



Junortoun Community Action Group Inc.

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Tania Macleod
Project officer: Greening Greater Bendigo
City of Greater Bendigo
PO Box 733
Bendigo Central Vic. 3552

Greening Greater Bendigo - submission

Dear Tania,

Thank you for attending the November meeting of the Junortoun Community Action Group and outlining the Greening Greater Bendigo strategy; we appreciate the opportunity for the discussion. The following written submission is provided to formalise our contribution to the Greening Greater Bendigo vision.

About the Junortoun Community Action Group

The Junortoun Community Action Group (JCAG) is a volunteer, not-for-profit community representative association for residents of Junortoun. The Action Group was formed in 2012 and became incorporated in 2014. JCAG has produced two Community Plans for Junortoun and has been effective in implementing and achieving many of the objectives identified in those plans. The Action Group is widely recognised for its representation and advocacy for Junortoun. JCAG communicates with the community of Junortoun through a quarterly newsletter, a Facebook page and a website.

The Action Group focuses its work in two areas:

- Building a stronger sense of community among residents of Junortoun, through events, activities and effective communication.
- Advocating for improvements to facilities and services including transport, sporting, recreation, environmental and other infrastructure.

JCAG has a track record of successful lobbying having achieved a playground, a cycling and walking track between Junortoun and Strathfieldsaye, improved bus services, and Mclvor Highway safety improvements. For several years it has led a nest box construction project involving students from Catherine McAuley College. The Action Group has close working relationships with local organisations including the Friends of the O'Keefe Rail Trail, Strathfieldsaye and District Community Enterprise, and Bike Bendigo.

The Junortoun Community Action Group supports the principles of Greening Greater Bendigo

JCAG values the bushland in which we live. The Greater Bendigo National Park, Wellsford State Forest, O'Keefe Rail Trail, Knul-doorong Woodland, Strathfieldsaye Bushland Reserve and Manning Reserve are all features of our community. They are homes to trees, other plants, mammals, birds, reptiles and insects; they are spaces for recreation, exercise, active transport and quiet retreat; their presence provides balance to the built environment in a community which is substantially car-dependent.

JCAG's recognition of the natural environment is reflected in its rules of association and in the motto of the organisation. Our statement of purposes includes: *to achieve a friendly, safe and peaceful, semi-rural environment, with a sense of community and a focus on families*. While our Group's motto "Our Home in the Bush" reflects not just the historical connection with Homebush but the Groups intention to recognise and respect the land which we call home.

We are especially honoured to have Knul-doorong Woodland located within Junortoun. This site is of special significance to Dja Dja Wurrung people. Its presence should be recognised and further protected in the strategies of the City of Greater Bendigo.

Junortoun Community Action Group supports initiatives and investment in tree-planting and other greening and pro-environment activities. In recent years our Action Group has led or participated in nest-box construction, tree-planting events, the Clean Up Australia Day campaign and other community cleaning activities at Manning Reserve, and along McIvor Highway.

JCAG argues for the preservation of existing trees and vegetated areas across Bendigo. Once trees are removed, for housing or industry, they can never be returned to the land, and our environment suffers as a result.

General comments relating to the strategy

Community education is important to achieving a green Bendigo

Discussion at our meeting noted that respect for the importance of trees and vegetation is not uniform across Bendigo. It also noted that even among residents who are committed to a green environment, there is lack of awareness of the challenges presented to gardeners by the Bendigo environment.

Community education should be provided that identifies and promotes:

- The importance of trees, shrubs and grasses for the environment and for the health of people and animals living in Bendigo and region.
- Suitable selection of species for planting in Bendigo.

- The challenges of gardening in Bendigo, including managing: clay soils, competition from Eucalypts, and irregular rainfall.
- When to plant in Bendigo, and how to maintain newly planted trees, shrubs and grasses.
- Guiding principles and rules for the care of street trees and nature strips by residents.
- Use of grey water and treated domestic wastewater on native species.

Bendigo cannot achieve a green city without addressing water security and management

A green city requires water to maintain the health of trees and plants and the animals that live within them. The City and associated authorities (Coliban Water, NCCMA) should have robust plans in place to ensure the water security of the Greater Bendigo region.

Where tree plantings are initiated by Council, community organisations or private bodies, a plan must be developed that supports the watering and care of new plantings well into their third year.

Resist changes to the Urban Growth Boundary

Greater Bendigo is growing at a substantial rate and demand for land for housing is high. The Junortoun Community Action Group argues that existing areas of trees and native vegetation should be retained, and housing growth should be confined to areas already identified, as well as in-fill projects closer to central Bendigo and in existing General Residential Zones.

JCAG opposes any extension of the Urban Growth Boundary eastwards into Junortoun, as this would contribute to loss of vegetation and amenity in our suburb.

Enforce rules and permits on clearing vegetation and undertakings to replant

With Greater Bendigo's growth there is demand from land owners to remove vegetation to provide for housing. This results in the loss of habitat, and impacts on the liveability of a suburb or community. JCAG believes:

- Greater restrictions should apply to landowners' to prevent removal of trees from properties.
- Greater monitoring and enforcement should occur to prevent, identify and prosecute unauthorised clearing.
- Where a land-clearing activity or sub-division requires the replanting of trees, the number of trees planted should be more vigorously monitored and enforced, including the maintenance of the health of the plants into their third year.

Enforcement of rules that address dangerous and unsightly land

JCAG believes there should be greater enforcement of existing laws concerning Dangerous or Unsightly land (clause 2.5 of the Community Local Law). This is more than just a matter of neighbourhood or civic pride, but helps to build an expectation that landholders should maintain their property for safety, for aesthetics, and for the natural environment which they share.

Junortoun specific initiatives

The Junortoun Community Action Group asks that the Greening Greater Bendigo strategy particularly notes and prioritises the following actions.

Support the initiatives of the Junortoun Community Action Group to preserve and protect Honeyeater Reserve

Honeyeater Reserve is the name selected for the former gravel pits located between Binks Road and Somerset Park Road Junortoun, south of Honeyeater Lane. This land forms an important nature and wildlife corridor which extends from the O'Keefe Rail Trail to the Strathfieldsaye Bushland Reserve.

The intentions of JCAG are to:

- Obtain Committee of Management status for the land.
- Formally rename the land as Honeyeater Reserve.
- Develop a management plan for the reserve.
- Obtain funding that will allow for effective management of the reserve including:
 - Fencing
 - Tree-planting
 - Erosion control, vandalism control and littering control
 - Pathways, seating and interpretive signs
 - Extension of the JCAG nestbox project.

The Junortoun Community Action Group asks that this ambition is identified and endorsed in the Greening Greater Bendigo plan.

Expand and protect Knul-doorong Woodland

Knul-doorong Woodland is a culturally important site located in Junortoun, protected by a Trust for Nature covenant. With Honeyeater Reserve (see above) and the Strathfieldsaye Bushland Reserve it represents an important wildlife corridor that connects to the O'Keefe Rail Trail. Initiatives undertaken at this site should be closely coordinated with local Dja Dja Wurrung community members. JCAG believes the following actions are possible at this location:

- Purchase the adjacent privately-held land (Lot 2 LP119983) and expand Knul-Doorong Woodland (effectively doubling the size of the Woodland).
- Protect the expanded Knul-doorong Woodland with the highest possible environmental covenants.
- Establish fencing or other barriers around Knul-doorong Woodland to protect the site from motor vehicles.
- Undertake native planting of grasses, shrubs and trees at the Woodland.

- Install walking paths to encourage park users to remain on tracks and to minimise erosion and damage to native flora.
- Erect additional nest boxes at the expanded Woodland.
- Promote water capture in the dam to encourage presence of water at the site year-round.
- Consider development of a Dja Dja Wurrung sculpture park at the Woodland.
- Consider establishing a centre for indigenous ecology within the expanded Woodland.
- Provide historical, natural and interpretive signage.

Plant trees along Mclvor Highway between Lords Raceway and Harley Street

Currently Mclvor Highway immediately east of Pratts Park Road is a stark and treeless environment. Clearing activities from the industrial estate and Bendigo Domain Village have contributed to this; as well as some failed tree-planting activities on the north side of the highway, and weedy overgrowth in the drain running along the Highway which represents the headwaters of Splitters Creek.

Planting of carefully selected trees along this length of road would provide:

- A more visually attractive entrance to the suburbs of Bendigo, that reflects the City's green ambitions.
- A tree-lined boulevard for residents of Bendigo Domain Village and other Junortoun residents to walk along.
- Reduction in the visual impact and blight of the adjacent industrial estate.
- Shade for users of the shared cycling/walking path on the south side of Mclvor Highway.

Act to prevent damage and erosion in Greater Bendigo National Park

Bendigo is fortunate to be surrounded by substantial areas of National Park, however this land is at risk from damage and erosion from non-permitted activities, in particular trail bike riding, private motor vehicle use, mountain-bike riding and tree-felling.

- Greater enforcement activities should be undertaken by relevant authorities, (e.g. Parks Victoria, Police) to identify and prevent damage to the National Park.
- Penalties for damage to National Parks and the natural environment should be increased.
- Community members should be encouraged to provide passive surveillance of illegal activities and to report breaches to a rapid-response team.
- Where damage has occurred to the Park this should be remediated without delay through fencing and replacement planting.

Continue tree plantings along O'Keefe Rail Trail

Our meeting with Tania Macleod identified several areas in Greater Bendigo where community tree planting is desirable, e.g. California Gully, Eaglehawk. These are acknowledged and supported.

JCAG also asks for continued support for tree planting along the length of the O'Keefe Rail Trail to make the environment of the trail more pleasant for trail users, and to maximise its habitat for wildlife.

Plantings along the Rail Trail should especially be planned for East Bendigo, west of Murphy Street, where the landscape is stark and uninviting for trail users.

Roundabouts are an opportunity to Green Greater Bendigo

Within Mclvor Forest Estate Junortoun there are several recently installed roundabouts which are a missed opportunity for public tree planting. Well chosen plants can act to buffer the concrete and bitumen environment. Local residents could be encouraged to maintain plantings.

Maintain support for the Junortoun Community Action Group nest box project

For the past two years the Junortoun Community Action Group has led a community-based project to construct and install nest-boxes for mammals and birds in Junortoun. This has involved design and construction of boxes by students of Catherine McAuley College and residents of Bendigo Domain Village; erection of boxes by staff of the City of Greater Bendigo; and maintenance of boxes (removal of feral bees) by a local Junortoun resident. Species target to date have been tuans (phascogales), sugar gliders, owlet night-jars, eastern rosellas.

This initiative has been funded through modest grants provided by the City's Community Grant program, and supported through the partnership of staff of the City's Parks and Gardens unit. JCAG acknowledges and thanks the City of Greater Bendigo for its support to date.

JCAG requests continuing support for this project, as it provides homes and breeding sites for species which are currently at risk from land-clearing activities. Future species planned for the project include microbats, owls, pardalotes and kookaburras. The project proposes to continue the installation of nest boxes east and west along the O'Keefe Rail Trail and on other public land in Junortoun.

The Junortoun Community Action Group thanks the City of Greater Bendigo for the opportunity to contribute to this strategy and requests to be kept informed of its outcomes and any associated actions, priorities or related strategies.

Yours faithfully,



Kevin de Vries
Secretary – Junortoun Community Action Group.