driver's flock became troubled and confused, looking to each other for guidance. As they encountered obstacles, some stopped in their tracks, some panicked and ran in various directions while others followed. At sundown, Driver's flock were scattered over the country, some badly wounded and others completely lost. Driver had collapsed, exhausted. Tomorrow he would continue!



PARTICIPaction

Tom Hatch
Recreation Fieldworker, City of Nunawading

PARTICIPaction is a one day community participation event designed as an opportunity for people to show their support for healthy and active living. The fitness challenge event involves communities competing against each other in an effort to gain the highest percentage of people in their city participating in 15 minutes of physical activity which makes the heart beat faster.

Participants must register their involvement by telephoning/visiting the central registration headquarters in their community. To determine the winner the final registration number is divided by the city's population to obtain the participation rates. The city with the higher participation rate is the winner.

The PARTICIPaction Challenge originated in Canada in 1983 and involved some 50 communities. In 1991, only 8 years later, over 4 million participants in 518 communities were involved in the Challenge.

The City of Nunawading first competed in PARTICIPaction in 1990 after being challenged by the Canadian City of Vaughan. The Shire of Corio and City of Bendigo also represented Victoria in the event, competing against Canadian Challengers. However all three Victorian representatives were unable to match their Canadian counterparts in the first official international challenge.

The Australian representatives for the 1991 PARTICIPaction Challenge included the City of Nunawading, the City of Bendigo, the Shire of Corio and the City of Geraldton. All cities were competing against a Canadian Challenger.

For the 1991 PARTICIPaction Challenge The City of Nunawading was issued with a challenge by the Canadian City of Guelph. The challenge day was May 29th 1991 and following the defeat in the event by our more experienced challenger in 1990, Nunawading was keen to seek victory in the 1991 challenge.

The City of Nunawading's PARTICIPaction challenge was sponsored by The Forest Hill Chase Shopping Centre, The Mitcham Private Hospital, The Complete Health Care Centre and Telecom Doncaster Region provided telephone lines and handsets for the central registration headquarters.

Regular coverage of the event appeared in the Nunawading Gazette and Nunawading Post in the weeks leading up to the Challenge Day and promotional posters supplied by the Canadian Crownlife PARTICIPaction Committee were distributed throughout the community.

Letters were sent to all schools in the community, local sporting clubs and various community groups, encouraging their involvement on the day.

PARTICIPaction Day 1991 proved to be very successful as the Nunawading community responded to the challenge and recorded it's first PARTICIPaction victory, with 15,454 registrations, a participation rate of 16.6%. Our Challenger the City of Guelph achieved a participation rate of 11.88% with 10,342 registrations.

This year attracted a good representation from local schools and an increased involvement from many community groups.



PARTICIPaction : Traffic stops – People action



PARTICIPaction registraton hotline at work.

On the day a varied range of activities were registered by participants including walking, tennis, basketball, aerobics, swimming, bike riding, running and golf. There were also some more unconventional activities registered by people enjoying the challenge, including hula-hooping, folk dancing and wood chopping.

Following the event, the results of each Canadian and International city participating in the Challenge was compiled and forwarded to each competing city. For the winning city a certificate was awarded by the Crownlife PARTICIPaction Committee in Canada. This certificate is now proudly displayed at the Nunawading Horticultural Centre.

As a victory symbol of Nunawading's win in the challenge, the City of Nunawading flag was hoisted outside the City of Guelph Town Hall for the week after the event.

PARTICIPaction which has become a popular national event in Canada successfully attracts community interest while promoting involvement in healthy living in a most enjoyable way. With further interest from local communities, Victoria could develop into a formidable PARTICIPaction Challenging state for our Canadian friends.

For further information on the PARTICIPaction Challenge contact Tom Hatch on telephone number 894 2577 or

Crownlife PARTICIPaction
Box 64, 40 Dundas St. W Suite 220
Toronto, Ontario M5G 2C2
FAX NO. 0011 1 416 977 9953

EASTERN FREEWAY EXTENSION

Issues such as the proposed extension to the Eastern Freeway are vexing for our urban society. The judgement of individuals on where they stand on such issues, usually results in as many being for the proposal as against it.

The Institute is not protected from this phenomenon, and firm stances on such issues will cause many members to feel betrayed and unrepresented. But to say nothing at all on this issue also invokes criticism of an uncaring, non thinking attitude.

At its meeting on 15th July, 1991, the Victorian Regional Council debated the issue of the Eastern Freeway Extension, and after some time, resolved to adopt the following stance;

"The Institute has a policy opposing the alienation of public open space. In this case the land in question is not public open space. Irrespective of whether the proposed freeway goes ahead, the Royal Australian Institute of Parks and Recreation supports the maximisation of public open space within the transport corridor".

The resolution is now open for you the members to make comment. On the basis of any such comments, the resolution will be finalised and copies will be forwarded to all municipalities along the proposed route, the Minister for Transport, VicRoads and The Met.

Your involvement in this process would be appreciated. Comments in writing should be forwarded to The Secretary, and marked "Eastern Freeway Extension".

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- * Specialists in rabbit control for parks & recreation areas.
- * Licenced Operators for "Pindone" rabbit baiting.
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The operators of VERNOX, Dr. B. Coman and Mr. I. Nolan (both ex Keith Turnbull Research Institute, Frankston) have a combined experience of over 50 years in the control of rabbits and other vertebrate pests.

For a free quote ring Ivan Nolan (03) 787 5630 (Melbourne area)
Brian Coman (054) 39 5385 (Country Victoria)

1990 – 1991 W. J. BRENS SCHOLARSHIP REPORT

On March 26th, 1990, as a Fourth Year Gardening Apprentice with the City of Nunawading, Parks and Recreation Services, I was awarded with the W. J. Brens Scholarship by the Royal Australian Institute of Parks and Recreation. As an incentive for horticultural apprentices, twelve months work experience in New Zealand is awarded.

The award was named in honour of W. J. Brens, CBE who served on and was chairman on the Melbourne City Council Parks, Gardens and Recreation Committee for 27 years. Councillor Brens played an active part in the development of Melbourne's Parks and Gardens and it was felt appropriate that he be honoured by the Australian Institute of Parks and Recreation because of his long association with the institute of which he was at the time the only honorary patron.

My initial place of employment upon my arrival in new Zealand was the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. The grounds of the Botanic Gardens encompass an area of 30 hectares, the majority of this being within the loop of the Avon river. they contain one of the finest collection of exotic and indigenous plants to be found anywhere in New Zealand.

Over a period of four weeks, I was rotated around the gardens working in various sections, with the highlights being the Conservatory and the New Zealand native section.

During my time in Christchurch, a work roster was arranged with Mr. Kingsley Clark, my New Zealand Co-ordinator and distributed around the Country to notify them of my arrival in New Zealand. I flew to the North Island to commence four weeks work with Wellington City Council and made my way north to Napier, Rotorua, New Plymouth, Hamilton, Tauranga and finally to Auckland in December.

Each of the Councils on the North Island provided me with a varied work roster which usually involved a week with their tree units, mobile gardening crews and nurseries. I was fortunate in that most Councils went out of their way to place me in work that was of a particular interest to me. With Arboriculture being one of my biggest interests, I was taken to work with as many Arborists as possible during my twelve months. This proved to be most valuable to my Arboricultural knowledge and experience.

The highlight of the North Island was my period of employment with the Auckland City Council. Being one of the largest Councils in New Zealand, it was interesting to witness the approach adopted by the staff. My arrival just happened to coincide with large scale redundancies which had been brought about due to the introduction of contracting. A subject that was obvious throughout New Zealand, contracting work has been viewed as an effective way for Councils to cut cost. From my observations of the contracting system, Council employees remained extremely competitive in most areas from both the standard of work and a cost point of view.

Most of New Zealand cities do not have enough competitive contractors to keep the standard of maintenance high and the costs low. As a result large scale companies are dominating contracts and dictating terms to councils who are no longer equipped or staffed to be competitive with large contractors themselves.

During December and early January I returned home for a 3 week holiday before returning to New Zealand to complete my scholarship in the South Island. Nelson was my first location after Christmas, located at the northern most point of the south island. It has an excellent climate. From there I journeyed down New Zealand's rugged West Coast to Invercargill, New Zealand's most southern city and worked my way up the east coast with periods of employment at Dunedin and Timaru City Council's.

The standard of horticulture varied from city to city throughout New Zealand but I gain valuable knowledge from each of the cities that I worked for. Two of the most important factors that became extremely important to me were the need for good public relations and communication with staff.

Relocating so often required quick adjustments on my behalf, a skill which I developed over the course of the scholarship and now value greatly. With 14 first days on the job to my credit, I certainly have a much better understanding of the problems associated with new employees and the adjustments that are required when starting work. Fortunately all of the Councils and staff went out of their way to help me to settle in as quickly as possible and their friendly and helpful attitude was always appreciated.



As with previous scholars, accommodation was arranged by each of the Councils that I worked for. This was excellent as most of my accommodation was by billet with parks and reserves employees, as well as hostels and cabins. Each family was extremely friendly and made me feel most welcome during my stay. It did involve some major adjustments from one city to the next as the lifestyles of my hosts varied a great deal. However, it was these people with their accommodation who helped to make the Brens Scholarship so successful.

The W. J. Brens Scholarship is an excellent opportunity for apprentices in horticultural trades throughout Victoria to increase their knowledge and awareness of horticulture. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the City of Nunawading and in particular to Mr John Brandenburg for his help and support over the past few years, the Melbourne City Council and Royal Australian Institute of Parks and Recreation, Victorian Region who sponsor the scholarship and Mr Eric Dalziel, Australian Co-ordinator, all who helped to make the scholarship the outstanding success that it is.

Stuart Maybury

THE PLASTIC ALTERNATIVE

After three years of trials our City of Box Hill Nursery, the time has come to put into practice a method of plant production which is quite different from the present norm. It will yield plants with as little environmental impact as possible. The system, although not organic, involves similar principles. The main difference, other than the non-use of chemicals, is the re-use of granulated waste plastics. It is this product which enables us to NOT use the normal nursery chemicals in the production of our plants.

Granulated foamed plastics have in particular proved to be an excellent substitute for washed river sand. I emphasise that we only use waste plastics, not the foamed polystyrene balls normally employed. The latter are in fact less stable in mixes, and float to the surface far more easily than granules. While it seems a contradiction in terms to say that plastics are used for environmental reasons, it does however very effectively address two major pressing issues. One is the use of hazardous chemicals (such as fungicides and herbicides); the other is the ever-increasing land degradation problems due to the removal of sand from river beds and similar sites.

Coarse sand is used in the horticultural industry as the basis for most propagating mixes, and is an integral component of virtually all potting mixes. Although the sand is completely natural and organic, it is NOT a renewable resource, and its mining for the purpose of growing plants, sees the degrading of one environment for the sake of another. For most plants granulated plastic enables us to replace sand completely, and in doing so it solves the present and ever-increasing problem of disposal. Thus it saves natural resources and their related eco-systems.

There are many other benefits from using plastic waste as opposed to sand. As the basis for a seed-raising mix it has proved to be excellent in the reduction of fungus problems, such as damping-off. As an addition to potting mixes it provides excellent drainage. It has also proved to be a very good substitute for pre-emergent herbicides when used as a mulch for container-grown plants.

A number of different plastics have been trialled. Some should not be used (typically there can be problems with coloured plastics with lead and cadmium bases). The preferred plastics are those that break down quickly and do not release harmful residues. Our present plastic-based mix mirrors our former sand-based or commercial mix. However, it is lighter, has a far greater air porosity and so far all indications are that it assists, and in fact enhances, our biological control methods.

This is one aspect of a nursery program, which addresses all problem areas of modern horticulture. We all have to stop and look at our practices of chemical use, and the materials we use to grow our plants. We must ask ourselves whether the problems we are having could be related to our present methods, and whether we are causing environmental problems as a result.

COLIN ARNOLD
Nursery Manager - City of Box Hill

(Editors Note : Colin is happy to talk to persons interested in his trials on (03) 895 9615)

NURSERY WINS APPLAUSE FROM PLASTIC INDUSTRY

On the 20th of May this year the Local Government Innovation Awards for 1991 were presented at a dinner at the Wrest Point Casino in Hobart.

Sitting in the audience were two representatives from Box Hill City Council, unsure as to why they had been requested to attend the evening. The consternation grew, as the evening progressed, with the City of Box Hill not yet mentioned.

Finally, the Executive Director of the Plastics Industry Association, Ms Susan Ryan AO (the Association sponsored the Environmental Improvement section of the awards), announced that her organisation was so impressed with the application from Box Hill, that the Association had awarded it a special "Award of Merit".

The application submitted by Box Hill promoted an environmentally sustainable approach to producing plants, especially in the use of recycled plastics in potting mixes.



Box Hill City Councillor Tom Thorpe accepts the Plastic Industry Association "Award of Merit" from the Executive Director Susan Ryan AO.

Predators in Your Park?

by

Clive A Marks

Research Scientist

Department of Conservation and Environment

Is there a voracious urban predator living in your park? Perhaps you have seen the signs. Golf and Tennis balls which go missing and then turn up in strange piles in the shrubbery, together with an assortment of odd shoes. Strange diggings which appear on the ninth hole. Or maybe its the macabre sight of a headless brushtail possum which caught your attention. The early morning users of your park or golf course, while engaged in their various masochistic rituals, have probably seen the animal responsible for these phenomena. Moving silently over the lawn area as if it was gliding on well oiled roller bearings, pausing to stomp on an insect while always keeping a close eye on its human observers. The colour of this efficient predators glossy coat leaves no doubt as to the validity of its name. For it is the Red Fox which has come to town-and taken up residence in your park.

Urban foxes appear to be a twentieth century phenomenon. A gradual movement of foxes into urban centres in the United Kingdom was recorded shortly after World War Two. Cities such as Bristol and London currently boast a thriving population of these colonists. In Melbourne we were unsure about the extent of our own urban fox population until very recently. While it was known that foxes were present in some dockyards, cemeteries and urban rural fringe areas it was commonly believed that our urban fox population was not extensive. The urban fox research project undertaken by the Victorian Department of Conservation and Environment and the Bureau of Rural Resources quickly altered this perception. A survey of the urban area within 15km from the GPO revealed Melbourne to be one of the urban fox meccas of the world. Foxes were discovered along urban creeks, living in industrial and residential areas and have even been sighted in Spring and Lonsdale streets! Approximately 1500 sightings have been recorded since the commencement of the survey in September 1990.

Since foxes became established in Australia, subsequent to two Victorian introductions in the 1870's, they have had a major impact on our native fauna. In Victoria today there are many mammals, birds and reptiles which are endangered predominantly because of predation by foxes. Furthermore they are well known predators of domestic stock. Yet there is another potential threat which the fox poses to us all. In Europe and North America the Red Fox is the primary animal responsible for spreading rabies. Fortunately, Australia is one of the very few countries not affected by rabies. This is however not a reason for complacency, for if rabies were to enter Australia the fox could act as a major reservoir for this disease in both rural and urban areas.

Presently our research is aimed at collecting data which will enable the production of an urban rabies emergency plan. In



Clive Marks (left) "bags" another fox during sampling.

order to develop such a plan we must have a good idea about aspects of urban fox ecology which will influence the spread of an exotic disease such as rabies. Obviously enough, information which allows us to determine the distribution of urban foxes is vital. In addition our studies over the past year have investigated where foxes establish den sites and what urban habitats are favoured by foxes. By radio-collaring a sample of foxes in seven different study sites across metropolitan Melbourne we now have an excellent opportunity to investigate the precise manner in which foxes interact and survive in the urban environment.

Foxes will establish breeding dens during winter each year. It is at this time that they are the most conspicuous. Dens are usually burrows which can extend a number of metres into the ground. They are commonly found under buildings, in earth banks, garden beds, under graves and in culverts. Foxes will be opportunistic in the establishment of breeding dens and as a general rule they will attempt to exploit locations which are not frequented by humans. Deserted houses and factories, cemeteries, large garden beds, railway cuttings and urban creeks are all ideal locations. Cubs are born inside the dens from early to late spring and will not venture outside the den for four to five weeks. After the young have been born a den site will become quite obvious. Food items, including dead possums and rats, birds and other scavenged items, brought to feed the cubs, will be discarded outside the entrance to the den. The unique odour that this produces is quite hard to miss! Any sighting of fox cubs will also mean that a den site is not too distant.

One of the odd behavioural quirks indulged in by some foxes is the tendency to collect and stash various odd items. While it is normal for a fox to bury excess food in many "larders" we were surprised to find one fox which has taken a distinct fancy to golf balls. Yet another appears to have a foot fetish and has busily collected over 30 odd shoes from around its neighbourhood!

While park and garden reserves are obviously not the only urban habitats where foxes will establish breeding dens, they appear to be favoured sites. At present it appears that many of the parklands in Balwyn, Burwood, Camberwell, South Yarra and the urban centre play host to foxes. Active usually only in the early hours of the morning they are commonly seen by police officers, insomniacs and sleep deprived researchers. Brushtail possums appear to be a particularly favoured delicacy which are in good supply in many of these areas.

During 1991/92 we hope to further extend our data set concerning fox distribution and establishment of breeding dens. Naturally we would be delighted to hear from anyone who may have sighted a fox in a suburban park or any other urban habitat. In particular we would be most interested in any reports of breeding dens. So if your local park or reserve is known to harbour a voracious predator please contact Tim Bloomfield at the Department of Conservation and Environment on 651 3726.



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