



fotpin update #50 June 2025

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This year has been notable in a number of respects, but perhaps none more so than the completion of the Interpretive Signs project, which began with a grant application in April 2022 and ended with the formal launch of the signs in April this year.

Our membership has continued to grow and our weed management program continues to tackle the weed issues in the reserve, with varying degrees of success. We continue to keep abreast of the ecological values of the reserve through regular surveys and by monitoring the citizens science data logged in Canberra Nature Map. And we continue to engage with the community through our programs of guided walks, joint planting days and participation in community outreach events.

Interpretive Signage

At long last, this project has come to fruition and the six new signs are installed and already attracting reviews by reserve users. It is very satisfying to see these signs being read and commented on by visitors to the reserve, and I hope they will continue to enrich people's experience of The Pinnacle Nature Reserve. Feedback on the signs has been universally positive and I have been approached by several people from other groups who are interested to hear more about our experience.

The QR codes on the signs link to pages on our website that provide additional and more detailed information, and I want to acknowledge Warren, Alana and Anne for their efforts preparing and checking that information.

The launch for the signs on April 6th was probably one of the most successful events fotpin has ever held. We got a really good crowd that included local MLAs from Labor and the Greens, representatives from the PCS Park Rangers, the Ginninderra Catchment Group and from Screenmakers, who made the signs, as well as descendants of three of the families who were local landholders before the reserve was established. Many thanks to everyone who worked so hard to make the event such a success.



Local Labor MLA and Minister for City and Government Services Tara Cheyne speaking at the launch

Photo: Alana Wilkes



Descendants of past local landholders, Nanette Betts (née Dixon) (*Kama*), and her cousin William Cameron (*Land's End*).

Photo: John Brannan



Admiring the panorama sign on The Pinnacle summit
Photo: Anke Maria Hoefer



A couple of old-timers getting stuck in
Photo: Alana Wilkes

2025 AGM

We held our AGM on Sunday May 18th in the staff room at Weetangera Primary School, as usual. This year our guest speaker was Tara Cheyne, our local Labor MLA and Minister for a number of portfolios. Importantly from our perspective, she is the Minister for City and Government Services, which now includes the Parks and Conservation Service with the merging of Access Canberra, Transport Canberra and City Services and the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate into the City and Environment Directorate (CED). This means that Tara is now effectively our "go to" minister on issues of reserve management. Here is a short summary of her excellent talk at the meeting:

The Minister shared her reflections on her first six months in the role as Minister for City and Government Services and invited questions and feedback from the meeting during her talk.

The Minister spoke very positively about the work done by volunteer groups, especially those in the environmental space and specifically acknowledged ParkCare and other groups in the Urban Parks network as examples of well-organised, collaborative, and respectful groups that are widely appreciated by rangers and departmental staff.

The Minister noted she wants to explore ways to better support volunteer networks and reduce unnecessary barriers, and acknowledged how much volunteers already give. She described the current grants system as burdensome and time-consuming for everyone involved. Instead, she is keen to look at a simpler funding system for the well-run groups with clear goals and good governance and reporting, perhaps with small stable annual funding, as well as special purpose grants for specific projects. She welcomes any ideas on this.

The Minister also talked about proposed internal reforms. The merger of Parks and Conservation with City Services aims to improve coordination to ensure environmental work like habitat restoration, pest control, and mowing are planned together, rather than in silos. She is also working to untangle some of the cultural differences between these departments. One example was the pay gap between different types of rangers, even though their work is equally challenging and important.

The Minister confirmed that kangaroo culling will go ahead this year but could not specify which reserves would be culled. She promised to provide further information about the selected reserve locations soon. (She has since confirmed that The Pinnacle will not be included among the reserves slated for a cull this year.) Deer, goats, and pigs were also mentioned as rising threats to biodiversity, and she agreed that these are priority issues for control efforts.

She welcomed feedback and encouraged everyone to share practical ideas, especially about how to better support volunteer work, simplify processes, and improve collaboration across agencies.

Questions from the meeting concerned communications between the planning level and the people who implement their decisions, including rangers or volunteers; the constant movement of rangers between positions; and the lack of sufficient rangers. The Minister acknowledged these concerns and will consider them in her planning for reforming the portfolio.

Fotpin members at the meeting raised a number of issues with Tara, which she noted and will raise with her department. The meeting thanked the Minister for her interesting and candid contribution.

Tara's talk was followed by my Convenor's report and then by the presentation of the audited financial statement for the year, both of which are available on the [governance](#) page of our website.

Tara also very generously agreed to act as Returning Officer for the election of the new Coordination Committee, which had the following outcome:

Convenor: John Brannan

Secretary: Anne Aisbett

Treasurer: Warren Bond

Ordinary members: Alana Wilkes, Denise Hall, Len Taylor

My sincere thanks to everyone who has volunteered to serve on the Committee. These days it really does run like a well-oiled machine due to the expertise, energy and commitment that the different committee members bring to their roles. But I would strongly encourage anyone interested in sitting on the committee for a while to get in touch. We are always looking for new people to breathe a little fresh air into the organisation.

Thanks as always to Weetangera Primary School for allowing us to use their staff room for the meeting. And thanks also to everyone who brought along the delicious snacks for afternoon tea.

Weed Control and Biodiversity

Rainfall has been consistently below average for almost every month since this time last year. Only December and February had above average rainfall until the welcome falls in the last few days of May. As a result, we have seen the abundance of some weeds decline compared with previous years and less abundant vegetation overall. The dry conditions have encouraged some weed species, such as thistles and woody weeds, and discouraged others, such as St. John's Wort. Our weeding teams are also encountering an alarming surge in the amount of Cobblers Pegs and one of its close relatives, Greater Beggar's Ticks, particularly in the Kama Link paddock and along both sides of the Southern Paddock boundary with Bottom Pinnacle, but Bob and his team and Warren have put in some sterling effort to try to ensure that this weed does not get away from us.

Between July last year and the end of April, our weeding teams have spent nearly 900 hours out there either grubbing, slashing or spraying weeds. This is an amazing effort by everyone involved and the reserve is looking lovely as a result. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of the PCS rangers and contractors for the time they have spent controlling weeds, and African Lovegrass in particular, around the edges of the reserve. Lovegrass continues to be a major threat to biodiversity in the reserve and we need to maintain our vigilance in future years to keep this invasive pest at bay.

The total number of native flora and fauna species observed in the reserve has now risen to 1,068, up from 1,029 this time last year, and the number of native plant species is now 276 (an increase of 6 since last year). The Pinnacle Nature Reserve's Species Richness Score ([SRS](#)) on [NatureMapr](#) continues to increase and we are still ranked 5th out of all the Canberra Nature Reserves.

Hazard Reduction Burn in the Forest

The burn carried out north of the Macrorhyncha Track by the PCS Fire Management Unit on April 8th was a long-planned hazard-reduction measure to remove the dense understory layer that has developed in the Forest block over a long period. After slipping off the list of scheduled burns several years ago, it reappeared last year and has been a fairly high priority for the FMU due to the fire threat posed by so much flammable vegetation so close to the homes bordering the reserve in Hawker.

There are some vegetation communities in that area that we wanted protected, and we gave the FMU Rangers clear guidance of where those areas were. There were also some areas where we were actually hoping for a fairly hot burn to knock over some invasive acacias that were becoming a nuisance.

Overall, our hope was that the burn would clear the dense thickets of *Cassinia* and *Bursaria* that had taken over much of the woodland and open up that area to allow greater plant diversity. There was a similar burn in the woodland south of the Macrorhyncha Track in the early 2000s that has opened up that area beautifully and produced some lovely areas of native wildflowers, including native orchids, which are relatively scarce at The Pinnacle.

Looking at the amount of tree foliage that was scorched, this burn certainly was hotter than we would've liked. But I did note that there were many open areas within the burn that were left untouched, so to some extent it was a "patchy" burn. I also noticed that the Firies took particular care to burn off most of the timber that has fallen over the last decade or so, presumably because they deemed it a fire hazard. At the same time, they also cut down quite a lot of trees, arguably too many, so they've also left a lot of fallen timber that will become valuable habitat in time.

We will of course be monitoring that area carefully in coming years to see what the results of the burn are. There may be weeds that will pop up after the fire, and we'll be doing our best to ensure that they are taken care of before they get a foothold in what is really the best part of the whole reserve in terms of ecological value. Hopefully, the fact that the area has been generally pretty weed-free will mean that there won't be much non-native seed in the seed bank to spring up post-burn, but I guess we'll find out.

Molonglo Watermain Pipeline Corridor Revegetation

We have made some significant progress with this project over the last year. In Spring, we conducted a couple of plantings in the highly degraded works compound beside the Icon water tanks just off Springvale Drive. One of the plantings was at the southern end of the compound in among the plantings and mulching first done by our erstwhile PCS Ranger Kelzang, and consisted mostly of grasses and other groundcover species. The other planting was at the upper end of the compound and is intended to establish mixed clumps of eucalypts and acacias that will lay the groundwork for future soil improvement, which in turn will facilitate native grass and forb plantings. I am indebted to Mitchell Kelly and Cybele McNeil for their commitment to watering the trees and shrubs and for replenishing the plantings when the original tubestock died.

In the meantime, we are still working on preparing the fenced plots further down the pipeline corridor for native grass and forb plantings. The prolonged dry weather has discouraged us from making a start on seeding these plots, but I am optimistic that we will get some decent rain soon and be able to proceed.

Weetangera Paddock Revegetation

Len Taylor and his team have worked for many years now to restore native grasses and forbs in Weetangera paddock, with considerable success (and the occasional failure 😊). Len has decided he can no longer propagate his own tubestock from seed and is eager to pass along his collection of plant tubes and frames so that someone else can take on the task. He also has a large stockpile of small wire plant guards that are ideal for protecting planted grasses and forbs. We can either hang on to these guards for our own use or pass them along to other deserving Landcare/ParkCare groups.

Fotpin also has a small free-standing greenhouse for raising and protecting seedlings and we are eager to hear from anyone who might be interested in taking over our seed propagation operation from Len.

Membership

Fotpin membership now stands at 117 (up from 110 last year), and the total number of people currently on our email contact list is 364 (up from 349 last year).

John Brannan
Convenor
04 June 2025



Early morning view from The Pinnacle Nature Reserve as winter approaches

Photo: Warren Bond