



# Friends of the Aranda Bushland Inc

*to conserve and rehabilitate the bush*

(1999) 22.2.00

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## Convenor's Annual Report AGM Tuesday 22 February 2000

1999 has been marked by some wins from our lobbying efforts and a new focus with the NHT grant for the Aranda Snow Gums Heritage site. This provides a weeding challenge in addition to the followup weeding needed to keep Aranda Bushland relatively free of weeds.

Again, I've had a wonderfully supportive committee - critical when lobbying inevitably creates unreasonable demands and ridiculous deadlines. The 1999 team has been Dave Kelly (Secretary), Robert Langdon (Treasurer), Pam Macdonald, Judy Kelly, Peter Ormay, Ian Falconer and Mary Falconer with Colin Macdonald and Trevor Dowling providing background support. Ian and Mary as new members have helped invigorate the team.

### **Handover of *Our Patch's* herbarium specimens**

The set of about 170 herbarium specimens for each plant in *Our Patch* is an impressive contribution. It was Merylyn Evans's vision and she did most of the work of collecting herbarium specimens, getting them identified by Estelle Canning, pressing, mounting, labelling and the general management of the project. These specimens and the slides for *Our Patch* were presented to the Australian National Botanic Gardens on 4 May 1999 - our contribution being about a tenth of the Public Reference Herbarium.

### **Horse riding in nature reserves**

The *Management Plan for Canberra Nature Park* was released on Wednesday 9 February 2000 after a twelve year gestation period and extensive (often heated) discussion on horse riding and mountain bikes. The fragmented nature of Canberra Nature Park, its closeness to the urban areas and its role as an essential element of the Bush Capital, make it extremely difficult to manage. The launch was on our patch.

We have been successful in keeping horses out of Aranda Bushland. It was critical to stop the expansion of horse trails at this point - the next campaign would have been Black Mountain. There is already one rural lessee using trails in part of Canberra Nature Park to run a horse riding business.

After the Legislative Assembly Standing Committee's strong recommendation for a return to conservation values, the government commissioned a scientific study by CSIRO Wildlife on horse riding in Canberra Nature Park in December 1998. Dr Jill Landsberg's report was finalised in March. The government developed management principles and policies for horse riding in Canberra Nature Park. They walked every horse trail and assessed it against the criteria established - a praiseworthy effort. Papers were tabled in the Assembly on 2 July 1999 and the *Management Plan* came into force early in September.

Year 2000 will be implementation year and the focus should move away from Aranda Bushland. However, others will need our support - the devil is often in the detail.

## Aranda Snow Gums Heritage Site

Since the site went on the interim Heritage Register, we've had five meetings with Environment ACT to develop a management plan for the site. The plan will be available at some stage for public comment - let me know if you would like to know when this happens.

In March 1999, we applied for a grant from the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) for conservation and rehabilitation - our long term goal is a self guided Frost Hollow to Forest trail. The NHT grant will provide us with funds for fencing, weed control and hopefully later for interpretive signs.

The initial funds came good in January 2000, but we were able to start work before that - especially after Parks and Conservation provided a stile over the barbed wire fence. We've had twenty work parties mostly pulling thistles and St John's wort in the key Snow Gums area. We've also had a ceremonial planting of Snow Gums propagated for us by Pat Treacy's Lake Ginninderra College students using seeds from the site. Our contribution in kind is \$7,275 at the NHT rate of \$15 per hour.

### Erosion control on walking tracks

Access to Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers resources through the Ginninderra Catchment Group's NHT grant gave us unexpected resources for erosion control on Aranda Bushland's walking tracks. There have been a serious erosion problems since mountain bikes became popular about seven years ago. Canberra North District was happy to seize the opportunity of an ATCV team for a week in August 1999. The rangers planned the erosion control work, provided the required logs, bolts, screws, tools and training, supervised the work and joined in the hard yakka. ATCV saw it as a useful break from other projects and will consolidate last year's work and fix remaining problem areas in the tracks this week.

### Displays and newsletters

During 1999, we provided Aranda Bushland/*Our Patch* displays at ACT Alive (15 March), Botanic Gardens (4 May - 1 Sept), Yarralumla Nursery (3 April), Fyshwick markets (29 April), World Environment Fair (6 June), Jamison Centre (27/28 Aug), Green Living Fair (21 Nov) and Ridgefest (12 Dec). There were four newsletters distributed to members.

### Submissions

As well as the horses issue, your committee has made submissions on the following issues:

- **John Dedman parkway** - all proposals threaten Black Mountain and Aranda Bushland with a major highway dividing them; the road will not solve Gungahlin's problems; with suburban infill our bushlands become a critical resource; there must be other solutions besides carving up them up to serve the private motor vehicle;
- **Aranda Shops 'redevelopment'** - commenting on conservation values;
- **Excessively severe control burns** and loss of hollow trees in the area burnt outside that advised - we raked bark away from the trees before the burns;
- **Overzealous removal of understorey** from the Aranda Spine in November;
- **Inappropriate mowing of endangered native grassland** 22A down the bottom of Caswell Drive - mowed again the day we got our reply.

There is plenty to be done to consolidate our achievements and continue protecting the bushland. We need support to remain effective and invite you to join us.

Jean Geue, Convenor

22 February 2000