

A reflection by Mary Ross, technical officer and former Manager of Natural Areas and Conservation at the City of Canning who joined the City environment staff in 1996

This fine association is indelibly linked with the Shelley Rossmoyne Foreshore, and rightly so, but reflecting on its name, the Canning River Residents' Environment Protection Association, the goals of the association are much broader.

A glance over the wide-ranging correspondence between the Association and the City over the years demonstrates this –

- concerns about housing density and the loss of trees on private property,
- the need for community education on environmental matters,
- encouraging environmental research,
- manning the Conservation Council stand at the Royal Show,
- promoting Brolga Park in Willetton for a Greening WA's 'chain of diamonds' grant for weed control, nutrient stripping and water quality testing.
- Encouraging the CEO to join WALGA to take advantage of the Perth Biodiversity Project

But back to the beginning – 1994 when CRREPA was first established..

1994 – Nelson Mandela first cast his vote in the South African election.

Paul Keating was the Prime Minister and John Hewson the Opposition leader (followed by Alexander Downer).

In WA Richard Court became the Premier and Carmen Lawrence the Opposition leader, followed by Jim McGinty (with Ian Taylor between).

Brian Bourke went to jail and Christopher Skase was arrested in Spain.

It was the year of Muriel's Wedding and the Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert, the finale of Mother and Son, the West Coast Eagles won the AFL premiership

And the City received a letter dated 1 June advising of the formation of the Association...

Less than a month later, there was another letter from CRREPA requesting the City's support for Margot Ross to be appointed as an Honorary Warden of the Swan River Trust, which the City provided, given that Shelley / Rossmoyne is 'an extremity of the City that is not easy to patrol'. The role would give her the power to issue notices about minor infringements... A brave and motivated woman...

I started at Canning a couple of years later, in 1996 and very early on, before I had had any involvement with CRREPA, a disgruntled Riverton Drive resident asked me acerbically if I was the daughter of Margot Ross... having no idea who she was referring to I just said 'no' and went back to trying to explain why taking out 'just the one tree' in front of her house was not a minor matter ... Later on, I came to understand that she had the possible charges of bias and even nepotism on her mind...

It wasn't until 1999 -2000, the turn of the millennium, that I really became familiar with Shelley Rossmoyne Foreshore and the vital role of CRREPA, when I was fortunate to be given the opportunity by Steve to draft the management plan for Shelley Rossmoyne Foreshore, which led to me meeting Diane Matthews for the first time and I cannot thank her enough for her open, generous

and patient approach to helping me understand the nuances and complexity of this long narrow stretch of river reserve.

I understand, too that it's not only about getting out there and doing the planting, weeding, watering, the water testing, the bird counts – there are the many 'back room' tasks that a successful community group needs to keep on top of – keeping the accounts, maintaining the business records, staying insured, building and retaining membership, producing newsletters, running meetings, representing the group on committees, applying for, administering and acquitting grants, reviewing draft documents... so many unrecognised tasks ..

I am in awe of the people in this room who have contributed so much of their time, effort and expertise on a voluntary basis, to fight for, protect and enhance our environment and the foreshore in particular. As with me, they have patiently educated a long line of parks officers, natural area team members, park managers and no doubt political representatives, about the place, so that a partnership formed between CRREPA, Council and the City

With combined effort, and acknowledging too the significant contribution from the State Government of both funding and expertise, in most places vegetation has been retained, in many places it has increased, there are more trees, there is a fence stopping cars from just driving onto the park, in places the path has been moved back from the water's edge ..

Merise and Max gave a presentation at the 20-year celebration and they spoke of the challenges that are always with us – weeds, storms, erosion, poor soil and what they politely called 'vegetation damage', but they also spoke of the highlights – restoration and revegetation, erosion control, consultation, bus trips, relationships, fun amongst the work...

All sites have their particular characteristics as do all people, the SRF must be one of the most challenging in Canning – we talk about 'the edge effect' where changes are most pronounced at the boundary between one space and another and 'fragmentation' which creates more and more edges for ecological areas – favouring weeds and other 'generalists' threatening the 'specialists'.

The foreshore comprises so many edges in a very narrow space; the moving tidal water edge, the hard fixed road edge, the fence which limits parking, the path (both sides), the turf areas and the precious slither of remnant and restored vegetation... it is that slither which gives the place much of its character, helps reduce erosion, shades walkers, supports fauna, provides a native corridor and so many other benefits.

All those edges aid the incursion into the very narrow remnant and restored areas by people, dogs, boats, weeds, litter and so on and on. Apart from funding, it takes a continuing input of time, effort, commitment and care to tip the imbalance enough to protect, restore and support the 'precious slither', way beyond what a local authority could provide. CRREPA should be so proud of what it has achieved by hard work, persuasion, lobbying, arguing, cooperating, and celebrating this place, which has not just survived but improved over the 30 years.