

# THE BUSHLAND BULLETIN<sup>©</sup>



No. 51, WINTER 2006.

A publication of the Bankstown Bushland Society Incorporated  
Reg. No. Y15576-12

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## THE PASSING OF IRENE JONES

*By Colin Gibson*

It is with a heavy heart that I write of the passing of our dear friend and environmental stalwart, Irene Jones. Irene breathed her last in Royal Prince Alfred hospital on the 11th of June, following a diagnosis of cancer which she received in April.

Irene was a quiet and thoughtful person, but a formidable character also. Her health was never robust, yet she took on an enormous workload on behalf of Bankstown's community environment movement. She was thoroughgoing, and whenever she decided to take on an issue or follow through with an enquiry we always knew she would pursue that course with diligence and insight.

She was the embodiment of leadership by example, and what



a mighty example she was to us all. Her dedication and perseverance lifted our aims. She was instrumental in setting up our bush regeneration workforce and steering it towards achieving its goals.

When we challenge the powers that be, it can easily lead to degrees of frustration and disillusion. Irene was always positive and encouraging of those working with her, no matter how difficult the situation seemed. I think she had learnt composure and discipline in her long career working in juvenile education and the special needs assessment for deaf children. This challenging work, along with her life-long struggle with painful arthritis had shaped her into a focused and forbearing person, added to which her inherent good nature that enabled her to achieve so much in the latter years of her life.

**(A tribute to Irene appears on page 3)**

One of Irene's great concerns was the loss of open space at a time when populations are rapidly increasing and land values rising. The Carysfield Park-The Crest of Bankstown open space corridor is one of the largest in densely urbanised Bankstown. Irene believed strongly that it should not be alienated from public use.

Council recently resolved to re-categorise part of Manuka Reserve, which adjoins Carysfield, to make it available for a new State Emergency Services regional headquarters. The following is the submission by the Bushland Society to Council, in opposition to the re-categorisation. It was written by Irene.

### **Proposed Re-categorisation of Manuka Reserve, Bass Hill.**

Bankstown Bushland Society objects to the proposed re-categorisation of Manuka Reserve from Bushland, General Community Use and Park to Bushland, Park and General Community Use (SES Headquarters) for the following reasons:

**1. Loss of community open space.** With the State Government's requirements to increase density in the middle ring suburbs, including Bankstown, public open space will be at a premium, and all open space now available to the community should be retained.

Adjacent to this site is planned high rise development with very little private open space provided, so all of Manuka Reserve will be required to provide recreational options for these future residents.

### **2. Compliance with core objectives for management of community land categorised as general use.**

a) Although an SES headquarters would be of benefit to the wider community, it cannot be considered to be a function of general community use, since the community would have no access to the site once it is constructed. The only access permitted would be for members of the SES.

b) Reservation of community land for car parking cannot be considered an appropriate use within the core objectives for management of community land. We understand that a good part of the land propose to be alienated from the public will be set aside for parking SES rescue vehicles and for private vehicles belonging to SES members.

**3. Impacts on adjoining bushland.** A large area of impervious surfaces will create an increase in run-off that could impact on adjacent bushland. Even if run-off is detained on-site, the water table could be impacted, reducing the amount of rain reaching the water table to replenish it and sustain adjacent bushland areas.

### **4. Impacts on nearby residents.**

a) Traffic congestion. Johnstone Road does not have the capacity to carry the extra traffic likely to be generated by the SES headquarters.

b) Noise disturbance. We understand that SES training requirements are now much more demanding since terrorism threats became a reality, so the facility will be used very frequently for such activities in the evenings and at weekends, creating considerable noise and traffic impacts on residents.

**5. Impact on character of the district.** The Crest-Carysfield district comprises wonderful areas of open space, including rare and endangered bushland, as well as sporting venues, that is undervalued by Council. Alienation of a portion of this open space from public use would be a retrograde step that could set a precedent and lead to further loss of open space through undesirable developments such as this.

Bankstown Bushland Society objects to the selection of Manuka Reserve for an SES headquarters.

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## IRENE CATRIN JONES (1936-2006): A Tribute

*By Colin Gibson*

When Irene Jones quietly attached herself to our committee as Assistant Treasurer at the AGM in 1996, none of us had any idea what a force she would soon become, nor of the important role she would play as an environmental advocate for Bankstown and south west Sydney. She was a latecomer to environmental activism; having retired about 199, her first involvement with local environment issues was with the Davies Road Action Group which formed in 1993. Resulting from her involvement with this group she met Bushland Society member and fellow Salt Pan Creek resident the late Bunty Oldmeadow, who encouraged her to join. Bunty told her that our meetings were a bit of a mess, but that our speakers nights and outings were worthwhile. So Irene came along.

Soon after Irene joined we became embroiled in the expansion of the Chullora Freight Terminal which became the focus of a Commission of Inquiry. Several new tracks were to cut through an area we called Freshwater Creek Bushland (actually the above tidal-influence, upper section of Cooks River). We wanted the new tracks situated on the northern side of the creek adjoining the Regents Park goods line, but the Commissioner found that this could not justify the extra cost and the project went ahead as planned, destroying the bushland in the process. This was a very difficult issue for us and we were all impressed with how Irene remained steady and dependable throughout.

Despite her late entry into environmental activism, Irene already possessed formidable administrative skills, and was to boot a fast learner and an excellent communicator. She knew that putting as strong a case as possible, and establishing contacts with sympathetic people was the name of the game. She connected us all, facilitating the exchange of information and ideas through meetings, outings, letters, press-releases, articles, submissions and goodness knows how many thousands of phone conversations and emails. We were never far from the next thing we needed to know, with Irene around.

Irene and I collaborated on winning

grants for bush regeneration projects, and I'm sure that her purposeful communications with agencies such as the Environmental Trusts, Southern Sydney Catchment Authority and National Landcare led to the success we've had. Irene herself had learnt a lot from her long-running and fruitless attempt to win funding for wetland restoration at Cutting Reserve along Salt Pan Creek. Her efforts there deserved better reward.

In the late 1990's she provided valuable assistance to Maree Ledson and David West helping win important grants for Norfolk Reserve and Freshwater Creek at upper Cooks River. She and I would eventually develop a formula that resulted in six successful applications in the space of three years, for regeneration of some of the rarest bushland habitats in Bankstown, and in Sydney for that matter. Irene had the capacity and motivation to administer these grants as a contribution in-kind on behalf of the Society, thus improving the ecological value of the results achieved. This is not only rare, but I'm sure it is unique among community groups in New South Wales, as I have been told.

When most people of her age retire they are looking forward to the club and the lounge. Irene however was a true community co-operativist, and in the last few years of her life as her knowledge of environmentalism increased I believe she was only just hitting her stride. She seemed to be everywhere attending meetings and committees: Bankstown Bushland Society, South West Enviro Centre, Revesby Community Action Group, Padstow Progress Association, Botany Bay and Catchment Alliance, Georges River Environmental Alliance, No Port Enfield Community Action Group, Bankstown Airport Consultative Committee, Chullora Waste Station Committee, - as well as addressing council at business meetings over issues such as urban development, tree preservation and the re-categorization of community land.

One of her most passionate aims was to see an environment centre established in south-western Sydney, and to this end

she was a founding participant and staunch supporter of South West Enviro Centre, which was conceived at a meeting convened by BBS in May 1998. She left no stone unturned in her search for funding options for such a centre, a hard trail that yielded little, but not at any stage was her faith in the concept diminished, as she full realised the benefit that such a facility would provide in the long run to the community. South West Enviro Centre continues this commitment.

Another skill she acquired late in life was hands on bush regeneration. As she rarely missed a meeting, she rarely missed an outing or an activity. She spent countless hours in the field with our volunteers and grant teams. She was a firm supporter of council's bushcare commitment, particularly at Padstow Park which she adopted as one of her special places. Like all of us with the bush regen bug she loved getting involved and making a difference, and how happy we are to have so many memories of her enjoying our precious bushland as she contributed purposefully to its protection and improvement.

We have lost our good friend and the sadness is deep, but she has given us plenty of inspiration to go forward with, and our pride is great in that we were privileged to know and work with such a special person. We salute her memory and her legacy of a better environment for our community.

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# Rare trees face the axe

DAVID CATT

A DECISION to allow development on a site in Rowestry – and cut down endangered trees to clear the way for it – has infuriated residents.

On Thursday night, Bankstown City Council approved an application by Boral to build 41 industrial units and a convenience store on its land at 41 Meriv St.

Council papers show the land is home to remnant Cumberland plain woodland, considered by the Department of Environment and Conservation to be an endangered ecological community.

The land is also home to downy wattle, which the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act lists as a vulnerable tree species.

The site backs on to Flood Reserve, where more remnants of Cumberland plain woodland and downy wattle exist.

Both council and department staff have given the green light for the trees to be removed.

But the decision angered and disgusted Irene Jones, of the Bankstown Bushland Society.

"Despite amendments to the original plans, most if not all the vegetation will be removed," Ms Jones said at the council meeting.

She was angered that the department had advised council that the trees' removal would have little impact on the rare trees' overall population.

She was also angry that the council found this advice acceptable.

"If Bankstown Council took this kind of advice over the years, there would be no bushland left in Bankstown," she said.

"The natural character of Bankstown is eroding away."

Ms Jones said it was particularly sad because she

estimated some of the trees were more than 100 years old.

Council's group manager for ecologically sustainable development Gerry Deasley defended the decision at the meeting.

He said the plan would enforce a 5m buffer zone of trees between the reserve and units to preserve some of them.

This was a requirement stipulated by the department.

"Council recognises that any loss of vegetation is regrettable but this land is zoned as industrial

‘The natural character of Bankstown is eroding away’

and, as such, is available for development," he said.

"This site has examples of threatened species but much of it is populated by regrowth vegetation and old trees reaching the end of their life cycle."

Local general manager for development Andrew Warburton told the Express that the development would be a significant investment in employment in Bankstown.

"It is a well-designed development that has been designed and sited to protect the amenity of adjacent residents and Flood Reserve," he said.

He said the trees' position on the site meant it was not possible to save them.

The loss would be more than compensated by landscaping within the development and the buffer zone required by the department, he said.



Flood Reserve. Express 05/07/2005

Bankstown Bushland Society's Irene Jones (left) and Patricia Bell with Cumberland plain woodland at Flood Reserve, Rowestry.

## Weeding out the wetlands

REGENERATION of valuable wetland will go ahead after a \$9600 grant was allocated to Bankstown Bushland Society.

Bankstown City Council has also moved to back the project by matching the funding.

The society will work to remove invasive woody weeds from the Milperra Wetland Complex using the Federal Government grant.

Bushland society secretary Colin Gibson said work on the project has already started and will

continue for one year.

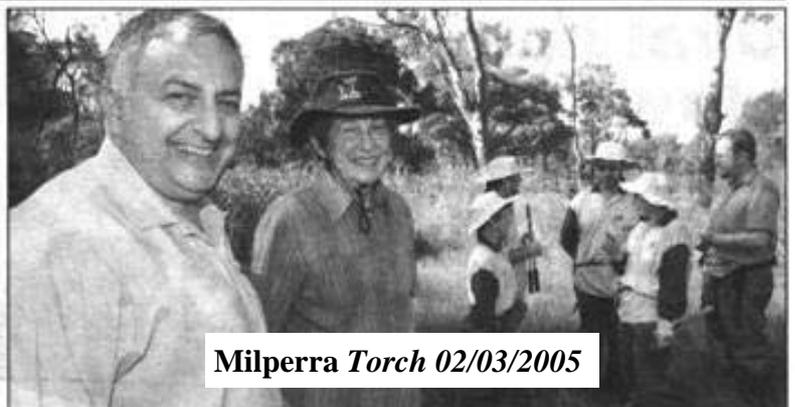
"We have a team of four qualified regenerators working alongside bushland society volunteers. The council will also have their own workers involved," Mr Gibson said.

The freshwater wetland

around Milperra Road and Henry Lawson Drive is all that remains of the original mid-Georges River floodplain.

The size of the wetland has been greatly reduced after years of reclamation, filling and rubbish dumping.

Federal MP Daryl Metham and Irene Jones from the Bushland Society with Bankstown Council's Cameron Lawnds and other society members on the Milperra site. Photo by KRISTY HUNTER.



Milperra Torch 02/03/2005

# Battle to save living museum

A BAND of committed gardeners is waging a constant battle to save Norfolk Bushland in Glenmore.

The patch of native bushland is one of the last remnants of scrub which once flourished in the northern part of Bankstown City.

Bankstown Bushland Society is fighting an uphill battle to protect what one of its members calls a living museum.

The 2ha patch of bush is what ecologists call Cook's River Clay Plain Scrub Forest, an ecological community which is listed as endangered by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Less than one per cent remains of the Cook's River Clay Plain Scrub Forest which existed before European settlement.

It contains examples of an endangered species of warble and is habitat for several species of insects and birds.

While there are no planned developments directly threatening the reserve, the society says weeds, dumpsites, bush trawls and the impact of



Norfolk Express 22/03/2001

South West Environmental Centre secretary Irene Jones and South regenerators at work

are constant threats to the reserve's long-term viability.

Society members regularly spend hours pulling out weeds like wandering jive, bridal creeper and Japanese fern to protect native species from being

The group also works on other bush sites around the city, mowing and re-planting native plants grown from local seed.

If you would like to help with bush regeneration, phone the society assistant secretary Pat Bell on 0295 2112.

# Council looking to recategorise parkland Park emergency

RESIDENT neighbours of Manuka Reserve, Bass Hill, are concerned that Bankstown Council is considering building a new headquarters for Bankstown's State Emergency Service in the park.

They have formed the Manuka Reserve Residents' Action Group to fight the proposal, but Bankstown Mayor Helen Westwood says they've moved too fast.

She says the council has made no decision yet. It has resolved to re-categorise the land and a public hearing to discuss re-categorisation will be held at 6.30pm on Wednesday, February 11.

But residents remain unconvinced. The action group has collected 92 signatures on a petition opposing that the site be used for an SES building plus 68 signed form letters.

Bruce Weldon and Allan Townsend, for the action group, complained of the council's "disgraceful lack of community consultation or involvement, due process and application of the law". They expressed concerns about a proposed chain link fence and barbed wire around the proposed SES depot. A council spokesperson knew nothing about such a proposal.

"We the residents of Johnston Road are appalled and outraged at Bankstown Council's proposal to snatch away and develop another part of our diminishing local parks and reserves," the action group said.

Cr Westwood said: "All we're doing at this stage is looking at re-categorising the area from parkland to parkland and general community use. We have to do that under the Local Government Act. We must go through a public consultation to change the use. After that it will have to go the normal development application process."

Irene Jones of the Bankstown Bushland Society said she was concerned about endangered bushland located immediately to the east of the proposed site.



Looking over the site at Manuka Reserve, Bass Hill, which is being considered as the location for a new Bankstown SES headquarters, are Irene Jones (left) of the Bankstown Bushland Society, who is concerned about endangered bushland in the area, and David Mathie whose home is in Johnston Road opposite the site. Photo by PETER BIRCHALL

# Criterion track causes concern

Endangered bushland species at Lewis Reserve are due to be bulldozed to make way for a proposed multi-lane cycling track near the Olympic Velodrome, according to residents.

The Bankstown Bushland Society says the Sydney Council is planning to bulldoze the site to make way for a Criterion Track and footpath which would cross through endangered bushland at Lewis Reserve near the velodrome.

"The usual excuse of Cook's River Clay Plain Scrub Forest, which provides valuable habitat for birds, will be abandoned by such a development. Although this vegetation is protected by law, our council will not give it the same status as it would give it at Chiswick and at Aspley Heath."

"We appeal to the members of Bankstown to please contact your local councillor and express your opposition to the proposed multi-lane cycling track, to ensure that it can be stopped," Mr Bell said.

Bankstown Council, councilor Peter Bell, said the development application for construction of the Olympic velodrome track will be lodged with the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning.

In view of OCS, Sydney Council's Land Council are not

involved with the development application. "The Council will be required to carry out a consultation process with the community before any final decision is made," he said.

"As part of the Development Application, OCS will be required to conduct an impact study on the Cook's River Clay Plain Scrub Forest and neighbouring areas. OCS has also proposed OCS consult with National Parks and Wildlife Service in planning the track."

"Work report to the area within the OCS, council will review the affected Department of Environment and Planning. Council is working with the National Parks and Wildlife Service to ensure proper consultation of the area for the proposed multi-lane cycling track."

"Members, we should not be misled. Mr Bell says Bankstown Council has promised the development application for the proposed multi-lane cycling track to be lodged with the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning."

The Criterion Track is not



Torch 04/08/1999

## THE MERRY WEEDERS OF BANKSTOWN

A tribute to Irene Jones and the women volunteers of the Bushland Society



Irene Jones and Maree Ledson at Lansdowne



Maree Ledson at Lansdowne



Jean Brian at Smith Park



Irene



Pat Bell at Lansdowne



Nerida Hradzil at Lansdowne



Jean Klovdahl at Milperra Wetland



**WHY NOT JOIN THE SOCIETY ?**



The Bankstown Bushland Society is an incorporated association under the Associations Incorporation Act (NSW) 1984.

We are Bankstown's only incorporated association dedicated to protecting our City's environment.

The Society's objects are:

- To protect the environment of Bankstown
- To assist other persons in the protection of the environment in Bankstown
- To foster better community awareness of environmental issues
- To lobby through Government, commercial and other persons for the maintenance of a high quality of life through the progressive improvement of the environment

If you are concerned about the local environment, then consider joining our Society. As a member, you receive one year's subscription to this newsletter, and can participate as a voting member in the direction and decisions of the Society.



Yes, I wish to join the  
***Bankstown Bushland Society Inc:***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Suburb: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership fees**  
 Family - \$20  
 Ordinary - \$15  
 Concession - \$10  
 "student/unwaged/pensioner"

Attached please find my payment of:  
 (\$ .00) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (amount in words)

Send this coupon with payment to:  
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 Bankstown Bushland Society Inc.  
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