

GUNSMOKE

Edition 131 April 2014

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**THE WILD SIDE
OF GUNGAHLIN**

Smoke Signals

**Resounding
SUCCESS!**



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Gillian Yeend

YEEND AND ASSOCIATES FAMILY LAWYERS



Gillian Yeend is a Lawyer who owns a specialist Family Law firm in Gungahlin- Yeend and Associates. Her firm locally employs two other professional staff and three administrative staff. They assist clients with their legal matters arising from relationship breakdown. Gillian has been a member of the GCC Executive since 2013.

My husband and I built our house in Franklin in early 2010 having to Canberra from Newcastle in 2006. I opened my firm in June 2013 after a period of maternity leave. I wanted to work close to our home and childcare rather than facing the traffic into town each day.

Owning a business located in Gungahlin, I joined the GCC to increase my knowledge about the plans for future growth and development in the area. I have only ever been involved in legal based Committee's so the exposure to development issues, community activity and consultation has been informative. My office is located on Anthony Rolfe Avenue, so I would love to see better parking for people working in



the area and lights at the intersection at Hinder and Hibberson Street. More childcare facilities and more locally based family mediation services would also be a great addition to the area. Besides this, an Ikea could be great here!

Despite the challenging gardening conditions of the Canberra climate, I love living in Gungahlin and think it has great outdoor facilities and an improving town centre. I have been impressed by the energy for committee work and passion for Gungahlin held by the GCC committee members. I would encourage everyone to attend a meeting. The information for the meetings can be found on the GCC website or the My Gungahlin website.

Gillian Yeend

www.yeendassociates.com.au



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GunSmoke is published to allow residents to keep in touch with their local community. The views expressed in GunSmoke do not necessarily represent the opinion of the editor, or members of the Gungahlin Community Council Inc.

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James Milligan, Meegan Fitzharris, Michael Norfor, Gillian Yeend



From the President

Ewan Brown

GCC held our first business breakfast in late February to seek to get local businesses more involved in broader local issues.

This was an extension of our Priority Target to keep Gungahlin residents aware of developments in their region, by seeking to get the local businesses more involved.

It was a resounding success with an impressive attendance of over 70 local and regional business representatives listening to ACT Chief Minister Katy Gallagher and CEO of the ACT and Region Chamber of Commerce, Andrew Blyth, discuss the opportunities for future business development in Gungahlin.

I noted that it could be said that Gungahlin is almost “coming of age”! I mentioned moving to the district almost 20 years ago (partly to participate in a broadband trial) and 19 years later being successful in getting the NBN connected! Residents have seen significant growth and development in other areas as well – but in many cases not quite matching the needs of a total population of 48,000 with expectations of reaching 60,000 in 10-15 years.

The GCC feels that residents are still not well serviced in this region.

However a number of projects are underway – a leisure centre, enclosed oval, an ACT Government office block with a shopfront and the Commonground accommodation block.

Future expectations include a cinema complex, another major hardware store, another club, extensions to the Raiders’ Club and to the Woolworths supermarket opposite, a mosque and Capital Metro light rail.

I indicated that I had developed a list of things that locals do not have to leave Gungahlin for and that I was gradually ‘ticking things off’! I stated that I hoped that ‘it speeds up’.

The GCC’s key message is that there is still so much potential to increase and further diversify the business base in Gungahlin and the event was convened to encourage developers and businesses to become more optimistic about ways to make Gungahlin a more dynamic

business community. The GCC foreshadowed plans to replicate this function during the year.

I also indicated that the GCC intends to embark on two significant projects in coming months:

1. To conduct a survey of residents and businesses to gain a very comprehensive set of views on what services and facilities are still required here in the Gungahlin town centre and in the nearby suburban areas to make this region an even better place to live, work or play.

2. To mount a campaign to place planning emphasis on the provision of adequate parking facilities around the town centre and in selected suburban centres. Problems have or are already emerging due to population growth and development. The completion of many of the projects referred to in the opening remarks will exacerbate parking issues unless remedies are considered and implemented.

To progress these aims GCC will be seeking greater input from the local business community to ensure that a solid business perspective is included.

The GCC has also set a ‘target’ of having all major roads into Gungahlin as dual carriageways within five years. This certainly caused a stir but in balance it mainly needs Horse Park drive to be added to the list if the Gundaroo Drive secures funding in this year’s ACT Budget.

In view of the anticipated substantial growth of Gungahlin over coming years with the settlement of new suburbs (including Casey, Kenny, Bonner, Throsby and Moncrief) there is a need for significant planning consultation on the provision and timely development of facilities for the area to accommodate the requirements of a population likely to exceed 60,000 residents. Transport issues (in and out) are of critical importance and the usual approach for ‘catch-up’ or remedial developments will not offer satisfactory solutions in the short-to-medium term.

continued >

CURRENT ISSUES

1. GCC wants a review/development of a new Master Plan for the Town Centre to reflect the needs of the rapidly growing population in the area. A previous Plan (2008), following a small community response, sought to retain a 'quiet village' type atmosphere for the Town Centre. Significant population growth and the strong likelihood of Light Rail terminating in Gungahlin now strongly suggest that a review should be undertaken to ascertain current community attitudes.

GCC proposes that another community survey/consultation process be undertaken to seek input from residents, visitors and workers. More facilities and amenities have been or are being provided in the region thus contributing to residents' expectations that even more development would be beneficial to avoid having to travel out of the region.

Focus needs to be placed on significant diverse commercial development to provide more employment and shopping opportunities for Gungahlin residents. (Key stakeholders need to be convinced of the value of locating or living in Gungahlin in order to engage in development and to attract new staff!)

Traffic problems feature prominently in our top priority issues. Recent statistics show Gungahlin having 3 out of the top 7 accident spots in Canberra. Two of these are covered in our urgent Budget funding requests.

Our scorecard of amenities, facilities and services that Gungahlin residents DO NOT have to leave the district for include:

- Supermarkets
- Library
- Health Centre
- Gyms
- Range of medical and dental services
- Clubs
- Most open-field sporting facilities (except tennis)
- Medicare and Centrelink

- Community services
- Hardware store(s)
- Good schools
- Child care
- Aged persons facilities

Committee Update

We welcome Stuart Todd, Branch Manager, Gungahlin, People's Choice Credit Union, to the committee to strengthen the essential connection with the community sector we initiated last year.

I wish to thank Meegan Fitzharris for her valuable contribution to the committee in the short time she was involved. Former and prospective political candidates are a great resource for voluntary community committees because they have a very well developed understanding of the views of local residents and have a genuine interest in the community.

I take pleasure in announcing that James Milligan has agreed to take on the role of Communications Director to improve our communications with the local community. We want many more people reading Gunsmoke online, we want more people to attend our monthly meetings or view proceedings online, we want more feedback on issues we raise and we want to see the business community engaging with us to a greater degree. James will be able to plan a program so that we can become more successful with these aims.

We have joined a committee to bid for funding to run a Gungahlin Festival in 2015.

At our last meeting we learned of problems resulting from the transition of TransACT cable services to the NBN. We plan to feature NBN updates more prominently in coming months.

Gunsmoke will be published June, August, October and December in 2014. Monthly meetings will be held from February to November. There will be no GCC public meetings in January or December.



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FROM THE POLLIES

Andrew Barr MLA
ACT Deputy Chief Minister

Last month I joined the Gungahlin Bulls Juniors Rugby League at their registration day in the town centre. There were hundreds of signups ready to do battle on the footy field this coming winter.

As Gungahlin matures it is important that we provide high quality sports facilities that can meet the needs of the community.

In March we announced that YMCA will operate Gungahlin Leisure Centre. YMCA currently operates 30 similar pool facilities and are the nation's largest provider of learn to swim lessons, teaching more than 27,000 people to swim every year. I know everyone is eagerly awaiting the pool opening which is just around the corner— it will be a fantastic asset for Gungahlin.

The new Gungahlin Enclosed Oval is ready for use by all football codes. The grandstand includes coaches' and announcer's boxes, covered seating for 550, uncovered seating for 700 as well as change rooms, public toilets, canteen, storage and a function and meeting room. This facility will soon become the home of sport in Gungahlin and will be a great place to watch footy.

I'm also amazed every time I drive past the park in Crace to see how many people are making use of the space. In planning Crace, it was decided to build an irrigated park rather than a neighbourhood oval. The park includes a kick around space, basketball court, cricket practice nets, a tennis hit up wall, a playground and exercise equipment. This model of community park encourages more active recreation and is a model that will be adopted in other spaces across Canberra.

Following a series of robberies at Amaroo Oval I am pleased to announce that the Chief Minister, Katy Gallagher, was able to provide \$40,000 to the Gungahlin Jets Football Club to complete works on their team shed, called the 'Hanger', and to boost security on the site.

Good luck to all those who are about to start the winter sport season, the ACT Government will continue to work with the community to provide high quality sports infrastructure where it's needed.



FROM THE POLLIES

Steve Doszpot MLA
Shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation

Sport is a serious issue for Gungahlin residents. This can be seen through the number of new clubs emerging and the number of ovals and playing fields now in regular use for a wide range of sports including athletics, football of all codes, cricket, basketball and tennis.

Local clubs such as the Gungahlin Jets have a very strong club behind them; the Raiders have their licensed premises based in Gungahlin and the prospect of a premier league football team being established locally all demonstrate the enthusiasm of residents for such activities. We also have the Gungahlin Eagles Rugby Union Club who have strong community support.

With other quality facilities such as the Gungahlin Lakes Golf Club, an attractive facility with numerous lakes and ponds, the area has something to offer sports lovers of all ages.

When the new Leisure Centre and enclosed oval come online Gungahlin will have even more choice.

The enclosed oval, many years in the delivery, will cater to all major football codes to a senior level. Its grandstand with covered seating for 580 people and open seating for a further 850, change rooms, toilets, kiosk, club room and storage facilities will provide quality facilities for local clubs.

The Gungahlin Leisure Centre will offer an all-year, indoor-outdoor, multi-use, aquatic facility with 50 and 25 m pools, change rooms, health/consulting suites, gymnasium, child minding facilities and café.

Both of these are significant additions to Gungahlin and many local clubs will get great benefit from having them available locally.

However, such developments don't just happen. They require an enormous amount of planning by local community groups and local MLAs hard pressing the ACT Government to deliver on its promises. In the case of the leisure centre, it required years of lobbying, and more than once it looked a lost cause, with promised deadlines not met and the size of the pool growing and shrinking with each new negotiation.

I applaud the tenacity and commitment of the Gungahlin Community Council who never gave up believing Gungahlin residents deserved these facilities. It will be the same commitment that will deliver additional sportsgrounds, new sports clubs and even more choice in the years to come.

Resounding SUCCESS!

By Tony Ozanne

The GCC held its first Gungahlin Business Breakfast at the Canberra Raiders Club on Tuesday 18th February. A theme was established around 'enhancing the business opportunities in Gungahlin' and saw all our expectations exceeded for the event with over 70 local business owners, managers and politicians in attendance.

The highlight of the breakfast was the support given by our two keynote speakers; the Honorable Katy Gallagher - Chief Minister of the ACT and Mr. Andrew Blyth - CEO of the ACT Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

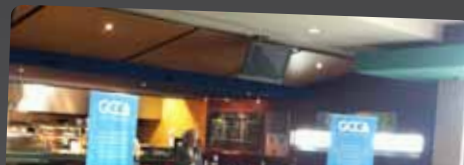
The breakfast commenced with GCC President Ewan Brown providing an overview of the GCC and placed a strong emphasis on the role of it to provide a conduit between the community, business and the ACT government on all matters pertaining to the Gungahlin area. This breakfast provided a tremendous opportunity to inform and update the large group of Gungahlin's business leaders on the key focus areas of the GCC. In addition to the networking which occurred before and after the meeting.

Following this, there was the opportunity for each keynote speaker to provide a 10 minute talk based on the theme and how they see the Gungahlin area sitting within Canberra.

The Honorable Katy Gallagher- Chief Minister

Ms. Gallagher stated that this was a "timely forum to discuss how to support the local economy via spending rather than having a cost cutting focus, as a difficult time was expected from the upcoming May Budget". Having said this, Ms. Gallagher also said she "hoped to increase business confidence from the upcoming Budget outputs".

The level and speed of growth in the Gungahlin area is one, which Ms. Gallagher said was tremendous with enormous, change over the last 20



years, and the future continues to look optimistic for Gungahlin. Some of this optimism can be witnessed from the amount of local construction occurring, the digital developments such as NBN, educational facility growth and retail additions within Gungahlin, as well as the area increasing in the public and private sector via new office locations and opportunities including government investments in infrastructure.

To emphasise the point on being optimistic in the ACT's and in particular Gungahlin's strong future for business, Ms. Gallagher pointed out several key projects or achievements including:

- Capital Metro – Gungahlin corridor being the first, why? It's the most congested travel corridor; the area has 5x the ACT population growth rates and has the highest car dependency within Canberra.
- Government Office Building - the addition of 500 + staff, a new concept cashless shop front to be built in Gungahlin next year
- NBN – Gungahlin area has the highest national uptake rate which presents room for future growth
- Other investments Gungahlin College, CIT, Library, Leisure Centre, Parks areas, Common Ground.

Andrew Blyth- CEO ACT Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Andrew noted a strong “sense of something happening out here, with business thinking outside the box” which makes it a huge business relocation opportunity centre. The total Canberra region has in excess of 800,000 people within the catchment areas and Gungahlin is a key “first stop” destination for services for regional visitors, add to this the future potential for direct flights from Canberra to Singapore and the potential is looking solid.

The pending merger of the Chamber and Canberra Business Point will allow for a one stop centralised business support mechanism which all businesses are encouraged to utilise from a resource centre as well as a networking hub.

From Andrew's perspective, he sees the following areas as key opportunities for business and the Gungahlin region;

- ICC World Cup in 2015 - great for branding and advertising potential as well as increased customer flow to the region
- A rebranding of the CBR - Confident, Bold, Ready logo which should be integrated by business owners via websites, marketing collateral and branding
- Asian Cup Soccer events to be hosted by Canberra, which provides an opportunity to make an impression to new business links throughout the events.

Both speakers provided a solid outlook for Gungahlin as a community and encouraged business owners to maximise engagement and promotion of the area within their own positioning.

In what was a unique opportunity for attendees, the speakers agreed to an ‘open mike’ Q&A session with some of the questions posed including:

Q. When looking at the whole of Canberra and the overall benefits to Gungahlin, have we reached the stage where we have a local, regional and national impact?

KG - Yes, mainly due to the potential from the NBN, our online presence and the creation of Gungahlin as a digital city.

AB - Our location makes us a natural hub. It is the first stop from Sydney and the Mitchell area has boundless opportunity to grow.

Q. With a strong focus regionally and the potential for Gungahlin being a hub for feeder roads access how can we capitalize on the regional opportunities?

AB - The GCC driven by Ewan as President has given Gungahlin a strong voice. He encouraged people to point out what is needed for the area and how the Chamber can help support and drive the agendas from the community.

KG - As the Minister for Regional Development, which is a new role, the needs of the regional communities can be sourced and the solutions in the Gungahlin areas such as health, schools etc. can be actively promoted to the cluster areas. The important aspect is to identify the key areas to focus on with the regional – Canberra relationship.

Q. The relocation of a government office to the area is a positive game changer, are there any plans for second office for the area to enhance the infrastructure?

KG - The missing piece is a large commonwealth employer, which was in discussion 18 months ago, but government change and Public Service efficiency gains have delayed. The NBN may help in the future, but the key is to focus the area as a service provider of schools, health etc. There isn't any immediate potential from the ACT government to relocate, but meetings with the Minister of Territories will discuss ASIO, airport etc. for next projects.

Given the success of the business breakfast by the GCC, it is planned to conduct these events on a 3-4 monthly basis to continue to drive the value of the GCC to the community and to engage with local business owners to give a chance to express views, and seek further clarity on plans and programs to support their businesses growth.

Progress Report

Prepared by Gungahlin Community Council

Policy on Light Rail

At the March meeting of the GCC Executive Committee the following policy on Light rail was adopted.

GCC supports the concept of A Capital Metro (Civic to Gungahlin) link in principle.

The project is considered to be good for future development and prosperity of the Town Centre. The GCC wants more employment in Gungahlin to significantly increase 2-way journeys to support the concept.

GCC also sees merit in the extension of the 'line' beyond Civic to maximise utility for Gungahlin residents as well as all patrons/travellers.

In the early planning stages GCC prefers a range of lower cost options that can deliver similar levels of service.

GCC notes that an efficient transit hub in Gungahlin is very important to channel users into the terminus. This also requires reliable feeder services from outlying suburbs as an important component. The development of Park n Ride facilities is considered vital to the success of the venture from a perspective of Gungahlin residents.

GCC wants to see a revision of the Gungahlin Master Plan in conjunction with planning for Light Rail infrastructure in the Town Centre.

Enclosed Oval Opening

The Gungahlin Oval will informally open on Saturday 29 March with a public open day. GCC and several other community groups will be participating so that residents can learn more about our role in representing the local community and seeking to make Gungahlin a better place to live, work, shop, study and play.

Possible Gungahlin Electorate for the ACT Legislative Assembly

Recently the Canberra Liberals voted to support the concept of a 5x5 model for the next ACT elections. This will mean five electorates of five members each (compared to the current situation of three electorates – one with seven members and two with five members each). The total number of elected politicians will increase from the current 17 to 25 after the next election.

Currently Gungahlin is in the electorate of Molonglo, which extends through central Canberra to areas of Woden and Weston Creek. Gungahlin still remains unrepresented by a local resident at the ACT Legislative Assembly. However, currently this electorate includes six local community councils, GCC being just one of them.

There is now a strong chance that Gungahlin can get an electorate covering all Gungahlin residents. It is likely that some non-Gungahlin suburbs will be included to 'equalise' the numbers but a solid Gungahlin base may be represented in this new electorate.

However this cannot be taken for granted and some persistent lobbying will be needed to ensure such an

outcome. Gungahlin tends to 'suffer' because the large number of young families means that a substantial and growing population does not fully translate into adults eligible to vote. In simple terms we have a large number of children and youth under the voting age.

With more new suburbs under development it is inevitable that Gungahlin will quickly reach a population (voter) base of sufficient size to warrant its own electorate but not quite in time for the 2016 election. This must be considered in the setting of the new electorate boundaries so that there is minimal change to the new "Gungahlin" electorate at the 2020 election and beyond.

The GCC will be canvassing the views of residents before making formal representations.

Roads Update

At the March meeting of the GCC the Director of ACT Roads, Tony Gill, gave a comprehensive update on the priority listing for roads in the Gungahlin district.

1. Barton Highway roundabout (signalisation preferred) - a top priority from a technical viewpoint for 10 years.
2. Duplication of William Slim Drive (Belconnen territory).
3. Duplication of Gundaroo Drive between the Barton Highway roundabout to Mirrabei Drive.
4. Gungahlin Bus Facilities (in the Town Centre) - already underway!
5. Horse Park Drive intersections with Mapleton Ave and Katherine Ave. These are likely to include provision for an eventual upgrade of Horse Park Drive to 4 lanes.
6. Flemington Road between Wells Station Road and Sanford Street Mitchell. This will involve a bus lane down the centre to relieve some congestion.
7. Majura Parkway. Scheduled for completion in June 2016, if not earlier.
8. Horse Park Drive upgrade.
9. Parking issues at Yerrabi.
10. Remediating problems at 4 intersections in the Town Centre.

- Hibberson/Hinder Streets
- Hinder/Efkarpidis Streets (worst accident spot!)
- Anthony Rolfe Ave/Mawby/Hinder Sts
- Anthony Rolfe/Rosanna/Wizard.

(A report on these intersections will be provide to the ACT Legislative Assembly in May - probably too late for the next Budget!)

GCC was concerned to learn that parking issues are often put in the "too hard" basket. Yet these are becoming more of a vexing issue for Town Centre patrons and will only increase with more development.

It was interesting to learn that the off-ramps from the Federal Highway onto Majura Parkway will be signalised.

ACT Roads works on an 8-10 year development program with the 1st year devoted to construction, 3 years of forward planning and another 4-5 years of interim planning. The first two can include design and project phases - both dependent upon funding after competing with other priorities throughout Canberra. This is why Gungahlin needs its own electorate to ensure much needed projects are funded in a timely manner.

BIG

Broadband In Gungahlin

by Peter Elford GCC Vice President.

For more information Visit www.nbnco.com.au/switch Phone the NBN Co Contact Centre on 1800 687 626.

If you need an Interpreter, please call Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on 131 450 and ask for the NBN Co Contact Centre. To find information in other languages: www.nbnco.com.au/translation

Landline disconnections coming up

As part of the arrangements between NBN Co and Telstra, the first home phone and internet services based on copper connections are scheduled to be disconnected and replaced by the NBN fibre network in parts of Gungahlin, starting from 17 July 2014.

What do you need to do?

If your address in Gungahlin is shaded in orange (see map), the NBN service is now available and your existing landline home phone and ADSL internet are scheduled to be disconnected starting from 17 July 2014. You should contact whoever you get your phone service from now, or an alternative phone service provider, to arrange the transfer to the NBN.

NBN Co strongly recommend you order your service 8 weeks before disconnection date to allow enough time to install and connect the equipment before disconnection. Don't leave it to the last minute.

Make sure you avoid disconnection. Act now! Please make sure your neighbours don't get left behind either.

We don't want anyone in Gungahlin left without a home phone or internet access.



TransACT FTTP Moving to NBN

Some areas of Gungahlin (Forde, Bonner, Crace, Casey 2, Franklin 2, Harrison 4) have Fibre-To-The-Premise (FTTP) connections originally installed by TransACT. TransACT was acquired by iiNet, who subsequently sold the FTTP network to NBN Co. These areas are not affected by the landline disconnection mentioned above, however:

NBNco have sent all TransACT FTTP customers a letter notifying them that as part of the move to the NBN, some equipment will need to be swapped out by the NBN Co. The letter also highlights some differences between what the TransACT FTTP service provided, compared to what the NBN service provides, specifically:

- A free-to-air TV signal is NOT provided by the NBN
- The NBN equipment only support two standard phone lines
- The NBN equipment is physically different

The NBNco letter indicates that residents will have to take these issues up with their "preferred service provider", since they cannot explicitly refer to any specific service provider because they are a wholesaler. Of course, one of these service providers could be TransACT, who have a very good understanding of the issues involved and have sent out their own letter with an offer which includes

- Replacing the current phone service with a service which will run in conjunction with your new NBN connection, retaining your existing phone number
- Managing the installation of a TV antenna at no cost for free-to-air television reception (or provide a \$100 credit if you already have an antenna at your house)
- Providing an Internet TV service (Fetch TV) to replace the Trans TV service

Although existing TransACT customers are not required to use TransACT as their Internet Service Provider or Phone service provider once the NBN transition is complete, the GCC recommends that each resident carefully examine all aspects of the offers and options available to them.

THE WILD SIDE



As we rumble along the golf course track heading toward the Gungahlin Lake, which is surrounded by a golf course and a ribbon of modern houses, is one of the smaller ponds in Bruno Ferronato's study and is part of the the waterway system which starts further north with Ginninderra Creek.

I hop out of the Institute of Applied Ecology's four wheel drive, quite excited about seeing the first trap in the lake.

Bruno wades into the dark brown water and pulls up the trap but there are no turtles in this trap. He has already had some success with the traps he pulled up earlier this morning before I joined him. He has two adult female turtles in the back of the car awaiting their visit to his lab.

Bruno, a long term visitor from Brazil, is in Australia for a few years to complete his PhD on the Eastern Long-neck Turtles (also known as the Eastern Snake-necked Turtle or 'Stinker' <http://australianmuseum.net.au/Eastern-Snake-necked-Turtle>).

It gains the nickname of Stinker for good reason; it lets of a stinky smell if upset. This is Australia's turtle version of the American skunk.

His research, under the supervision of Professor Arthur Georges and Professor John Roe, will compare and measure the impacts of urbanisation on the habitats of the long-necked turtle (*Chelodina longicollis*).

Various sites within the location of Gungahlin are used for his research. Bruno says, "I started out studying veterinary science and this eventually evolved into an interest in turtles. I worked in the Amazon for a while studying turtles (*Phrynops Geoffroanus et al*) of the same family (*Chelidae*) as the Eastern Long-necked Turtle. I lived with the Central Peruvian native people, the Ashaninka, whilst I studied this turtle and observed its' place in their lives and in the jungle wilderness. Being part of their diet didn't seem to affect the ability of the population of this turtle to survive. I loved this time living in such a remote location in the jungle, it will always be a much treasured experience in my life. This research in Canberra is quite a different experience being surrounded with all the modern day trappings and having the drier climate to work in. Through my

OF GUNGAHLIN

By Sam Brown

research work in South America, I came across one of the leading experts in turtles, Professor Arthur George, and from this connection the opportunity to move to Australia to do my PhD came about.”

We move on to the next location, Yerrabi Pond. Being a larger pond, Bruno has 6 traps set here. The grasses and reeds bordering this lake give the turtles some great habitat areas.

As we pull in the first trap a passer-by stops and asks how the turtle study is going. It seems that a few locals are in the know about Bruno’s work. The passer-by asks if Bruno knows how many are in the pond and how long they live for. Bruno explains, “I won’t know how many until my statistical analysis has been completed but at a rough guess it could be around the two hundred mark. It is believed that they live for about 40 to 50 years although the length of their lifespan has not been confirmed by any research. The population here is healthy and robust.” He also adds, “The main threat to the turtles seems to be from being run over by a car as they move from pond to pond. They tend to move more when the ponds’ water levels drop or after rain. They are completely carnivorous and will eat water insects, insect larvae, tadpoles as well as small fish. Their strong webbed feet are useful tools for digging and ripping their prey apart. They are basically scavengers and will be attracted to any rotting meat.”

Not long after this encounter we are questioned by another passer-by who has been fishing. He questions Bruno about what he is doing with the net. Bruno points out that he is completing an authorised study with the University of Canberra’s Institute of Applied Ecology. The fisherman explains that he is worried that the net might have been illegal as he recently caught a fisherman using a net to haul in a catch of the native fish that was well over the legal limits. Bruno stated, “It is good that you ask and check. I have had many enquiries for the same reason.”

Two dams in Mulligan’s Flat are the next study locations, these being the most remote and least urbanised ponds in Gungahlin.

Mulligan’s Flat is now a nature reserve although at one time it was grazing land. It is now a haven/mecca

for many re-introduced animals such as the Eastern Bettong and the New Holland Mouse as well as for many bird species. The grasses are straw coloured and crisp from a lack of moisture. The twisted and gnarled weather-beaten trees are bewitching with their different colours and shapes. Set amongst this stark but intriguing landscape are several man-made ponds which are veritable oases for the local birds and animals. The first pond has a dead tree in the middle with a large and obvious nest of jagged twigs resting in a fork; this could well be an eagle’s nest. It seems that the bird is making a rather audacious and bold statement that the land is now theirs. The turtles are well escensed in these ponds and have actually been tracked moving in and out of the reserve area. Bruno states, “The turtles here have less reliability in the water supply and therefore seem to suffer more from a lack of food. In the urbanised ponds the turtles are doing better in terms of numbers and growth sizes. It is like booking into Pond Hilton when you have a constant water supply. They have to aestivate here in the bush in drought times. They find a bushy area or hide under logs and wait out the tough times.” No more turtles are found today but we do find an interloper in one of the nets... a humungous yabby which snaps frustratedly at Bruno. It gets put back in the pond and we pack up the nets.

Bruno adds, “I will take the two female turtles back to measure them and check them for eggs. They will then get released back where they were found. The reproduction rates are a vital statistic in my study so we examine all the adult females for eggs.”

This research project will finish at the end of this year for Bruno. “I have been working on this project since 2011 so I should now have enough data to finalise my thesis. All of this research will supply some of the knowledge which will enable the future survival of this species of turtles in this region. Unfortunately there isn’t as much research done on turtles as on other reptiles. They are just not as popular as the snakes and lizards although they are the more loveable creatures in my opinion!”

