

BANDICOOTtimes

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A PROGRAM OF



City of HOBART

Bushcare Roundup



Founders and early volunteers. Back row: Ken McKay (Cornelian). Standing, left to right: Grant Hayward (Truganini), Stephen Robinson (Lambert), Ingrid Garland (Lambert), Carolyn Thomas (Lambert), Nigel Rogers (Mt Nelson), Hermie Cornelisse (widow of Paulus Toonen), Viv Fujiura (Mt Nelson), Bruce Longmore (Ridgeway), Mike Bowden (Wellington), Gavin Wright (Lambert), Janet Stone (South Hobart). Seated: Robert Rands (Waterworks), Margaret Eldridge (McAulay), Sue Drake (Ridgeway), David Phillips (McAulay), Bruce Champion (Knocklofty), Kerry Heatley (Council), Astrid Wright (Knocklofty). Front row: Bec Johnson and Sonya Stallbaum (City of Hobart).

Claire Knowles
Bushcare Coordinator

As we start planning for 2024 I am feeling fortunate to have joined the City of Hobart's amazing Bushcare team. I'm also looking forward to everything that will be achieved in the new year by Hobart's largest volunteer group – Bushcare.

The weather was kind to us for our annual Bushcare celebrations on the Queens Domain ... maybe mother nature knew it was our 30th birthday! What an amazing

turn out, with so many founding members making it to this special event, including Margaret Eldridge from the McAulay Bushcare group, who also celebrated a birthday that day.

Hobart's Deputy Lord Mayor Helen Burnet joined us and thanked our volunteers for their deep commitment to the natural world around us, and announced our Golden Secateurs winner, Carol Bristow, an invaluable member of Waterworks Valley Landcare.

Carol's story featured in the local TV news and in the Mercury

newspaper, but as Carol says, she is one in a team of dedicated volunteers and we thank all of our Bushcare volunteers for the more than 3000 hours of environmental work you achieved in 2023.

For those of you who stayed for dessert, we enjoyed a beautiful rich mud cake made by Elise Jeffrey, who used to run the City of Hobart's biodiversity program.

The cake was cut by Kerry Heatley, Bushcare's first program coordinator. It featured our lovely bandicoot logo designed by the late Paulus Toonen.



Cover photo:
Bushcare team leaders Sonya Stallbaum and Bec Johnson share a laugh at the Bushcare celebrations.
Photo: John Sampson

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THE POWER OF PERSISTENCE

Sonya Stallbaum
Team Leader Bushcare

What gives our Bushcare movement such longevity? For me the answer is very clear – the persistence of people willing to commit to nurturing ecological recovery, and an enduring, planned approach to nature restoration.

This approach has long been a hallmark of the Friends of Knocklofty, who have developed an important working relationship with TasNetworks that began in 2006 when the Bushcare group entered into a contract to manage vegetation under powerlines within Knocklofty Reserve.

Critical to Hobart's energy grid, the powerlines criss-crossing Knocklofty Reserve don't sit comfortably in a reserve that features a tall forest canopy.

Historically, trees beneath the powerlines were managed through slashing, but this can have damaging results on the landscape, opening it up to weed infestation and threatening the overall ecological integrity of the reserve.

Finding equilibrium

The Friends of Knocklofty wanted to become part of a solution. Fast forward 17 years and today a heathland equilibrium has been created beneath the powerlines that is in a steady state of low-growing vegetation.

Reaching this equilibrium was not easy, but an injection of high intensity working bees early on gradually evolved into an easy



Friends of Knocklofty volunteer Geoff Dodd working under the powerlines.

maintenance program of weed follow-up and tree regeneration control.

TasNetworks is very happy with the results and wants to see the contract with the Friends of Knocklofty continue for as long as the Bushcare group is willing to do the work.

The relationship between the Friends of Knocklofty and TasNetworks was further cemented recently with a donation of tools from

TasNetworks. They will be put to excellent use!

This project, which keeps native vegetation strong and healthy, without letting it interfere with Hobart's power grid, proves that a slow and steady approach can result in long-term environmental benefits.

This has been an exceptionally impressive mission both in terms of on-ground results and for the dedication of Knocklofty's amazing Bushcare volunteers.

A photograph of Carol Bristow, a woman with short grey hair, smiling and standing outdoors. She is wearing a dark blue cardigan over a black and white striped shirt. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery and a building.

A FORCE FOR NATURE

Bushcare, the City of Hobart's longest running and most popular volunteer program, has celebrated 30 years of caring for our forests, grasslands and riparian vegetation.

It has also recognised the outstanding contribution Dynnyrne resident Carol Bristow has made to Bushcare in her 25 years of volunteering with the Waterworks Valley Landcare group.

Every year the City of Hobart recognises a Bushcare volunteer who has made a positive and lasting contribution to the conservation of Hobart's bushland reserves and who inspires others to do the same.

This year Bushcare convenor

Carol Bristow is being recognised for her outstanding efforts in the conservation of nature through her Bushcare work.

"Bushcare is such a positive way for people to make a change to benefit our natural environment," Ms Bristow said.

"The people that come and work and volunteer with us are wonderful to be with, they all have a good sense of humour and value the things that are important.

"You walk away from a Bushcare working bee and you feel good about yourself. You think yes, I've done something good today."

Hobart Lord Mayor Anna Reynolds says Bushcare has

achieved remarkable results in caring for our natural environment.

"Every weekend our Bushcare volunteers can be found working along the shores of the Derwent Estuary, up on the Queens Domain, in Knocklofty Reserve, deep in the forests of Fern Tree or across the alpine landscape of kunanyi/Mt Wellington," Cr Reynolds says.

"They rid wildlife habitat of environmental weeds, are helping the City of Hobart protect nationally significant native grasslands on the Queens Domain, and our newest Bushcare group is restoring waterway habitat along the Hobart Rivulet."

The City's Sustainability



in Infrastructure Portfolio Committee Chair Bill Harvey says Bushcare volunteers play a vital role in protecting our local native wildlife and inspiring others to do more for the natural environment.

"The key to Bushcare's success has been its caring, passionate volunteers, who get out into our bushlands every weekend to keep environmental weeds under control and restore wildlife habitat," he says.

"In a world where environmental issues can feel overwhelming, our Bushcare volunteers are a reminder that the people of Hobart care deeply for the natural world around them, and want to help protect it."

Pictured: Carol Bristow walks up to receive her Golden Secateurs award.

Back in the day: Andrew Hingston hands out tools for a 2004 Mt Nelson working bee.

THE EARLY YEARS



Sonya Stallbaum
Team Leader Bushcare

The story of Bushcare in Hobart began as a true grassroots push from the community.

Even before the inception of a City of Hobart Bushland Unit, a Landcare group sprang up in Wellesley Park in the early 1990s where a mass planting took place to stabilise eroding slopes below houses on Huon Road.

The original community members who rolled up their sleeves to plant those trees have since moved on, or we have lost contact, but that early work later led directly to the birth of the South Hobart Bushcare Group in 2001.

The vision to restore the natural values of Knocklofty Reserve was initiated by Melva Truchanas in 1992, widow of Olegas Truchanas.

Melva letterboxed houses close to Knocklofty and on Forest Road, calling for a community movement

to control thickets of gorse in the reserve at their back door. Work on the gorse began in earnest – all on the steam of community energy and passion.

Within just three years, between 1992 and 1995, the Friends of Knocklofty was joined by a surge of other new groups including the Waterworks Valley Landcare group and Lambert Gully Bushcare. Friends of Truganini, Cascades Landcare, Guy Fawkes Rivulet Landcare, Friends of the Domain and Kangaroo Valley Bushcare soon followed.

In those very early days, the groups worked almost entirely independently as the City of Hobart's first ever bushland manager, Jill Hickie, found her feet, instilling within council an ethic as stewards of nature.

In 1995 Jill formalised Bushcare as a Hobart Council program, and a year later appointed our first Bushcare coordinator, Kerry Heatley. Kerry nurtured the growth

of Bushcare for more than a decade and started up our annual Bushcare celebration as well as Bushcare Adventures, a program aimed at furthering ecological knowledge and encouraging citizen science – now the Bush Adventures program.

Around the same time we established a "Bushcrew", which added grunt to the broad-scale primary weed control that was now happening across large areas of bushland in Hobart. The Bushcrew worked in tune with the growing number of groups, which by then included Fern Tree Bushcare.

During the mid-1990s to the early 2000s environmental restoration was all the rage in Australia, with vast amounts of grant money readily available off the back of the Telstra sale.

Many will remember Senator Brian Harradine, who sustained a unique position of power and negotiated huge sums of money



that benefited Tasmania, including environmental gains.

The National Heritage Trust and Envirofund provided grants that would empower small communities nationally to repair and restore damaged local environments.

Grant monies around that time were a huge boost for both Bushcare and the City of Hobart's bushland projects and some large scale ventures were undertaken.

Huge tracts of gorse and other woody weeds were targeted, and without the tremendous amount of environmental funding injected into the Bushcare and Landcare movements, much of it would have been far less effective.

Under the leadership of Hobart's bushland manager Rob Mather, and the Bushcrew Supervisor Paulus Toonen, long-term success was improved through better management processes.

Ambitious restoration projects were only approved if the proposal included long-term follow up and site management strategies.

As the decades rolled on Australian Government funding for grassroots community action all but dried up. Environmental money now goes to Natural Resource Management bodies (NRMs), which are bound by national priorities, mostly aimed at threatened species. The result was a steep decline in opportunities for grassroots environmental restoration.

Much has changed at the City of Hobart too, with a larger focus on fire management from both a hazard reduction and ecological perspective. The Bushcrew became the Vegetation Management Unit and then the Fire and Biodiversity (FAB) Team.

One enduring fact over the past 30 years is that our Bushcare groups have been critical in maintaining

the gains made in the early days. Recovering degraded natural areas is a long-term undertaking – Bushcare people know this better than anyone. Just as important is quick action to keep weeds out of our natural areas. Weeds are an ever-present threat to our native bushlands, always ready to escape nearby gardens and threaten the local natural environment.

Many people think the bush is stable, that it looks after itself.

But that's far from true.

The health of Hobart's beautiful bushland areas should never be taken for granted – the amazing natural values we all treasure are hard-won and the dedicated people of Bushcare past and present have played and continue to play an enormous role in protecting, enhancing and caring for these values.

Thank you to the people of Bushcare!

