

Montrose Environmental Group – The Early Years

As presented by Rodger Elliot at MEG's 30th Anniversary AGM in 2001.

Rodger talked about MEG's beginnings, when, following a serious accident at the corner of Stradbroke and Canterbury/Mt Dandenong Rds the authorities decided to make a 'divided highway' to replace the narrow road which then existed. MEG began as a reaction to the destruction of the trees and roadside vegetation which that entailed.

Ron Taylor was the first President and Ray Yates was the first Secretary. MEG met at Montrose Primary School. Subscription was \$2 per family or \$1 per person. In the early years there were many visits to see the local State MP Bill Borthwick to get his help with MEG plans. The local council was seen as generally anti-conservation at all times.

Later, 'general meetings' were held in the Montrose Tennis Clubrooms and consisted of a business meeting followed by a speaker, often with a slide show.

MEG became interested in the Federal Government's plans for 'Urban Renewal' but nothing came of that.

MEG was opposed to the idea of extending the football ovals at the Montrose Recreation Reserve. MEG proposed a site for expansion away from the treed area but the Reserve's Committee convinced the Council that the trees needed to be removed, despite advice that without trees the area would become prone to flooding. The bulldozers went in one early morning in secret. They were stopped by a court injunction by MEG member Jean Richards who then spent years opposing the Council's plans.

MEG members also were at the forefront of opposition to a plan to 'upgrade' Cambridge Road the roadsides of which were comparatively unspoilt. There was a letter drop to the local residents and a residents' committee formed to replant the area with local species.

At that time also MEG produced a coloured pamphlet entitled 'Roadsides' which became valued by community groups from many areas of the State. One of the first pamphlets MEG produced in the 1970's was 'Native Plants for Native Birds'.