



FRIENDS OF VICTORIA GARDENS

NEWSLETTER – JULY 2011

Dear Member,

Yes this is the first news letter for 2011, the result of other events taking over my time during the first half of 2011. While the Friends may have been quiet over the past 6 months the same cannot be said for Victoria Gardens and Stonnington Council.

During December 2010 and January 2011 the sunken oval was fenced off for major repairs involving the installation of dripper irrigation and returfing in Kikuyu Grass. Kikuyu (*Pennisetum clandestinum*) is a native of tropical East Africa and is classed as a warm season grass. It grows rapidly in summer (often a curse to gardeners if it escapes into garden beds) and is tolerant to heat and heavy use. It is often used in parks and garden, and is the dominant lawn species in the Royal Botanic Gardens. In the winter months the grass turns yellow.

While we have experienced above average rainfall in Melbourne since October 2010, this was not the case in 2009, a year of extreme heat and a drought that had extended for more that 10 years. In 2009 the Council commenced a program to secure water for its parks and gardens. In Victoria Gardens a bore was sunk to 120 meters to obtain a source of water. The bore is mostly through granite, resulting in a low yield of 0.5 litres per second. Further, the salt level is 2,500ppm, well above the level that plants will tolerate (needs to be <1000ppm). However to drought proof the Gardens, Council installed a bore pump, desalination plant and 40,000 litre holding tank in the depot. The bore pump has been installed at 89m and water is cleaned using reverse osmosis to 250ppm and then stored in the tank. It takes 2 days to fill and when irrigating, the tank is drained over night. The water is used for the beds, trees and to maintain grass on the oval and has been in operation since early 2010. Further technical information is available at: www.aqueoussolutions.com.au



If you are wondering what has happened at the northern end of the oval, it's become water logged. It's now too wet to install a new drainage system. Given the effort to source water for the Gardens is rather ironic that we have too much.

While the two Plane trees at the south end of the oval have continued to decline, and will be replaced next year, the South African Willow (*Combretum caffrum*) planted by the Friends in 2008 is thriving and is now over 2m high. The area around the tree has recently been cleared to improve the growing conditions. Council have erected a new notice board and over the next month a new display by the Friends will be installed.

Spring into Gardening will occur on Sunday 9 October 2011 between 11am – 4pm.

The Friends next meeting is the AGM on Monday 25 July at 64 Bendigo Street, at 7.45pm
I hope you will be able to attend

John Hawker, President - Phone 0438 510 522 or 9510 522