

Oaks Estate News

Oaks Estate Progress Association (OEPA)

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Gillespie Park upgrade due for completion on Monday 31 October.

Following the meeting with Jon Stanhope last year, the ACT Government allocated \$100,000 for community infrastructure upgrades. The community asked for the Gillespie Park playground upgrade, BBQ and table, and fencing of the Park along Railway Street. After consultation with the OEPA, Territory and Municipal Services (TAMS) are now renovating the Park, rolling stages 1 & 2 of the improvements into one. OEPA and TAMS will organize a community opening in November or December once the work is finished.

Robertson House tour, Thursday 27 October, 6.00pm

The ACT Government allocated \$165,000 for the conservation of Robertson House in Hazel Street. Conservation of Robertson House by the ACT Heritage Unit is finished and people are now able to visit the site and interpret its history. Dr Peter Dowling, the heritage consultant who planned the work on Robertson House, reported that:

- The building was conserved with as little replacement of original fabric as necessary to stabilise the building.
- Options to make the building habitable as a dwelling or a community centre were rejected as it would have required a lot of the original fabric to be replaced to meet with current housing standards. To do so would have substantially reduced the heritage values of the place.
- The future use of Robertson House will be as an historical interpretation building addressing the heritage values both in the structure of the building and the social values relating to working class family life.

Nigel Fetherstone, of the ACT Heritage Unit, has kindly volunteered his time to conduct a tour of Robertson House on Thursday 27 October, at 6.00pm. Peter Dowling might also come along. They will discuss future uses of the building and community involvement. The Heritage Unit is keen for a community group in Oaks Estate to have a guardianship role, perhaps with support from the National Trust, to help manage the building and grounds, and to organize tours.

Community Garden – allotments available

The working bee at the COGS Oaks Estate community garden (Canberra Organic Gardeners' Society) in September went very well. A trailer load of rubbish was removed, several garden beds were repaired and weeded, and a large depression in the paddock was filled. There was good food and good company. Another working bee will be held in November. All welcome. There are several allotments available to interested gardeners. Please contact Peter O'Dea if you are interested. Peter's contact details are at the end of the newsletter.

Oaks Estate river corridor storm debris and weed removal project Meeting at the Community Hall, Monday, 24 October, 6.00pm

TAMS, ACT Parks and Conservation, and the Molonglo Catchment Group are collaborating on a major project for removing the remaining storm debris and rehabilitation of the river corridor in Oaks Estate. The project is currently budgeted to run for 10 months and will be carried out in three parts:

- **Part 1** – Removing the huge accumulation of flood debris. This will begin in the next couple of months, could be sooner.
- **Part 2** – Removal of willows and some of the incidental woody weeds – probably poplars and some others - between the Queanbeyan Railway Bridge and the Oaks Estate Road bridge.
- **Part 3** – Rehabilitation (to happen in or around Autumn).

Because this area of the river has been identified as a potential Murray Cod breeding area there will be no removal of snags etc from the river during breeding time (which is about now).

TAMS in-house discussions have identified the river junction, particularly on the east and north side, to be a target spot. As the flood has already damaged them, TAMS proposes that the stand of poplars at the junction should be removed and replanting to replace them begin using more suitable species of vegetation to stabilise the junction during future flooding. Follow-up maintenance of the plantings by the community will be important to the success of this work. TAMS are looking into the possibility of improving the community's access to east side of

the Queanbeyan River by creating some form of pedestrian crossing (raised cement blocks just downstream from the weir near the railway bridge).

The debris that currently cuts the path between Hazelbrook Nursery and the railway bridge is recognised as an access problem for the movement of project equipment and its removal will be given top priority. This will also ensure that the mower can be brought through when the grass starts to grow on the track again.

There seems to be general agreement that a track could be cut between River Street and the Oaks Estate Road Bridge to provide access along the river for machinery, and for future recreation and land-care work.

The TAMS project team wants to work closely with the local community – the Progress Association, the Molonglo Catchment Group and Queanbeyan Land-care Group. John Bruggeman and Karen Williams (<fourofus@cyberone.com.au>) are happy to co-ordinate and liaise with people and groups.

Karen and John will let people know more about the project as information comes to hand. The long-term success of any rehabilitation work will depend on how much help the community provides during and after the project. Documentation of the river has already begun to provide pictures of before, during and after stages of the project. This documentation will be placed on the Oaks Estate website www.oaksestateact.org soon. Monitoring of the water and riverbanks will also be done to indicate how the project influences the health of the river over time. There will be plenty of opportunities for people to get involved.

The OEPA Committee and all interested people in the community have been invited to meet Rebecca Dawson, who is manager of the Restoration of Waterways and Surrounds Project, at 6.00pm on Monday 24 October at the Community Hall. Rebecca is planning to take the group for a walk along the banks of the river while it is still light and then return to the Hall for a discussion. Rebecca said that she is pleased to be working collaboratively with the Oaks Estate Progress Association and Molonglo Catchment Group to restore this much loved waterway in historic Oaks Estate.

Oaks Estate Master Planning Community Consultation

Master Planning for Oaks Estate was to commence in November, but has been postponed pending appointment of a consultant. The ACT Planning and Land Authority (ACTPLA), recently renamed the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate (EESD), will undertake the consultation process, with participation by the Queanbeyan City Council.

The OEPA was informed by EESD that “the objective of the master plan is to provide a planning framework with consideration of the community’s values to guide conservation and change to this historically important settlement.” EESD (ACTPLA) have suggested that we gather ideas for improvements in Oaks Estate and work out how we see Oaks Estate developing over the next 20-50 years.

Detailed infrastructure data to be used in the master plan project was collected earlier this year for an *Oaks Estate Infrastructure Capacity Study*. The OEPA does **not** have a copy of the *Study*. It is not yet on the ACTPLA web site (www.actpla.act.gov.au).

ACTPLA (EESD) has proposed the following process, to start once the consultant is appointed:

- ACTPLA will negotiate a consultation strategy with the community, probably in the New Year;
- then an initial consultation with the community will be held;
- this will be followed by a presentation to the community of a draft master plan with different scenarios and options.

EESD (ACTPLA) has just informed the OEPA that “the Oaks Estate Master Plan project brief has been completed and is currently in the procurement stage. This procurement process is to run throughout the month of November to identify and engage by public Request for Tender a consultant to create and provide a Master Plan of Oaks Estate. The evaluation of tenders is envisaged to be completed by mid December and a contract exchanged late December/early January. This timeframe has changed from our initial estimates as Request for Tender will be open for the period of one month. Once the contracts are executed EESD will have a more accurate timeframe for all the stages of the Oaks Estate Master Plan process. We are sensitive many people are very busy at this time of year and during January with holidays, travel etc and consequently will look to holding consultation with the community early in the new year when as many community members are available as possible.”

**Oaks Estate Progress Association website is now on-line <http://www.oaksestateact.org/>
Please contact Sarah Hooper re feedback, new content or advertising oeпа@hotmail.com.au.**

**You can contact the Oaks Estate Progress Association President, Peter O’Dea,
Ph. 0439400313; peterodea1@bigpond.com.**