



Chairperson's report to the first Annual General Meeting of Woodlake Reserve Action Group Inc (WRAG)

It is with great pleasure and a sense of shared accomplishment that I present this inaugural report, reflecting on WRAG's journey since 2023.

What began as a passionate response to the pressing needs and the potential of Woodlake Drive Reserve, has blossomed into a robust, community-driven action group. This report aims to capture our collective efforts, the milestones reached, and the partnerships forged in pursuit of a vibrant, sustainable future for our local environment.

Small beginnings

In January 2023, ten residents of Craighburn Farm came together, each sharing concerns about the deterioration of Woodlake Drive Reserve and keen to find ways to address the situation.

WRAG originally hitched its wagon to the Blackwood Action Goup while ideas and plans for the Reserve at the heart of Craighburn Farm were collated, discussed, and developed and reshaped...and a wider resident support base was secured.

WRAG's first community event was a humble Sausage Sizzle in April 2023 the first ever community wide event in the Reserve...fifty residents turned up for a snag and to hear about WRAG's ideas for the Reserve. Then we held another event later in Spring 2023 and even more residents gathered and many signed up as members of WRAG. The energy spurred us on.

We worked hard to start the process of repairing the Reserve with the support of our local Councillors Karen Hockley and Darren Kruse and our local state member Catherine Hutchesson MP. Their continuing engagement and support is heartening and heartfelt.

WRAG's primary goal in the first 12 months was to develop a good working relationship with the City of Mitcham and by October 2023, a small group of WRAG members was officially inducted as Mitcham Council volunteers.

By the end of the year, our membership had grown to twenty inducted volunteers and twenty ordinary members, and more residents were awaiting the induction process with Council.

Council maintenance was reactivated, and the Reserve began to look cared for.

Plans and Action

With the help of Bill Chandler, a resident and retired landscape architect and planner, the many ideas canvassed with residents and discussed by WRAG were brought together in a plan for Woodlake Drive Reserve. The plan identified twenty-one opportunities and actions, including improving reserve maintenance and water quality in the duck pond, addressing the condition of boardwalk, reinforcing pedestrian connections to the adjacent Reserves, creating an environmental corridor, and more.

We are immensely thankful to Bill for his contribution to WRAG and Craighburn Farm.

The plan formed the basis of WRAG's Strategic and Action Plans, developed and adopted by the Committee in early 2024. These Plans now guide our purpose and activity in enhancing Woodlake Reserve and the adjacent open spaces of Craighburn Farm.

The Plans, together with the Nature Trail Plan (also prepared by Bill), were discussed with management of the City of Mitcham and after due consideration, have now been supported as the basis for action in the Reserves.

In March 2024, WRAG was Incorporated, with Management and Strategic Plans in place and the founding members forming the first official WRAG Inc Committee.

We organised monthly working bees - usually weeding existing garden beds or cleaning up paths on the bridge - and decided on a butterfly garden, in a sad corner of the Reserve, as our first project.

Plants for the garden were donated by Green Adelaide and with the leadership of Meredith Luscombe, the garden was planted by 13 inducted volunteers. We were successful in obtaining a grant from the City of Mitcham for an interpretive sign. Mitcham Council has installed a tap nearby and the garden has flourished even during the drought. There has been a 90% survival rate for the native plants over summer.

We have recently added further plants to the Garden and hope they all thrive.

Visions and actions

Committee member, Carolyn Hastie, envisioned a nature trail with a sensory garden in the Reserve, to bring the community together and grow a better understanding of the flora and fauna in our local environment.

The idea was supported by the committee and our then Treasurer, John Spriggs, together with Jacquie Wright, then Deputy Chair, with advice from Trees for Life, prepared an application for funds from Green Adelaide's *Grass Roots Grant* programme. Some five months later, to our delight, we were advised that the application was successful. \$64,000 was allocated to WRAG for a Nature Trail in the Woodlake Drive and Wetlands Reserves over two years.

In response to this significant grant to a local community group, the City of Mitcham is investing \$69,000 to reengineer a problematic creek bed in Woodlake Drive Reserve and improve access in the Wetlands Reserve, by relocating a constantly boggy path. We are told that work should start very soon.

Under the leadership of Terry Quinn, detailed implementation plans for the Nature Trail were prepared, with Trees for Life being contracted to work with WRAG. Before Christmas 2024, orders were placed for over 400 tube stock, stakes and guards.

Preliminary on-site work on the first part of Stage 1 began in early April 2025, with planting undertaken on 27 and 28 June and 4 July 2025. Trees for Life prepared the planting sites and dug the holes, while seventy-two WRAG volunteers, residents of Craighburn Farm and the City of Mitcham assisted in the planting of 420 tube stock. Rotary provided invaluable support in running a Sausage Sizzle for the hardworking volunteers.

At the community engagement event for the Nature Trail on 28 June, WRAG was delighted to host the Deputy Premier Susan Close, a former resident of Diosma Drive, Member for Waite Catherine Hutchesson, Mayor City of Mitcham Heather Holmes-Ross and Councillors Karen Hockley, Darren Krise and Tom Morrison. All bogged in and helped one way or another, moving mulch, planting tube stock or watering, to make this event a great experience. Their support and encouragement of WRAG from day one has been amazing, and we are very very thankful.

Other plans

The Nature Trail is a massive task...and probably more than we ever thought possible for WRAG back in early 2023. While it has become the main focus for WRAG, it is not the only one (see below).

In September 2024 WRAG applied for grants from the City of Mitcham for interpretive signage for the Reserve and for a pétanque and bocce court and garden on the derelict playground site in the heart of Woodlake Reserve, these being priority projects identified in our Strategic Plan.

We were successful in winning a grant for a sign for the butterfly garden and support for the pétanque/bocce court and garden, but no grant. However, following further discussion with the City of Mitcham and lots of further work by WRAG, the Council has now approved a pétanque /bocce court and garden in its 2025-26 budget. So, watch this space and get those bocce balls polished up.

2025-26

The next phase of the Nature Trail will be one of WRAG's main priorities for the next Committee. A review of the plan and detailed operational planning will be undertaken in conjunction with the City of Mitcham and Trees for Life and the community.

Council work on the reengineering projects will commence soon, while we anticipate greater clarity of Council's XTrail project impacting on parts on the Nature Trail....and then, of course there is the pétanque and bocce court to get up and running.

A Street Library, the first in a City of Mitcham reserve, has been approved and funded by the Council and is being constructed at the Blackwood Men's Shed by Graham Ellender. It is scheduled for unveiling at the 2025 Spring event on Saturday, 9th November. Colin Luscombe will serve as chief librarian.

We will continue with working bees and community events, engaging the community, enhancing the Reserves, and working ever more closely with City of Mitcham.

Community events and gatherings

Building a sense of community in Craighburn Farm is one of WRAG's key objectives and we take this very seriously.

Thanks to the organising skills and hard work of Carole Tye WRAG has been able to host seven community events in the past two years including Easter egg hunts, autumn and spring gatherings, Christmas events and special events to thank volunteers for their support. At each event we have canvassed for ideas and support for our Strategic Plan priorities and invited residents to become members of WRAG.

We were delighted to assist in hosting a visit from Premier Peter Malinauskas earlier in 2025, attracting close to one hundred residents. It was very encouraging to have the Premier's support for our work on improving biodiversity in the Reserves.

Membership and communication

WRAG's membership has grown to fifty-eight at 30 June 2025.

Younger members of Craighburn Farm are beginning to take an interest in our work and are keen to join WRAG, giving us their views on what they would like us to do in the future.

We have established regular News updates in Autumn and Spring emailed direct to members, set up our own Facebook page and are developing a Web Site, the latter thanks to Colin Luscombe, John Spriggs and Ben Schaefer.

We are extremely grateful to all of our volunteers who have braved varying weather conditions and site challenges to help with WRAG's projects.

Thank you so much to our Treasurer Jacquie Wright for keeping our books balanced, Caroline Hastie for undertaking the role of Minute Secretary (until later in 2024) and Terry Quinn as Secretary and Minute Secretary and Meredith Luscombe as chief Butterfly Gardener and WRAG's horticulture advisor.

Thank you to past and present committee members who have contributed to WRAG's success. I have really appreciated your support.

It has been an honour to lead WRAG Inc and watch our projects bloom. We should all be proud of what we have achieved.

We have learned so much since the early days of 2023, especially the value of listening to each other and harnessing expertise, the importance of persistence, and the remarkable potential that emerges when community members unite around a vision for the common good.

Looking ahead, our vision remains steadfast: work collaboratively with the City of Mitcham and the residents to -

- promote and nurture Woodlake Drive Reserve as the park at the heart of Craighburn Farm and a place for residents to enjoy
- support the restoration and maintenance of biodiversity
- encourage the maintenance and improvement of the reserves by the City of Mitcham
- build a sense of community.

Angela Hills
Chairperson WRAG Inc
16 July 2025