

Evaluation of community engagement activities: 'Making Friends for Urban Grasslands'



Merri Creek Management Committee
Brian Bainbridge and Dimi Bouzalis

June 2007

Evaluation of community engagement activities: ‘Making Friends for Urban Grasslands’ to December 2006

Introduction

In 2006 the Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) received a grant from the Port Phillip & Western Port Catchment Management Authority to undertake a community engagement project called *Making Friends for Urban Grasslands*. The community engagement elements provide a case study for the way MCMC, in particular MCMC’s Parkland Management Team, formulates and conducts community interpretation and engagement activities. Funding in 2007 from the Natural Heritage Trust (via the Port Phillip & Western Port Catchment Management Authority) for the *Northern Nature – Creek Connections* project provided the opportunity for a detailed evaluation of project.

In order to undertake the evaluation, the following questions were asked;

- What community engagement activities were successful? Which were not? Why? How do we assess this?
- Which groups in the community is a priority to target?
- What activities, messages and approaches work with particular groups?
- What displays and materials are the most effective?
- What activities from this assessment can be put in place for the NHT grant activities in 2007-8?
- What ideas might be considered for future grant applications?

Sustainability Victoria has required recipients of their grants (mainly local government and agencies) to complete an Outcomes Hierarchy evaluation as detailed in ‘Does your project make a difference?’ (Dept. of Conservation & Environment, NSW 2004) since 2006. This evaluation framework appears to offer an effective method for assessing community engagement projects in the environmental field. This report is the first attempt by MCMC to use this framework. It attempts to appraise the project and to use the results to formulate and prioritise approaches in the future.

Aim

This report summarises the activities and outcomes of a 2006 grant *Making Friends for Urban Grasslands* from the Port Phillip & Westernport Catchment Management Authority (CMA) using the ‘Outcomes Hierarchy’ evaluation framework (DCE NSW 2004). The exercise will provide data for decision making and improve assessment processes for community engagement activities to be conducted by MCMC’s Parkland Management Team and Catchment Team including those undertaken through the *Northern Nature – Creek Connections* 2007-8 project, funded by the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT).

Objectives

- Identify measures of success in community engagement under the *Making Friends for Urban Grasslands* using the Outcomes Hierarchy framework.
- Assess community engagement activities in 2006 by MCMC under the CMA and NHT grants.
- Document feedback and impressions from staff, collaborators and participants in these activities.
- Identify options for further engagement projects.
- Identify gaps in the data required for evaluation and how these can be filled in future projects.

Methods

Recollections of participant feedback from MCMC staff, and notes taken during the activities were compiled in December 2006. An ‘Outcomes Hierarchy’ framework (DCE NSW 2004) was used to arrange the thoughts, notes and quotes into a coherent structure. Assessment criteria for this project and future projects were formulated and applied. The findings from Outcomes Hierarchy framework have been summarised for use in planning further grant activities with particular reference to the current NHT grant.

Results

An Outcomes Hierarchy assessment for the community engagement aspects of the CMA activities and some NHT activities in 2006 is included in Appendix 1. Data gathering for some of the activities was inadequate

Evaluation of Community Engagement of ‘Making Friends for Urban Grasslands’ to December 2006

to complete a full assessment using the Outcomes Hierarchy framework. These gaps are identified and documented in tables of findings.

A table summarising findings of the assessment of community engagement activities carried out in the CMA is included in Table 1.

Table 1. Findings from the assessment process

Evaluation process
Gaps in critical data gathering for community engagement activities includes the following;
Attendance figures for different events need to be included in a searchable database that is able to be filtered and graphed over time for site, suburb and project. (MS Excel should be sufficient)
Gathering suburb/postcode as a minimum from attendees as a means of identifying the percentage of locals attending activities
Development of standard questionnaires for staff, activity collaborators and participants to gauge activity effectiveness.
Develop a standard evaluation reporting, discussion and dissemination process, perhaps based on this project, to promote an <i>adaptive management</i> approach in engagement activities.
Urban Grassland engagement
No noticeable increase in local participation at Grassland planting events (a key subjective measure of success that was identified prior to the project) despite the considerable amounts of extra community engagement work that preceded the plantings. A small increase in the local involvement at planting days was apparent but this was from a very low base. These few extra local participants were known to result from concerted communication with particular individuals rather than resulting from the other engagement exercises or from the usual media and letterboxing/advertising.
Observations from this project suggest that the following innovations may increase attendance at planting days; - Approach particular groups who might 'adopt' particular planting days as a venue for a get-together. Work with the group to ensure catering, media and facilities are attractive to members of their group. - Contact some of the parents at Central Creek who were interested in activities for children based on the Native grassland. Develop an ongoing relationship with these people. These parents commented on the large number of families with young children moving into the new housing around the Central Creek Grassland. - The Fawkner community house provides a good variety of audiences and opportunities for interpretation. There are a several additional groups to those reached under this grant that could be targeted in the future. Approximately eighty-five local community members received environmental interpretation during this project. It is strongly recommended to continue to work with this House as a venue for interpretation and seek contacts with a similar community house in Reservoir. - The value of repeat visits and being flexible enough to follow up group-instigated projects such as the Cooking group picnic was apparent. This can generate activities where the group is particularly receptive to interpretation. Developing organisational capacity/flexibility to resource and project manage opportunities like this when they arise is a particular challenge that requires further organisational discussion.
Flowing on from above, it is vital to continue to work with groups that have already proven willing to be involved.
Urban Grassland interpretation themes
Themes that stimulated group observations/discussion included; rubbish and green waste dumping, weeds, scenic/relaxing spots, volcanic rocks and soils, journey of the creek, walking path, recreation facilities, feelings of seclusion, being in nature, birds.
For locals, the danger of snakes appears to occupy much of their consciousness as soon as they enter grasslands. This has to be acknowledged and addressed as it leaves little space for other messages to be heard. A package of messages to reduce paranoia using humour/reassurance/relevant statistics and snake behaviour information appears warranted. Discussing approaches, and ensuring staff were confident in presenting this material, should be a priority for Grassland interpretation. From observations of the groups, it is important not to discount or get impatient with the fear that locals may have but also not allow a group to magnify the fear in a group situation, staff need to be ready and confident take control of discussion and capable of responding to misconceptions in an effective manner.
Urban Grassland 'venues' and 'props'
Long grass and lack of comfortable shady gathering spaces makes grassland a confronting place for many locals. Interpretation 'venues' that provide a transition from the urban landscape to the wild landscape may help. Such venues may be spaces in the parklands where seating, gravel, mulch or mown grass, shady trees, pleasant views and interpretation features, close to access points and paths combine to make places where groups of people can relax and be receptive to interpretation messages.
The path that circuits Central Creek is an excellent venue for interpretation and has developed a culture of evening 'promenade'. The stall placed near the interpretation board during the spring evening walk was particularly fruitful for face-to face interaction.
Large, bright A3 colour laminates of photos of grassland close-up details were effective in attracting inspection by participants and increasing the impact of displays.

Discussion

The assessment process has provided a valuable format for ordering the many kinds of information received from this kind of project. It has generated a list of actions that will allow a more accountable and verifiable statements about the success of future projects. It has provided leads that appear fertile for developing effective community engagement in the future. By making explicit the place of environmental activities and interpretation in the context of in the wider program of Native Grassland conservation, it should encourage clarity in planning.

The following ideas were generated during discussions about this project and the assessment process.

Priorities for *MCMC* staff to develop these projects have been allocated based on perceived effectiveness of the idea in addressing needs identified during the assessment, MCMC expertise and organisational expertise.

Table 2. Ideas generated through the assessment of the grant activities.

Idea	Priority	Opportunities for implementation
Logistical/Operational		
Develop an database that will allow changes in FOMC mailing lists to be tracked over time	High	NHT 2
Developing a short questionnaire to assess people's satisfaction with displays presentation etc.	High	NHT 2
Develop an database table to graph attendance figures broken down by activity type, postcode, satisfaction ratings etc.	High	NHT 2
Develop new engagement projects that incorporate the new pathways at Jukes Rd and Central Creek as interpretation sites and for advertising activities	Moderate	Incorporate into future CMA grants etc.
Assessment Projects		
Identify who else is doing similar community engagement work in local area in Native grasslands. (VUT, Hume, Whittlesea, Darebin and Brimbank Councils, Mooramong, Gould League). Open dialogue/share the findings from the report, possibly reinstate a GERG interpretation type network. In particular identify approaches and evaluation documentation.	High	This is being developed in the NHT grant 'Communities Engagement' workshop.
- Develop organisation-wide Outcome hierarchy frameworks for the following goals; - Community engagement in Reservoir/Fawkner/Campbellfield areas - Engage the community in the industrial landscapes surrounding Merri Creek - Maintain and deepen community engagement in inner-urban areas. - Maintain and deepen community engagement with Friends of Merri Creek members	Moderate	Would be valuable to develop these for future grants. Possibly develop under Planning & Coordination. Include in MCMC strategic planning. Perhaps develop with FOMC and input from interested individuals.

Creative/Artistic projects		
Propagation and sharing of plants with culinary uses.	Low	May be a project led by community in cooperation with MCMC- Eg. Fawkner Community House Cooking Group
Develop cooking group activity where uses for indigenous plants are demonstrated	Low	May be a project led by community in cooperation with MCMC
Embroidery-textile- Fawkner map-patchwork with a flower theme- look at adapting some of the indigenous wildflowers into designs for traditional type embroideries. Look at Greek designs, Indigenous art, Traditions from different cultures, Kashmir textiles. End up with a wall hanging for the Fawkner Community House that can be exhibited and interpreted elsewhere such as festivals, planting events, Libraries etc.	Low	May be a project led by community in cooperation with MCMC
Low key and recurrent engagement opportunities		
More picnics with the Cooking group on the creek	High	Follow up existing contact
Host a suitably themed snake handling show on-site at the Central Creek and the Jukes Road Grasslands	High	
Host a MCMC/FOMC stall at the Fawkner Festival in October, adjacent to a snake handling show to build awareness in local area.	High	Has been followed up with Moreland Council grant.
Larger grant ideas		
Identify interpretation 'venues' in the parklands where interpretation activities might be based (comfortable, safe, accessible, have a feature that tells part of the landscape's story). Identify what/whether infrastructure such as seating, a clearing, shady tree, sitting rocks or even signage might be needed to enhance the venue.	Moderate	
A project where community members collect seed and propagate it to plant in the following season would provide a powerful interpretation/connection project for locals.	Low	
Materials/displays development		
Profiling Manna Gum site at Jukes Road for its bird habitat	High	Display has been developed in the 'Black & Blue CMA Grant.
The development of kits of 'props' that can be handled by participants at activity days to stimulate questions and discussion may be a project outcome of the Northern Nature. The props could include; Laminated photos Aerial photos Laminated maps Snake skins, nests	High	
Highlighting the links between the Fawkner Community House indigenous garden to the remnants and plantings along the creek.	Low	Could be developed by other groups including FCH Garden Group and SGA
Snakes- Aim to have a display where snakes are presented in a different light, put them in the context as a part of a food web, show how they are vulnerable and also play a role in rodent control, etc.	High	Aim to include resources to develop in the next Native Grassland themed grant.

References

Department of Environment and Conservation (NSW) 2004 Does your projects make a difference? A guide to evaluating environmental education projects and programs. Dept. of Environment & Conservation (NSW)

Funding

Development of this report was funded through the *Northern Nature – Creek Connections* project.

Northern Nature - Creek Connections
 *Communities caring for the
environment of the Moonee Ponds,
Merri and Darebin Creeks*



Appendix 1. Outcome Hierarchy framework for Urban Grassland Community engagement activities carried out by MCMC in 2006.

	Measures				
Ultimate outcomes Impact on the overall problem and ultimate goals (biophysical, social economic, organisational, communications)	Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Information sources	Standard/Judgement method	Evaluation output use
A community that values the local Native Grasslands and takes action to protect it.	Is there a positive attitude to the local grasslands in Reservoir and Fawkner from the locals who adjoin them? Is there an awareness of the conservation value of the grasslands? Is there a desire among local community for their continued protection? Is this desire strong enough to translate to action?	Emergence of local friends groups and locally instigated projects Active support for conservation initiatives. Far-reaching reporting of destructive behaviour	• Surveys • Analysis of Friends activities records • Community liaison records such as the 'Complaints' book.	No available standards A benchmark review based on a questionnaire (possibly a student project) may provide some baseline against which project outcomes may be judged.	Inform development of future community engagement projects in Fawkner and Reservoir Develop improved evaluation processes for MCMC community engagement projects Adaptively manage the NHT grant project activities Document successful approaches for dissemination to other environmental groups Reporting to MCMC
Locals stop having negative impacts on the grasslands (dumping, garden incursions dogs off leads, cats unrestrained).	Is there a reduction in dumping events, new garden incursions, dogs off lead in parks, unrestrained domestic cats?	Reduction in instances of dumping and garden incursions. Survey of houses adjoining parkland re. cats. Park survey, observation of proportion of dog owners keeping dogs on lead near the grassland	Audits Photo points Aerial photographs	Comparison from a baseline survey (Student projects?)	

Intermediate outcomes Changes in individual and group knowledge, attitudes, skills: changes in aspirations, intentions, practices and behaviour	Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Information sources	Standard/Judgement method	Evaluation output use
Appreciation of the conservation value of Native grasslands in the Merri Creek area	Is there more awareness of the conservation significance of the local grasslands?	Record answers to a questionnaire or verbal quiz	Analyse results of questionnaire	No available standards A benchmark review based on a questionnaire (possibly a student project) may provide some baseline against which project outcomes may be judged.	
Increased understanding of the activities that compromise Native Grassland health in urban areas	Has there been an increase in the understanding of 3 key issues (?fire, snakes, dumping)	Record answers to a simple questionnaire or verbal quiz	Analyse results of questionnaire	No available standards A benchmark review based on a questionnaire may provide some baseline against which project outcomes may be judged.	
An increase in participation in the Fawkner and Reservoir area to average of 15 local community members per community event.	Have we achieved this figure? What factors have contributed/prevented this from being achieved?	Attendance sheet Quiz participants Discuss with local group coordinators	Graph attendance figures Notes from discussions	An analysis of MCMC attendance figures for various sites may be used to develop goals for attendance figures.	
Increase in Friends of Merri Creek membership from Fawkner and Reservoir	Have we got an increase in membership from these postcodes?	FOMC records	Graph FOMC membership records by postcode	Analysis to compare membership by postcode to judge whether the outer urban area can be brought up to the inner urban area.	
Staff pursues development in CALD engagement in a self-directed, enthusiastic manner.	What proportion of staff pursues further opportunities to develop their expertise in this area?	Discuss in staff meetings. Training records.	Add details of CALD training to training databases for staff.	No standard available	
MCMC staff and FOMC members who can confidently engage with diverse local communities in an effective and appropriate manner.	IS STAFF carrying out effective and appropriate engagement in the local area?	Feedback from staff, coordinators of groups and of participants. Potentially a questionnaire	Review feedback	No standards available	

Immediate outcomes Levels & nature of participation: reactions to the activities/outputs by participants/stakeholders	Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Information sources	Standard/Judgement method	Evaluation output use
Increased participation in community events at Jukes Rd and Central Creek	Did we achieve an increase compared with earlier years?	Analysis of attendance figures over multiple years	Review graph for use in reports and for project development	Compare with a goal based on analysis of other MCMC planting sites.	
Feedback/responses of participants at walks, talks indicating support for conservation activities	Were the responses positive or negative?	Notes for project reporting	Review for project development	No standard available A baseline study essential to develop figures for comparison.	
Responses to brochure or displays indicating interest at events.	Did we get any response? Pos or neg?	Notes for project reporting	Add details to reports	No standard available	
Invitations for further involvement with local groups that were involved	Did we get any invitations?	Notes for project reporting	Add details to reports	No standard available	
Staff demonstrate increased understanding of CALD communities in the area	Does the staff have an increased knowledge about the local CALD communities?	Discuss in Staff meetings	Add notes of staff discussion to a community engagement resource database	No standard available	

Activities/outputs What products/services/activities the program actually offers to engage participants	Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Information sources	Standard/Judgement method	Evaluation output use
Brochures Brochure in 5 languages including English (CMA)	Does the brochure work? What is the most effective use of the brochure?	Query participants at activities Query coordinators of groups where they are distributed	Review feedback	No standard available	
Brian Bainbridge <i>The production of this brochure used advice from Dimi Bouzalas about the effectiveness of using local 'elder's' (in particular women) faces and experiences as a means of connecting emotionally with people across a broad range of community groups (don't be afraid to go for the heartstrings, scientific detachment is not going to be very effective). Comments from a local cultural consultant on messages that resonate across a number of different ethnicities were used to help develop the text messages. In particular appealing to cross-generational/family equity and to acknowledge and respect 'national' pride. Advice from Fawkner Community House was sought for choice of the most useful languages for the area (Italian, Turkish, Arabic and Urdu). Meredith Lawrence (House coordinator) gathered stories from a range of house participants that were used to generate text. Photos of these women were taken. A photo of a child's eyes (taken by the child herself at the Central Creek planting) was inspiration to link with the older women's faces- inspiring a theme of 'memories'.</i> <i>Responses so far have been very positive. The inclusion of peoples faces in the brochure has provided an immediate 'connection' which promises to be much wider than just the house participants since the women's own networks (schools, churches, families etc) are also likely to respond.</i> <i>Reception of the brochures at an ESL class at the Fawkner Community House was striking with excitement at seeing familiar faces in a brochure.</i> <i>A local council environment officer (Anna Zsoldos) commented on the emotional impact of including human faces with the environmental message.</i> <i>The brochure has yet to be distributed pending feedback from this report.</i>					
Display A laminated display illustrating local grassland ecology and management	Does the display work? Where are the most effective places? Which elements do/don't work?	Query participants at activities. Assess responses to the display	Review feedback	No standard available	
<i>No reaction to the display has been sought. Installation of the display at Fawkner Library and at the Fawkner Community House is proposed, use of display at plantings also. Developing a second half to the individual A3 sheets with printouts of colour paintings showing the seasonal grassland (making an A2 display) is proposed as a way of increasing the impact of the existing work.</i>					
PowerPoint presentation on CD A collection of images of the local grasslands and wildlife. Presented with commentary.	Does the CD have impact? Does it stimulate discussion? Were any elements particularly impressive or was there a cumulative impact of the images? How did the commentary work with the images?	Ask participants, gauge the comments.	Review feedback	No standard	
<i>Feedback was markedly positive at the two ESL classes where this was shown. See activities under 12th December.</i>					
Illustrated Talks - Illustrated talk to FCH Cooking Group (CMA) - Illustrated talk to ESL class FCH (CMA) - Illustrated talk to FCH AGM 7th Dec (NHT) - Illustrated talk with an ESL class at FCH 1 12 Dec 06(NHT) - Illustrated talk with an ESL class at FCH 2 12 Dec	Were the talks well attended? Were the talks appreciated? Were there other groups that may have been contacted, provided a larger impact? Could the evaluation be made stronger to assist in monitoring?	Query participants Attendance sheets Recollections from staff Feedback from group coordinators Responses to talks and invitations to do more.	Graph attendance figures Review feedback	No standard available	

Evaluation of Community Engagement of 'Making Friends for Urban Grasslands' to December 2006

06(NHT)					
Illustrated talk to Arabic Women's Group FCH 29/8/06(CMA) Approx 10 participants, their teacher, Dimi Bouzalis and Jill Hildebrandt, <i>Women appreciated an activity that explored themes beyond the essential 'survival' type skill acquisition that is typically provided at the house.</i> Field visit to the Merri Creek Parklands, Arabic Women's Group FCH 29/8/06(CMA) Approx 10 participants, their teacher, Dimi Bouzalis and Jill Hildebrandt <i>Confidence in visiting parklands was gained. Snakes were raised as a big issue for the women in relation to the parklands.</i> Illustrated talk to FCH Cooking Group 4/9/06(CMA) 7 participants Dimi Bouzalis, Brian Bainbridge <i>Laminated Photos, Strudel using native spinach.</i> <i>The aspect of joining in on the activity of the group prior to attempting to get across message was critical (not imposing a structured talk). Ideas for the group's further involvement were generated spontaneously as a part of the interaction, sharing a meal. The 'props' laminated photos, food using indigenous plants and flyers for upcoming activities were examined during the period in an informal way and provided for some fruitful discussion about the issues.</i> <i>Difficulties- The group were very busy (and talkative) and didn't allow for in-depth examination/appreciation of any of what we were there to do. Opportunities for this would ideally emerge at future events. The group had little concept of the time/budget constraints of our future involvement. This would need to be lined up and made clear at some stage to ensure ongoing projects can be followed up. The whole visit took a very long time.</i> <i>It was recognised that the time spent with the Cooking group was an example of the non-structured, 'making friends' approach with results that were hard to assess in a traditional manner (talks given, topics covered). Despite this, the time was amongst the most productive I (BB) have taken part in for the depth of real connection made with the community and developing a willingness for further participation in environmental programs. In discussion with Dimi we recognised that formal type approaches with such a group would be likely to have resulted in perpetuating 'us and them' attitudes to environmental issues, sense that the presenter is intimidating and is demanding idealistic/pure goals that have no relevance to their lives. The time spent with the group allowed issues to come up and develop as a part of the natural conversation.</i> <i>This approach is requires time! One way to extend the time available for such this approach in the future is, with staff agreement, base visits around lunchtime so that staff can share a meal and extend the time spent with community.</i> Illustrated talk to FCH AGM 7th Dec (NHT) Brian Bainbridge – Approx 50 participants + councillors, council staff etc. <i>A 10 minute talk with questions was presented to approximately 50 participants of the Fawkner Community House at their AGM. The theme of the talk was 'Nature makes our lives better'. To increase effectiveness of the talk to an audience with diverse language skills, the talk was illustrated with a number of large format photos of the local Native Grasslands and community participation in their care. The talk themes concentrated on very tangible advantages that the local environment provides to the wider community and the potential for fuller participation and benefits that the activities NHT grant would make possible in 2007. The audience remained attentive through the brief talk. The large format photos in particular, seemed to stimulate discussion. One commented on how the large photos made the close up beauty of the native plants accessible. The talk finished with an invitation to join in on activities in 2007. A distinct shudder was apparent to me. Spontaneous questions began to come from the audience about the danger of snakes. This provoked a strong negative feedback effect, magnifying the fear and stories. This was not unexpected but the vehemence of people's antipathy to the local parklands as being a home for snakes was surprising. This was also commented on by Meredith Lawrence (coordinator) in a discussion later.</i> Illustrated talk to ESL class at FCH (1) 12th Dec 06 (NHT) 10 participants + class teacher + Dimi Bouzalis Illustrated talk to ESL class at FCH (1) 12th Dec 06 (NHT) 8 participants + teacher + Dimi Bouzalis <i>These talks used the PowerPoint CD developed by Dimi. This apparently had a strong effect on both the teacher and participants. The session had a strong impact in that it challenged the paradigm of Fawkner as an uninteresting, unattractive, 'ordinary' environment by highlighting what is special about the Fawkner grassland environment. The novelty of the proposition that Fawkner has a special environment apparently almost came as a 'shock'. The impact of these presentations included an increased enthusiasm by the ESL teacher to be involved in further programs.</i>					
Evening walks	Were the walks well attended? Who were the participants, age/ethnicity/ Did the walks work logistically, as a recreational, educational experience?	Analyse attendance sheets Query participants Recollections from staff Responses from participants, requests or invitations to do more.	Graph attendance figures Project summary	No standard available	
Brian Bainbridge, Dave Crawford- 5 participants- Very cold, night fell quickly. One enthusiastic family who subsequently attended future events. Brian Bainbridge, Sam Bretherton- 7 participants- Three local family groups. Children prominent. The stall at the Central Creek sign was effective for reaching additional passers-by.					

Planting Days - Planting at Jukes Road Grassland 9/9/06 (CMA) - Planting at Central Creek 16/7/06 (CMA)	Did we have an increase in planting days compared with earlier years? Which advertising was effective? Was the experience enjoyable so we can expect repeat involvement?	Analyse attendance sheets Query participants Recollections from staff	Graph attendance figures Project summary	Develop benchmarks on attendance figures for planting activities	
Planting at Central Creek 16/7/06 (CMA) Dave Crawford, Jane Beverlander Planting at Jukes Road Grassland 9/9/06 (CMA) Brian Bainbridge, Dave Crawford One resident called his brother who is involved with the running of the Darul Ulum College and Mosque. He came out and we talked of developing events where the Muslim members of the community could be encouraged to participate. He provided his number and offered to be a liaison contact for following this up.					
Picnic Cooking Group Picnic 4th Dec (NHT)	Was this a good forum for environmental messages? Are the cooking group a strategically valuable group to target? What were the strengths and weaknesses?	Recollections recorded Responses to a set of questions to the group	Group feedback	No standard available	
Dimi Bouzalis, Brian Bainbridge, Jill Hildebrandt and Jane Beverlander Memories <i>Frolicking</i> <i>'Why didn't you take us to Coburg Lake – it's nice and clean there (Antoinetta) – Antoinetta did not want to go on the walk. She ended up coming, and was very interested in the material covered – asked lots of questions and came out with "This is so interesting / important – you should tell everyone about this."</i> <i>Got the group talking about other natural places, common experiences such as being in King Island.</i> <i>Steve – told us how he has been walking there for 30 years, was able to describe the changes along the creek.</i> <i>Of the women, even though they have been living in Fawkner for a long time, NONE had been down to the creek.</i> <i>Jim – initially was not going to walk. Joined the group once he realized it would be a short walk.</i> <i>Thirstiness, perhaps partly due to unfamiliarity with exercising outdoors in warm weather, led to some discomfort.</i> <i>Group expressed discomfort – with humour – said 'What was there?' about the rustles in the grass.</i> <i>Group was probably tired by the time they got to do seed collection (amble plus talking of approximately fifteen minutes).</i> <i>Seeing Patterson's curse – opportunity to talk about weeds</i> <i>Jim appreciating the work that went into compiling the bird guide</i> <i>All the group seeing the grass parrots and other birds – connecting to them being on a native plant</i> <i>Interest in birds</i> <i>There was an assumption amongst the group, that in the wider community, the Merri Creek conservation bushland is not seen as special.</i> Things they liked <i>Social aspect</i> <i>The outdoors</i> <i>The fresh air</i> <i>Shady trees and short grass</i> <i>Picnic was great experience - perhaps this was about having food as initial connecting point, then other messages flowed.</i>					
Media releases and Newsletter articles	Were these carried out? Did we get a response from	Keep track of Number of phone calls/participants who respond to	Summarise as a part of report	No standard available	

Evaluation of Community Engagement of 'Making Friends for Urban Grasslands' to December 2006

	these? Did they get a response from locals? Which were the most effective media for the local areas?	articles			
<i>No data was collected on responses to the articles and newsletters.</i>					
Staff training	Did the staff take part in training? Was this helpful? Did it help during the project?	Staff discussion	Notes	No standard available	
Staff attended a 'Community Profile' for the Muslim community run by the Northern Migrant Information Centre in late 2006. Brian Bainbridge <i>The community profile did give me more confidence in approaching Muslim community members for engagement activities in the later stages of this project. The heightened awareness led to some useful contacts with local Muslims being made in the course of the project.</i> <i>The profile did stimulate discussion in the staff about means of improving engagement with the Muslim community. A number of issues have been raised about understanding attitudes to dogs and photographs at activities.</i>					

Needs Priority issues that the program must respond to: (physical/catchment issues, social, organisational, communications) based on existing or new information (policies, data, consultation, research)	Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Information sources	Standard/Judgement method	Evaluation output use
Need more local support/participation for MCMC/FOMC activities in Fawkner and Reservoir Grassland sites	Do we know how many locals already are in FOMC? Who are the local residents? What would motivate a local Fawkner or Reservoir resident to get involved? What is the impact of current low participation rate? What is the reason for lower participation as compared with inner suburbs?	FOMC records Demographic data from council Query with locals Discussion with peer organisations involved in similar work	Graph FOMC membership by Postcode over time Notes Summary notes of discussions	Compare with Friends membership as a percentage of population across suburbs in Merri Creek and also Hume, Brimbank, Whittlesea, Darebin	
Need to change behaviour that impacts negatively on grasslands	Which behaviours do we want to change? Can alternatives to the negative behaviour be made more accessible, cheaper or convenient? What is the current attitude and state of awareness of the local community? What are the existing channels of communication? Which messages would be most effective locally?	Records/recollections of negative or ignorant comments/attitudes about Native Grassland from immediate neighbours as relayed via staff/FOMC. Photographic evidence of current issues.	Notes Photo points	No standard available	
Need to increase MCMC capacity for appropriate and effective engagement in the local area	What is the state of awareness of the staff re. the local community? What is their capacity to provide engaging presentations and materials?	Staff questionnaire Discussion in a PMT meeting	Questionnaire results Notes	No standard available	