



## **Green Wedges**

The future of Melbourne's green wedges has become a hot topic since the Brumby government pushed through a major expansion of the urban growth boundary in 2010, and now the Baillieu government is approving the development of land in some green wedges.

The Department of Planning and Community Development lists 12 designated green wedges (refer to <http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/planning/plansandpolicies/green-wedges>). These are mostly on the outer, semi-rural periphery of the Melbourne Statistical District, although three – Manningham, South East (between Frankston and Dandenong) and Werribee South – penetrate well into the built-up area of Melbourne.

A number of community organizations have taken up the fight to preserve the green wedges, including Environment Victoria, The National Trust and The Green Wedges Coalition (<http://www.gwc.org.au/>).

The TCPA committee recently came to the view that it will not be economically feasible to protect all green wedge land from development in perpetuity, as land owners expect to realize their assets eventually, and it is beyond the means of the state government to purchase land in order to preserve it as open space.

However, there are opportunities for community action to preserve and improve small pockets of land for public enjoyment, as exemplified by the following case, described by John Leavesly.

### **Post Office Hill**

Interest in the green wedges movement continues to grow, whilst green wedges are under threat of dismemberment by stealth. The green wedge strategy is to

retain land sites that are maintained as parkland with local native flora and fauna, protected from commercial development, but open to public use and enjoyment. Such land is anathema to developers and even councils that are under increasing pressure to turn all such sites into opportunities for revenue collection.

Sites are identified for a number of reasons, often being a collection of natural endowments and historical and/or heritage values. In Central Victoria one such site is being actively managed by a local group of concerned residents.

Chewton lies on the old Mount Alexander Road between Elphinstone and Castlemaine. Once the road to the first goldfields, it has now been by-passed by the Calder Freeway between Bendigo and Melbourne. Just to the south of Chewton is Post Office Hill, the location of a now long-gone-facility serving many thousands of gold miners almost one hundred and fifty years ago.

The activities of Post Office Hill Action Group can be classified in three ways. Firstly we accept responsibility for the rehabilitation of the twenty-two hectare site of crown land, developing overall plans and strategies to bring them to fruition. Secondly, we undertake some of the tasks ourselves, often inviting other local interested groups to participate with us. Thirdly, we seek financial support from statutory bodies in the form of grants and/or specific work undertaken by professional operators. With monetary grants we are able to employ local contractors to provide services that include the formation of trails, cleaning dumped rubbish, weed control and general beautification of the area.

After two years of operations, Post Office Hill is becoming better known both in the local community and official organizations

such as Department of Sustainability (DSE), and North Central Catchment Management Authority (NCCMA)., from whom we acquire funding for projects as well as advice about approaches to take in weed control. Small groups have been escorted through the site and their positive comments made generally about Post Office Hill and the work done so far, give reinforcement to our efforts relating to the physical, environmental and intrinsic values of this area.

Tasks undertaken during the last two years include:

- weed control through spraying of noxious weeds;
- removal of hard rubbish piled up by members of Conservation Volunteers Australia;
- “pushing over” dead trees and some of the humps to assist with DSE and their slashing program;
- regeneration of small plants, and selective spraying to ensure their survival.

Application for funding has been made, and finance received, under initiatives from all levels of government. These include "Bush Guardians Program 2009/2010/2011"; a maintenance grant from NCCMA; and the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) Bendigo "Good Neighbor Program". A "Community Action Grant" has been sought from the Federal Government. Each grant covers different objectives.

Post Office Hill Action Group has received

support from local organizations such as the Chewton CFA, Chewton Primary School, Conservation Volunteers Australia, Mount Alexander Shire, DSE, North Central Catchment Management Authority, and local contractors.

Future plans include:

- (i) Preparation of an information brochure.
- (ii) Installation of nesting boxes for a range of birds and animals
- (iii) Grooming of heavy gorse infestations,
- (iv) Additional spraying for weed control and
- (v) a Post Office Hill Photo Display.

*John Leavesly*

### **James Barrett Memorial Medal**

The TCPA committee has decided to award the James Barrett Memorial Medal to Susan Course, in recognition of her work in bringing about the creation of Darebin Parklands (see *The Age*, 21/9/2011, p3). However, owing to Susan's present commitments, the award will be made in 2012.

### **Annual General Meeting**

The Annual General Meeting of the TCPA will be held at 6.00 for 6.30 pm on November 10<sup>th</sup> at Ross House Mezzanine Floor - Sue Healy Room, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne. The **guest speaker** will be the former Deputy Prime Minister, **Brian Howe AO**.