

Nomination of Richard Bomford for honorary life membership of Friends of Grasslands

Under the Association Rules of Friends of Grasslands (FOG), Honorary Life Membership is a special award through which FOG can recognise exceptional service by a member or former member. The committee can propose an award as part of the business of any general meeting of the association; the person proposed will not be a current serving member of the committee; the general meeting will vote on the committee's proposal, with a majority of votes indicating acceptance. A maximum of two new honorary life members can be recognised in any calendar year.

For the 2024 annual general meeting, the committee recommends that honorary life membership be awarded to Richard Bomford for his exceptional services to FOG.

In making Richard Bomford an honorary life member, FOG recognises his voluntary contribution, over a long period of time -

- creating and maintaining FOG's easy to use and informative website, which
 - creates a strong public image for FOG – with over 100,000 visits a year;
 - provides important information published by FOG, such as its newsletters, formal submissions, annual reports, description of projects, notices and so on;
 - contains a powerful search facility;
 - facilitates people to join FOG as members or renew membership, and to purchase publications; and
 - is done at minimum cost to FOG.
- participating in and helping to facilitate FOG's activities, especially but not confined to the south coast;
- along with his partner, Bernadette O'Leary, demonstrating to FOG's members and neighbours how to maintain and restore their 40 hectare grassy property at Brogo, which has hosted a number of FOG's events;
- providing, on many occasions, sensible advice and solutions to FOG, especially on public communication approaches; and
- voluntarily participating in other community, heritage and biodiversity projects.

In 2007 FOG had already embarked on a web presence, using Yahoo's Geocities as a platform, established by Paul Hodgkinson. With his interest in websites, Richard offered to take it over as Paul didn't have the resources to keep managing that site. Richard's interests involved learning the basics of web publishing. The text was taken off Geocities and converted to native HTML, FOG registered its own web address, and found a low-cost hosting service to take it live. From there it has been a process of accretion of content, and evolution of formatting.

Richard maintains the website, ensuring it remains up to date. He maintains a complete list of all submissions the group makes and all newsletters. These contain invaluable information about the work of FOG in its advocacy, education and communication roles and he ensures FOG's website is transparent in all its processes, decisions and activities. A lot of the website usage is by school pupils getting information for assignments – in particular, the fairly technical *Grasses of NSW* pages are very popular.

Richard has a geology degree from ANU, which included study of geography and forestry; has an electronics and communications certificate from Canberra TAFE; and he studied law for a couple of years at ANU.

He worked for twenty-two years in the Australian Public Service mostly in policy roles in the Environment Department, with some shortish stints with the Joint Committee on Public Works and AusAID.

Richard says of his and Bernadette's bush block "Three decades of weeding, a bit of planting, protection of seedlings as they come up, years of droughts, flooding rains and the occasional bushfire have left their marks, and the place is now a mosaic of grassy bits, woodland bits, viney bits and some places vaguely resembling forest. Give it another 300 years and it might get to some semblance of its former majesty, but with rabbits, foxes, deer, cats and rats, not to mention invasive plants, it certainly won't be what it was. If Australia's human population by then is in the 200 – 300 million range, then it might just be a very valuable

little pocket of a granite soils ecosystem, given that nearly all the granite soils along the coast have been cleared for agriculture.”

Richard is not unlike many of FOG’s members who have had a successful professional career, combined with a strong interest in managing land for its biodiversity values, and who have used their skills both to learn and contribute to FOG’s objectives. Acknowledgement must also go to Bernadette for her role within FOG’s committee and in her career advocating for grasslands and grassy ecosystems.

FOG thanks Richard for his many years’ contributions to the organisation and to grassy ecosystems generally.