



Friends of Manuka Pool

February 2019

Welcome to Newsletter #5

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1. President's report

FoMP's Committee has been very active in recent months, as this newsletter shows. There's no value repeating what you'll find below, but I would note that the profile of the Pool and community recognition of its social and built heritage has expanded rapidly since FoMP was formed three years ago.

I'd like to acknowledge the injection of new energy into the Committee with the election at the last AGM of Caroline Luke-Evered, David Evered and Rosemary Hollow.

And we would all like to thank Kasey Tomkins, an inaugural member, for her great work on the Committee.

2. New committee

At the AGM the following members were elected:

President: Clive Hamilton

Vice-President: Rebecca Scouller

Vice-President: Su Muir

Secretary: David Evered

Treasurer: Caroline Luke-Evered

Ordinary members: Rosemary Hollow, Robby McGarvey, Auriol Weigold.

3. Honour Board

The highlight of 2018 was the restoration and unveiling of the Honour Roll commemorating the sacrifice of nine young men who were active members of Canberra Amateur Swimming Club at the Pool in the 1930s and early 1940s.

Next time you visit turn on the spotlight in the foyer and have a good look.

The project was made possible by a Department of Veterans Affairs grant and a generous donation from the family of one of the nine.

Frances McGee and Nick Swain researched and wrote a wonderful booklet with biographies of each of the nine. The booklet, "Swimmers Who Gave Their Lives", has made a large contribution to informing the Canberra community about the social heritage of the Pool. They are available for \$10 through friendsofmanukapool@gmail.com.



The restored Honour Board

Several dignitaries attended the event last Canberra Day (12 March) including The Hon. Gai Brodtmann, Ms Candice Burch MLA, Chief of Army Angus Campbell (now Chief of the Defence Force), Secretary of the Defence Department Greg Moriarty and Allan McKinnon, Dep Sec for Security representing the Secretary of PM&C. Representing the Chief of the Defence Force, Air Commodore Matt Hegarty unveiled the new Honour Board.

The event concluded with a rendition of the *Last Post* played by a bugler from the RMC Band. It was an emotion-charged rendition and very Australian with Defence personal in dress uniform, family members, friends of the pool and those who had just left the pool for the ceremony still in wet

swimmers.



Bugler Justin Williams, RMC Band
Photo: Stephen Blackburn

You can read more at [Friends of Manuka Pool unveil restored Honour Roll](#). We also appeared on WIN News.



Dignitaries at the unveiling of the restored honour board,
12 March 2018
Photo: Courtesy of Ms Brodtmann's office

FoMP prepared a nomination for a National Trust Heritage Award for our work restoring the plaque but we were unsuccessful.



After Gai Brodtmann's speech in Parliament
L to R: Rebecca Scouller, Merv Knowles, Beth Knowles, Gai Brodtmann, Martin Shafron and Kasey Tomkins
Photo: Courtesy of Ms Brodtmann's office

The Hon. Gai Brodtmann, Federal member for Canberra, made a statement in the House of Representatives recognising the lives of the nine men and the efforts of FoMP to restore the Honour Board. We thank Ms Brodtmann for her recognition. You can read the speech [here](#).

4. Swimming caps



Photo: Rebecca Scouller

Have you bought your swimming cap yet? We have commissioned some great quality silicon caps sporting our fabulous logo. \$15 or two for \$25. You can pick one up at the pool or send an email to arrange collection – friendsofmanukapool@gmail.com

5. Conservation Management Plan

The Conservation Management Plan for Manuka Pool carefully describes the heritage features of the pool and how they should be protected. But the current plan was prepared in 2005 and is well out of date. These things are usually reviewed every 5-10 years.

In January, FoMP wrote to the ACT government asking for a new plan to be prepared. We stressed review should reflect the shifting community activities around the protection of Manuka Pool and the surrounding landscape, especially in response to the proposed GWS-Grocon development at Manuka Oval in 2016, which demonstrated a strong and growing community attachment to the area and the Pool.

A new CMP should also incorporate the enhanced awareness of the social value and the social heritage of Manuka Pool in the development of the city, not least the important work of FoMP in uncovering, investigating and publicising the links between the Pool and Australia's war effort (see above).

Our request has been acknowledged and we await a full reply.

6. Test Match parking

FoMP, local residents' groups and the Kingston Traders wrote to the ACT Govt last year to raise concerns about parking and access during the Test Match.

Reports post-game suggests that by and large parking was reasonable. Pool patrons could obtain free passes from the office to park on Montgomery Oval at Telopea School. Keep it in mind next time. However, we are interested in your experiences noting the Chief Minister's excitement post game and his announcement that he would like to see even more games at the oval.

The government also [waived time restrictions](#) on paid parking around the oval.

7. Community Panel for Manuka – still waiting

In June 2018 several groups joined forces calling on the Chief Minister to immediately convene the community panel for Manuka Oval that he promised in 2016. The letter also asked for a Conservation Management Plan for the precinct. This is an important document as it helps identify and prescribe how to best protect the heritage of the oval. This is particularly important for both the broader heritage of the Precinct (including Manuka Pool and the Manuka Arts Centre) and because part of the value of the oval for patrons is its boutique and heritage feel.

The 'coalition' repeatedly sought answers from the Chief Minister's office. Caroline LeCouteur MLA also sought an update in the Assembly. We finally received a response via Ms LeCouteur's questioning in August (dated July) that a community panel will commence in 'early 2019'. Minister Stephen-Smith noted on 12 Feb that it is still 'early' 2019 and plans are under way.

It was disappointing that it took several months to receive this answer, noting the panel was promised to first meet in 2016. There were also several excuses proffered. For example, it was claimed, without any apparent logic, that the Media Centre (approved using call-in powers) needed to be completed before the panel could meet.

We have yet to receive any further information which leaves us wondering if the response was yet another stalling tactic. After all, Mr Barr has said he is not interested in the opinions of anyone over 40.

8. Media Centre

Members will have noticed the appearance of the imposing Media Centre at the southern end of Manuka Oval. It was built, at considerable expense,

so that the oval could host international test matches. It had been planned for the northern end of the oval (which would be better for the cameras) but after strong representations from FoMP, arguing it would overshadow the pool and provide sight lines into it, it was placed at the other end.



Media Centre on Day One of the Test Match
– not very full

9. Signage and heritage

For some time, a few of us have felt that the safety signs at the Pool are unattractive and clash with the heritage colours and design of the building. It turns out, after considerable digging and bureaucratic confusion, that the signage, but not the signs themselves, is approved by the Royal Life Saving Society.



To cut a longish story short, FoMP has gained agreement from ACT Property Group to put forward new signs, ones consistent with the Pool's heritage, which will then be put to RLSS for their tick of approval. (We're sure it will be more complicated than it sounds.) Our new signs might be of interest to other pools around Australia.

So, we are beginning the process of making contact with "heritage sign makers" (if there are such) with a view to having new signs designed and, if approved, made and installed.

It's going to cost a lot more than we have, so we are thinking about options. Suggestions would be very welcome.

Exotic fauna spotted at Manuka Pool



The Selkie Sisters

Actually, they're not mermaids but selkies, creatures hailing from the Orkney and Shetland Isles that take the form of seals in the water (chlorinated water is okay) but shed their skins on land and take human form. It's said that men have been known to steal the skins of the seal-folk, preventing them from returning to the sea, and then marrying them. But they always gaze at the sea longing to return.

If you'd like to make contact with the Selkie Sisters for a land-based kids party or to join them in their adult fitness group at the pool (tailored to people with chronic illness) they have a website- selkiesisters.com.au or email contact@selkiesisters.com.au

10. Canberra Services Club

In April 2011, the clubhouse of the Canberra Services Club was razed to the ground by a mysterious fire. The empty site on the corner of Canberra Avenue and Manuka Circle now boasts a tank. In April 2018 the Canberra Services Club submitted a Development Application to remove the concessional lease on the site. A concessional lease is one for land dedicated to community use.

In 2018, the Club revealed [plans](#) for a possible \$45 million mixed use development on the Manuka Oval site. Colliers valued the land at only \$100 per square metre, making it some of the cheapest land in Canberra. This land value typically forms the basis for a calculation for a lease variation fee.

Due to lack of community consultation, Elton's (who prepared the application) conducted retrospective consultation in November. This consultation did not address concerns about loss of community land, land value and possible development on the sites inconsistent with current planning and community expectations.

Now there is a third bite at the cherry for the same application that will close on 21 February—you can review it and make a submission [here](#).

FoMP has previously argued that the lease variation should not be considered until the Conservation and Master Plans are completed for the Precinct. For this to happen we need the Community Panel to be engaged to inform the plans.



The Services Club site

We also noted that Chief Minister Barr declared in 2016 that no development would happen around the outside of the oval before the community panel/Master Plan was completed. Barr ruled out residential development in the Oval Precinct as part of any upgrade. Yet the current proposal by the Services Club flags possible residential development.

Our concern is that a development could harm the character of the Precinct and stimulate another Grocon-style attack to develop the Precinct, which would affect the privacy, solar access and character of the pool.

We are watching developments closely.

11. Pool Survey

Each year there is an opportunity to participate in a survey about your experience at the pool for the season. This assists Manuka Pool continually improve from season to season. You can participate in the survey [here](#).

12. Winter works at the pool – Retiling

Over the 2019 off-season, the Pool will be completely retiled. The tiles were laid by a master tiler in 1930 and are an important element of the Pool's heritage, which FoMP wants to preserve if at all possible. Unfortunately, some of the tiles are beginning to come away and the scum gutters (wonderful term) are obviously badly worn.

Moreover, "health and safety" comes first, and the existing equipment that extracts and filters the water is inadequate to meet modern standards. A new filtering machine will be installed and bigger pipes into and out of the pool are needed to take the higher volume of water. That means digging up the concrete around the pool and installing larger scum gutters.

FoMP has lobbied ACT Property Group, the government agency that manages the pool, to match the tiles and scum gutters as far as possible. They are doing so, having the tiles manufactured at a plant in Germany.

As part of the retiling, FoMP has urged ACT Property Group to include imitations of the old signage, namely the "DEEP" and (now missing) "SHALLOW" signs on the tiles above the scum gutters and retain the imperial measures of depth.

Life member Merv Knowles was given the photo below last year. Note the "SHALLOW" indicator in the tiling. It's no longer there but we hope a replica will be included when the pool is retiled in the 2019 off-season.



Photo: photographer unknown, circa 1931

13. 31 Days In

In October Canberra was lucky to have Zoe and Tim visit from Wellington. Since this pair met in Chile in 2010, they have travelled around the world from the

Faroe Islands to Belgium. In each place they spend 31 days to create an artwork a day.

Along with the predictable Parliament House and the Carillon, they discovered gems like cyclists with maggie-detering cable ties, Manuka Pool and the 'phallic' Belconnen Owl.

With so many gems in Canberra still to cover, the couple haven't ruled out 'Another 31 Days in Canberra'. You can follow them on Instagram and Facebook and purchase your favourite print through [Etsy - 31 Days In](#).



31 Days In, an image inspired by our very own
Rebecca Scouller

Like to become a member of
Friends of Manuka Pool?

Contact us at friendsofmanukapool@gmail.com
or pick up a form at the Pool entrance
