

## **Friends of Mt Majura (FoMM) – 2006 at a glance.**

In 2006 we continued to tackle weeds, we collected seeds, raised and planted trees, broadcasted forbs and grasses, monitored frogs and water bugs at the Majura dams, and worked to control erosion in the reserve. We learned more about the fascinating range of Mount Majura's wildlife on expert guided walks, which turned out to be as popular as ever attracting up to thirty-five people on each occasion. We completed a list of the plant species of Mt Majura, which can be found on our Website at [www.majura.org](http://www.majura.org). I particularly thank Susan Campbell for managing our Website, which has become a major tool for dissipating information on Mt Majura and FoMM activities. We celebrated our work on World Environment Day, which hopefully will become a jour fix for years to come, with a well attended "Walk, Talk and Tea" on Mt Majura - a wonderful opportunity to share our achievements and experience with the wider community,

2006 was also a year of frustrations and I do have concerns about the future of Mt Majura and FoMM. Members of our group felt that the looming government decision to construct a dragway close to Mt Majura poses a major threat to the reserve and they therefore became involved in a residents' group that opposes a dragway close to suburbs and nature reserves (see [www.dragwayaway.com](http://www.dragwayaway.com)). A lot of our energy thus was spent averting this threat. The working bee attendance stagnated (averaging about five people) despite increasing group membership and well-attended walks. New faces appear rarely at working parties and I find it very hard to attract - and keep - committed members. I wonder whether this is partly a consequence of the dragway proposal. People might feel little motivated to help enhancing the values of the reserve when these values are being threatened by the government's decision to build a dragway close to the reserve.

At the same time, the government is cutting resources to manage Canberra Nature Park and I worry not only about how this will affect the integrity of the Mt Majura nature reserve, but also about how it will affect the willingness of volunteers to engage in park care activities. I find it increasingly difficult to convince people to give their time for weeding and other conservation activities when at the same time the government culls ranger positions, abolishes weed control, and - most disturbingly - conducts activities that result in weed invasion and degradation of nature reserves.

Here are two examples: (1) FoMM members spent hundreds of hours manually removing many truckloads of horehound and thistles from a former sheep camp area. We reseeded the sites with native grasses and forbs, which we collected over many hours in the vicinity of the camp. In 2004, major grading work in the adjacent pine plantation resulted in a huge amount of thistle seeds being blown into the freshly weeded sites of the nature reserve. We will have a major thistle problem for years to come. (2) Two years ago, ACTEW conducted work below the powerlines at Mt Majura which transverse Yellow box Red gum grassy woodland. The work was poorly conducted and caused appalling degradation. Weeds have sprung up at sites where ground cover was removed by large-scale chemical treatment. We have spent dozens of hours to remove thistles, Paterson's curse, mustard and St John's Wort. Fire trails and power lines need to be maintained. However, the lack of proper training or briefing of contractors and the lack of monitoring and weed control following potentially destructive work condemns community to be hard-working fools.

At workshops, volunteers are being informed on best practises in Natural Resource Management, while government agencies are clearly unable to enforce these same best practices. How am I supposed to motivate people to become volunteers, if they are confronted by bulldozers and un-informed out-sourced contractors? Rather than pulling weeds would it not be more efficient to convince the government that a fraction of the 8 million dollars allocated for building a dragway would go a long way towards maintaining the public goods of our nature reserves?

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