

# BEND OF ISLANDS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC. NEWSLETTER

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Inc. No. A11100A

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## WHAT LOCAL PLANT IS FLOWERING?

Botanical name: *Acacia pycnantha*

Common name: Golden Wattle

Family: Mimosaceae

Flowering period: August, September,

*Acacia pycnantha* is Australia's floral emblem.

It varies in form from a large, bushy shrub or a small, erect or spreading tree, 3-10 m high x 2-5 m wide, with broad leaves and large branched clusters of golden flowers at the end of the upper stems.

It is widely distributed growing in fairly open positions, in full or partial sun, on dry, stony or shallow soils.

The bark is dark and smooth, with a silverish bloom on the upper trunk and branches when young.

Leaves are not true leaves, but phyllodes, i.e. a flattened leaf stem that function as a leaf. Phyllodes are 20 cm long by 1-5 cm wide, shiny, dark green, curved, broadest above the centre, narrow at both ends, with a prominent midrib and a gland near the base of the phyllode. The gland exudes nectar which attracts ants and other insects.

Flower heads are globular or ball shaped, and are made up of 45 to 75 tiny golden flowers, tightly clustered on a stout, hairless stalk, with long yellow stamens. The golden balls are strongly scented and arranged in long racemes, 8-15 cm long, in the upper axils, i.e. in the angle formed between the leaf and its supporting stem. The nectar filled flowers provide valuable food for honeyeaters and butterflies.

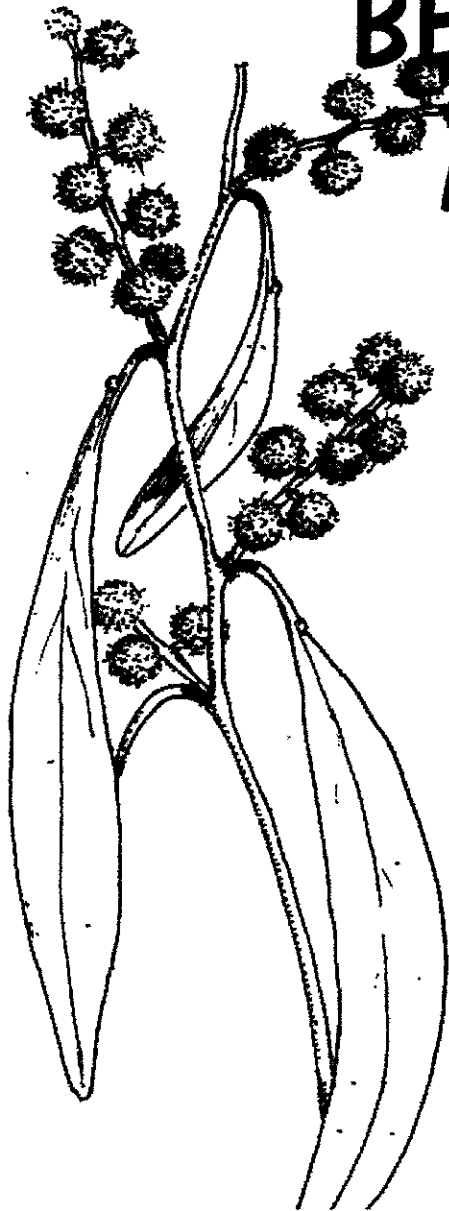
Pods formed after fertilization contain hard seeds which are an important source of food for many birds. The straight, leathery pods are 5-12 cm x 5-7 mm, thin walled and slightly constricted between seeds. The many ripe seeds are dropped readily and provide food for many insects and caterpillars.

The sap released from the trunk is an important source of food for sugar gliders.

Propagation is by seed, treated by covering the seeds with boiling water and soaking for 24 hours.

*A. pycnantha* is a fast growing and drought tolerant plant, useful for screening, wind protection or controlling soil erosion.

GRIC HENRY



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

May 29<sup>th</sup> was an uncomfortable 17 degrees overnight, an all-time record in Melbourne. Warm is how I would describe autumn and the beginning of winter, then a blast from the past as the cold finally set in. Although we are still experiencing very dry weather there were two very substantial rainfalls in June with 21 mm on 19<sup>th</sup> and 38mm on the 27<sup>th</sup>. The mosses are green, the orchids are popping, buds are appearing on the Acacias, the leaf litter is composting down and is soft underfoot and new leaves are shooting on the eucalypts. Seems like all is well but the lack of *Acacia genistifolia* along Henley road reinforces my concern about the impact of the ongoing drought and is perhaps another indication that climate change is here.

Since our last newsletter there has been plenty happening in the Bend and the Nillumbik Shire.

I attended the launch of the Nillumbik Woman's Network "Say No To Violence" initiative. It was a very moving and emotional event that will hopefully achieve some positive outcomes.

Also attended an afternoon tea in the Dandenongs hosted by Parks Vic to recognize Parks volunteer groups with 25 years or more service. Friends of Warrandyte State Park and the Rhododendron Society received awards.

We have had a meeting to continue with work on the Management Committee for the Neil Douglas Conservation Reserve. A commemorative plaque is being made to be installed on site.

There have been a number of Council workshops.

The Green Wedge workshop at Edendale Farm attracted a good crowd of familiar faces and lots of new enthusiastic people (and another nice arvo tea was enjoyed by all).

We attended the Forum to consider the location of the Nillumbik Civic Centre. There was support for Eltham as the preferred site.

There has been an initial meeting to achieve an Aqueduct Master Plan. Consultants have been employed to look at the use of the decommissioned aqueduct from Eltham to Sugarloaf and BICA are represented by Alan and me.

Further to my concerns re climate change I attended the Warrandyte Climate Action Now (CAN) meeting. BICA has become a member so we can support and learn from this initiative. Watch out for the more meetings from this inspirational group.

At Mayor's Forum at Edendale Farm the Guest speaker on the night was Rob Gell who gave a presentation on the crisis of climate change. Great information but a gloomy outlook for the world unless we seriously address the issues now.

Welcome to our new Bend of Islands owners and residents and I look forward to catching up soon.

CAROL BONNY

See you 'round

## NET GAIN

Alan Bonny

BICA has been involved in discussions regarding Net Gain trade-offs. Development applicants within the region may be required to compensate for their works by funding off site Net Gain projects. This is a relatively new concept and the authorities concerned are working their way through the process. There may be opportunities for Bend of Islands properties to provide the Net Gain and use the funding to improve and enhance the ongoing environmental values.

To this end BICA has met with DSE, Council and Trust for Nature to clarify issues of responsibility, management, costs, liabilities etc. Works will be funded for a managed period of 10 years. Trust for Nature has expressed an interest in being involved with approved projects and a Conservation Covenant has been proposed as appropriate security for Net Gain works. This is an ongoing consideration and if you want to know more about Net Gain or Conservation Covenants please ask a member of the committee.

## WYEENA CLOSING DOWN

Wyeena Nursery in Smiths Gully is no more and best wishes go to Kahn Franke and family with their retirement. This reduces the number of reliable suppliers of local provenance indigenous plants.

Our Planning Scheme requires indigenous plants only. The BICA folder contains detailed lists of plants and to get these try the Friends of Warrandyte State Park Nursery or Osborne Peninsula Group or contact me and I may have some available.

Always ask for Bend of Islands provenance. You will not get this from commercial nursery outlets.

## NEXT EDITION OF BICA NEWS

This is a thin number of BICA News but we printed everything that we got! We want to get another edition out in November. That is not too far in the future so get going on your contribution! Remember that digital content should be, for preference, unformatted (single paragraph returns, one typeface, eg. Times, no underlining or indents). Drawings and high contrast photos would also be good. Talk to me (mccallum@minopher.net.au) about the photos before you send them; pics that look OK on your computer can be quite unsuitable for printing and photocopying.

JOHN MCCALLUM

## GULLIVERS TRAVELS

Mike Pelling

For some five years now I have been on a bi-annual safari. This has meant visiting the Reef Hills regional park at Benalla and a secret stand of Ironbark forest near Gooram-bat, usually in May and August, to survey whether a native flying projectile, the Swift parrot, exists. Amazingly they breed in Tasmania in November or December, (possibly coastal southern Victoria also) in the Tasmanian Blue gums, when they can find them, and as you can imagine clearing could be a factor. They then fly to the mainland, for autumn, to destinations ranging from South Australia to Queensland, sometimes flying at night. Their migration follows the flowering eucalypts and they search for nectar and lerps.

But life was not meant to be easy, and I know at Benalla they have a constant battle with Friar birds and Wattlebirds as well as other Lorikeets, for the blossoms. In Victoria their journey usually means following the Box Ironbark belt but Red gums and Grey Box are also visited, other types of eucalypts are visited interstate. Sadly, for the last three years I have not seen any, because there has been no blossom. This would seem to verify a shift in seasonal timing as well.

These dynamos are about the size of a Budgerigar and look very like the Little Lorikeet, and because they are small, and usually present on top of the tree crown and sound like lorikeets, are difficult to identify. In addition they fly very quickly and perhaps the only way to spot them is to permanently attach binoculars to your head so no time is lost aiming and tracking. This could avoid visits to the chiropractor also. I must admit too that I still do not know why they are called a parrot and not a lorikeet.

However the real reason for this fixation is that they are an Endangered species and it is thought, based on the surveys over some 10 years, that about 1000 birds exist. In spite of this they have been observed in Melbourne and possibly in the Bend of Islands. The program is part of the Threatened Bird network program and Birds Australia is an active supporter. I am certain these bodies would welcome being told of any sightings.

## BICA WATTLE WALK

Liz Mildenhall

By the end of this year Peter and I will have walked 3,000kms and spent six of these 12 months traveling in this amazing country. Retirement is wonderful! We've been on the Overland Track in Tassie, The Royal National Park, Carnarvon Gorge, The Fraser Island Track. We're off to Maree and then The Australian Alps Track at the end of the year. Everywhere we go we try to learn about the extraordinary and varied flora... massive 1000 year old satinays and tallowwoods on Fraser, ancient cycads, mosses and lichens and heath and palms. We curse some of the books we spend money on, our

stupidity when we forget or can't identify but continue to marvel anyway.

A few Sunday mornings ago when we joined a bunch of Benders on a wattle walk it was assumed because we'd been here 15 years we'd know about the wattles. Not so. We took up this opportunity because we'd felt really guilty that we knew so little about the plants here.

The walk was great. Twenty plus big and little people checking out the glands on the silver and black wattles (the glands are evenly distributed and appear where the leaf joins the stem on silvers but more haphazard on blacks), the different flowers, indigenous and exotic species, prickles, pinnate leaves and pronunciations( *Acacia acinacea* = acackear ackanackear! We were amazed at the variety of wattles and came home enthused and interested to identify the ones on our block.

Thanks John for organising the walk and everyone else who identified and explained and answered questions. Thoroughly enjoyable and informative.

## Thanks from Rosemary West

I would like to thank the BICA community for the good wishes, welcome and help that has been extended to me. This includes the use of the phone at a house in the Co-op (the person's name escapes me) so that I could phone the RACV when my car broke down on Skyline Road.

The indigenous plants given to me are now enjoying their new home and are not yet eaten! Just the general feel of the place. As for the environment itself - words fail me! My block has carpets of orchids and ferns & lots of herbs popping up (not yet identified), wonderful views, and all the creatures that seem remarkably unafraid, including the wallaby that eats the plants, the wombat that reluctantly got out of my way then growled at me, and this morning the gaggle of sulphur-crested cockatoos that I chased from my doormat. They merely raised their crests and their wings and squawked sneeringly at me all over again.

## WHAT A LOT OF RUBBISH!

John McCallum

A walk along the first kilometre or so of Skyline Road recently revealed some pretty sloppy work by the "yellow bin truck" with the items from a number of bins being strewn along the road. What was more alarming, however, was what these items were. They included used tissues, greasy paper towel, foil/plastic lolly wrappers and assorted bottle tops, all of which at the moment have to go in the red (landfill) bin. Not a great advertisement for the Environmental Living Zone. We should be leading the way towards effective landfill reduction by observing the sorting of household rubbish. The system can't work if there is contamination of the bins. If you are not sure what to put in the bins check with the Shire.

## THERE'S A GORILLA IN MY CEILING

Sheila Dixon

Living alone in a green piece of bush is all very well until you think someone is trying to break in at 3.00 AM. Then you wake up and realise it's only that gorilla again. It's using a jemmy and I can hear the squeak of boards being lifted and those heavy feet thumping around shifting bits and pieces up there in the roof space either side of the upstairs bedroom.

If I can be bothered I go and get a broom handle and bash it about on the cedar ceiling hoping this will give it a fright. Silence reigns for a while and then begin the skulking noises that tell me that he or she is trying to be a bit more careful. I get the impression that there is some construction going on up there, it's obviously been to Bunnings and has quite a collection of building material at hand. Oh well, I suppose winter will come despite the climate change but this gorilla knows there will be a warm bed away from foxes and other predators.

Then there are the pantry pests. Mind you all these fur people have been here much longer than we have and I suppose they are grateful for us plonking these handy places here for them to use. The "pantry people" is an intriguing animal called a Brush-tailed Phascogale. Long nose and about the size of a large rat. The tail is so like a toilet brush, and I am not sure why it looks like that. You see them coming out in the early evening shinning up trees and in general moving very fast. Ah, but what they are waiting for is quietness in that handy building over there and a fervent hope that the human has left the pantry door ajar.

What wonders to behold. Glass and plastic jars are useless but there are always plenty of boxes and easy-to-get-at stuff. The attack is simple. Just run across the shelves and knock everything to the floor. This is what wakes me up – the crashing of glass and general mayhem and then all is quiet for a few moments. Sometimes the decision to get up and shoo them away is just too hard, besides, knowing they are at work down there in the kitchen let's me know there are no nasty humans hanging around dubiously outside.



*Picture from Hillary Jackman*

## FIREGUARD FIELD DAY

Franca Majoor

*The Upper Catani Fireguard Group wanted to know what was meant by such terms as "heavy fuel loads" and "10% slope" that are used when assessing fire risk. A field day was held to show how to measure aspects of fuel and slope. Franca reports.*

We had a field day Saturday afternoon 23/6/07 to examine fuel build up and slope calculations at a couple of different sites. Who was there? Marie, Wolfgang, Pam, Franca, Margo, Tom, John and Meg.

John showed us how to measure slope using a homemade inclinometer. A 1 in 5 slope indicates dangerous fire conditions. We then measured fuel build up using a fuel depth gauge and gauged fuel potential of litter, stringybarks and vegetation density in our area. All indicators suggest we live in a high-risk fire area. In terms of recommended clearing around our homes to minimize fire risk we realized the conflict between keeping natural habitat and clearing. Refer to the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade website for further information.

## OUR WEBSITE: COMMITTEE MINUTES

The BICA website (<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~bica>) has been largely of interest to "outsiders" who want to find out about BICA and the ELZ. This is the way it was set up originally although there has always been some content that was of interest to locals, e.g., the BICA calendar.

We wish to continue to promote BICA via the internet but would like to increase the content that might be of use to people already living here. Recently the BICA Committee minutes were put on line and you can get a user name and password to gain access to these from the Bonnys or me.

The minutes can also be sent to via e-mail. Contact BICA

We would welcome other suggestions as to how our website could suit our needs better. E-mail John on [mccallum@minopher.net.au](mailto:mccallum@minopher.net.au).

**JOHN MCCALLUM**

# A DUMMY'S GUIDE TO GREEN POWER

## Tom Fisher

According to an Australian government source, 'nearly one thousand Australians per day are making the switch to GreenPower', and 'nationally, there are more than 590,000 customers subscribing to GreenPower, an increase of more than 90,000 customers in 3 months' ([www.greenpower.gov.au](http://www.greenpower.gov.au)). Some BICA members are among them, and there may be others interested in joining them.

As indicated in Barb Whiter's account in BICA Newsletter 68 of BICA's April workshop with Paul Brown, Greenhouse Project Officer at Nillumbik Shire Council, there are many questions surrounding the purchase of GreenPower electricity. In the notes provided below, I attempt to summarise information contained in an article entitled 'Flicking the Green Power Switch' in the June 2007 issue of *Choice*, which provides useful general information and a rating according to cost. However, another comparative study of suppliers reaches very different evaluations by applying different criteria. Though I have visited some of the websites listed below, I make no independent claims for the accuracy of the information presented either in the original *Choice* article or the ratings published by Green Electricity Watch.

### What is GreenPower (GP)?

GP is a government-accredited program that oversees electricity energy production and distribution coming from 'genuinely renewable sources built after 1997'. This energy forms a tiny portion of the national electricity grid, and increased use of GP increases the proportion in the overall distribution of electricity. Renewable sources include: biomass, hydro, wind and solar generation.

GP 'products' can range in their proportion of GP accreditation – or clean energy – from as little as 10% to 100%. So it is important for consumers to check exactly what they are purchasing. Where the rating is less than 100%, the remainder of the energy derives from 'black' sources such as coal or renewable energy from sources created after 1997, the use of which does not increase the current pool of green energy.

### Costs

There are three basic GreenPower pricing schemes:

- Consumption based: consumers are billed for the amount of energy they use at a premium of three to five cents per kilowatt hour (kWh).
- Fixed price: patrons pay a set amount regardless of how much energy they consume, which may be helpful to those who use larger than average amounts of electricity. *Choice* estimates additional costs of \$2-8.00 per week for this product. Some fixed-term contracts carry financial penalties for cancellation.

- Block based: users buy a chunk of energy per day, e.g. 10-20 kWh.

### Victorian Suppliers and Contact Information

*Choice* lists eleven 100% green electricity products available in Victoria at the time of writing and estimates that they will cost a premium of from \$104 to \$435.60 each year for average household usage. Reproduced below is a table with their names, products and websites, in ascending order of cost (cheapest on top), taken from p 12-13 of the article cited above.

Retailer	Product	Website
EnergyAustralia (now Simply Energy)	Green Saver Premium	energy.com.au (simplyenergy.com.au)
Victoria Electricity	Premium Green	victoriaelectricity.com.au
Country Energy	ForeverGreen	countryenergy.com.au/green
Jackgreen	Jackgreen Power	jackgreen.com.au
Neighbourhood Energy	GreenSwitch Neighbourhood	neighbourhoodenergy.com.au
Australian Power & Gas ActWAGL	Greenchoice 100	australianpowerandgas.com.au
AGL Energy	GreenEnergy	actewagl.com.au/greenchoice
Origin Energy	Greenearth Wind	agl.com.au/green
TRUenergy	Windpower	originenergy.com.au
Origin Energy	GreenEarth Solar	truenergy.com.au

However, the current survey of GreenPower suppliers published by Green Electricity Watch (see below for website) uses four criteria but does not include price. In it *Choice*'s cheapest selection rated in the bottom half of those surveyed, while some of the most expensive options rated best on those broader criteria. So, potential consumers may wish to acquire further information from that highly informative website before making a decision. The 2007 survey is scheduled for release in November.

### General information

The following websites may have updated information on this topic as well as other related material that BICA members will find useful:

- Australian Conservation Foundation: [www.acfonline.org.au](http://www.acfonline.org.au)
- GreenPower scheme: [www.greenpower.gov.au](http://www.greenpower.gov.au)
- Green Electricity Watch: [www.greenelectricitywatch.org.au](http://www.greenelectricitywatch.org.au)

## TRANSPIRATION BEDS: OUT OF FAVOUR

Neil Harvey

At the last BICA General Meeting at my place our guest speaker spoke about septic tanks and their maintenance. The various forms of waste treatment were raised i.e. absorption trenches, absorption trenches with sand filters, absorption trenches with worm farms etc. Transpiration beds were ignored. As I have a fully functioning transpiration bed with over 30 years of service, I mentioned it to the meeting. No longer a good idea apparently as the untreated waste water which will transpire from the base where it feeds into the transpiration bed can be a health hazard. Various diseases are possible we were told.

There are 14 transpiration beds on the Co-op. some are well maintained and a couple are a garden showpiece, none have had any record of causing any illness as mentioned above.

To have a garden in the Bend of Islands to grow food plants and the occasional non-native flowering plant a transpiration bed is ideal. It is a contained environment with waste water from the house being put to productive use.

A transpiration bed is a large hole in the ground, lined (ideally with 2 layers of 200 um black plastic), which is then filled at the base with coarse (50mm) rock, followed by coarse sand, a layer of half round perforated ReIn drain (inverted) and covered with a mixture of mountain soil and loam (the soil must be sterilized). This provides a sealed underground lake and allows the waste water that overflows from the septic tank to provide water for plants to grow, even through the summer months. All new plants need to be watered in until they drop their roots to the moist soil below and normal garden maintenance tasks are still necessary.

Gardening is a love for some and a chore for others, so a transpiration bed is not for everyone. Joyce and I live silly lives with far too many tasks and not enough hours, but we still have a wonderfully productive lemon tree, a few grape vines, we grow buckets full of potatoes, tomatoes and other vegies, the occasional flower and far too many weeds.

There are showpiece transpiration bed gardens on the Co-op. where people are creative and industrious with no known ill effects. I hope more people in the bend consider a transpiration bed if they are gardeners and use our examples as a guide.

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Peter Gurney was presented with a 20 years service badge with the CFA in June. Peter is typical of a lot of our fire fighters with many years of service. Our Brigade is always looking for new volunteers to provide the valuable community service and share the workload.

## NATURE NOTES FROM CAROL

### Going Nuts

Last season our stringy barks flowered profusely and that has left the trees loaded with gum nuts. Crimson Rosellas love to feed on these and at our place it seems the only trees they choose are the ones that are directly above corrugated iron or a car. You get the picture, it sounds like world war two and during the day it's not too disturbing but as an early morning wake up call it's a bit aggressive. I still love their visits.

### Good Morning Call

Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos have been passing through on a regular basis over the last few months and it is often their call that wakes me in the morning. Recently on their early morning flight they paused for a rest in the stringy-bark just outside our bedroom window and despite the frosty morning I tore myself from my cosy bed to observe and take a photo. The observation was successful but because of the early morning light the photo was not. Never the less it was wonderful to watch as they nibbled and chatted for around fifteen minutes before they flew north in their distinctive lazy manner.

### Wee Jacky

I have written a few items about our resident Jacky lizards and I have another recent observation. Late afternoon with the sun getting low, I was on our water tank getting ready for my Ouzo sundowner when I noticed Jacky on a log soaking the last rays. No need to stand still around our lizards they are very used to the comings and goings of this household so I made myself comfy and watched.

I was thinking how beautiful he was when he started signalling. I have observed this behavior before but always enjoy the performance. First the head bobs up and down, then the tail flicks frantically followed by the waving of feet on rotating limbs, all this interspersed with extremely quick dashes from one vantage point to another. This time after the dance he returned to the warm concrete and some minutes later he flattened his belly, lifted all four limbs into the air, and did a wee!!!! Well I am assuming that is what he did, and quite a puddle it was too. He then moved out of the wet patch, enjoyed the last of the sun before disappearing into a pile of logs. Nature, isn't it wonderful!

## FAREWELL TO MICK AND MARG

A gathering was held at the Fire Shed to celebrate the Woiwods time in the Bend and to wish them well for their new venture in the back blocks of Eltham. Woiwod family members conspired with BICA to provide a surprise afternoon tea for friends and neighbours with about 80 attending. And it was a surprise with Mick wondering why they were stopping at the fire station, and what were all the people doing there. Mick and Marg were presented with photographs of Wombalano mounted in a frame. A great 'Bend of Islands' day.

The Woiwods have now relocated to Eltham North and the shift was completed with a minimum of fuss but there was a bit of concern when the new beds didn't arrive until about 9 pm on the day of the shift.

Their new contact details are:

Mick & Marg Woiwod  
142 Glen Park Rd  
Eltham North  
Vic. 3095  
9439 5679

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*Mick has been one of the most prolific contributors to the BICA Newsletter over the years. His contributions have included social comment, articles about the European history of the area, information about the original inhabitants and notes on the local geology. I look forward to his continued input to our newsletter for many years to come!*

**JOHN MCCALLUM**

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## ANOTHER FAREWELL

Another departure from the Bend is Norm Linton Smith who is off to Leith Park in St Helena. We wish Norm all the best for this adventure.

## FIRE PLAN NOW!

The fire season will be here soon so now would be a good time to start reviewing Fire Plans. Various Fireguard groups are active within the Bend so ask your neighbours, BICA or your Brigade. Information about fire safety and links to other web-sites of interest are to be found on the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade web-site. <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~chfb>

## SIGNS AT THE BEND

### Carol Bonny

All of us commuting into the Bend along Henley Rd are informed and reminded of Community Events and happenings via the signpost at the bridge in Henley Rd. The post was installed to replace the old sign tree, which was well dead, and perhaps the weight of all the nails caused it to topple

In the past Norm Linton Smith produced our BICA signs and our new generation of signs are painted by Jeff Drummond. Wolfgang Krause provides the blank boards and is responsible for the efficient and timely hanging and removal. Thanks to all for their efforts in keeping us up to date.

The signpost is available for not for profit community notices and users are requested to be considerate in their hanging and removal of messages. It's a great community resource.

Its no longer the sign tree so perhaps the gallows?

## YOUR BICA COMMITTEE

President: Carol Bonny	9712 0648
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Treasurer: Neil Harvey	9712 0462
Secretary: Alan Bonny	9712 0648
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Michael Pelling	9712 0286
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C/- PO Kangaroo Ground. Vic. 3097

**Next BICA events**

Pub Walk : Sunday 28 Oct  
Night Event : Saturday 10 Nov

**Greenhouse action  
SAVE THE GLOBE.  
TURN YOURS OFF!**

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