



Big wins for Oaks Estate

The new OEPA committee has been very busy, and we have had a lots of exciting big wins for our village:

- Buses
- \$22,100 won in heritage and infrastructure grants
- road safety improvements
- fire hazard-reduction
- lighting for George Street
- community working bees

Read on to get more details about things being planned, what we have already achieved and ways that you can get involved in some fun community events coming soon.

Welcome to the new committee members

Thanks to everyone who attended the OEPA annual general meeting and community workshop earlier this year. This year was very well attended and for the first time in many years, there were more nominees for committee positions than available spaces. Thanks to everyone who put their hand up to make a difference for our local community.

The new committee members voted in were:

Michel Starling returned as president
Adam Stephan-Slade as vice president
Alex Saeck returned as treasurer
Kate Gauthier returned as secretary

Ordinary committee members elected were:

Dan Heldon, Anthony Hill, Adam Stokes, Terry Williams and Pablo Serazio.

Members present at the AGM agreed that should anyone step down, the vacant positions would be taken by the other nominees in order of votes received. They were Stephanie Shean, Hugh Griffin and Nick Saeck.

Since the AGM, Terry Williams has resigned as a committee member, replaced by Stephanie Shean. Michel Starling has resigned as president and from the committee. Adam Stephan-Slade has since been voted as president, and Adam Stokes as vice president.

Community workshop

At the AGM, the OEPA held a community workshop, the initiative of OEPA Secretary Kate Gauthier. The goal was for the community to decide what were the key issues they wanted OEPA to focus on, to make sure the work of the OEPA truly represented the wishes of the community.

The top things for OEPA to achieve in order of votes were:

1. Roads and footpaths - traffic calming on Railways street, pedestrian crossing, halting illegal and dangerous parking on McEwan Avenue and traffic calming for George-Hazel-McEwan intersections.
2. Street trees - replace leaning trees on George Street and increase general level of street tree planting around the village.
3. Community Events - events where the local community can get together and some where we can showcase Oaks Estate to the rest of Canberra. These could include a festival, music in the park, open air cinema, art shows, markets etc.
4. Beautification - community working bees on smaller projects, and getting TAMS to give us return on our rates by improving and maintaining community infrastructure.
5. Water tower - seek funds to preserve and paint the water tower, with a possible garden project underneath.
6. Robertson House - find ways to preserve Robertson House, as well as use it for the benefit of the broader Canberra community in a way that will promote the heritage qualities of Oaks Estate.
7. Toilets for the park - lack of toilets severely limits the park from being used for community events. Consider other uses for land such as orchard.
8. Planning issues - continue to promote the wishes of the Oaks Estate community to protect the existing nature of the village.

A resolution was then passed that the OEPA should focus on these key goals.

I thought I saw an ACTION bus!

You did! You did see an ACTION bus! After much lobbying from OEPA and local resident Hugh Griffin, Transport Minister Shane Rattenbury has asked ACTION to investigate options to improve public transport to Oaks Estate.

OEPA Secretary Kate Gauthier and local resident and ACTION bus driver Bob met with ACTION to discuss options. ACTION proposed three possible solutions: increase QCity loop services to Queanbeyan (paid for by ACT Government), a loop service to DFO, and a direct to Canberra school bus service.

The QCity bus loop to Queanbeyan has already started. ACTION also ran a timing operation, to work out the timing for a loop service to DFO, but have not said whether this service is going ahead. OEPA is still negotiating with ACTION to try and get them to start this loop service.

We also hope to win a direct to Canberra school bus service. Shortly, OEPA will conduct a survey of Oaks Estate school kids to provide advice to ACTION on how many kids need to be dropped off at which Canberra schools. We are confident we can get a direct to Canberra school bus service, which will improve child safety and make travel times much faster.

OEPA wins heritage grant

Residents Karen Williams, Ewan Maidment and OEPA Secretary Kate Gauthier put in an application to the 2015-16 ACT Heritage Grants. OEPA was given \$2100 to digitise and preserve the oral histories recorded by Karen Williams during research for her book on Oaks Estate *No Mans's Land*. OEPA has been encouraged to apply for a larger grant next year, to pay for a professional management plan to be developed for Robertson House. This would pay for heritage experts to come up with ideas - in collaboration with the local community - of how to preserve and use Robertson House as a heritage resource now that it has been given a full heritage listing.

OEPA wins \$20,000 commonwealth grant

As you know, Oaks Estate has a great little park with BBQs and a lovely rotunda, but no public toilet. This severely limits the use of the park for community-building events. OEPA requests to the ACT Government to install a public toilet in Gillespie Park were rejected, on the grounds that we are too small to meet the criteria to get a public toilet.

A toilet in the park was one of the key priorities voted on by the community at the workshop in April. So OEPA Secretary Kate Gauthier has turned to the Commonwealth Stronger Communities grants, and has been successful in winning the maximum allowable grant of \$20,000 to help pay for a toilet to be installed in Gillespie Park. OEPA will use the \$20,000 towards purchasing a kit toilet (yes, even dunnies come in kit form). OEPA is still in negotiation with TAMS, asking them to partner with OEPA in installation to reduce costs. But we still need to raise more funds. OEPA will be having some fundraising activities and we hope you will come along and support this important initiative.

OEPA has great plans for public events in the park this summer, including jazz and folk music events in the rotunda on lazy summer Sunday afternoons. More details to follow closer to the dates.

Shop cleanup

You may have noticed the corner store has been cleaned up, with signs removed. The store has not been rented out, but the owners have let OEPA members do a cleanup to improve the appearance of the corner. Later this summer, we have plans to paint a children's mural on the McEwan Street side. We'll let everyone know so you can all bring a brush and paint some flowers.



Local residents Atticus and Luther lend a hand to scrub the walls

TAMS improvements: gates, hazard reduction and a food forest

As part of our discussions with TAMS over the toilets in the park, OEPA negotiated some other key improvements:

- TAMS has finally agreed to undertake bushfire hazard reduction near the community hall where there are numerous arson attacks every summer.
- TAMS has filled in some dangerous pot holes in the park.
- TAMS agreed to put a gate on the railway street entrance to the park, to improve child safety near the busy street.
- We have asked TAMS to send an arborist to inspect the trees on George Street to review their safety. We will let you know the outcomes.
- TAMS has indicated support for a food forest (just a fancy name for an orchard) to be planted on the vacant lot north of the community veggie garden. OEPA will be looking into this option next year, including getting community input on whether there is support for such a project.

The case of the disappearing park bin

OPEA was alerted to the fact that the Gillespie Park bin had been removed by TAMS. OEPA members cleaned up the rubbish that had accumulated, and OEPA committee members Anthony Hill and Adam Stephan-Slade resolved the problem with TAMS and the bins have been returned. Well done guys.

Oaks Estate signs

You will all have noticed the Oaks Estate chalk boards placed at the two entrances to the village. Lots of residents have commented that they give a great look to the entrances and promote the heritage character of the area. However, three times now, someone has three now attempted to vandalise and remove the community-owned signs. The latest was the night of Tuesday 3 November. So if you notice suspicious behaviour at the two blackboards, please notify OEPA via oaksestate@hotmail.com

Please feel free to use the signs for your community messages - events, birthdays, shopping lists...

George Street lighting

OEPA has lobbied the ACT Government to investigate the lack of street lighting in George street. We will keep you posted on whether new lights will be installed.

Road safety improvements

OEPA has long been lobbying the ACT Government to spend money on road and pedestrian safety in Oaks Estate. We are always told that we do not meet the funding guidelines, as we are too small.

Local resident Hugh Griffin approached Queanbeyan Council to put in safety measures on the south side of the McEwan Avenue bridge. Mayor Tim Overall agreed to undertake a traffic study (already completed) and put in some immediate traffic safety measures such as improved signage and line marking. They have also put into the 2016-17 budget a plan for a proper pedestrian crossing and traffic island to slow traffic and join up the bike path.

OEPA notes with some disappointment that we have called on the ACT Government where we pay rates - for many years to provide these services and we always get rejected. But with just two phone calls and one meeting with Queanbeyan Council and they see the need and take immediate action.

Thanks for the trees

You may have noticed that three flowering plums were planted on McEwan Avenue. It seems that Queanbeyan council crossed the border and engaged in some guerilla-style street planting to improve Oaks Estate. Once again, we can't even get services from the Government we pay rates to, but Queanbeyan gives us free infrastructure. Unfortunately someone has since stolen two of the trees, but we have plans to replace and protect them.

OEPA in the media

OEPA has been taking the fight for services to the ACT assembly and the media.

Local member, Steve Doszpot, once again asked questions of the government about the lack of services to Oaks Estate. You can read the transcript here: www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2015/pdfs/P151028.pdf Go to page 3753

OEPA was also in the Canberra times on 10 November, talking about lack of services. You can google the article.

OEPA was also interviewed on 2CC about services. You can download the podcast from 2cc.net.au

Plot ratio discussion at the community workshop

A community member raised concerns at the AGM that the plot ratio agreed to in community meetings was 45%, but OEPA later lobbied for a plot ratio of 35% to be included in the precinct code. In fact, no such recommendation was made by OEPA.

The precinct code brings in a new requirement for a 35% *site coverage* in the residential areas. RZ1 zones have a standard 50% plot ratio for large blocks, and the precinct code does not change this. This new site coverage rule means a person can build up to 500 sq m (that's not a typo - our blocks are a standard 1000sq m) but it cannot be single story, as you are only allowed to cover 350 sq m of the land. Additionally, where people argue they want to build a second residence and the precinct code does not allow it, there is another rule for all RZ1 areas that restricts the size of a 2nd residence to 90sq m. This is a generic rule for all of Canberra and has nothing to do with the Oaks Estate precinct code. So in Oaks Estate with blocks of 1000 sq m, you can build a granny flat / second residence of 90 sq m, and still have a two story house of up to 400 sq m and meet all the restrictions.

The site coverage provisions were developed by ACT Planners, not OEPA. They are designed to ensure that density in Oaks Estate remains about the same level, which is something that was consistently asked for by many people in planning consultations. Any increase in plot ratio or increase in site coverage is an increase in density and will significantly change the character of the area, which would be against the majority community feedback given both to OEPA and ACT Planners.

Plots available in the community garden

The COGS garden is slowly filling up although space is still available. Gardeners must be members of COGS (which involves a membership fee) and pay plot fees that depend on the area cultivated and are set to cover the amount of water used.

Further info from the COGS website cogs.asn.au or from the new convenor, Jinglong Chen, ph 0428 384 106.

Heritage Festival, April 2016: "Discovery and rediscoveries"

Did you know that sherds of crockery and glass found in the paddocks now occupied by the industrial estate of Beard date back to the 1820's, the time of Timothy Beard, an ex-convict and the first squatter in

the Queanbeyan-Oaks Estate district? Aboriginal stone artefacts found beside the crockery and glass sherds show that there is a whole lot more to the story.

The oral histories of the old people of Oaks Estate, the families that came with the railway and with the development of the new Oaks Estate subdivision, are about children growing up in Oaks Estate; the struggle for water and electricity during the Depression and the War years, and for improvements to community services during the 1950s and 1960s.

Join me, Karen Williams, at the Robertsons' House, 9 Hazel Street Oaks Estate during the ACT Heritage Festival, 2-18 April 2016 –exact date to be determined - to hear some of the oral histories and see a slide show of early Oaks Estate families. If the weather is good, bring a picnic and a rug and enjoy sitting under the trees in the Robertsons' yard. This event will be supported by the National Trust in collaboration with the Oaks Estate Progress Association.

Guessing competition

Can you guess where this spot is in Oaks Estate? Send your answers to OEPA@hotmail.com.au



