

WELCOME

**by David Grant
Executive Director, Parklands**

On behalf of the Parklands and Sydney Olympic Park, I would like to extend to you all, a very warm welcome to what we trust will be a terrific day.

The issue with which today's seminar is concerned, the restoration of Urban Ecosystems, is of vital importance in what must be described as our struggle as a community to recover from the destructive effects of the exploitation of our environment.

As no doubt you all are aware, the land we now call Sydney Olympic Park, was a particular victim of such destruction, but it is also the place where one of the greatest projects of restoration that Australia has ever seen occurred. Over nine million cubic metres of waste material was either gathered and contained or remediated, and something like four million seedlings of grasses, bushes and trees were planted. After this restoration, this is also a place where we have taken on the responsibility of monitoring and managing this remediation long term so that we and others may learn about what undertaking restoration actually involves. The result is that Sydney Olympic Park, and especially its Parklands, for which I'm responsible, are now among the most valuable of Sydney's public assets. We don't however, claim that we have more than some of the answers. In fact, of course we have much to learn from others who are gaining experience in restoration. It is the combination of offering what we know and wanting to know more, which has been the main motivation behind today's seminar, since we believe that only by like-minded people listening to each other and working in partnership can we drive the process forward.

We have therefore invited to present here today, a wide cross section of speakers, each of them leaders in their field and each committed to urban restoration. Our hope is that from today we will not only learn more about what restoring urban ecosystems means, but we can also begin to form new partnerships to help take the process of restoration forward. It is certainly my determination that this will happen; my hope is that when we meet again, at a similar event next year, these partnerships will be firmly established.