



# FRIENDS OF MORWELL NATIONAL PARK INC.

P.O. BOX 19  
CHURCHILL 3842  
APRIL 1989

SECRETARY ph 22 2597  
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Dear friends,

**WANTED:** Person/s of any race, class, sex, origin required to undertake position of great responsibility.

Qualifications: Literacy, slightly crazy sense of humour, ability to coerce members of the public into donating money to worthy causes (notably ours).  
Req. to possess large brief case, carry case etc. to carry all the response and donations from the above coercion.

Benefits: The friendship & gratitude of Yvonne for ever & the sigh of relief from all those not willing to give it a go.

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The above is a plea for support from the members to fill the vacant position. Yvonne has been carrying the bulk of the work since the resignation of our secretary.

She has done a great job but its up to someone to shoulder some of the burden. This position would suit a couple just as well as one person. You know the old saying 'Many hands make light work'.

C'mon folks start making life a bit easier for everyone and offer to help.

Last month, the friends undertook to clear some of the 'hard' rubbish from the Billy's Creek area. It was a pleasant afternoon although quite cool & marred by the lack of attendance by a number of members.

This made the meeting very difficult to conduct as there were not the numbers for a quorum. However a meeting was held and the business arising will be accepted at this months meeting.

The main topic of discussion for most of the afternoon was the public meeting held in Churchill about the access track along Billy's Creek. A short summary by one of the friends is attached.

The report on the Friends conference by Ken Harris was also handed out at the last meeting & I feel it as an excellent summary of events and well written. Well done Ken.

Next months meeting & jaunt will take place on 21st May at Fosters Gully at 1.30pm. NOTE THE CHANGE IN VENUE. It will involve a jaunt through the new area of the Park on "Peel's Land". So get your walking shoes & join us. There will be a short meeting before hand.

The news is through that a new Ranger has been appointed to the Park. His name is Robert Howell but at this stage very little else is known about him. So stay tuned, he should take up his position sometime in May hopefully.

Thats about all for now so cheers until the meeting.

Shelley.

Quite a few Friends attended the public meeting, held by CFL on April 12, to discuss the options for vehicular access to the Billy's Creek area. Depending on the frame of mind of those as they entered, the meeting either was an extreme eye-opener or the confirmation of their worst fears.

The meeting was dominated by residents of the Billy's Creek area and rapidly degenerated into a slanging match. Whilst arguments favouring limiting access to the area to allow for maximum conservation were admirable, it quickly became apparent that the vocal contributors to the meeting were using this option simply as a means to keep outsiders away from the area that they live in. The other major concern addressed at the meeting was the dangers associated with the state of the two roads under consideration.

Whilst this brief summary appears very disheartening, some positive points can be gleaned from it. An invitation by one resident to form a locals' action group was greeted with a deafening silence. It would appear that those who made their feelings felt at the meeting weren't committed enough to put any time into their protests. If local residents stress the needs of conservation of the area in any future meetings, we should approach them with genuine requests for support, either financially or through becoming members. This should gauge their true commitment to the region.

By the way, thanks to all those who supplied supper for the meeting.

4 th FRIENDS OF NATIONAL PARKS CONFERENCE  
ROSES GAP, 11-13 MARCH, 1989

The conference was opened on the Saturday afternoon by Ms. Kay Setches, Minister for Conservation Forests and Lands. She spoke of the importance of public involvement in Park Management and especially appreciated the voluntary contributions of Friends Groups. She spoke of the Flora and Fauna guarantee act and said that the government was prepared to put their money behind it. She also stated that the government was committed to both the Alpine National Park and a Mallee National Park and to the wilderness legislation. She finished by launching a new "Touring Guide to Grampians National Park (\$4.00)", which was subsequently criticized for not mentioning the "Friends of the Grampians".

Peter Langley (Director of Regional Management, C.F.& L.) replied. He emphasised that C.F.& L. should always respond positively to Friends Groups and recognize their "right" as well as interest in being involved with Park management.

He referred to the major topic of the previous conference, a conflict with unions regarding volunteer work in the parks and told us that negotiations with the unions had been amicable and had succeeded in drawing up a Memorandum of Understanding as guide-lines for such volunteer work in the future (copy attached). The previous meeting had asked for a C.F.& L. , Liason Officer with the Friends Groups. One was appointed, but has just been replaced with Graham Sutling, Advisory Officer in the Regional Management Office.

The speakers were then exposed to questions from the meeting.

Kay Setches was asked about the enormous on going problem of litter, particularly drink containers. She appeared to be in agreement as to the need for action. She said that the government had previously given manufacturers notice to clean up their act themselves and felt that no great improvement had occurred and that it was time for the government to revue legislation. Someone pointed out the success of a 10 cent a can deposit in South Australia. Can litter stops dead when you cross the border from Vic. into S.A.

There was extensive dissussion of protective burning in parks. General concern was expressed at over frequent burns, tending to change the character of vegetation and often not reducing the fire risk. Many felt that burning was over done to appease local landowners. The Grampians proved an area of particular concern in this regard.

A panel chaired by Don Saunders, the Director of National Parks Division then answered questions. Don announced that in regard to the Flora and Fauna guarantee, each region will have a trained person with the specific responsibility for overseeing it. This person, in each region, would be the person to contact if any rare plant at risk is discovered.

Problems of re-introducing native grasses are still unsolved, but research continues mainly in the Organ Pipes area. Priority is being given by C.F.& L. over the next 2 years to the purchase of remnants of native grasslands around the fringes of the Melbourne

area and to look at the important areas in Western Victoria as a whole.

Don also stated that the government is committed to management plans for all National Parks within their current term of office. Eric Quinlan informed the meeting that some 1500 km of no longer used railway line existed in Victoria and the land was in the process of being disposed of. Some 700 km are to be handed over to C.F. & L. for management as linear reserves. The future of the rest is in the community's hands. If local groups express an interest and a willingness to contribute to their care and management, further sections can be retained as crown land and hopefully linear parkland. Other-wise they will be offered to local municipalities who may then sell them to private land-owners. I have copies of the full details of which lines are involved and I propose to pass these on to the Latrobe Valley Field Naturalists for possible action.

On the Saturday evening, we drove into Hall's Gap to the new Grampians National Park Visitors Centre, where we were entertained by an excellent talk and slide show by Graham Pizzey on the birds of the area with fascinating details of their feeding preferences and techniques. Anyone visiting the Grampians should call at the Visitors Centre (about 1 km south of Halls Gap), if only to see the magnificent mural in the lecture theatre, portraying many of the plants and animals of the area.

The Sunday morning was devoted to a workshop session. Eight topics were offered and we were able to attend 2 each. I elected to go to a session on "Environmental Education" chaired by John Reid, who has been working on a Community Education Program in the Dandenong Ranges.

I found this session to be excellent and got several useful ideas from it. The general theme was that the future protection of all parks and of flora and fauna generally is strongly linked to developing a love of the natural environment and that education has a vital role to play.

A strong point was made that it is important to involve children in doing something themselves in the study or management of their local environment, it is of little value to simply talk about it. It was also pointed out that when children have a good experience at one place, they bring their parents there to share the experience with them.

Any project involving children, should involve them in all aspects including the planning. Never plan to the last detail and then ask children to do exactly as you tell them.

Selby Primary School have produced their own booklets (selling for \$1.50 each) on the plants of their area. They are written and produced by the children, using direct photo-copies of plants for illustration. I shall be attempting to get copies of these and am very interested in trying to do something similar, perhaps in Morwell National Park.

Involving children in revegetation is excellent, if the children share the whole process, through seed collection, germination, growing and planting.

A "Junior Friends" group as a separate affiliated organization, sounds a good plan that we might work towards.

Do we send a copy of our Newsletter to the local press?

The second workshop I attended was "Conducting Nature Walks" led by Sue Mclnnes. This was disappointing, as she merely led a very enjoyable walk, but didn't offer or discuss any ideas for the conduct of nature walks in general.

Sunday afternoon was given over to outings. Various outings were available led by people with local knowledge, but I opted to explore some of the area with my family.

On Sunday evening, a speaker from South Australian National Parks Association told us of their Friends of the Parks Organisation. They have been operating since 1980, although most groups have formed since 1984. Some important differences emerged between S.A. and Vic.. In S.A., Friends Groups are formed by National Parks holding open meetings in the area and actively encouraging the setting up of a group. An important effect of this is that all groups are predominantly locally based (like Friends of Morwell N.P. ), unlike most Victorian groups which tend to be Melbourne based.

Another difference of importance to Victoria is that S.A. Nat. Parks have a blanket insurance cover, covering all groups, a vast improvement on the uncertain status current in Victoria.

The evening finished with each of the new (or reconstituted groups) since the last conference giving us a brief run down on their activities. The groups were :-

- Buckleys Falls - group will start in April.
- Little Desert Nat. Park - meet annually in the park.
- Marine Reserves - reconstituted last year.
- Merri Creek - they have achieved remarkable results against initial opposition, which has been won round so that seven local councils along the creek actively support them. An interesting group for a visit one day!
- Mt Buffalo - rejuvenated and reformed.
- Nunnawading Parks
- Queen's Park, Lorne
- Williamstown Rifle Range - another group who have achieved huge success, taking on the big developers and winning at least so far.

Monday morning concluded the conference with perhaps the most important session, titled "Looking Forward" at which ideas developed during the conference were crystallised into action.

The first topic was Incorporation and insurance. It emerged that only 2 groups Morwell & Sherbrook have incorporated, so far. Our constitution was offered by V.N.P.A. as a model for other groups who may decide to follow our lead.

Reasons for incorporating were given as vsetting liability during group activities in the group rather than in individuals and the fact that many possible sources of grants are only open to incorporated bodies. Lengthy discussion of insurance followed during which the following points emerged :-

Some accident cover exists through the department.

Legal liability MAY rest with C.F.& L. because all work is with their permission and control.

Visiting helpers should be recorded to make sure they are included in any insurance cover. Some groups keep a book in which names of all those present at an outing are entered and signed. C.F. & L. have some liability cover for volunteer groups. V.N.P.L. will document the current insurance situation and send it to all groups.

Work-care has an age limit of 16 - 65 years only!

We learned of an interesting innovation in the "Scout and Guide Movement", namely "Adopt a Track", where individual troupes will adopt and help to maintain a track in their local park.

A series of important motions were then moved from the floor of the meeting :-

Firstly that environmental weeds constitute the greatest conservation threat in Victoria and that the issue be given the highest priority by C.F. & L. (Currently no work on this problem is carried out by C.F. & L.). A lot of time was wasted quibbling over words, but the motion was eventually passed unanimously.

In answer to a question on Saturday afternoon, Don Saunders had stated that a knowledge of flora and fauna was no longer an important criterion for selecting rangers and that public relations ability had become the main criterion. This resulted in the second motion, namely that "this conference views with concern the fact that the prime qualification for rangers is public relations ability and not a knowledge of flora and fauna". The motion went on to ask that such knowledge become an important part of the selection and training of rangers. The motion was passed by all but 3 delegates.

The third motion, to be sent to 2 government ministers, was in relation to the non-returnable food containers and requested a compulsory deposit on all metal, glass and plastic drink containers. Carried unanimously.

The next conference will be held in 2 years, once more on the Labour Day weekend. The recommended venue was French island, but the new committee will make the final decision. The new Friends Committee consists of :-

Geoff Durham	V.N.P.A.
Geoff Gaynor	You Yangs
Wayne Woods	Organ Pipes
Ian Taylor	Coolart
Clive Gordes	French Island
Fay Gordes	French Island

Dave Wilson made a closing speech, summarising well the issues raised during the conference.

Ken Harris.

