



FRIENDS OF MOUNT PAINTER NEWS

JULY 2023

This is the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, 2021-2030: to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems on every continent and in every ocean.

NEIGHBOURS

Dotted through Canberra's suburbs are small open spaces, what you might call "parklets". They are treed with mowed grass beneath, some with playground equipment and a bench, but not much else. In some cases, nearby residents have taken it upon themselves to care for these spaces and have added shrubs and more trees. This is what has happened in the area bounded by Henry, Oakes and Skinner Streets in Cook, where Debbie Newton and Mandy Doherty, along with other keen locals, have been working for many years.

The ACT Government is now encouraging the establishment of urban Landcare groups through its Adopt-A-Park Program and so far there are more than 80 such groups in the ACT. Two nearby ones are on Blackman Crescent in Macquarie and between Bandjalong and Jalanga Crescents in Aranda. The Oakes Street group is now formally becoming an urban Landcare group, and planning to extend Landcare activities, from the space shown in the photo at right into a wider area, as Debbie describes in the article below.



NEW POCKET PARK CARE GROUP IN COOK

By Debbie Newton

Local residents around the suburban parks in Oakes Street and the adjacent Captain Cook Memorial Block on Skinner Street are establishing a new urban Landcare group. The new Cook group is provisionally titled Friends of Oakes Parks.

The group aims to enhance the environmental and habitat value of this urban green space corridor which connects to the Mount Painter Nature Reserve. It will at the same time build stronger local community connections and engagement. Its main activities will focus on developing biodiverse understoreys of native plants in mulched "no mow" areas to complement the existing mature trees in these urban parks.

The new Cook urban group will liaise closely with Friends of Mount Painter thereby strengthening the habitat connections between the reserve and the suburb, and the people connections between the two volunteer groups.

Next steps

In coming months the new Cook group will be formally established and registered under the [Urban Parks and Places volunteering](#) program. This program, which is run by the ACT Government in partnership with the ACT's three Catchment Groups, extends the community partnership approaches of the broader Landcare movement into the suburbs.

The new group envisages applying for grant support from early 2024 to undertake park improvement activities under the ACT Government's Adopt-A-Park and Connecting Nature Connecting People Programs.

The first community meeting for Friends of Oakes Parks will be advertised soon by letter box drop and by signs in the parks. For further information email interim convenor Debbie Newton at foakescook@gmail.com.



WHAT FRIENDS OF MOUNT PAINTER HAVE BEEN DOING



The rain, more than 100mm of it in April, foiled three efforts to schedule a work party that month. The May work party made up for that lack of activity with a big planting on the lower west side of the hill. With the help of a Ranger Assist team led by Ranger Chris Evans, we added trees and shrubs to an area with only sparse tree and shrub cover. The added vegetation, one tree to every four shrubs, will increase the 'structural complexity' of the habitat and improve the pathway for migrating animals.

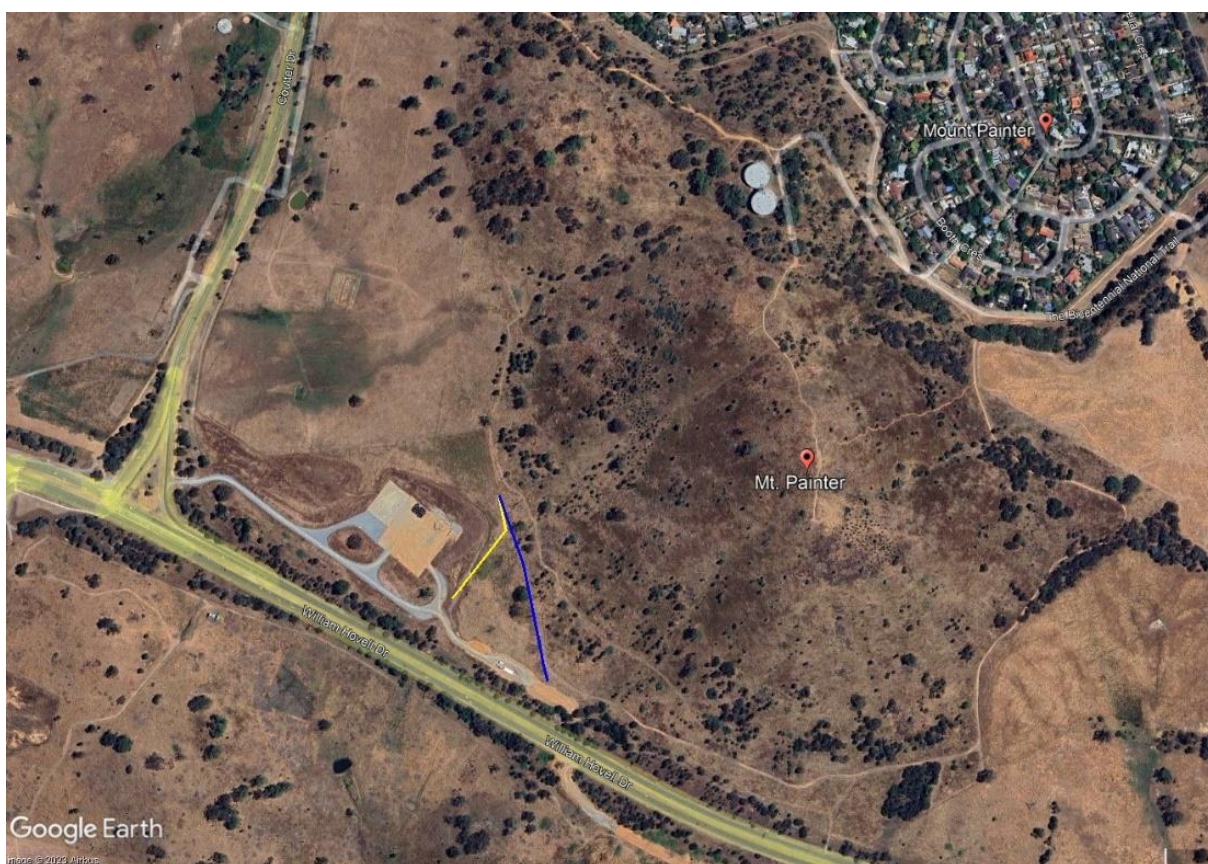
Above: celebrating the last seedling planted! Below: pink and green tree guards round the 206 tubestock planted. On a sad note, the rich brown colour is from the dead stems of St John's Wort.



In June we rounded up many of the large pink tree guards and stakes first used on the hill in a big planting by the Parks and Conservation Service in 2011. The guard round up continued in July when we removed pickets and mesh guards that had been protecting Drooping Sheoaks from decimation by kangaroos. All are now stored for future use.

A SMALL ADDITION TO THE RESERVE

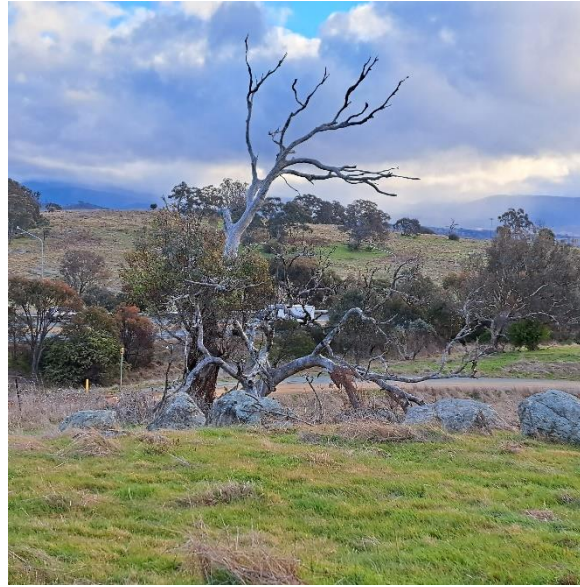
Two hectares are being added to the reserve. When construction of the electricity substation started in a paddock on the west side of the reserve, it was discovered that the fence between the reserve and the neighbouring paddock had been erected such that almost two hectares of what should have been reserve was included in the paddock. A new fence along the correct alignment has now been erected. A gate, cavaletti for horses and walk-through for people are planned. Access is along the gravel road from Coulter Drive.



The area between the new (yellow) and old (blue) fence lines is being added to the reserve.

The added land is fairly ordinary, well-grazed, former paddock. There are a few mature eucalypts, dead trees, pasture grasses and rocky outcrops. It is interesting to see that the paddock is free of St John's Wort which is abundant on the existing reserve. Sheep, horses and cattle are obviously effective at controlling the wort.

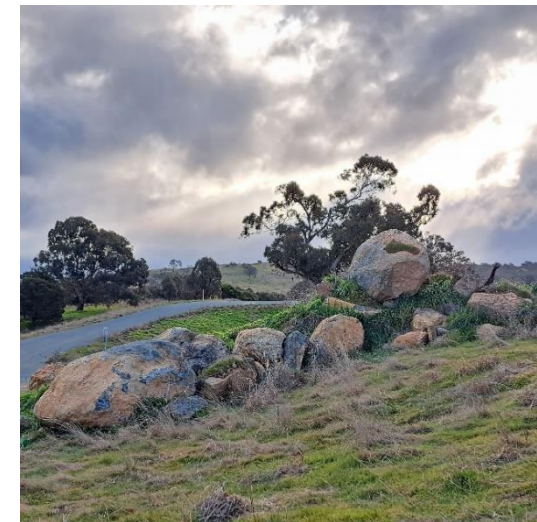
Boulders that have been excavated from the substation site have been piled in the lower part of the new area. Parks and Conservation Service have plans to bring in more rocks and translocate some endangered Pink-tailed Worm Lizards there.



The trees are variously (left) mature in the mid distance, struggling at front; (middle) mostly dead but resprouting, and (right) a long fallen, once mighty tree



View from below



Boulder pile