



# COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter  
January 2025

## *Previous Meeting*

**Sunday 15 December 2024**

### **Mid-Ridge**

A pleasantly warm morning as 11 of us (Paul Sheils, Jenny Shapcott, Kirsten Wehner, Linda Spinaze, Leanne Shepherd, Alison Empson, Rob Lundie, Helen Govey, Chris Oates, Jenny Horsfield, Natasha Newman) walked up from Darrell Pl to weed the mid-Ridge area to the south of the reservoir. The plantings by the scouts from a few years ago were checked out, weeds cleared and the protectors replaced unless they were damaged. The plants were generally found to be doing well with a survival success rate of about 80%. Very satisfying.



Linda Jenny Natasha Jenny Helen Leanne Alison  
Kirsten Paul Photo: Rob Lundie  
Briar roses, verbascum and fleabane were also  
cleared from most of the area. After a couple

## **Next Meeting**

**Sunday 19 January 2025**

**Lincoln Saddle**

**Time:** 8.30 am – 11.00 am.

**Meet:** Lincoln Place

**Bring:** hat, gloves, water to drink.

**Task:** cut 'n' dab exotic weeds under native trees

**Contact:** Rob Lundie 0418291735

of hours, the temperature was well on its way to the predicted 36°C and so we retired to a shady spot beside some large logs for a welcome Christmas morning tea feast. It was good that Linda used her gate key so that she could drive in the basic supplies. It was agreed that she should drive the tools in each month to as near as possible to the weeding point.

*Rob Lundie*

## **Visit by Dr Simon Copland**

In December a few of us from the CRPCG took the opportunity to showcase the Ridge to Dr Simon Copland, the new Executive Director of the Conservation Council ACT (CCA). This was a chance for him to see a part of the Western Edge Investigation Area and understand what would be impacted if the area was subjected to urban development, eg the effect on the Murrumbidgee River catchment area. Wandering along the Bicentenary Nature Trail we pointed out

many different eucalypts and native grasses as well as evidence of our native fauna enjoying the habitat eg the wombat which appears to have got the message and is now heading away from the trail. We discussed the mammoth task involved in protecting the Ridge from invasive weeds. The current prolific growth of St John's Wort clearly demonstrating this. The issue of easier access for disabled members of our community was also highlighted and Simon indicated the CCACT may be able to assist with this. A successful visit and great to have him show real interest in the Ridge!

*Helen Govey*

## **Tributes to Bess Sledge**

The death of Bess Sledge, the Group's founder, at the end of November 2024, was noted in the December issue. Rather than reporting how she founded the Group which was reported in the May 2021 issue, four senior members were asked for their thoughts about her. Here they are:

**Doug Tinney:** I first encountered Bess when I joined the CRPCG in 2001. She was the president and driving force of the Group and had been since its inception. Bess used to raise money through stalls down at Cooleman Court. Any funds we have now are down to those efforts. I remember getting a grant for tools when I was president but of course that money had to be acquitted and no unspent amounts remained with us. Bess bought whipper-snippers which I used to see her wielding on the Ridge during the week. In fact, I think she spent more time on the Ridge than at home! When I joined she was winding down her involvement because of her husband, David's, serious illness from which he subsequently died. I can't recall exactly when she moved to Gosford to be nearer her daughter. She came back for the Group's twenty-year celebration and she seemed in good form. I recall Tony Brownlie speaking at that function. He had retired, I believe but he had great admiration for Bess and her "Can do" approach to hands-on conservation.

**Alan Ford:** Bess was very protective of her Ridge. She had people on remand whipper snipping areas of weeds and managed to clear large areas so that now, the large remaining areas are quite obvious in the landscape. Individuals were invited to look after a patch

and this gave you a clear idea of what was needed. She set up a program of weeding along the spine of the Ridge and you would follow one spot after the other. She was an inspiration to all of us and will be missed.

**Malcolm Gill:** Bess was knowledgeable, friendly, dedicated, practical, hospitable, and generous. She had many ideas for raising money to buy Park Care equipment and getting work done on the Ridge. For example, she supervised whipper snipping of weeds by "naughty boys" - who were having to do community service for aberrant behaviour. She was also able to involve children in planting native grasses. She made apricot jam from a tree growing on the Ridge and sold it to raise money for work on the Ridge. Bess was a wonderful, dedicated Park Care Member.

**Tony Brownlie:** While I mourn the loss of a colleague, I pay tribute to a life that was well lived. One of the original "Park Carers" Bess committed herself to the conservation ethic. With her rich experience of managing programs and people she grew and evolved the Cooleman Ridge Park Care Group into a most effective and efficient body. She faced a challenge to her life, by way of illness, with great courage. Many others in her circumstances would have given up. Her determination to carry on despite trying personal circumstances demonstrated her commitment to conservation. Understandably Bess is admired for her outstanding contribution to supporting and participating in the Park Care ethic. For those fortunate enough to know her, she will be missed by many but never forgotten.

*Rob Lundie*

## **Exhibition: Creek**

Over recent months, Weston Creek artist Kirsten Wehner has joined the Group to draw some of our activities. Kirsten is the M16 Artspace/Concept Six Environmental Artist-in-Residency, and her project explores the life of the Weston Creek waterway, including the people who care for places along it. Kirsten's exhibition, *Creek*, opens on Thurs, 23 January at 6-8pm, at M16 Artspace, 21 Blaxland Cr, Griffith. All are warmly invited. *Creek* continues until Sunday 16 February.

<https://www.m16artspace.com.au/2025-exhibitions/creek>