



## **PLANT A TREE! VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!**

### **OAKS ESTATE TREE PLANTING DAY**

**9.30am-12.00, Sunday 20 May.  
Meet at the River end of River St.**

**Followed by a BBQ  
at the Community Hall.**

**Bring along a mallet &/or mattock if you have one! Wear long sleeves, sturdy/shoes boots and bring hat and work gloves**

**Please RSVP if possible (for catering) by Friday 18 May, email OEPA [oepa@hotmail.com.au](mailto:oepa@hotmail.com.au) or phone Karen and Terry on 6299 2409.**

**Supported by Greening Australia,  
Queanbeyan Land Care, Molonglo Catchment  
Group & Oaks Estate Progress Association.**

## **RE-PLANTING ON THE RIVER**

Greening Australia will provide about 2,000 tube stock trees and 300 other plants for cluster planting – wattles, grasses, sedges and rushes – along the river bank. They are endemic, frost-hardy species suitable for low, middle and upper story plantings. We are looking for quality planting, not quantity.

A submission has been made to the ACT Government for additional funding for the project in the 2012/13, 2013/14 financial years. There is budgeted funding for follow-up weed control of the area that has already been cleared.

Volunteer in-put is essential to the success of the project.

A tour of the River, upstream from Queanbeyan, is planned for the near future so that people will be able to see what the river should look like.

John Bruggeman  
Secretary, Molonglo Catchment Group

## **OAKS ESTATE HERITAGE IGNORED**

The ACT Government has committed to develop a Master Plan and Precinct Code for Oaks Estate, reflective of place, its heritage and community. This is not happening!

The Master Plan was to provide surety on the issue of Oaks Estate heritage and provide controls — defining the characteristic of the village and guiding future development and change. This has been promised (though not delivered on) to the residents of Oaks Estate for the last 23 years. All places in the ACT have this. Most places in Canberra have a Master Plan within a matter of months - not decades!

Since the process commenced in the early nineties, successive ACT Governments have initiated studies and community consultations and have either ignored the findings or ignored the community. This has allowed major development to occur that is eroding the heritage values of Oaks Estate and is not in keeping with the planning studies and contradicts advice from ACT Government agencies, including the Heritage Unit. Today we want a fair outcome.

The village of Oaks Estate, with its built history dating to 1837, is under threat of being lost to inappropriate development, including medium-high density residential, industrial developments and heavy commercial traffic.

Michel Starling,  
OEPA Representative on the ACT Govt. Oaks Estate  
Master Plan Reference Group



Michel and others at OEPA community BBQ, 12 May.

## **RAILWAY LAND REZONED FOR LIGHT INDUSTRIAL USE**

Karen Williams, representing the OEPA, made a presentation to Queanbeyan City Council's Planning and Development Review Committee at their meeting on 9 May. Karen spoke in opposition to the proposal to rezone railway land fronting Railway Street, contained in the Draft Queanbeyan Local Environment Plan.

Karen stated that the OEPA opposed the proposed railway land rezoning, because we believed that the advice that Queanbeyan Council has been offered in relation to the rezoning options of the railway land has been under-informed. She also said that the proposed rezoning would have a major impact on the northwest gateway to the City, presenting Oaks Estate as a low value industrial suburb of Queanbeyan, and would compromise the outcome of the Oaks Estate Master Plan. The proposed rezoning would also significantly degrade the heritage characteristics and environment of Oaks Estate and the Queanbeyan railway station.

The Planning and Development Review Committee passed a motion recommending that the rezoning proposal be approved with the following concessions:

- that the proposed maximum height of buildings be reduced from twelve to nine metres
- that it is the intention of Council to prepare a Design Control Plan that ensures that the heritage item of the Railway Station is protected and views and vistas to the station are retained.

There was no recognition that the Railway Station is part of a cross-border heritage precinct, which means that its broader landscape context is also of significance and should be protected. Nor was the Planning and Development Review Committee prepared to consider other concerns raised by the OEPA. As a result, the OEPA intend to pursue this matter at a higher level.

## **ROBERTSONS' HOUSE HERITAGE TOURS**

The National Trust and the ACT Heritage Unit allowed the house to be open on April 22 as part of the ACT Heritage Festival. This was very successful with between 60 and 70 people going through, seeing for themselves just how hard life was in the good old days. There is interest in the house among people who are related to the Robertson family and some of the locals, as well as those with a general interest in history or heritage.

The house is about to be transferred to the ACT government's Property Group who maintain everything from libraries to heritage properties around the ACT. This transfer will mean that, over time, there may be a little bit of money for a fire alarm system and (possibly) a rewire of the house. In the short term, all that will be done is that the plywood inside the windows will be

replaced with frosted perspex, and the toilet cistern will be replaced. The house still has water connected and ACTEW has now located the stop-cock. The important thing is that the house be protected from damage while we establish if there is interest in having the house open a number of times a year.

There seem to be a few out-of-area kids floating about at the moment, so anyone who sees anything suspect at the house should call the ACT Police on 62567777 (a central switchboard for all the ACT police stations). Please don't call 131444, it goes to Queanbeyan Police Station. In a real emergency, where life is at risk or if there is a fire, please call 000 and ask for fire, ambulance or police. Tell them you are calling from Oaks Estate **ACT**, and leave the rest to them.

If it can be arranged, I'd like to organise another open day before the end of the cold weather, one aimed just at locals and those related to the Robertsons. I'd like to see if there are others who would like to learn more about the house and help open it up more often. The rules for opening the house up are very strict. If it is done by the ACT government the house must have a fire alarm and illuminated signs to mark the exits. This might seem excessive but the ACT government has to opt for safety, rather than expose school groups etc to undue risk. I will ask Chris Wain, the Executive Director of the ACT National Trust, whether the Trust would support us in more frequent openings.

Terry Williams

## **MASTER PLAN UPDATE**

The short story is that there is still a lot of work to do.

- Master Planners have not addressed Oaks Estate heritage matters.
- Public Housing will not be re-located.
- McEwan Avenue will not be closed as proposed in the draft Plan.

For the longer story, read on. OEPA's President, Karen Williams, spells it out in detail.

The Master Plan process, to date, has confirmed to the planners (Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate – ESDD) what the OEPA has been telling them from day one, that Oaks Estate is an active, complex and unique community.

What makes us so? Well, Oaks Estate is strongly influenced by a mix of rural and urban environment. We form the area between the city and the countryside. We are neither a suburb nor a rural village although we have many characteristics of both. Within that, we have a small but very diverse population (historically, around 250-300 people). There are people who have lived in Oaks Estate for a long time and people who are new to the area. Oaks Estate has shopkeepers, factory owners, manufacturers, artists, tradespeople, office workers,

people who are unemployed, and pensioners, landlords, homeowners and tenants (both government and private).

Within that mix there are simply too many different and sometimes contradictory perspectives and issues for the OEPA to advocate one particular cause at the expense of another. Instead, the OEPA has continued to vigorously articulate to ESDD the resolutions circulated in our last newsletter. These are very broad guiding principles that were formulated out of the first Ideas Workshop that was held by ESDD in March. Those principles are intended to reflect the general concerns of people at that meeting and elsewhere: the common ground that underpins our community despite the differences that may exist. Those principles are on the OEPA website at [http://www.oaksestateact.org/newsletter/1204\\_06\\_OEPANewsletter\\_Draft3.pdf](http://www.oaksestateact.org/newsletter/1204_06_OEPANewsletter_Draft3.pdf).

What this means, in terms of the Master Plan, is that OEPA is putting its energies into ensuring that, despite our differences, everyone has a chance to say what he or she thinks. In terms of housing, for instance, some people want one house one block. Others want to be able to put two houses on a single block. Others want to put new contemporary housing in, somewhere, maybe making more room for it by retaining select houses to maintain a bit of charm. Some say medium density development and a higher population will raise values, others say this would ruin the niche market. If we are to create a plan that we can all support, we need to recognise and reconcile, as best we can, these disparate views.

On the other hand, there is general agreement that something should be done about the standard of the public housing stock in Oaks Estate. There has been talk about asking the Government to sell the blocks in question so that better quality and lower density housing could replace it. Some tenants are now worried their units are going to be demolished. Let me assure everyone, right now, that the relevant government agencies have firmly stated that:

- a) there is no intention to do anything significant with the public housing stock in Oaks Estate for at least ten years.
- b) if something does eventually happen, the ACT Government would most probably be looking to sell to a developer with the expectation that similar-density housing would replace it.
- c) any ideas about moving public housing to newly released blocks elsewhere in Oaks Estate in exchange for lower density zoning on the land it currently occupies have grown out of groundless and flawed assumptions.

The OEPA will, however, continue to work to ensure that, as part of the Master Plan process, public housing tenants have a genuine opportunity to discuss issues that are relevant to them.

We have used newsletters, leaflets, emails, blackboard messages, newspaper articles and word of mouth to make sure everyone is informed about what is happening, where the process is up to, what is being discussed and what is going to happen next. ESDD has also recognised that people work in different ways and has now decided to broaden the Master Plan consultation process beyond large public meetings, to better receive spoken, written or online submissions. If you disagree with the proposals being discussed, or you feel your specific concerns or your personal interests are not being adequately reflected or talked about then the only way to make that happen is to tell someone. If you find that difficult to do, let us know and we can help make sure the right people hear what you want to say.

The planners have told us that OEPA has been portrayed by some people as not being representative. I reject that criticism. As I have said, no one organisation can possibly represent the conflicting views of an entire community. OEPA will, however, support common concerns, just as it always has.

For those who might have forgotten, or have not lived in Oaks Estate long enough to know, the OEPA supported the opening of the community garden in 1991. More recently, OEPA negotiated with COGS to avoid the closure of the garden and obtained a grant to enhance it. OEPA has also had a hand in ACT Housing opening a community room in the George street flats in 2002 and in Oaks Estate residents receiving a bus fare subsidy in 2008 (a 15 year effort). The Oaks Estate community successfully lobbied, through the OEPA, for a rehabilitation project for the Molonglo and Queanbeyan Rivers around the junction in 2011. The OEPA is now working in partnership, with the Molonglo Catchment Group and Queanbeyan Landcare and Greening Australia, to host a community tree-planting day on the 20<sup>th</sup> May. Building on that event, the OEPA hopes to form a landcare group as a sub-committee, to co-ordinate future maintenance and monitoring of the new plantings. The intention is to also initiate future community development projects that merge health, fitness and environmental activities. We meet with a representative of Southside Community Services shortly to discuss the potential of the idea and the possibility of the OEPA working in partnership with them.

This strategy, along with our objectives of a walking/bicycle track along the river corridor to Fyshwick and better pedestrian and bicycle access along Railway Street reflects the Government's "Active Communities" policy, as does the OEPA's long-term objective of putting the area of urban open space in front of the railway station, on River Street across the road from Gillespie Park, to good community use. (The OEPA was instrumental in the rezoning of those blocks to urban open space back in 2002/2003, and Gillespie

Park has been recently upgraded, again as a result of OEPA lobbying.)

There has been a Progress Association in Oaks Estate since at least 1926. Being largely issue-driven, its concerns have changed with the circumstances. During the 1920s and 1930s the focus was on obtaining a supply of water, electricity and other services. In the 1940s and 1950s the focus was on obtaining equipment for fire protection, a bus service, and local amenities such as the Community Hall, a preschool/play-centre and a bus shelter. In the 1960s the focus shifted to sewerage, drainage, kerbs and gutters. In the 1970s the big issue was the resumption of Oaks Estate's freehold land by the Commonwealth Government. OEPA successfully lobbied for the creation of Gillespie Park in time for the Bicentennial celebrations. At the same time a heritage survey was carried out proposing that the policy of medium-density be removed and the existing multi-storey units in River and George Street be upgraded.

In the 1990s the OEPA embarked on a program of community development and cultural projects supporting the identification, documentation and promotion of Oaks Estate's heritage. With the support of the occupant, Les Robertson, the OEPA and the National Trust lobbied for the protection of the Robertsons' house. The OEPA worked with the ACT Arts Council to raise the community's profile in support of the OEPA's submission about the newly-drafted Territory Plan. There, the government agreed that review was needed, and it did begin, but stalled. It was not until 2001, after some not-too-subtle urging by the OEPA, that the consultation process was re-instigated, and both a new planning study and a heritage survey were completed. That process was not finalised.

So, in 2012, here we are again. What has changed is the rate and scale of pending development that is proposed within and around Oaks Estate. (We reported in our previous newsletter about the Eastern Broadacre development, Queanbeyan's railway land rezoning, and Oaks Estate land release, to name a few.) Like it or not, these are changing times and the Government wants clear policies and planning instruments in place.

This Master Plan consultation process is our opportunity to have some influence on change. That is why it is important to tell the planners what we want Oaks Estate to be and how we want to interact with the spaces where we live, work, play and relax.

If you want to make sure your particular concerns and ideas are fully reflected in the consultation process then you need to submit something yourself: in writing, as a drawing or whatever, by email or website survey. Or, failing that, you can get someone from the OEPA committee or the Oaks Estate reference group representatives to help you make a submission.

There will be another opportunity to speak to the planners directly, face to face, in June/July when more

design options are put up for display and discussion in the Community Hall. Other ways to communicate your views are to send an email to [oaksestatemasterplan@act.gov.au](mailto:oaksestatemasterplan@act.gov.au), or visit: [www.environment.act.gov.au/oaksestate](http://www.environment.act.gov.au/oaksestate) to fill in the online questionnaire, survey and comments form, and/or call Canberra Connect on 13 22 81 or 6207 1923 and have your say.

Karen Williams  
OEPA President

### OEPA COMMUNITY BBQ

The OEPA committee promoted a 'Meet your Neighbour' BBQ, held last Saturday, 12 May, in Gillespie Park.

Twenty or more local residents came along. It was a good chance to have a relaxed chat about what's going on in Oaks Estate and to talk to OEPA representatives on the ACT Government's Master Plan Reference Group, Michel Starling and Karen Williams.



Having a chat at the BBQ.



The dogs enjoyed it too!