President’s Report

**AshfieldCAN Meeting Monday 13 February 2023**

The 2023 year offers some unique challenges to AshfieldCAN and its membership.

Importantly we have in place a strong committee and adequate funding.

Increasing membership should be an important focus of the coming year as influence increases with a strong membership base. October this year will begin the next two year cycle of local government elections and gaining representation on Council can only improve the reach and effectiveness of AshfieldCAN. Some would argue we are and should remain an apolitical organizing however, it should be noted that local Government, in its purest form is apolitical therefore there is no conflict.

We have a member who, should he nominate again, has the best chance of achieving representation on Bassendean Council. If achieved this influence will not only benefit AshfieldCAN but also the Ashfield Reserve sports hub. Sport plays such an important import part in in the health and wellbeing of a community, particularly the young.

**The Lookout Park**

The Lookout Park has been established and is maturing, gaining a a reputation as gathering point for families, groups and individuals who wish to view the Ashfield Flats Wetland, the river valley and the Darling escarpment beyond. *It should be noted the current Bassendean Council members chose the Park, and its backdrop views, as a photographic feature in its annual publication.*

Unfortunately, unless action is taken, it is likely that within the next two years the ‘Lookout’ aspect of the park will disappear, as inappropriate planting of trees and shrubs will completely block the views that make the park unique.

Trees and shrubs are an emotive matter and can generate public angst if there is a move to remove them, regardless of the motivation for planting them in the first instance. In this AshfieldCAN must be careful, lest we be seen as environmental vandals. It is my personal belief that those responsible for these inappropriate and *dangerous* plantings are aware of this likely reaction. Indeed, it could be seen by them as a fait accompli.

That the plantings are dangerous to property and life is inarguable. Following an extremely dangerous wildfire a 2015 report commissioned, and adopted by council, titled ***Bushfire Risk Management Plan – Ashfield Flats*** was explicit. The fuel load along the Western boundary, of the Ashfield Flats Wetland adjacent to dwelling houses should be reduced to mitigate the danger to lives and property. Furthermore, the crowns of eucalyptus should be no closer than ten meters apart. Consequently, some mature trees were removed.

Inexplicably, following this report and without consultation with the Town Of Bassendean, the Government Department responsible for part management of the Wetlands, planted about 150 eucalyptus trees, on flat ground precisely along the 80 metre eastern boundary of the Lookout Park, and contrary to the report, along the vulnerable western boundary of the wetlands. All botanical literature recommends a distance of between 6 and 8 meters as a minimum between eucalyptus tree plantings. The grove of trees referred to are so densely planted that it is difficult to walk between them. Consequently, the trees are completing for light and nutrient, and will never thrive. Atop the Lookout escarpment, the same Government department, again without consultation and knowing the purpose of the lookout park, planted shrubs that once mature will completely block any view to the East. These decisions, with the insistence of AshfieldCAN, should come under the closest scrutiny.

**Community Viewing Scope**

The free access community viewing scope has been sourced and is currently in storage. It is a high quality, fixed position optical binocular which, when installed on a concrete plinth, will provide magnificent views to the East from the Lookout Park.

The progress of this installation will be the subject of negotiation with the Town of Bassendean before the next AshfieldCAN meeting in March.

**Conclusion**

With the approval of the committee, I wrote to the CEO Town of Bassendean outlining some concerns surrounding the lookout park and suggesting crime prevention initiatives. There was a considerable delay in responding due to the CEOs resignation and the need to recruit a replacement, as well as the holiday break. A copy of my email and his response is included. Very little was achieved but it is a starting point. The Town expressed its gratitude for the efforts of AshfieldCAN.

Yes, we have challenges ahead but with perseverance much can be achieved.

Bob Brown

President

Ashfield Community Action Group

Phn: 0448160000