



FriendsNET

Number 46 February 2004

Insurance Imbroglia!

imbroglio

1. an intricate and perplexing state of affairs; a complicated or difficult situation.
 2. a misunderstanding or disagreement of a complicated nature.
 3. a confused heap.
- (The Macquarie Dictionary)

Volunteer Friends are entitled to straight answers to the following questions:

- Am I indemnified against any claims against me arising out of my volunteer involvement?
- If the Friends Group is incorporated, is it indemnified against claims?
- If the Friends Group is not incorporated, are its members indemnified against claims?
- Am I entitled to any accident insurance benefits if I suffer injury or loss, and if so, what?

There is great confusion and prevarication. During the Year of the Volunteer there were many expressions of appreciation of volunteers, but it was a year when insurance for volunteers was a huge issue. If authorities are serious about encouraging volunteers they should provide appropriate insurance cover.

First, a distinction must be made between liability insurance and personal accident insurance.

Liability insurance covers the legal liability of a person or group if sued by someone who suffers injury or loss. That someone may be a fellow volunteer or a stranger. A successful claim requires proof of fault.

Personal accident insurance provides an injured person with limited benefits beyond what is available through Medicare. It may include a loss of earnings component. Some volunteers may not be concerned about personal accident

insurance—they may be prepared to bear the risk, regarding it in the same way as a domestic or sport injury, or they may rely on private health insurance cover or have their own private personal accident cover.

FriendsNET has checked with the various management authorities:

Parks Victoria provides public liability cover and accident cover for authorised activities in parks. The Department of Sustainability and Environment provides liability cover for overseen activities and some personal accident cover. Trust for Nature provides both.

Each municipal council and water authority has its own arrangements. For example, Melbourne City Council provides neither cover but Bayside provides both. Some councils treat Friends not as independent autonomous groups but as Special Committees of Council that are thereby covered by the council's public liability policy.

Where management authority cover is provided, it may be limited to claims arising out of an authorised activity by registered participants on management authority land and not extend to off-site social or other activities. Some Friends Groups have taken out their own public liability insurance to fill this gap.

Doug Evans, the Regional Landcare Coordinator for the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority, has prepared a useful summary of insurance options. It is available on Web site: www.landcare.net.au

The Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne found that the cheapest public liability cover is through the Garden Clubs of Australia Inc. Premium is related to membership. For example, for the first year the cost is \$321.06 for up to 30 members and \$531.61 for 100 members.

The message for each Friends Group is: understand exactly what your management authority or authorities provide, make the position clear to your members, and then decide if you should take out insurance cover.

— Geoff Durham 9523 5559

Nothing to do with insurance, but a reminder of the importance of the social side of group activities, and of celebrating people and events.

Friends of Damper Creek celebrated their 10th anniversary last November, and also bestowed a Life Membership. See Geoff Durham's Group Grapevine on page 3.





Friends Forum – 17 April 2004

Enclosed with this newsletter is a flyer with registration form for the forthcoming forum, to be held at Melbourne/South Yarra Senior Citizens Centre, Fawcner Park, 65 Toorak Rd West, South Yarra (Melway map 2L:C5).

A PDF version of the flyer is available on our website: home.vicnet.net.au/~friends.

We are looking forward to a good representation of Friends from a wide range of groups.

Best Friend 2004

The award for Best Friend for 2004 will be announced and presented at the Forum.

FriendsNET – how are we doing?

This is the third issue of *FriendsNET* since we revised the format. We are trying to make it more 'interactive' and useful to groups, and are delighted at the increase in responses. We are aiming for a balance of Network news, practical information, and pieces which represent just a sample of the many interesting and important things being done by groups across Victoria.

We would welcome feedback to indicate whether we are getting the mix right (see contact details on page 4).

Remember you can download a PDF version of *FriendsNET* from our website, or have it sent by e-mail if your group has requested this.

Groups in Action ...



Wally Mortimer – convener of the Friends of Wonnangatta Valley

Return to Shangri-la

The Friends of Wonnangatta Valley have returned to their Shangri-la after a 12-month lapse due to last summer's alps fires and the subsequent closure of access tracks.

Remarkably, the valley itself was not burnt. Over the forthcoming Easter period (9–12 April) the Friends will hold their main working bee and social occasion for the year. They describe it as a 'promotional visit' when they hope to engage many more people in their activities.

The Wonnangatta Valley is a remote place of outstanding beauty, pioneering fortitude and murder mystery in the heart of the Victorian Alpine National Park. Access is by foot or 4-wheel drive from the north via Myrtleford or from the south via Heyfield.

Wally Mortimer of Milawa instigated the formation of the Friends group in 1991. He became—and still is—its Convener. He is the author of *The History of Wonnangatta Station*, first published in 1981. His first visit to the valley was in 1948, and he has been a regular

visitor ever since. He organised the restoration of the historic cemetery which the Friends maintain.

This year their main project is completion of a stock yards feature fence (see photographs). They will camp at the site of the old Bryce homestead, destroyed by fire in 1957.

In his book Wally says:

The beautiful Wonnangatta valley is a rare geographical phenomenon. It is a cleared flat plain varying in width from a few hundred yards to over half a mile through which meanders the Wonnangatta River, and the whole is framed by towering mountain ranges. It is about 1000 acres in extent.

Wally has a special message for *FriendsNET*: 'I would like people who have heard or haven't heard of the place to see it at first hand. We will be there to answer questions. Members of other Friends groups will be particularly welcome'. Anyone considering accepting this invitation should contact Wally on 5727 3269.

The Friends of Wonnangatta Valley working on a replica of the original post and rail fence around the old stockyard at the Homestead site. The materials were brought in by the Friends.



Experience Exchange (your space – expanded!)

A response on the rabbits and plant guards issue (see *FriendsNET* 44):

Leon Costermans (Friends of Langwarrin FFR) reports that a staple from a staple gun at the top of one or more stakes is a simple way of stopping the animals pulling the plastic down. Of course, it doesn't stop the wallabies nibbling the plant once it grows above the guard!

And several suggestions for effective poisoning of Angled Onion (see *FriendsNET* 45):

From Mark Williams (Friends of Koolunga): I have successfully tried a mixture of Brush-off 15g/100L of water with Roundup 1.5L/100L water. This combination was given to me by Stephen Ainsworth at Monsanto, and it works! It must be sprayed just before flowers are forming as it takes approx. 6–8 weeks to kill the plant. If it is sprayed too late the bulbs may not be killed off, and the seeds will still be viable. I sprayed this mix on 500 sq. metres and the whole area was almost free of Angled Onion the next year! The plants that did reappear were almost all ones without multiple bulbs, proving that they were not plants surviving from the previous year, but new ones germinated from old seed. I did try the same concentration of Roundup as above, but on its own, and it had very little effect. I also tried Brush-off on its own, with little more effect, but no apparent change the next year.

From Kieran Martin (Friends of Picnic Hill): Kamba M is very successful on Angled Onion but must be used when the buds are just forming and you won't get all the bulbs in one year. I have also had some success with Roundup 130mL/10L water plus a penetrant. I don't use

Brush-off because of reports that it remains in the soil and is taken up by eucalypts.

From Geoff Speedy (Friends of Warrandyte SP): You need to spray/slash when the infestation is at the growth stage known as 'bulb exhaustion'. Any later than this the plant has created 'bulblets' which are suppressed by the main bulb, which will flower next season if the main bulb is destroyed. Bulb exhaustion is easily identified by pulling the green stalks and noting the shape of the bulb. When the stalk pulls easily and the bulb has disappeared (i.e. it is tube-shaped, not bulb-shaped), the bulb-part no longer has potential for growth. Slashing or spraying at this stage, to remove the greenery, will kill that plant. However, by the time the plant is flowering, the plant is creating bulblets and restoring the bulb to survive the following summer. Bulb exhaustion is around May along creeks in Warrandyte, but could be earlier or later in your area, and will depend on immediate local conditions of the infestation.

And now a question on allergic reactions:

Steve Fernee (Friends of Wanderslore) writes: After weeding Japanese Honeysuckle in short sleeves, a member developed a long, angry, raised, red welt on his arm—apparently an allergic reaction. It persisted for a couple of weeks and the skin peeled as from sunburn. It is suspected the cause was Forest Wire Grass. Has anyone had a similar experience with this or any other plant?

If anyone has had similar experiences with particular plants or even unusual bites or stings while working in the bush, let us know and we might try to get advice to be included in a suitable article in *FriendsNET*. —Ed.

Share your questions, experiences or ideas – contact a Committee member (see page 4)

Geoff's Group Grapevine

In my liaison role I am frequently asked what Friends do. It comes down to three things: Support, Enjoy and Protect.

The focus of a Friends Group is support of a conservation or historic reserve or native species. But it is not all work. Involvement as a Friend leads to enhanced enjoyment (and knowledge) of the reserve or species. Protection comes from input into management decisions.

We talk a lot about obtaining and retaining members, and I think in this regard we may not have appreciated the importance of the *social* aspect. I recently read an article about the significance of 'social inclusion' for mental and physical health. Dr Mardie Townsend's talk at the Friends Seminar established that involvement in a Friends group can provide great 'social inclusion'. Successful groups are inclusive; everyone is welcomed,

and as well as involvement in activities there are opportunities for social interaction.

There can be no more genuine recognition than that by one's peers. Honorary Life Membership has been bestowed on the following members of their respective groups:

Cyril Curtain of the Friends of Brisbane Ranges NP on the occasion of their 25th anniversary celebration.

Doug Pocock and Arthur Francis of the Friends of the Lilydale to Warburton Rail Trail at their AGM.

Barry Hunter of the Friends of Damper Creek at their 10th anniversary BBQ (and damper) held under the watchful eyes of two Tawny Frogmouths.

Gaye Gadsden and Margot Craddock of the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater at their AGM.

— continued on page 4



Geoff Durham
Group Liaison Officer

More from Geoff's Group Grapevine ...

Some events of note are the presentation of yet another successful show by the Friends of Woodlands Historic Park called 'Woodland's New Century'. They also organised a watering roster for the historic gardens over the summer period. The Frankston Environmental Friends Network had eighty Friends and others at their 'Green Day' Seminar on 22 November. In the Dandenongs, the Friends of George Tindale Memorial Garden will have a plant sale on 27 March 2004, and Karwarra Australian Plant Garden, Kalorama, have their Autumn Plant Sale on 18 April. They are presenting 'Our Australia' photographic exhibition in association with Knox Photographic Society (13 March - 4 April).

Parks Victoria's *Conservation Reserves Management Strategy* (see *FriendsNET* 45) states: 'Friends groups can act as the eyes and ears of reserves managers'. And they do. The newsletter of the Mullum Mullum Creek Bushcare Group says: 'If you come across feral bees nesting in trees in the bush please contact your local Council so they can remove them. The number for Maroondah is 9294 5677 Brad Curtis'. They informed Brad of three feral bee hives that they found while weeding. Friends of Pallister's Reserve found an active fox den. Many groups reported the best wildflowers (and invasion of weeds, particularly Paterson's Curse) for many years. Powerful Owls have been featuring in newsletters: F O Angahook-Lorne report a pair and chick at Distillery Creek, F O Warrandyte three nesting pairs, F O Dandenong Valley Parklands sighted a roosting bird in Koomba Park, and F O Kurth Kiln report a sighting of a young owl.

The eyes of Friends groups for Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries could play an important role by monitoring and reporting illegal activities.

The Trust for Nature board has approved Guidelines for the recognition and operation of Friends Groups on properties owned by the Trust. The Guidelines are similar to the Parks Victoria Guidelines.

And We Welcome...

We continue to formally affiliate both old and new groups -

Balcombe Estuary Rehabilitation Group
The Balcombe Estuary Reserve at Mt Martha is 44 ha of riparian vegetation. Activities are planting and weed removal every Tuesday morning and on the third Sunday of the month. Mary Stemp 5977 1089.

Blackburn & District Tree Preservation Society
We are proud to formally affiliate one of the oldest conservation organisations in the State. Formed in 1958, it is highly respected for its on-going work for the environment of the City of Whitehorse and in educating the community about indigenous vegetation. It has planting and weeding days at four sites in spring and autumn. Ann Clayton 9878 6585.

Black Rock & Sandringham Conservation Association
Established in 1969, the Association has a broad charter. It incorporates a Friends Group involved in weeding, planting and general foreshore protection. Janet Ablitt 9589 6646.

Mullum Mullum Creek Bushcare Group
'All you need do is bring gardening gloves, a sense of humour and a cup. Tools and drinks provided. No experience necessary.' Weeding sessions on the 2nd Sunday of the month. Dale Morgan 9870 1060.
Web site: www.members.optusnet.com.au/roughplanet.

Victorian High Country Huts Association
Not only huts and associated structures in the high country of Victoria, but also conservation of the natural environment are the concerns of this group formed last year. It already has about 160 members and a web page: www.vhcha.org.au. David Oldfield 9747 1411.

- Geoff Durham

How to contact us ...

By post: Friends Network Committee
c/- VNPA, 60 Leicester Street, CARLTON 3053

Convener & group address database: Bernie Fox
- 9741 9859 - hayburn@bigpond.com

Newsletter: Margaret Boyd - 9560 8084
- bboyd@melbpc.org.au

Group Liaison: Geoff Durham - 9523 5559
- gadurham@bigpond.com

Have we got your contact details correct? Check on our website home.vicnet.net.au/~friends, or contact Bernie Fox (details at left)

Deadline for May issue: 19 April 2004

If undelivered, return to:
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