

HISTORY OF THE FERNY HILLS PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

Late in 1965, at an informal meeting at the home of Mr and Mrs Mitchell, Andina Crescent, it was decided to form a new Progress Association with the aim 'to get a Kindergarten' in the area. The Association was formed in May 1966, with a Ladies meeting under the drive of Mrs Denise Drake becoming the nucleus committee for the Willmore Kindergarten. At 30th June, 1967 there were only 150 occupied homes in the Ferny Grove estate and 15 more under construction. The population of 450 had 109 preschoolers – evidence that the Kindergarten was a definite necessity.

Having exhausted all official sources without success, a letter was dispatched to the developers of the land (Messrs Willmore and Randall) and, for £450, Lot 13 in Irruka Crescent (which had originally been given to the son of George Willmore) was made available to the Kindergarten Committee. On 31st January, 1970 after years of extensive fundraising, Willmore Kindergarten was officially opened by the late Mr George Willmore.

Ferny Grove (Pine Rivers Shire) Progress Association produced a small newspaper (The Gazette – 12 issues) from August 1957. All funds from this and other sources was directed to the provision of the new Kindergarten.

Unfortunately, the Progress Association's first records were all destroyed when the President, Mr Phil Ryan's car was involved in a fire. However, records found in the papers of the late Andy Williams (Pine Rivers Shire Councillor for Division One for 18 years to 1967) gave us an original letter dated May 1966 setting out the office bearers of the newly formed Progress Association and several important requests on behalf of the local residents.

Following a non-functioning lull, the Progress Association was re-organised in July 1969, and was well on its way to the present strong Association, with Area representatives visiting and welcoming residents in their appointed areas, and organizing residents for a voluntary annual half day of work on community projects.

When a Pine Rivers Shire Council bulldozer broke down clearing Pyong Grove Park (now Pyong Park), the Progress Association hired a bulldozer to complete the work for the Association's burning off work party.

A very nice gesture was made by the PRSC Chairman (Mr Bray) who took time out to call during the Saturday of the first working bee to see the residents in action, thus showing his interest in the development of this fast growing area (23/1/1970)

After the area name change to Ferny Hills was gazetted, the Progress Association's name was also altered officially on 16/10/1972.

Matters discussed at meetings and appropriate actions taken have included the condition of roads, drainage problems and the need for sewerage, street lighting and street name plates, mail and telegram deliveries, over 600 trees planted along streets to a Council provided plan, play equipment and even top dressing of parks. Seats and a notice board for the Grove shopping centre were installed in June, 1974. A meter box with wattage suitable for fetes etc usage at George Willmore Park was installed at the toilet block – the Ferny Hills Progress Association paid the quarterly rental accounts and controlled the keyed use of the facility.

Much of the Association's funds came from bottle collections, originally by car/trailer tour of the area and later from those left at the collection area on the School grounds in Ferny Way (opened/fenced in August, 1970 and closed in April, 1980). Proceeds were also distributed to local groups, Ferny Hills School P & C, Scouts, and Guides. The Ferny Grove Youth Group for girls and boys commenced late in 1969 with a voluntary convenor and Progress Association backing, and support was also provided to Flamingo Netball Club in Oolong Grove for two years. Ladies of the Progress Association manned the first drink stall when Ferny Way (now Ferny Hills) school opened with 153 pupils in January, 1970. FGPA support was sought and given when the Focus Newspaper – a private enterprise – was set up by local residents; stopwatches and equipment were provided for the Ferny Hills Swim Club's first season; finance was freely given to the Wahminda Park Scout Group to assist their Den Building Fund; to the Pine Hills Sports Club amenities block building; sharing costs of the combined Progress Associations' annual Hills District Garden Competition; to Care Services to purchase and maintain the switching system for a crisis telephone service.

In 1973, a children's playhouse art union resulted in a profit of \$1,200, and a Christmas Toy Carnival held at the Grove Shopping Centre, Ferny Way, was the fore-runner of successful Community Christmas Carnivals in George Willmore Park in 1974 and 1975. The most memorable Carnival was on 13th November, 1976 when street lights came on at 9am during a thunderstorm downpour just as the tents were being erected. Miss Junior Ferny Hills Personality Quests were held annually between 1974 and 1978. The organizers and girls who entered raised considerable funds for Progress Association projects. Another fundraising/community service was luminous street numbers fitted to road kerbs during 1973/74.

A Tennis Club was formed, aiming to raise funds to build the tennis courts. Eventually, when it was found that the Association's funds were not sufficient to cover the cost, the suitability of the proposed site in Pyang Park was in question.

The Association's major undertaking has been the acquisition and development of Lot 107, Samford Road. This was later renamed to Wahminda Park (Wahminda is an aboriginal word for 'friends') that was chosen in a 'Name Our Land' competition. Many deputations and much correspondence with Council and the Land Administration

Commission finally resulted in signing of a lease on 17th August, 1976. Two flexipave tennis courts constructed in 1977 with Council funds. The Association constructed the first amenities block in early 1978. By April, 1979 night tennis was being played under lights paid for by receipts of court hire fees. The log wall and second amenities block were constructed early in 1980, and in 1983 the Tennis Courts were completely repaved and items of children's play equipment installed nearby – all at the Association's cost.

Over the years, major issues affecting the area have resulted in discussions by large groups attending meetings, such as:

- July 1971, the siting of the Tavern;
- February 1973, an objection to Councils proposed intention to give control of part of George Willmore Park to Wests Ruby League Club with inclusion of night games under lights
- August 1973, protest committee formed when a Government feasibility study for flood mitigation measures included a proposal to use Keperra Golf Club Links as a retention basin, which could have forced residents out of their newly constructed homes in Kuringal Drive and Kiryna Street.

In 1976, representations to the Railways department obtained better access to Ferny Gove station, speed bumps in carpark and bitumen footpath between rail tracks.

In 1981, a poll was conducted by the FHPA through the Adviser newspaper to ascertain public feeling on the siting of the proposed Division One Swimming Pool complex in George Willmore Park, Ferny Way, opposite Ferny Hills State School. Only 193 votes were recorded, with a majority of 63 being in favour of the site.

In 1983/1984, negotiations with Main Roads Department finally achieved a revision of the original plans giving top priority to having speed limits through the Samford Road/Ferny Way intersection lowered from 70 to 60km/h, and a barrier installed at each end of the repositioned crossing to slow down pedestrians into groups. Traffic lights for Samford Road were not forthcoming, however after a great number of years of badgering, Council finally in 1984 installed much appreciated traffic lights at the intersection of Ferny Way and Patricks Road.

Also in 1984, FHPA's application in conjunction with Care Services was successful in obtaining a Community Employment programme grant. Under the terms of this CEP grant, the funding is to be used for salary and supporting equipment to enable the employment of an employment-disadvantaged female. The Commonwealth government provided 70% of the total cost, and FHPA 30% commitment totaled \$5,500 over twelve months.

In 1979, the International Year of the Child, FHPA sponsored Ruby from India through World Vision until 1984.

Truly the aims of the Association (drawn up in July 1969) have been fulfilled.

Having regard to recent meeting attendances, it may be said that the area has outprogressed a Progress Association, but whenever a resident voices an opinion on a problem, a service lacking or a safety precaution necessary, the Association is always available. "Pot holes" appear on most paths we traverse!

Life Membership has been conferred on only 5 persons by this Association:

1977: MRS MAUREEN LAWRENCE – A consistent attending member since July 1969. Became the first female President in 1981 (a temporary fill-in position) and currently continues to hold this position after 4 years in the chair.

1981: MR BRIAN BATTERSBY – Long and meritorious service to the aims and ideals of the Association and in particular the tremendous amount of time and effort he put into development of Wahminda Park. From 1972, Committee member to Presidency prior to election as Pine Rivers Shire Councillor, and as a working member even now.

1983: MR MIKE MCGUILL – in recognition of more than 12 years continued service with the association in committee and executive positions. Mike was one of the stalwarts in obtaining the Wahminda Park lease, and organising the bottle collection, the Bike Fest, the Carnivals, and many other events.

1984: MRS BERNICE McWILLIAMS – in recognition of quiet, efficient and voluntary audit of the Association's accounts for the past 14 years. Some people help using brick and mortar, Bernie balanced the books!

1984: MRS MELVA WELCH – for assistance through services to the local Adviser newspaper.

Report prepared from several written records published in various Adviser issues. The assistance of Mrs Maureen Lawrance is acknowledged.

MELVA A. WELCH
8/2/1985

UPDATE:

- The Ferny Hills Progress Association became an incorporated association in 1994.
- New Life members include Kev Oliver, Bill & Dianne Stomfay
- The FHPA established their own web site (WWW.FHPA.COM.AU) in 2002.