

Indigenotes

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President's Letter

At the very first meeting of IFFA many years ago, the conversation almost immediately turned to the question 'How local is local?' This conversation proved to be one of the main talking points of the organisation for many years. In fact, 'How local is local?' has punctuated many a discussion with some notable contributions over the years. Who can forget the seminal article by Ian Lunt putting the case for a more scientifically based definition when many others were using less tangible parameters.

Liz Henry, in this issue, re-opens the ongoing discussion adding more points to help us get closer to a more clearly understood concept, this time from the viewpoint of a nursery grower. Genetics are now a major consideration and proving to be critical if we are to manage populations of many of our most frequently used plants. Liz James, conservation geneticist at the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne will be presenting a talk on the subject soon (see advertising box). The September meeting will provide an opportunity for members to revisit this fascinating and engaging topic. Do you have something to contribute?

Artwork for our Indigenotes covers has been another talking point over the years. Many an original artwork by our members has found its way into our homes over the years. Many of these pieces of art are noteworthy as are the artists. The difficulty for our editors has been finding willing artists to contribute to this worthy cause. This month's cover is supplied by one of our newest members, Dr. Bronwen Scott whose talents remained hidden from us until we started the search for a cover. Her primary love is gastropods but it is obvious that there is an untapped talent for scientific illustration lurking just below the surface. How about you? Any budding Anita Barley's or Celia Rossiters out there? You too could be a published artist. Let us see your work and who knows, you could be on the cover of Indigenotes.

IFFA's new Treasurer



IFFA's Committee has appointed Caroline Dunn to fill the vacant position of IFFA Treasurer. She brings excellent financial qualifications and experience as well as an interest in indigenous flora and fauna.

IFFA wishes to thank Neil Gardiner who has done a sterling job of Treasurer up until his recent resignation.

Indigenotes asked Caroline the same questions the other Committee members answered in the last issue:

1. *What is your passion that leads you to be involved in IFFA?*

I love being with and observing plants, discovering VINC, and now IFFA, enables me to learn about indigenous flora.

2. *What really gets you going?*

Being in a beautiful natural place where I can forget about life.

3. *Comment about IFFA?*

Meeting and spending time with people who feel the same is really exciting and satisfying, IFFA provides this.



Indigenotes finally extracted a photo of Michele Arundell, our Secretary, and here it is for those few of you who haven't met her at some stage.

Butterfly gardening

Judy Allen

Butterflies are welcome addition to any garden, and with a few simple design principles are easily attracted, making that border, nature strip or school garden come to life. There are 80 butterflies in Victoria and 24 in urban Melbourne, - and they are all native, except for that nuisance in the veggie patch, the cabbage moth. So it makes sense to attract and feed your Australian butterflies on local indigenous plants.

Nectar traps: Colorful, massed beds draw butterflies in and keep them happily moving through the garden. They particularly like blue, yellow and red, but are attracted to a large range of colors, with bold clusters of flowers more effective than single plants dotted through a garden

Flowers: The shape of the flower is important too, with simple, flat flowers easier for butterflies to extract nectar. Double flowers with their multiple petals are too complex, but daisies, native pelargoniums and blue-bells, saltbush plants, and pea flowers are especially useful.

Position, position, position: Butterflies use the early morning sun to warm themselves and retreat to cooler, shadier places during the heat of the day. Providing a sheltered position that combines warmth and protection is ideal such as corners and courtyards. Also consider adding flat rocks for butterflies to bask and to court each other. Water can be provided as mud puddles, which can also provide essential salts, or as a dish of damp sand.

Host plants: Incorporate host plants for the butterflies to lay her eggs. The caterpillars are generally few and shy, and won't devastate the garden with excessive munching. Popular indigenous plants include Bursaria, Wattles and Mat rush, and grasses such as Kangaroo grass Wallaby grass and Tussock grass.

Artificial feeders: For the craftily minded, artificial butterfly feeders can be simply made using a colourful plastic plate filled with pebbles, pieces of sponge or colourful beads. Fill the dish only to half the depth of the beads with home made butterfly nectar. The butterflies will stand on the beads and sip happily. Remember to clean the dish out regularly, and to top up the level of liquid as they could become stuck in the mix with evaporation!

Recipe:

- 1/2 teas honey
- 1/2 teas castor sugar
- pinch of salt
- 1 cup of water

A great project for kids while you are planting the garden.

Further information

CSIRO website for identification

GAV website for your nearest indigenous nursery location.

Seminar on Urban Grasslands:

Urban grasslands are slowly shrinking and disappearing as the urban sprawl spreads further and further into previously extensive tracts of indigenous grasslands on the fringe of Melbourne. What can be done to keep those grasslands that are left healthy and viable, and also to regenerate them?

Ros Shepherd, Secretary of the Weed Science Society, advises they are holding a seminar on Urban grasslands on Tuesday 5th October at Melton and thinks this would be something 'Friends' would be interested in. For further detail, please contact Ros on 9576 2949 or at secwssv@surf.net.au.

How Local is Local?

by Liz Henry*

Conservation of our natural habitats is of concern throughout the world. We want to get the most appropriate source of propagation material for the customers of our indigenous nursery and supply plants grown from local provenance – but how local is local? It depends on the biology of the species, the variability in the local geology soils and climate as well as how long the cultivar has been in artificial cultivation. Sometimes at the nursery we are all at sea.

In preparing this article, I have re-read the many forums and seminars that I have attended in the past 10 years or so as well as local authors' books or articles in newsletters.

Dr Graham Lorimer reported in the *Linking Provenance and Biodiversity Conservation* seminar¹ that:

“The concept of provenance for natural systems only became common in Victoria during the early-to-mid 1980s. At that stage, there was an explosion of interest in growing plants for restoring or re-creating natural landscapes and habitats – particularly around Melbourne – and I think people wanted to do two things:

- make their work as close as possible to natural for their area, and
- preserve the landscape and plant forms which are special to the area.”

According to Dr Lorimer the concept of provenance was introduced to help achieve this so that knowing the provenance of a propagated plant, one could hopefully decide whether it was of a form which would naturally occur at a revegetation site, and by sticking to plants of local provenance, we could keep the gene pool pure and prevent local plant forms from disappearing through cross-pollination with non-local forms.

Dr Lorimer related that initially provenance was often quoted just on the basis of the suburb or town where propagation material was collected, or by broader descriptions such as “sand belt”. It quickly became clear that this was not adequate. Some species vary little over large distances, whereas others change drastically over a few kilometres. Even within an area of a few square kilometres, there may be sheltered spots supporting one form of a species, and exposed sites supporting another and, usually, no-one is sure what the results will be if you mix them up. He stated that given all the complexities, geographic provenance alone may not provide all the answers to the two objectives. Instead he suggested that the provenance of a plant should refer to the geographical location (preferably to within a few kilometres) as well as the habitat type (e.g. “mountain ash forest”) of the point of origin. In addition if the plant has had one or more generations in cultivation, that information needs to be included.

Dr Lorimer explained that his intention was that provenance,

by its definition, ought to help determine what sites might naturally support the particular form of plant in question. With a little more information about pollination biology, genetics, and response of the species to changed growing conditions, people might also be able to work out what additional sites might support the plant without risk of upsetting the local gene pool. He also explained that there are some circumstances where biodiversity considerations may override matters of provenance. In particular where very small remnant populations occur mixing genetic material from different provenances may be necessary to overcome local extinction, or non-local material may be planted to suit changed environmental conditions where no local material would otherwise suit

He indicated that those who should be concerned about the provenance concept include anyone who pursues the two objectives listed above, and anyone working to conserve rare or threatened species. In summary he said that:

- Provenance = Locality + Ecosystem (if from a seed orchard, for example, also state that.)
- Altered Landscapes - may need plants from other localities, maybe use seed from a different site because of the same ecosystem.”

In September 2000 Greening Australia Victoria organised a seminar as part of their Environmental Industry Training Program². The program aimed to bring together leading academics, experts and practitioners to present and discuss contemporary research into land management issues and explore areas of new study, provide an opportunity for the technical transfer of information between researchers and land managers and create an atmosphere whereby networks can be established and future directions discussed.

In a presentation analysing gaps in research and development, Dale Tonkinson and Marita Sydes identified the need for a detailed review of the genetic issues related to revegetation, particularly that of provenance and, subsequently, the development of a strategic research plan for these issues.

They stated that evidence supporting or negating the concept of local provenance from either ecological or genetic data was non-existent. Use of local provenance in revegetation projects is assumed to be best. They identified that genetic pollution studies indicated that if closely-related material was used in revegetation then inbreeding depression may occur. They concluded that the occurrence of in or out-breeding depression or out-breeding vigour remains untested for plant material used in revegetation.

Tonkinson and Sydes identified potential research projects which included detailed review of issues surrounding provenance, both scientific and philosophical, and research into

whether using the most local source of plant material is the right precautionary approach. Their analysis emphasised the need for stronger partnerships among researchers, facilitators and on-ground practitioners.

In 2004 Darren Wallace, President of the Knox Environment Society quoted Dr. David Beardsell as suggesting “Most of your indigenous plants are likely to be rubbish”³. Dr Beardsell is a well-respected scientist at Knoxfield Horticultural Research Institute who was referring to the general supply of indigenous tubestock given poor propagule collection practices.

In his article Mr Wallace reports on a quick ring-around of several community nurseries, commercial producers of indigenous plants, and several consumers of indigenous plants which revealed that there really was little understanding or concern for things relating to genetic integrity, propagule collection guidelines and that perennial question “what is local when we talk about provenance?”

In 1998 Dr Beardsell⁴ discussed strategies for seed collection. He identified inbreeding as a key issue, for example, ornamentally planted *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* planted among remnants in Yarra Park where some genes are threatening the remnants. Generally, he said inbreeding reduces seed set; reduces seed size; reduces growth rate by half or more and reduces size at maturity.

Dr Beardsell identified two strategies for remnant populations of different sizes. Firstly for remnant populations of 10 or fewer individual remnant plants, where random mating is unlikely to occur because of the small number of individuals, the genetic diversity is probably too small to rely on seed collection. In this case all individuals need to be preserved and vegetatively propagated. A strategy could be to plant to supplement the gene pool with individuals from within the natural breeding area – say 1-5 km radius, and later collect cross-pollinated seed.

The second strategy Beardsell suggested was for remnant populations with 20 or more individuals. In this situation, genetic diversity is possibly sufficient to allow seed collection for revegetation projects, and to supplement the original population. He suggested that to ensure preservation a seed orchard could be used to duplicate the gene pool using either progeny collected from each mother plant or, even better using vegetatively propagated material from every plant.

Dr Beardsell asked the question “Why is there a crisis in performance of native trees” and in answer stated that most are seed propagated but strongly out-breeding or self-incompatible, making them susceptible to inbreeding depression. He gave examples of some outcrossing rates: *Eucalyptus*

leucoxylon 92%, *E. citriodora* 86%, *E. obliqua* 76%, and *E. pauciflora* 70%.

Recommended reading:

Germination of Local Native Plant Seed Murray Ralph Bushland Horticulture Melbourne 1994 - esp. Page 2.
Flora of Melbourne Society for Growing Australian Plants Maroondah Inc 1993.

- 1 *Linking Provenance and Biodiversity Conservation*. Greening Australia Victoria 1995 Training & Seminar Program - 28 November, 1995.
- 2 *Environment Research Forum*. Greening Australia Victoria 2000 Environmental Industry Training Program - 13-14 September, 2000.
- 3 March, 2004 Edition of *The Knox Environment Society Inc*. “Most of your Indigenous Plants are likely to be Rubbish”
- 4 *Indigenous Revegetation - Strategies for Seed Collection* presentation by Dr. David Beardsell at Knox City Council on 23-4-1998.

* *Liz Henry is Nursery Co-ordinator, Whitehorse Community Indigenous Plant Project Inc. - Bungalook Nursery, Fulton Road, Blackburn South, Vic.*

Indigenotes welcomes feedback on this issue – it is time that the subject made headlines again. What are your thoughts? What is relevant research and how should it be implemented by the practitioners on the ground? What further practical studies should be undertaken? What is known about DNA of indigenous plants, and what needs to be known? What should priorities be for workshops on certain genera or species? Or should IFFA initiate a web-based discussion group?

How Local is Local? Evening workshop

To all who work in local revegetation projects.
Looking at provenance, ranges of plant systems. Trees, shrubs, grasses and herbs. Important issues in using native flora.

A research based presentation
by Liz James

Liz works at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne specialising in the genetic aspects of plant conservation programs.

Tuesday 26 October 2004
Field Naturalists Clubrooms
Gardenia St. Blackburn
7:30 for 7:45 start.

Gold coin donation at the door. All very welcome.

Enquiries: Margaret Witherspoon 9878 5998, or www@bigpond.com
Co-sponsored by Blackburn and District Tree Preservation Society Inc.,
Whitehorse Community Indigenous Plant Project Inc. and Greenlink Box Hill Inc.

Through the Eyes of an Old Sault.

By Samira Heale*

Few people know the Mornington Peninsula like Tom Sault. The 81-year-old Tootgarook resident is a well-loved authority of the regions' flora and fauna and the author of a new book. His observations over the last 40 years are the premise of a new book entitled *The Mornington Peninsula Through the Eyes of a Naturalist*.

Tom's passionate interest in natural history began as a young boy and he spent most of his young years in Eildon. At the age of eight, during "The Depression," Tom's father built bridges in the Heytesbury Forest in Southwestern Victoria. The family camped in a tent along the roadside for two years and Tom could not attend school. "Apart from making sure mother had enough water and wood I was free to roam. I could stand in a forest and pretend it was 8,000 years ago," he recalls.

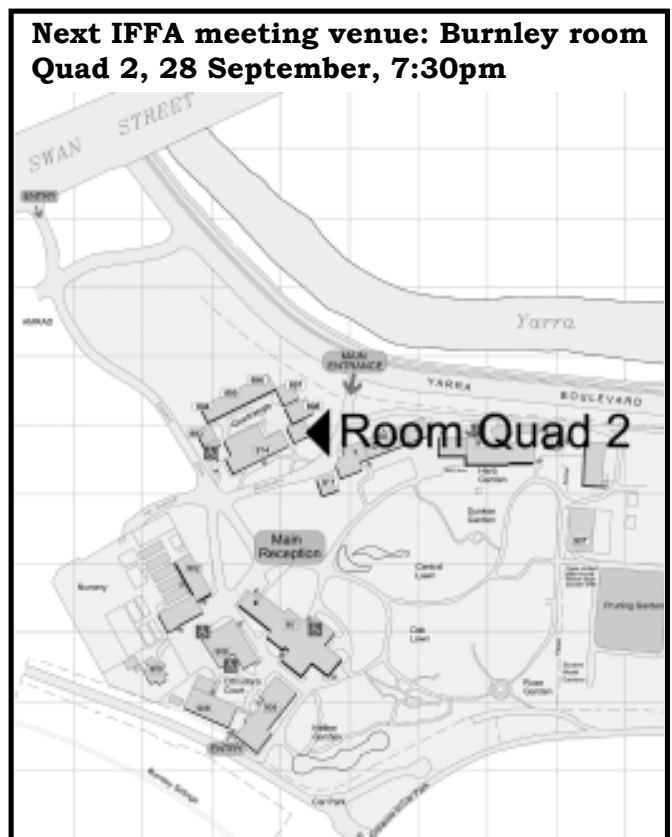
Tom joined the army at 18 and spent the Second World War primarily in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. After the war, whilst working as a cabinet-maker and stair-builder, he took a CAE course in geology at the University of Melbourne and soon became involved in the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria. The club's membership included botanists, geologists, entomologists and ornithologists and Tom developed interests in many areas of natural history believing "...the best way to learn is to stick with people that know more than you." He was the president from 1971 to 1973 and for more than 40 years, conducted numerous fauna surveys throughout Victoria, including the Mornington Peninsula.

A great asset of the Mornington Peninsula is its bush land. However Tom cites the subdivision and clearing of land, the use of pesticides and inadequate protection of our coastal and creek-line habitats, as having damaged the region's biodiversity. Tom warns that the use of agricultural and domestic pesticides compromises the region's insectivorous bird and bat populations. "The use of these chemicals have not only wiped out pests but also harmless insects that these

birds rely upon," he says. Tom also warns that better efforts need to be undertaken to keep our coastal parks healthy. "Traffic in summer puts a lot of pressure on these environments" he says, highlighting the need for people to stay within designated tracks and walkways.

The Mornington Peninsula Through the Eyes of a Naturalist is aimed at those who are yet to discover their local natural history. It contains general observations of the region's plants, insects, mammals and birds. Edited by local resident Richard Pugh, the book was launched by Mornington Shire Council CEO Michael Kennedy on 9 September at the Rosebud Library. The book will be available in local bookstores in the next few months.

*** Samira Heale is a member of SPIFFA**



Little Aussie Battlers

By Elaine Bertotto*

"Spring has sprung, the grass is ris, wonder where the sunshine is" could be the call of many but I do not need the sunshine to know that spring has arrived. For me the harbingers of spring come in the feathered variety in about the last week of August. The Spotted Pardalote has made his spring /summer place at my home for the past 36 years. These little digging machines in the past have slowed the progress in the construction of garages, the construction of walls and the planting of crops. As annual guests they have been known to bore holes through the forgiving walls of hanging baskets in their pursuit to adhere to the Pardalote building regulations of 25-35cm (10-15 inches) of tunnel followed by a cup shaped tightly woven nest. As little speeding bullets, Pardalotes are quite tolerant of the presence of humans. But just get out of their way when construction and refurbishment of the nest is under way because there is no time to be lost swerving in flight to avoid collision with humans once territory has again been reclaimed.

A Spotted pardalote complete with partner has arrived and they are busily refurbishing the old nest in the open gravel bank. It is clear that we will witness again this spring the close flurry of little wings and the deep chirrup that emanates from the tall branches of the nearby eucalypt that is so much a part of our southern springtime. Like their predecessors, the new arrivals can be identified by their 9-10cm (3 1/2") chubby little body, of buff grey with black wing feathers speckled with white spots, yellow throat, black head and distinguishing brownish red lower back and tail feathers.

Pardalotes use their blunt little beaks to peck at the soil until they have the start of a tunnel. As the construction progresses, showers of dirt fly out of the tunnel as the urgency of the breeding season takes over.

At the completion of the tunnelling and they have created a chamber at the end the Pardalotes begin the task of building a neat cup shaped nest of the finest locally grown materials. Animal fur, feathers and bark line the nest.

Male Pardalotes will return to a particular nest year after year, the entry to such nests has deep furrows the equivalent to car tracks in a bush track. Four or five white eggs will be laid and incubation shared by the pair for around 16 days. When the youngsters hatch, both parents will feed them with squirming juicy insects for the next 25

days until the whole family flies off together from the tunnel. Spotted and Striated Pardalotes seem to prefer the August to December time slot for breeding with fledglings left the nest by Christmas day.

All pardalotes feed high in the tree tops and clean the eucalypts and acacias of bugs, which gives particular advantage to the eucalyptus in the removal of sugary lerps, which if left unchecked will cause die back and eventual death to whole forests.

High in the treetops the acrobatics of the pardalote are difficult to observe, as they are not unlike the outline of a eucalypt leaf. The frequent chirping and other clicking sounds coming from the trees as they fleece the foliage tells you that Pardalotes are doing the work for which they were intended.

Pardalotes are unique to Australia, they are hand in glove with eucalyptus and wattle trees, and you will find more than one species in any area.

On the Peninsula you will find the Striated and the Spotted at least. There are many burrowing sites visible along the Arthur's Seat mountain road, these little fellows know about homes with a view. Take a walk down Arthur's seat between August and Christmas you will be sure to see and hear Pardalotes.

Cats are undoubtedly the biggest problem for Pardalotes, with feral cats in national parks and domestic cats in the urban areas. The Pardalote is most vulnerable when it is nesting in tunnels located in road cuttings or garden mounds of dirt, as cats just need to wait at the entrance for a delectable taste of wild life.

Birds like Bell Miners are particularly aggressive towards our little heroes and will chase them from an area. Unfortunately, this can be disastrous for the eucalypt as the Miners eat only the casing of the lerp and not the lerp.

To help save our eucalypts and the character of our bush look out for our Little Aussie Battler - encourage responsible cat ownership, provide habitat, use pesticides and herbicides sparingly and listen for Pardalotes aka the Diamond Bird, high up in the canopy - flat out for Australia.

*** Elaine Bertotto is a resident of Rosebud.**

This article was written for the July 2004 Newsletter of SPIFFA (Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association)

Moreland Indig St Strategy weakened

By Ken Duxbury*

A new draft “Street Landscape Strategy 2004-2009” has recently been prepared by the City of Moreland. It was on public exhibition until July 7, 2004, and should soon go before Council. The new strategy would replace the existing *Moreland Street Landscaping Strategy 1997-2017*, which provides for the use of 80% locally indigenous street trees and 20% non-local native species (with no new plantings of non-Australian exotic species).

Whilst I believe the strategy did need review, I think it is highly unfortunate that the new draft strategy appears to weaken the commitment to using indigenous street trees.

The new draft Street Landscaping Strategy explains its background as follows:

“CONTEXT

The Moreland Street Landscape Strategy was prepared under a recommendation from the Moreland Open Space Strategy (1996). Council endorsed the Moreland Street Landscape Strategy in 1997 as a twenty-year plan for greening Moreland’s streets. This strategy was noted throughout Australia for its highly innovative position on the use of indigenous plants. Council still strongly supports the concept of using indigenous plants in urban settings wherever appropriate and particularly in areas of environmental significance near waterways.

While many good results have been achieved under the guidance of the 1997 Street Landscape Strategy, there have been problems with tree performance and community acceptance. Many of the tree species selected for the original strategy were inappropriate, unacceptable or have exhibited mixed performance. Indigenous trees selected for their local provenances are not horticultural selections with known performance in urban situations. The Moreland community has expressed a desire for a more diverse species palette including indigenous, native and introduced species and cultivated varieties.

The majority of Moreland streets are now characterized as eclectic mixes of native trees and resident plantings with few streets showing consistent avenues. Community perceptions of street trees require improvement. Council needs a new strategy that is more practical and builds on the vision, themes and achievements of the original strategy to deliver street landscapes that are unique, reliable and sustainable.”

Much of this material is self explanatory. However, it should perhaps be noted that:-

1. Although “Council still strongly supports the concept of using indigenous plants *“in urban settings wherever appropriate and particularly in areas of environmental significance near waterways”* nothing is said about whether Council (or its staff) still support – strongly or at all – the use of indigenous plants for *street* planting.
2. The new draft policy does not provide any detailed information about the good results that have been achieved under the guidance of the 1997 Street Landscape Strategy, or about the problems with tree performance and community acceptance. It would be helpful to know more about exactly what the successes and failures of the current strategy are; and whether these are such as to require fine tuning – for example, planting more of those indigenous species which have been achieving good results and limiting or deleting use of species which are growing poorly or are not achieving community acceptance; or whether the strategy really *does* require drastic change.
3. It is probably fair to say that some of the indigenous trees included in the existing strategy are inappropriate for street planting. As one example, Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*) is not very well suited for street planting because it is short lived, prone to attack by boring insects, and prone to limb breakage and blowing over. However, it does not necessarily follow that the use of indigenous plants for street planting is inappropriate *per se*.
4. It is also probably true that indigenous street plantings are exhibiting mixed performance, but it is not clear whether this is the result of using intrinsically inappropriate species, or using a potentially appropriate and successful species in the wrong environment – for example, planting a Lightwood (*Acacia implexa*) where it could get wet feet.

5. Some of the “mixed results” are probably also due to the fact that each indigenous tree is genetically unique. It is a little bit unrealistic to develop a strategy aimed at maintaining and rebuilding biodiversity and then complaining that the trees do not all look identical and grow in exactly the same way.

6. The fact that indigenous trees selected for their local provenance are not horticultural selections with known performance in urban situations was clearly noted by the original strategy, and the strategy did, in fact, recommend the use of horticulturally proven and successful non-indigenous native trees in formal and “high profile” situations where uniformity of growth and proven urban success were required.

7. It is probably true to say that there has been some degree of community disenchantment with the restricted species palette of the existing strategy and, in particular, with the way in which the strategy appears to exclude all new plantings of non-Australian exotic tree species. The existing strategy even appears to exclude those species such as plane trees and English elms which have grown successfully in Moreland’s streets for well over one hundred years, which are an important part of Moreland’s cultural landscape and heritage, and which provide dense summer shade, whilst allowing the penetration of winter sunlight. There may also be a desire to plant species which reflect the existing ethnic and cultural diversity of Moreland.

However, it is also true that many Moreland residents have a strong commitment to the use of locally indigenous species for street planting and other landscape purposes – as shown by the many indigenous gardens and nature strip plantings throughout much of Moreland, and enthusiastic participation in community planting days (and by the fact that several IFFA members live in Moreland).

8. There is, I believe, a need to develop a revised / upgraded / amended version of

Moreland’s Street Planting Strategy, provided that this does in reality build on the vision, themes and achievements of the original strategy, rather than if not explicitly disavowing these aims, then diluting these aims beyond recognition, which – as will become clear from the following sections of this article – sadly appears to be the case.

POLICIES AND ACTIONS PROPOSED BY THE NEW STRATEGY

The report goes on to provide a list of Policies and Actions which should be taken by Council to achieve the objectives and vision of the new Street Landscaping Strategy. These include the following sections:

1.3 Tree Selection

Policy Statement

1.3.1 *Tree species will be selected depending on their suitability for the site, performance, sustainability and potential to contribute to the streetscape.*

It is, I believe, unfortunate that the tree selection criteria do not include any reference to such factors as maintaining, restoring and enhancing Moreland’s diversity, the habitat value of trees, or the maintenance and development of a distinctive and unique local character – factors which would tend to favour the selection of locally indigenous and (to some degree) other Australian native species.

Policy Statement

1.3.2 *Native and indigenous trees are an important element of Moreland’s character and will be maintained where appropriate.*

Actions

1.3.2.1 *A diverse range of native, indigenous and introduced species will be maintained throughout Moreland.”*

It would seem that, not only is there no longer any commitment to reinforce and extend existing indigenous and other native tree plantings, but existing plantings might actually be removed as “inappropriate”.

3.2 Nature in Streets

Policy Statement

3.2.1 *Biodiversity of native fauna and flora species are enhanced wherever practicable in street landscapes.*

Actions

3.2.1.1 *Undertake a formal study of bird species and other wildlife, utilising Moreland street landscapes as habitat sites.*

3.2.1.2 *Species that are known to act as environmental weeds in similar climatic zones in the Melbourne area will not be selected and planted in Moreland streets.*

3.2.1.3 *Streets with trees that are known problem weed species are to be considered higher priority for systematic removal and replacement of trees.*

3.2.1.4 *Information on care of appropriate wildlife habitat in home gardens available on the Moreland website.”*

The list of actions surprisingly doesn't make any reference to the use of locally indigenous or other native plantings as a means of enhancing the biodiversity of native fauna and flora species in street landscapes. Presumably the use of these species is regarded as somehow not “practicable”.

I believe that any formal study of bird species and other wildlife utilising Moreland street landscapes could be extended to also look at wildlife using wildlife corridors such as Merri Creek, parks golf courses, and private gardens. It is also important that the study does not just examine the wildlife, but recommends how wildlife habitat values and corridors can be protected and enhanced.

It is laudable that reference is made to the non-selection and removal of existing or potential environmental weeds. However, excluding environmental weeds is not the same thing as selecting species which positively contribute to biodiversity and habitat values.

However providing information on the care of appropriate wildlife habitat in private gardens does not mean that there is any less of a need to have regard to biodiversity and habitat values in street plantings. In fact, street plantings can provide an important role in providing a connection between wildlife corridors such as the Merri Creek and wildlife habitat provided in private gardens.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

I believe that there was a real need to review Moreland's 1997 Street Landscape Strategy, which appears to have attracted a certain degree of community opposition and which included some tree species – such as Golden Wattle – which are not ideally suited for street planting. And, in particular, I believe that the strategy could be greatly improved by allowing for plantings of non-Australian exotic species, to provide for a range of shady deciduous trees, to enable the cultural landscape and heritage values of Moreland to be maintained and reinforced, and, also, to recognise Moreland's multicultural diversity (even if olive trees *do* have the potential, in certain circumstances, to become environmental weeds).

However, I think that it is highly unfortunate that the new strategy appears to have come to the conclusion – without any real evidence – that locally indigenous trees are generally unsuited to street planting; and that such characteristics as habitat value, contribution to biodiversity, and local character should not – or perhaps *cannot* – be taken into account when making street tree choices.

I believe that a far better approach would be to carry out further investigations into how locally indigenous species can be used more successfully, and in ways which achieve more universal community acceptance. This could include the development of a list of the most appropriate and reliable locally indigenous species, and investigating how these can most effectively be used for street planting (and other landscaping) purposes.

This would enable the City of Moreland to continue to become a greener and more environmentally friendly city, and one of Australia's most innovative and committed supporters of the wider use of a wide diversity of locally indigenous plants.

It will be interesting to see what sort of public response the new strategy receives, and whether it is approved – either in its existing or a modified form – by Council.

*** Ken Duxbury is an IFFA Committee member.**

Culture for sustainability

Extracts from submission to Moreland by Dimi Bouzalas*

The main factor causing reduced sustainability is that human 'desire' has overtaken an understanding of what makes our world work. Sadly, the proposed revision to the Street Landscape Strategy is a huge backward step, once again butting ecological sustainability against human desires.

[in addition to reduced ecological sustainability] ...the huge, inestimable cost is the loss of learning experiences people will have for the natural world we live in. *Any* improvement on reconstructing our natural environment in an urban situation is critical in current times. Especially in a municipality where the number of times some people get to visit a natural landscape is zero.

Moreland – be proud of being a leader

Moreland ought to be proud of being a leader, embrace it and continue to lead. We have only just started to learn how to use our local indigenous plants in the urban setting, and Council has indicated it wants to kill the idea before it has even had a chance to become an infant! It is ironical that many streets and road sides in Greece are lined with the Australian Eucalypt – often the River Red Gum! – and they are so proud of it. This suggests to me that our fears may have some basis on experience, but they are largely attitudinal and exaggerated. one thing I would love us people to learn, is to admire nature for the character it has and not want everything to fit into our designer world.

Was the Indigenous community consulted?

Council opens its speeches with an acknowledgement to the Indigenous people – have they been asked what they would like? – and not only one person, but a range of representatives. If this has not been done, those words are that and no more.

Culture can be acknowledged and celebrated in a great number of ways.

People from different cultures have a strong desire to be acknowledged and accepted for who they are. The more our ways we are accepted, the more we feel we belong.

I believe that one of the reasons some people insist on having plants that "culturally represent" them, is that they do not feel accepted in other ways and it is a way of declaring "here I am, let me be represented in this land too".

I am sad that 'ethnicity' has been cited as a reason to revise the strategy's earlier commitment to planting indigenous plants. This connection has the potential of increasing divisiveness between

groups rather than building respect for each other. I am sure that some people would have expressed a desire to have trees of their own culture represented in the landscape. In my work, I found is that people love the plants they know, but provided with adequate experiences and information, almost without exception, people are more than happy to embrace the planting of indigenous plants.

My experience has also shown me that people love the trees that remind them of their cultural heritage. It is the people who most have this love, that most easily embrace the idea of planting indigenous plants. It makes perfect sense to them. They understand that there are plants for our human use, and there are plants for nature – and this can be balanced.

One of my most moving experiences was a planting with a group of Vietnamese people who were studying English. One student wrote that it wasn't until the planting she truly felt like she belonged in Australia. The actual planting of a locally native plant, the symbolism to her, the connection she felt with others on that day, transformed her sense of feeling 'foreign' to 'belonging'.

I feel we can have plantings to acknowledge and celebrate the diverse cultures in our municipality. There are a number of solutions, one being a high profile public park where people come together to celebrate, as being the site for a 'cultural diversity park'.

The desire for planting locally native trees has come about through dramatic awareness of how important they are if we are going to approach living sustainably on this planet. Many mistakes were caused by the early migrants as they did not understand this land, for which we are paying dearly now. However, they had no precedent of what damage was being caused – we do – we must learn from those mistakes, not keep the damage happening.

We get to plant whatever we as individuals want on our own block. In our suburbs there is only a small percentage of land that is potentially committed to nature – part of that percentage being the "nature strip". Let us give nature the respect it needs – lets ask the land what sort of trees it wants.

*** Dimi Bouzalas lives in East Brunswick and is an IFFA Committee member**

IFFA activities:

IFFA (Vic)

General Meeting

Tuesday 28th September at 7:30pm

- Speakers
- Gawk and squawk (show and tell, and Poster presentations)
- Bring your business card

Venue: University of Melbourne, room Quad 2 (Quadrangle 2 classroom near the Library in the classroom quadrangle) see Melways map 45 A12 and the campus map on page 6)

SPIFFA

Public meetings are on the first Monday of every month at 7:30 pm at the Parks Victoria depot at Hinton Street Rosebud.

Contact: Gidga Walker 0418 416 182.

Membership

IFFA membership costs
\$40 for non-profit organizations,
\$50 for corporations,
\$25 for individuals and families,
or \$20 concession.

Membership includes
4 issues of *Indigenotes* per year,
and discount subscription to
Ecological Management and Restoration

Members should check the mailing label to ascertain the status of their membership. If an invoice is required, please send a purchase order requesting an invoice.

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COMING ARTICLES:

- Wattle Bradyrhizobium inoculant
- Confessions of a problem hand-weeder

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Contributions to *Indigenotes* should be sent to the editor — the deadline for the next issue is 12th August. Contributions must be in electronic form, either on PC formatted floppy disk or CD or can be sent to the editor by email.

The views expressed in Indigenotes are not necessarily those of the Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association.