

MOTH's 17th ANNIVERSARY



In October 2009 it was 17 years since Minders of Tuggeranong Homestead (MOTH Inc.) began.

MOTH's focus back then was on opposing the development plans announced by the ACT Government. These included building hundreds of medium density houses on the Tuggeranong Homestead property that is bounded by the suburbs of Richardson, Calwell and Isabella Plains.

A small, dedicated group of people began advocating for the much-loved and historically significant Homestead which had for years been listed as significant on the Register of the National Estate.

Some MOTH members had family connections to the property, others a passion for history and heritage, while others simply enjoyed the rural presence of the Homestead within their suburb.

The campaign was intense in the early years. MOTH members researched the Homestead's history, publicised the struggle and constantly championed the cause of preserving, restoring and enjoying the property. All the while they needed to raise funds to keep the whole thing going.

Alliances were forged with other community groups. MOTH received help, advice and support from individuals as well. Schools took an interest including the group of children and their teacher from Theodore Primary who called themselves "The Mini-Minders".

MOTH had to overcome numerous setbacks and disappointments throughout the first few years. However, the tide began to turn with the findings of an appeal taken by MOTH to the Land and Planning Appeal Board. The appeal was successful on heritage grounds, vindicating MOTH's strong belief in the importance of the Homestead.

Bit by bit over 17 years the nature of MOTH's work for the Homestead has changed in keeping with the times. So much of the early work was done away from the Homestead, in parliamentary committee rooms, meetings and media interviews. These were the battlegrounds where MOTH members had to be prepared to make a stand.

For too many of MOTH's 17 years the Homestead was either completely out of bounds or access was strictly limited. In recent years, with Neil Gillespie as the lessee, MOTH has enjoyed much greater freedom to visit the Homestead. The community also has many opportunities to enter the property including the Lions' Club Market days.

Now the work MOTH does at the Homestead is hands-on, with environmental and cultural projects keeping the members busy. Revegetation and water catchment work, exhibitions, musical afternoons, writers' talks, are just some of the activities that members organise and take part in.

Some of the original members are still very active in MOTH and new members have joined to share the friendship and satisfaction of involvement with a worthwhile volunteer association. New members are always welcome and perhaps in another 17 years they too will look back with pleasure on their contribution to a treasure in our midst; the Tuggeranong Homestead.

Lyn Forceville
(Founding Chair)