

WELCOME TO

**FRIENDS OF THE ESCARPMENT
PARKS (TOOWOOMBA) INC.**

Our Vision is that:

“All remnant natural Bushland in Toowoomba should be weed free, well managed and valued by the Community, in vigorous growth and contain a diverse range of plant and animal species”.

We appreciate your support to assist us achieve our vision for the future of Toowoomba’s bushlands.

WORKING WITH THE FRIENDS OF THE ESCARPMENT PARKS

A guide for New Members

Last revised in March 2014

Welcome to Friends of the Escarpment Parks (Toowoomba) Inc. (FEP). We appreciate your support to help us achieve our vision for the future of Toowoomba's bushlands, and also value your company and your input into what we are doing.

To achieve our vision FEP is systematically removing environmental weeds from our urban bushland parks, allowing the native vegetation to recover and regenerate. We work closely with Toowoomba Regional Council and other landholders, since they are responsible for the parks and also provide us with support including tools, safety equipment and other supplies. Initial weed removal is carried out in the bushland areas before a monitoring and maintenance program is established to help maintain parks in the future.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is intended for people who are new members with F.E.P. We hope that the information provided will be useful to you. Please let us know if there are any other items that you think should be included.

ABOUT THE FRIENDS OF THE ESCARPMENT PARKS

One sunny weekend in the mid 1980's Dr John Swarbrick took his daughter to visit her friend at Spring Bluff Railway station. While there, John walked around the area with the Stationmaster and saw the big problem that the Lantana was creating. He invited a few friends to work in the area and so the seeds of Friends of The Escarpment Parks were sown.

Once the group achieved their goals there, they moved to Prince Henry Drive and then to Duggan Park. It was here that their success, enthusiasm and expertise impressed the then Director of Parks and Recreation of Toowoomba Council that in 1991 he proposed that they form a Friends group to help attract more attention to the Bushland

parks at Council level and to increase funding for the Bushland park Management and share their expertise and local knowledge with Council. So the seed was germinated!

The emphasis at that time was on the parks along the eastern escarpment of the City, hence the name Friends of the Escarpment Parks. The group met regularly to control exotic woody weeds in small areas of Redwood Park (mainly Cat's-Claw creeper and Lantana), Jubilee Park (Cat's-Claw creeper), Picnic Point Park (Lantana), Tobruk Drive (Lantana), and Prince Henry Drive (Lantana). Considerable help was received in the early years from students from Gatton College (now part of the University of Queensland) as well as from local Scouts who undertook work to achieve appropriate badges.

The group became incorporated on 1st September 1994 as The Friends of the Escarpment Parks (Toowoomba) Inc., and continued working much as before. In 1995 we received a grant to prepare and publish the booklet 'Environmental Weeds of the Toowoomba Region', illustrating and describing 21 of our most serious bushland weeds and outlining their control.

In 1999 we worked with Council to prepare and plant Toowoomba's Millennium Forest, an area of Eucalypts, Wattles, Hoop Pines and other native trees in what was then a neglected filled quarry in Duggan Park. FEP continued to clear other areas in Duggan Park and assist Council with further planting. They were also responsible for the provision of Nesting Boxes in the trees adjacent to the picnic area.

Then FEP were approached by National Parks and Wildlife Services to clear the North Western half of Hartmann Reserve and upon completion moved into areas of private bushland adjacent to Nielsen Park that had been offered to the Council but was too heavily invested with Lantana and Privet for them to accept.

At this time FEP procured their first Shipping Container which was installed at Nielsen Park to store their increasing amount of tools and equipment.

Around this time several members attended a number of weekend Seminars to learn more about Weed and land control which resulted in a change from total to patchwork clearing to reduce the impact on the wildlife.

In 2004, after accepting the 2 areas into extensions of Nielsen Park, the Council suggested that FEP move into Echo Valley South Park a daunting area of some 7 hectares with monocultures of Lantana and Privet. The container was moved and a development program set up that would eventually have seen the eastern side of the gully cleaned and regenerated to include a picnic area and public amenities. With numbers then down to as few as 3 for a long period, the wishes of the local Bird Society and the other priorities of the Council, all this ambition was not fulfilled but the eastern area was left clean.

Unfortunately lack of numbers has not allowed FEP to maintain this area as they would have wished although some regular maintenance is still being carried out there.

During their 5 years in Echo Valley South Park the Friends periodically returned to Duggan Park and Nielsen Parks. The Friends also responded to a request from University of Queensland to clear an area of Boyce Gardens of Cat's Claw. With the agreement of Council they even set up a propagating House to breed beetles that had proved effective against Cat's Claw in other areas,

but after distribution it was found that they could not withstand our colder climate.

Friends of the Escarpment Parks now had Duggan Park, Nielsen Park, The Waterbird Habitat, Panorama Crescent Park to maintain as well as Echo Valley South Park and Hartmann Bushland Reserve.

At Hartmann Reserve under the leadership of Veronica Newberry (Council Parks Coordinator) and her assistant (Kristie Worthy nee Jenkinson) held a series of Open days with some groups set – up to maintain the Reserve.

However due to a lack of sustained public support, the project faded away.

During these years FEP assisted the Council in “Clean up Australia Days” and organising National Tree Planting Days in Tobruk Drive that involved up to 300 volunteers each year and the planting of approximately 6,000 plants.

In 2010, after over 20 years of devotion to the parks, John Swarbrick finally vacated the president’s chair and Friends moved on to a new and even greater challenge under the leadership of their new President Hugh Krenske. Hugh had been involved for many years with the Richmond Birdwing Butterfly project and so brought a new

respect and interest to the society. Hugh's lifelong association with Redwood Park lead him to persuade the rest of us to move into that park and in 2010, just before the spring floods in 2011 which damaged the bridge over Gatton Creek, the Friends commenced a project to remove the invasive weeds from an area of Redwood Park immediately across Gatton Creek from the picnic ground. With the support from students from one of the local schools, a large amount of flowering coral berry was removed and bagged.

After the floods in 2011, the Friends were given approval by Toowoomba Regional Council to make the lower rainforest area of Redwood Park one of our responsibilities. This move into a rainforest ecosystem seemed to invigorate the friends.

Since then the wide publicity that has been given to this work through the press, the establishment of our own web site and the closer relationship developed with the Council including a place on their website has brought this work more to the public's attention.

Recently, a grant of \$50,000 was obtained to assist with the cost of weed management and the construction of a short, class 3 educational walking

circuit through the rainforest. The circuit was to be easy enough for families with young children and older, less able people, with interpretive signage at intervals indicative of the rainforest ecosystem. The friends also received a portico from a burnt out business premise which made an ideal shelter over one of the picnic tables. A private offer was accepted to erect a notice board in the picnic area and the picnic ground was officially named the "Edwin Bernays Picnic Area".

Under the umbrella of Conservation Volunteers Australia, groups of young people from all over the world have spent time in Redwood Park assisting in the construction of a new walking circuit through the dry rainforest and the removal of exotic weeds such as lantana, climbing asparagus and coral berry. The removal of these weeds allowed FEP members to more easily access the area to treat the infestations of madeira vine and cats claw creeper. Our target area has now increased to approximately 5 hectares.

Overtime the Friends hope to make other picturesque areas such as the rock faces adjacent to the creek area and close to the picnic ground more accessible to visitors.

Open Days and Tree Planting days received the support of our Mayor and other Councillors.

New Maintenance groups have been established in Duggan Park, Nielsen Park and Panorama Crescent Park. A new group is being formed to weed and revegetate an area of Jubilee Forest at the end of Mackenzie Street north.

A Munitions Store and second Shipping Container were purchased and sited.

By the end of 2013, Friends of The Escarpment Parks has moved a long way from their early beginnings and are stronger than they have ever been before with over 80 subscribers and approximately 20 active volunteers and all involved can be proud of their achievements.

However, the urgent need for more volunteers has never been so great.

Through persistent efforts Toowoomba now has the opportunity of creating one of the finest forest

walking areas in Queensland as well as offering a variety of bushland habitats for public access.

Whether or not they survive for future generations will depend on the future priorities of Council Parks Department and above all the support of the public.

WHAT CAN FEP VOLUNTEERS TO ASSIST?

While the main objective of Friends of The Escarpment Parks is to rehabilitate our city's bushland parks by weed control and other activities, there are some associated jobs which require attention, where volunteers could assist.

Some examples of other duties include:

- **PUBLICITY**

We require people to develop and manage a wide range of publicity including static displays in public spaces, schools and events, media releases etc.

- **GROWING NATIVE PLANTS**

We need to replant some areas that have lost native vegetation, especially grasses, ground covers and screening vines etc.

- **MONITORING and RECORDING**

Areas of parks that have already been rehabilitated need regular visits, (probably six monthly) to record and photograph regrowth of natives and weeds etc.

- **DISTRIBUTING NEWSLETTERS etc.**

We produce a newsletter every second month and occasionally other material for special events.

- **RESEARCHING THE HISTORY OF INDIVIDUAL PARKS AROUND TOOWOOMBA**

Our group knows very little about the history of our parks and research is required into their individual histories to help explain how they are now and how they should be managed in the future.

- **PHOTOGRAPHY**

If you are interested in, or involved with photography, you may be able to assist with photography of wildlife and plants in our Bushland Parks and Reserves.

- **ASSISTANCE TO ORGANISE AND CONDUCT ENVIRONMENT TYPE WORKSHOPS**

You may be able to assist our group to organise and conduct Workshops, when required. Topics could include “Building Nesting Boxes” and “Rock making”

- **BE INVOLVED IN SPECIFIC PROJECTS ONLY**

Occasionally FEP is invited to participate/be involved in environmental type events such as GARDENFEST (TOOWOOMBA), ENVIRONMENT EXPO DAYS and other Environmental type projects.

Members are advised when these events take place and assistance is sought.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION, WE ADVISE THAT VOLUNTEERS CURRENTLY PERFORM REHABILITATION WORK IN THE FOLLOWING ESCARPMENT PARKS AND RESERVES:

- **Redwood Park**
(Located Warrego Highway below the saddle)

- **Nielsen Park**
(Located Tarlington Street off Ramsay Street)

- **Echo Valley South Park**
(Located Ramsay Street)

- **Panorama Crescent Park**
**(Located down the laneway between 4 & 8
Panorama Crescent, Prince Henry's Drive)**

- **Hartmann Bushland Reserve**
**(Located corner of Alderley and Rowbotham
Street)**

- **Duggan Park**
(Located Leslie and Collier Streets, Rangeville)

- **Jubilee Park**
(Located at McKenzie Street North)

Should you wish to become a volunteer to work in any of our FEP groups at one or more of the above parks, please feel to contact a Committee Member whose details are on our Web Site (fep.org.au) or telephone Toowoomba Regional Council, Parks and Recreation Services (Project Officer 4688 6173).

The days and times that we currently work in each Park/Reserve is listed on FEP Web Site in above paragraph.

If you commit to being a volunteer, we advise the following general information.

INSURANCE

If you wish to work as a volunteer in our Escarpment parks, you must register with Toowoomba Regional Council and obtain a T.R.C. Volunteer Handbook for completion and return.

Toowoomba Regional Council has its own Volunteer Public Liability Insurance & Group Personal Accident Insurance, which only covers FEP Members if you are registered as an individual volunteer with Council and are acting within the scope of your duties ON behalf of the Council.

Each Claim is assessed individually.

Volunteer Insurance is provided by AON Insurance through Queensland Water and Land Carers (Q.W.aL.C.) for Personal Accident, Public Liability and Association Liability.

To be eligible for insurance cover you must be working on approved FEP projects and sites under a Bushcare Coordinator (FEP supervision) with your hours recorded on FEP Time Sheets.

You must be taking proper care of yourself and be wearing appropriate clothing and safety equipment.

You must NOT be under influence of alcohol or drugs or be committing any unlawful act.

WHAT TO WEAR AND WHAT TO BRING WHEN WORKING IN THE BUSH

Your safety and comfort are of the greatest importance. We strongly recommend that you wear:

- **solid covered shoes or boots**, to provide balance and foot protection
- **a light weight fully brimmed hat (preferably with a neck covering)**, to provide sun protection, stop debris falling down your neck and help to protect your face and neck against scratches and bites
- **long trousers or overalls**, to protect your legs against scratches and bites
- **gaiters or socks long enough to tuck your trousers legs into**, to protect you against bites
- **a long sleeved shirt**, to protect your arms against scratches
- **Safety glasses or sunglasses** to protect your eyes.

- **Knee pads** are advisable as much of the work is done on hands and knees. Kneeling mats will be provided on request.

Gloves will be provided and MUST be worn.

Insect repellent and sunscreen are available from the person in charge. FEP strongly advises using insect repellent when ticks are about and sunscreen on unshaded and unprotected skin especially during the summer.

Please also bring water or other drink and something to eat when we stop for smoko in mid morning.

We do insist that you do not smoke in the bush – it is a fire hazard.

HOW WE CONTROL ENVIRONMENTAL WEEDS

Most of the environmental weeds that we remove from the bush are woody – they are shrubs (eg. lantana), small trees such as broadleaved privet, vines (eg Japanese honeysuckle, passionfruit and cat's-claw creeper) or tough woody herbs like pavonia. Most such weeds can be controlled

manually by using simple hand tools. We only use herbicide (glyphosate only) when necessary, and as an FEP volunteer you can of course choose not to use it yourself.

We use three main methods to remove weeds from the bush:

- pulling or digging them up by the roots,
- cutting them off close to the ground and immediately treating the stump with glyphosate weedkiller (*the cut stump method*), and
- Stem injection with glyphosate weedkiller.

We occasionally use other methods for certain tough or specialised weeds. Where possible and required the seeds or other regenerative parts of the weeds are collected for proper disposal elsewhere. The tops of the weeds are generally scattered over the ground as mulch which helps to reduce further weed invasion, keeps the soil cool and provide shelters for insects and small animals.

HAZARDS WHEN WORKING IN THE BUSH

We are a responsible organisation and your health and safety is our prime concern.

Our group has a number of rules and regulations when working in the bushland parks to ensure the maximum safety of volunteers.

