

# Stenner Street Forest Park Report 2023

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The area of public land in which my husband Ken and I volunteer, is bounded by Stenner Street, Greinke Drive, residential allotments, and Middle Ridge Golf course. This area includes a playground, a bike skills park and a forest area. These three areas are each under the jurisdiction of a different department in the Toowoomba Regional council.

When we moved to the area, almost four years ago, the forest understorey was mostly impenetrable lantana. Except for one residence where the owners had cleared and mowed a safe fire break, the rest of the forest perimeter was a tinderbox of lantana, fallen eucalypt branches and dry garden and golf course refuse .,

Our immediate motivation was to minimise the fire risk. Our initial contact with the TRC resulted in a mulcher clearing a firebreak along the Stenner Street and residential boundaries. We had cleared a fire break behind our house immediately after our arrival, and we continue to maintain that area, regularly mowing and picking up fallen branches and safely burning them in our fire pit. Other home owners adjoining the forest , have followed the example of our neighbours and ourselves in keeping the area beside their fence green and clean.

Over the years Ken and I have been systematically cutting and poisoning lantana and prickly asparagus, pulling out hundreds of privet seedlings, eliminating non-native cassia in the vicinity of our house, and trying to control many other weeds including, tobacco weed, black-eyed susan, cobblers pegs, Scotch thistles and others. An unintended and disappointing consequence of our weed control has been the added accessibility of the forest to an unsociable element, so there is an ongoing task of cleaning up and carting away rubbish including soft drink and alcohol containers, broken glass, vape containers, drug utensils, takeaway food containers and much more.

The playground park is regularly mowed by council. Our main task there is picking up and disposing of litter left by teenage boys on their way to and from the Bike Skills park. The skills park itself is not cared for by the users and is often very untidy with large amounts of rubbish strewn around. I have contacted council several times about the need for the area to be whipper snipped and maintained. When I have been picking up rubbish there, I have sometimes suggested to the bike riders that it would be helpful for them to tidy up the place that they use.

There is still a large proportion of the forest which is overgrown with lantana and needs to be controlled. However, this will need to be replaced with suitable natives as a habitat for smaller birds, a job which is beyond us.

Council planting of natives as a dust buffer between the Bike Skills park and residences has been invaded by many weeds, and unfortunately, ongoing care and maintenance is lacking. I have intermittently done weeding in this area, but it is too much for me.