

## **KooyongKoot Keepers Report**

### **November 2024**

It's been another huge year.

I would firstly acknowledge the funding from the Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation (LMCF) which allows me to devote my time to the creek and help support the groups that care for it.

A key part of the Keeper role is being your voice on The Gardiners Creek Regional Collaboration (comprising 14 different stakeholders). We have made significant inroads with the tender for the Strategic Plan for Gardiners Creek. It is about to be sent to 5 groups to tender and those tenders are due in January 2025.

A litter action plan is also being developed for the creek

KKA continue to be an integral part of the various working groups. shaping and developing that strategy for the catchment. Su Dempsey, Frank Giorlando and Rex have also been active participants.

I would acknowledge the great work of all the 14 collaboration members, it's such a positive group, but would specifically mention Neil Sutton, the Collaboration Lead, who having taken over from Matthew Kirwan, is doing a magnificent job.

### **Advocacy**

Advocacy is also a key part of the Keeper role

I am proud to have been a founding member of the Urban Waterways Alliance, which is made up of 6 Urban waterways, allowing us to advocate for them at the highest levels of government. Yarra River, Werribee River, Merri Creek, Darebin Creek, Maribyrnong River and Gardiners/KooyongKoot are all partners. Such is the groups influence we have already had high level meetings with Harriet Shing, Water Minister and Steve Dimopoulos Minister for the Environment.

We are also a key stakeholder in the Concerned Waterways Alliance who are looking at water on a regional basis.

Members of the KKA committee have met with Tanya Plibersek, Federal Environment Minister and we have regular meetings with both State and Federal MPs as well as close relationships with many councillors, with our group receiving regular mentions in both State and Federal parliament.

KKA have been involved with early discussions and made written representations on , *the Boroondara Biodiversity Strategy plan/ Canopy Strategy, the Whitehorse Open Spaces Strategy the proposed Regional Park in Monash, Stonnington's Master plan roll out for the revegetation of Gardiners Creek* amongst others.

Several submissions on issues potentially impacting the catchment including park lighting and inappropriate development have been made.

I also represent the KKA on the Suburban Rail Loop Precinct (SRL) reference group. The proposed SRL station near Deakin University has the potential to have a huge impact on the creek, with tower developments of up to 20 storeys. This will have a significant impact on the

creek and its catchment. The proposed naturalisation of a small section of the creek seems incidental to the impact of this mega project could have. We hope our voice is being listened to.

## **Funding**

Another key part of the role is attracting funding to the catchment. Out of 8 project grants applied for, 8 have been awarded!!

It has been a big year for projects. We have successfully implemented a number of grants, resulting in nearly 15,000 plants being planted in the catchment.

Through the State Governments **Greenlink Grant** Funding (\$92,000) a significant planting of 17,000 plants over 1.2 HA at Gardiners Creek Reserve has begun, with the Urban Guerrillas, FO Gardiners Creek Reserve and Deakin University. The launch in June was done by RH Harriet Shing the Water Minister. The State Governments Greenlink grant is over 3 years.

The \$10,000 Melbourne Water **Healthy Waterways** grant to continue our work at Markham Reserve on Gardiners Creek, involving over 20 different community groups, including Friends Groups, Ashburton Forest, Back 2 Nettleton, Glen Iris Park, Back Creek. We have planted over 3000 trees and shrubs. With a further 3000 to be planted in 2025.

Thanks also to Whitehorse and Boroondara Councils for their respective support on these projects.

We have also continued our revegetating nature strips program with the JG Rovers Crew with a grant from Boroondara Council, with 15 nature strips being completed. With more funding anticipated from Boroondara Council through their **Climate Action Grants**

These projects would not have happened without the KooyongKoot Alliance and the funding from LMCF, Federal, State Governments and Council support.

I would stress that the baseline planting (over and above the specific KKA projects) for all the Friends and Advisory groups over the past year sits at over 30,000 plants. A remarkable contribution to biodiversity in the catchment.

## **Members**

We now have over 20 groups within the Alliance, and more are on the way. The Urban Guerrillas continued their rise, their youthful enthusiasm and 'can do' attitude has been infectious. A number of other new groups have emerged, FO Wurundjeri Way and ACBC. Established groups at Blackburn Lake and the Blackburn Creeklands, as well as Damper Creek, Scotchmans Creek and Valley Reserve and South Surrey Park are the backbone of the Alliance, but all the groups are an important part of our community, including Greenlink and Bungalook Indigenous Nurseries.

This is an exciting time for the individual groups, The Alliance and for the Creek.

## **Forthcoming Projects**

There are a number of significant forthcoming projects in the catchment.

The fact we received 3 Greenlink grants in our catchment demonstrates the strength of the collaboration.

- Gardiners Creek Reserve 1.2Ha site 17,000 plant project. \$92,000
- Blackburn Lake Project Blackburn Lake Advisory Committee together with Bungalook Nursery were also successful with grant funding for a significant project at the headwaters above Blackburn Lake the \$54,000 grant is allowing removal of silt and revegetation of the riparian corridor
- A refurbishment of Glen Iris wetlands, East Malvern is in the pipeline, it is received funding from State governments Greenlink Fund and will be carried out by Stonnington Council with FO Glen Iris Park.

Federal Urban Waterways Grants re still to be implemented include:

- Rewilding Stonnington's brainchild, **Greenline**, with Yarra Link, have proposed a Kooyong Station to Hayington Walk project. The funding is confirmed, and the detail being worked through. It involves significant revegetation along this important corridor. The Federal Urban Waterways Grant is for \$250,000.
- **Toorong Wetlands**, where a new wetland is to be built with Federal Funding in conjunction with Stonnington Council will add to the biodiversity of the corridor and help improve the water quality of the creek.

### **Future Collaborations**

Our efforts were acknowledged last year when we were awarded the **VEFN Connecting Habitats Award**, but we do much more than that, we also connect communities.

We are at full capacity with existing commitments. Stimulating growth through supportive collaboration is how we anticipate growing the number of initiatives in the catchment and maintaining our momentum.

We are developing new exciting collaborations with Box Hill Private Golf course, Bendigo Bank and Holmesglen TAFE involving numerous stakeholders as well as advancing discussions with Vicinity Centres, the owners of Chadstone Shopping Centre.

ACF have with our support established a Waterwatch Group at Back Creek and we are in discussions with Deakin University Enviro Club to do the same at Gardiners Creek Reserve.

I am also aware of the ongoing projects being undertaken by the more established groups in the catchment both planting and caring for what we have already. There are too many to list here, but their contribution is vital and greatly appreciated.

I would point out that funding for my role runs out in January. Councils and Melbourne Water, despite seeing huge value in what we do, are reluctant /unable to allocate funds at the moment, but we are still hoping to source alternate partial funding from the LMCF.

I would like to thank everyone for their support over the past year and in particular the current committee for their great support and guidance that they have provided, they are a formidable team.

These are challenging but exciting times that we live in, biodiversity is starting to get the interest it deserves, but we need to lead from the front and advocate for much more funding to be delivered at a National and Regional scale as well as at our catchment level.

We all have a critical role to play and with your support we can help deliver the message and the all-important on ground projects.

We need to be stronger than ever, together.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graham Ross', written in a cursive style.

Graham Ross