

Rushwood Drive Reserve

Craigieburn

SITE INFORMATION NOTE 3

Industry and conservation: finding common ground



Clean business is safe business (and safer for the environment too)! Programs to promote best practice can also limit pollution events.

Rushwood Drive Reserve in Craigieburn demonstrates the worst environmental impacts of industry as well as some excellent ways to reduce them.

Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) and Hume City Council have worked here for over fifteen

years to mitigate impacts such as soil disturbance, dumping, pollution and weed invasion. These problems are exacerbated by the proximity of factories. Wider understanding of the impacts can prevent such problems from being repeated.

Community discover Merri Creek's wild side

The Rushwood Reserve is off the beaten track for most of the community, even Friends of Merri Creek.

However planting and clean-up activities since 2002 have helped to restore this 'hidden' corner of Merri Creek.

Several local automotive businesses have taken part in MCMC's programs to raise awareness of stormwater contamination issues and the role of local business in reducing pollution.



MERRI CREEK



MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Special points of interest

- Rushwood Drive Reserve is across the creek from the Nationally Significant Craigieburn Grasslands (or 'Galgi ngarrk' a Wurundjeri language word meaning 'backbone')
- Rushwood Drive Reserve forms only a narrow vegetation buffer for that part of Merri Creek
- MCMC and Friends of Merri Creek advocate for wider reserves along creeks. At least 200 metres either side of Merri Creek is suggested as a minimum for biodiversity, recreational and maintenance needs
- Rare frogs and flowers are found here, just metres from factories



Austral Pelargonium

Merri Creek Management Committee

Merri Creek Management Committee Incorporated (MCMC) is an environmental coordination and management agency formed in 1989 to achieve a shared vision for the waterway corridors of the Merri Creek Catchment. Its members include all the municipalities in the catchment:

the Darebin, Hume, Moreland, Whittlesea and Yarra City Councils plus Mitchell Shire Council, the Friends of Merri Creek and the Friends of Wallan Creek. Representatives of these member groups form a Committee of Management which develops policy and guides the activities of MCMC's

approximately 20 staff. The primary purpose of MCMC is to ensure the preservation of natural and cultural heritage, and the ecologically sensitive restoration, development and maintenance of the Merri Creek and tributaries, their corridors and associated ecological communities.

Pressures increase on the last of the past

The ancestors of today’s Wurundjeri people would have known the Rushwood Drive area as a creekline sheltered within a valley of small cliffs, much as it remains today.

What is different is that broad grassy plains and River Red-gum woodland extended both east and west from the creek. Now the west side is closely hemmed in by factories.

Grazing by mobs of sheep introduced by squatters in the 1840s was soon followed by the cessation of traditional Wurundjeri practices such as burning. The nearby Sydney-Melbourne Road hastened early settlement. Protected by natural cliffs,

boulders and boundary fences, the future reserve area apparently escaped the worst effects of grazing. However, some sensitive wildflowers and wildlife would have disappeared as Gorse and Blackberry, Rabbits and Foxes established. The water of the creek was polluted by livestock and later by the outflow of the nearby Craigieburn Sewage Treatment Plant as well as stormwater runoff from the Hume Highway. This resulted in excess nutrients that promoted unnaturally dense growth of large native aquatic plants as well as aquatic weeds.

Intensive development began in the late 1980s and illegal incursions prompted actions to secure the vegetation of the council-owned reserve. Works to maintain and restore environmental values also date from this time. Despite regulation, incursions caused by leveling of adjoining factory land has continued to seriously degrade the reserve.

Since the mid 1990’s, weed control by MCMC and City of Hume has reversed the advance of Gorse, Blackberry, Montpellier Broom, Artichoke Thistle and Sweet Briar. Plantings have re-

established dense thickets of shrubs. Upgrading of sewage treatment processes and improved grazing practices have reduced these sources of the water pollution. However, urbanisation of the catchment in Craigieburn and increasing road use counter this positive trend.

Impacts on vegetation from nearby industry may require ongoing restoration works.



The map shows how remnant vegetation is tightly hemmed in by factories. Most of the reserve is about 30 metres wide.

EVC 132 — Plains Grassland

treeless grassland on fertile basaltic soil, dominated by Kangaroo Grass with a high diversity of other grasses and herbs.

EVC 851 — Stream Bank Shrubland

dense shrubby vegetation. Typical species include River Redgum, River Bottlebrush, Silver Wattle and Blackwood.

EVC 895 — Escarpment Shrubland

dense shrubby vegetation, on drier slopes and cliff faces. Lightwood, Sweet Bursaria and Tree Violet are typical.

ECOLOGICAL VEGETATION CLASSES

are widely used in Victoria to categorise different kinds of vegetation

Benchmarks describing EVC’s can be found at the Conservation and Environment page of the Department of Sustainability and Environment’s website

<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/dse/index.htm>

HOW TO GET THERE

The entrance to the Reserve is at the bend of Rushwood Drive. **Melway Map 180 E1.**

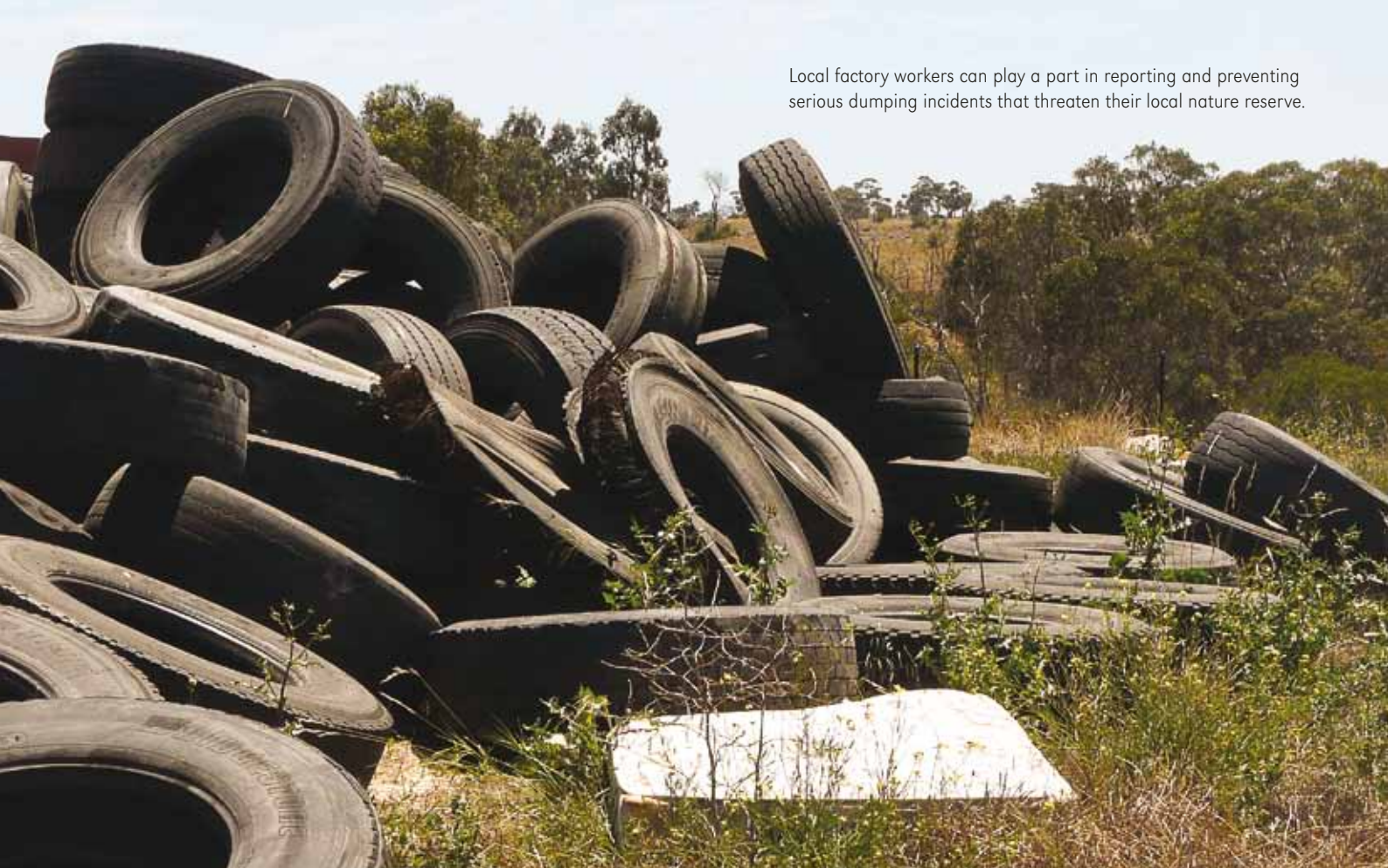
The number 532 bus from Craigieburn Railway Station is a public transport option.

A ribbon of ‘remnant’

Rushwood Drive Reserve contains approximately 7.5 ha of indigenous vegetation. It is across the creek from the Nationally significant Craigieburn Grassland Reserve (Galgi ngarrk) and is thus part of a larger vegetation patch of approximately 500 hectares spanning the Merri Creek between Cooper Street and Craigieburn Road East. This is the northern part of the proposed Merri Creek Regional Park which will extend south to Mahoney’s Road. Rushwood

Drive Reserve is one of the wider stretches of protected land on the western bank of the creek. Industrialisation and urbanisation is planned to extend several kilometres north. The presence of the nationally endangered Matted Flax-lily contributes to the site’s conservation significance. Regionally uncommon species found here include White Elderberry, Sickie Fern, Maidenhair Fern , Dwarf Skull’s Cap and Prickly Woodruff.

Streambank Shrubland dominated by bluish Woolly Tea-tree skirts the creek while Escarpment Shrubland occurs on steep slopes above. Factories pushed up against escarpments compromise vegetation management.



Local factory workers can play a part in reporting and preventing serious dumping incidents that threaten their local nature reserve.

RUSHWOOD DRIVE RESERVE



A more generous setback would have allowed for screening plantings and maintenance access.

Ongoing challenge for the future

Restoration works have strengthened the environment at this vulnerable stretch of the Merri Creek. The good will and support of local workers could secure survival in the long term.

Devising reliable and economical ways to sustain indigenous vegetation and fauna in industrial surroundings is another important objective of site management.

Investigation into the problems at Rushwood Drive can inform industrial development further along Merri Creek.

Opportunities to be involved in this site and information about MCMC's other work can be found at www.mcmc.org.au

Grass-frogs and Bursaria fairies

Rushwood Drive is both a home and a highway for animals.

The nationally endangered Growling Grass Frog occurs here. Bursaria Fairy moths fly among the flowers of the Sweet Bursaria in summer. Their caterpillars feed on the flowers of this locally common plant. The ribbon of dense vegetation is a 'highway' for migrating animals including Fan-tailed Cuckoos and Rose Robins.

