

Newsletter Winter 2018

Friends of Willunga Basin inc.

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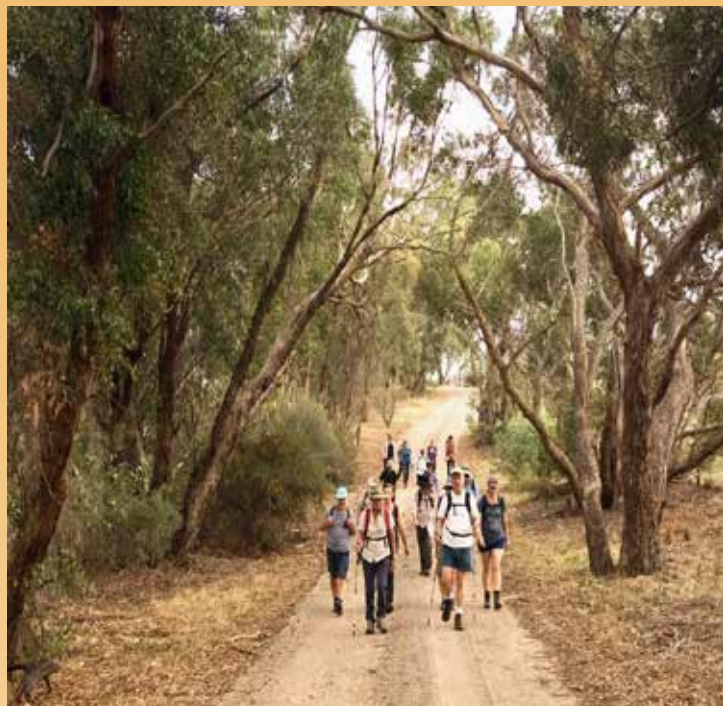


WELCOME, FRIENDS !

What a pleasure it is to Chair this healthy and thriving organization that very definitely punches above its weight! Your Committee is a diverse and fully engaged group, the members bringing with them strong professional, environmental and community engagement credentials.

Although it's been a while since we wrote, we can assure that this is because we have been hard at work, rather than any lack of effort. Sometimes it's simply hard to get to everything. It happens to us all....

But, as described in this Winter Newsletter, we are active in the planning arena, on trails and waste water, and in town centres and creeks.



Above: Walkers on the Willunga Basin Walking Trail

WILLUNGA BASIN WALKING TRAIL: A FUTURE ICON OF THE BASIN

The Willunga Basin Trail is a new and soon to be world class (and world famous) walking/hiking circuit of the Basin, extending 123 km from the hills to the coast and from the Onkaparinga River to Sellicks.

While the trail had its genesis in FOWB, and we remain keenly interested and supportive, the group overseeing the trail's on-ground creation has been an incorporated body – Willunga Basin Trail Inc – since March 2016 and has its own membership. You are welcome to join (see contact details below).

Importantly, this Trail is now part of the City of Onkaparinga's Trails and Cycling Strategic Management Plan, council having received a very high approval rate for the project via its recent public engagement on trails more generally. Thank you if you were one of those who approved.

One of the project's aims – promoting walking as a healthy activity – has seen two members become qualified Day Bushwalk Leaders, with two others presently saddled up in the same course. Zara Lupton, the group Secretary, has devised a very active walking schedule, partly to keep the Trail route under the keen eye of active participants and partly to encourage new leaders to blaze new walks on the Fleurieu. Again, you are welcome to join in.

The Trail Committee has recently submitted an application to the Office for Recreation & Sport for a Community Facilities Grant to establish the Trail over the next two years, from August 2018. We hope the application will be successful.

The committee particularly looks forward to working with volunteers from Friends of Onkaparinga River National Park, who have generously committed 100 hours labour towards the Trail in their park.

Council is also involved. In July last year the committee met with Council staff and a pilot project was conceived to clear of woody weeds along Edwards Unmade Road Reserve. This will reduce fuel load under Council's fire management plan making the construction of the Trail far easier – noting that there are 18 creeks to be crossed between Thomas Hill Road and Willunga. The committee has enjoyed its contact with Council staff, and appreciates their helpful, friendly manner.

If you would like to be involved, whether in working bees or as a walking participant (in the company of interesting people who invariably boost the economy of one of the many coffee houses along the way!), contact either Chris Davies on 0439 077 038 or Zara Lupton at zaralupton@hotmail.com .

EAST-WEST CYCLING LINK

Consultation around the South Road upgrade brought to the fore the matter of an east-west cycling and pedestrian link between Willunga and Pt Willunga.

FOWB is strongly of the view that such a link is required to complete the Shiraz Trail and has been lobbying Council in this regard. Council acknowledges the need for east-west linkages across Willunga Basin, both for the benefit of local residents and as part of its tourism infrastructure.

Recently, a proposal to construct such a trail along Aldinga Rd emerged from the Fund My Neighbourhood programme, and is undergoing early planning, for the section under the Victor Harbor Rd underpass.

FOWB maintains that Aldinga Rd is a hostile environment for cyclists, and a bit boring.



Above and right:
Limited safe access by bicycle on Aldinga Road under and approaching Victor Harbor Road

We prefer Little Road as a more suitable solution. Such a trail would run along Little Road between the two highways (including a section of closed road at its eastern end). It's quieter and vastly more scenic. We think that a programme to make it bike friendly could be fully in place much faster than a completely new trail alongside Aldinga Rd.

Initially it might connect to Willunga via Pethick Rd and Aldinga via Adey Rd and Flour Mill Rd. In the long term, we think that it is possible to construct underpasses beneath both South and Victor Harbor Roads, allowing a more direct connection to the Shiraz Trail in Willunga and the Willunga Creek Reserve, adjacent to Aldinga (so avoiding the Port Rd/South Rd roundabout).

We will continue to lobby for this as the best outcome whichever way you look at it. We might call for your voice when we need it. Watch this space!



Aldinga Washpool

THE WASHPOOL: A WORK IN PROGRESS ...

We remain hopeful that moves initiated by FOWB and taken up by the previous state government to consolidate the presently fragmented ownership of the Washpool under the Minister for the Environment will proceed to realization. Current owners include DPTI, SA Water and Council.

The big picture objective is to facilitate the improved management of this jewel in our crown by bringing it under a single, suitably qualified agency. FOWB is hoping to meet with the new Minister for the Environment to discuss this change and to lobby for him to see it through.

PLANNING MATTERS Vigena Wines

FOWB has made a representation to Council regarding Vigena Wines' retrospective application to operate a substantial bottling plant at its Main Rd winery and cellar door. Again, we are waiting for news of a hearing. As with the corrugated iron fence on the western side of the Willunga Hotel, FOWB is concerned at such retrospective applications, which frequently appear to be able to secure approval because they are now there and without penalty.

PLANNING MATTERS *cont.*

LATITUDE DEVELOPMENT, ALDINGA CENTRAL

This development is for a residential and commercial complex fronting Aldinga Beach Rd, opposite the Aldinga Central Shopping Centre. FOWB was one of several individuals and organizations that opposed it on the grounds that, at five storeys high against the three storeys envisaged by the Development Plan, it failed to comply with current zoning for the area or to take into consideration, among other things, that the mass of the structure would unreasonably block views of the hills face from this locality.

FOWB also presented a petition to Council requesting that the zoning at this site not be changed to medium density.

The project has now been approved by the SCAP and we are pleased to hear that Council will appeal this decision.

We think that the SCAP's decision is a poor one. The planning policy is newly minted and it should not be open to the development industry to sour the local landscape with built form that is so far outside the guidelines.

Below: Artist's impression of proposed five storey development at Aldinga



REDEVELOPMENT of CALTEX SERVICE STATION, WILLUNGA

In its submission to the Council of August last year, FOWB stated that while it did not oppose the design of the structure itself, it raised concerns in particular about the proposed removal of three identified significant and regulated trees, all being river red gums (*E.Camaldulensis*), and proposed that the development be modified to reduce the level of destruction proposed.



Willunga Service Station, showing trees slated for removal.

WILLUNGA MAIN STREET REGENERATION

Work on the Main Street is finally all but complete. While some clearly like it – it is now an award-winning upgrade – others feel that the community was ultimately and unreasonably excluded from the design consultation process, and that the final result is an inappropriate and unwanted intrusion into this historical townscape.

FOWB has submitted a post-completion critique of the regeneration, covering consultation, design and project management. The primary author was committee member, Dr Gavin Malone, Visual Artist and Cultural Geographer. This critique has now been submitted to the Council CEO and Mayor, and to the four Wine Coast Ward Councillors, for purpose of encouraging reflection on what has and hasn't work, and identifying some low key remedial actions.

Copies of the critique will be made available on the FoWB website, together with Council's response, when received.

OLD ALDINGA

The recently completed OTR, Aldi and the large roundabout at the Port Road/South Road intersection are a very significant presence to users of this major north/south artery. However there are many creative and vibrant people driving a large range of tempting, delicious and admirable activities in the Old Coach Rd precinct, their efforts have brought a liveliness not seen for many years. Well worth visiting to tantalise the visual, olfactory and taste buds!

The volume of carbon-intensive concrete poured into it notwithstanding, the small town's precinct upgrade is a significant improvement on what went before, and the result is being made to work to the benefit of the traders and visitors.

FOWB's particular contribution, in partnership with our comrades at Friends of Pt Willunga, was to bring about change in the final shape and scale of the OTR and Aldi developments.

Now for a roundabout at the corner of South Rd & Aldinga Rd....

RECORD OF TREES ON PUBLIC LAND, WILLUNGA

While we're on the subject of trees, we welcome greatly a new initiative in citizen science that seems poised to take off. Council staff, in discussions with the many local groups concerned with trees have introduced us to a project where, following specific training, a group of residents will be measuring trees on public land. The aim is to identify the trees' environmental services such as shade produced, CO2 absorbed & oxygen produced. The information from assessing each tree is processed online and is then able to be used for many purposes, including online interactive maps, tags giving information about individual trees and the establishment of tree walks.

A Red Gum walk in Willunga has been proposed for an initial project. We are delighted that Council appear keen to support this great project with funding for training of volunteers and support for the project.



Examples of tree tags

BOWERING HILL WASTE WATER LAGOON

The proposal by Willunga Basin Water Co. to construct a waste water storage dam at Bowering Hill has now been withdrawn, at least for the time being. At the time the development application was lodged, FOWB facilitated a series of meetings between the proponents, effected residents, SA Water, engineers and other interested parties and we learnt a great deal about this important issue. Subsequently, we issued a Discussion Paper which was distributed widely to interested and affected parties, and which is available to members.

We remain in periodic discussion with the proponents and understand that a new proposal is pending which, as we presently understand it, would seem much more acceptable to the community. From our perspective, it is a far better alternative to Bowering Hill.

However, the real issue is not the proposal for the next lagoon, but the fact that the proponent proposes to develop a series of such lagoons across the Basin, with the ultimate objective of eliminating discharge of waste water to Gulf St Vincent from the Christies Beach Waste Water Treatment Plant.

FOWB supports the elimination of discharges to the Gulf and acknowledges that this requires water to be stored on land. From this starting point, we support and advocate for a strategic approach to the planning for these dams.

REVIEW OF CHARACTER PRESERVATION ACT

The Character Preservation Act (legislation which FOWB was very active in developing) prevents subdivision of land in rural areas for residential purposes. This extremely important protection of our Willunga Basin from urban sprawl is now 5 years old and thus came up for review, naturally we supported its retention.

As seen from the above, FOWB is active in addressing planning and environmental matters across the Willunga Basin. We remain concerned to ensure that the voice of community will still be heard when the new planning system is in place.

FOWB does not oppose development. We oppose bad development.

BIODIVERSITY PROJECT

As with Willunga Basin Trail Inc, FOWB has now spawned its second new group in two years. It must be something in the wine we drink at our meetings.

The McLaren Vale Biodiversity Project Inc is a joint undertaking between FOWB, the NRM, McLaren Grape Wine & Tourism and the local grape & wine industry. It is newly incorporated and is now looking to secure modest funding to enable it to step up its programme of 'green cleaning' the Willunga Basin.

The aim is to put feet on the ground at monthly field days, clearing woody weeds like ash, briar rose and olive from selected creek lines across Basin, and replanting with endemic species. The work is deeply satisfying and the difference is already plain to see in many locations.

You will shortly be invited to join as a member. Meanwhile, you are invited to join in at the field days. Watch the group's Facebook page for news of coming events – usually on the first Sunday of the month – or email Geoff Hayter at geoff.hayter@propad.com.au

On the subject of olive trees, congratulations to Council on its 'Free the Tree' project, which is removing feral olives that are choking large eucalypts on roadsides around the Willunga Basin. Keep a look out for the signs as you make your rounds.



Biodiversity group members clearing woody weeds

ELECTOR REPRESENTATION CITY OF ONKAPARINGA

As many FOWB members will know, the number of Elector Representatives in the City of Onkaparinga has been reduced from 20 (5 wards of 4 members) to 12 (6 wards of 2 members), with effect from the next election in November. In other words, ward boundaries have been re-drawn, increasing the number of wards from 5 to 6, and representation in each ward has been reduced from 4 to 2 representatives.

FOWB made a strong representation to Council advocating for 15 members, and this position was initially accepted by the full Council. However, an apparent failure to follow due process in re-consulting with the community on this decision ultimately led to it being reversed.

Our appeal to the Electoral Commission failed to elicit even the courtesy of a response.

YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO BE INVOLVED

Be the first to know what is happening around the Basin! We are a group that cannot (or will not) be ignored by either local or State governments. The committee meets in open session at 7.30pm on the second Wednesday of every month at the Environment Centre in High St, Willunga. Membership is a trifling \$10 for individuals and \$15 for families. A bargain at twice the price!

Membership forms are available at fowb.net.au. You can support our work simply by being a member and thereby strengthening our 'voice' when we talk to the powers that be. Indeed, given recent events, there is no better time than now to join Friends of Willunga Basin as your principal advocate for the built and natural environment in which we live.