

Friends of the Aranda Bushland Inc.  
Convenor's report for 2002.

2002 was a very active and successful year for the Friends of the Aranda Bushland.

Our year began in January 2002 with a second large clear-out of fire fuel behind the houses on the suburban edge of the bushland, by Canberra Nature Parks in consultation with us. This followed FAB's own major clean-out during the winter of 2001, during which four truckloads of material were removed. After the Christmas fires it became apparent that more work was needed for fire safety on the edge of the bushland and this was carried out. It seems probable that the recent disastrous fires will result in yet further attention to fire control on the edges of Canberra's suburbs.

The highlight of the year was the 'opening' of our frost Hollow to Forest Walk by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Wayne Berry, on 19<sup>th</sup> June. The event was held at the Caswell Drive end of the walk, with support from Canberra Nature Parks (CNP) who provided a large tent, where we and CNP provided refreshments. The role of the National Heritage Trust and CNP in funding snow gum replanting, fencing and the excellent permanent descriptive signs was described at the opening by Jean Geue. Jean initiated the Snow Gums project when she was Convenor and has remained the project officer on behalf of FAB through to its completion. The pictures on the signs were drawn by Winifred Mumford, with the design and text by Mary Falconer, Jean Geue and Peter Ormay. Sharon Lane and Kim Tatnell set up the graphic design. The result is a set of excellent permanent signs, illustrating well the natural history seen on the walk. We also designed and had printed a brochure, to advertise the walk and as a source of information. A group of Committee members is currently working on a Schools guide for the walk

As a consequence of our winning the Alcoa Community Group Landcare Award for the ACT in 2001 we were finalists in the National Awards for 2002. Each State winner was entered, bringing together highly successful projects from across Australia. The National winners for community groups were South Mortlock Landcare from WA, who formed the group remediate 35,000 hectares of increasingly saline land on their properties, by strategic tree planting. Over a decade they successfully planted over one million trees, and the saline water table has dropped considerably with the land beginning to recover. This Award illustrated the breadth of landcare issues and community group activities, from our work in a small area of high quality natural biodiversity under threat from weeds, erosion and misuse to the recovery of extensive areas of degraded land resulting from farming practices.

We had another spring walk and a second marsupial night stalk this year, following the very successful ones last year. Both were lead by Peter Ormay and we thank him for his enthusiasm and knowledge.

During the winter we held two quite different work parties. One was erosion control on the walking paths in the bushland, which minimises wear of our very well used paths. Several individual members of FAB continuously repair roll-overs when they wear down with traffic, and we owe them especial thanks. The other was a blitz on hawthorns and rose briars on the rural lease. This assists Neville Stuart in his land management and also reduces seeds which birds carry into the bushland.

Clean Up Australia Day in 2002 was a major effort by FAB and Aranda residents to clean up Caswell Drive. Two loads of bagged rubbish were removed, including parts of cars, lots of fast food wrapping and dumped garbage. March 2<sup>nd</sup> is the date for this years cleanup, and we will meet at the end of Wangara St at 9am to get that side of Aranda looking clean again. Neighbourhood Watch are cleaning Bindubi St every two months in 2003 and it looks greatly improved for it.

We have continued to oppose the Gungahlin Drive Extension, which has had many designs which would result in clearing larger and smaller amounts of bushland. The eastern route, which now appears more likely, may take off the corner of Black Mountain Reserve as well as cutting a swath through Bruce Ridge.

The Snow Gums Heritage Site was finally legislated as part of Canberra Nature Park, so what was the whole of Block 1399 soil conservation area is now the southern part of Aranda Bushland. We have continued to weed the area, and poison briar roses. This year the grassland has been much changed by drought and kangaroo grazing. Estimates of the kangaroo numbers range from 300 to 600. At present there is little grass cover left, so it will be interesting to see what recovers when it eventually rains! It may be that the native grasses do best under these severe conditions. We are delighted that our planted snow gums are thriving, without any watering.

The success of Friends of Aranda Bushland is dependent on the hard work of our members at work parties and individually in restoring and maintaining the bushland and grassland. To them the whole community owes thanks. I personally want to thank our committee for the year, Robert Langdon our treasurer, David Kelly our secretary, Jean Geue our publicity and project officer and committee members Diana Brown, Helen Hordern, Peter Ormay, Bill Packard and Susan Smith. Bill Packard and Diana Brown deserve special mention for the extremely welcome refreshments at our work parties.

We look forward to 2003 with confidence and enthusiasm.

Ian Falconer, Convenor