

FRIENDS OF BRIXTON STREET
AND THE
CONSERVATION COUNCIL OF WA

A PROPOSAL FOR A YULE BROOK NATURE RESERVE



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A proposal for Yule Brook Nature Reserve
/ Friends of Brixton Street and the
Conservation Council of WA

DEPT OF BIODIVERSITY, CONSERVATION & ATTRACTIONS

INTRODUCTION

This is a proposal for the establishment of a Yule Brook Nature Reserve of approximately 137 ha to include the Brixton Street wetland complex. It is also a proposal to close Brixton Street between Alton Street and the Railway to vehicular traffic so that the vegetation continuum can be maintained between the two reserves.

The Brixton Street wetland complex is a remnant of the once vast wetlands of Kenwick. It extends from the railway line (Brixton Street) in the south west to Yule Brook in the north east. It is dominated by extensive seasonally waterlogged flats and ephemeral claypan basins which support a rich plant and animal community and is poorly represented in conservation reserves. It was recognised in the Australian Nature Conservation Agency publication "A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia".

FLORA

Over 350 plant species are present in the area, which makes the Brixton Street region **floristically significant**. Putting it into a wider context, there are only 1,400 plant species in the whole of Britain so this represents about a quarter of Britain's plant species being present in a tiny area in Kenwick. Bushland in Britain and Europe is largely modified and there are no remaining natural areas with intact vegetation communities. We are fortunate in Western Australia that we still have bushland, much of which is in excellent condition.

The 19 ha Brixton Street (Homeswest) site support 17% of the known flora of the Perth region in less than 0.005% of the area, making it a site of high biodiversity.

The Australian Government recently ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity which is intended to ensure the long term survival of the full range of biological diversity, while at the same time providing for human needs through the sustainable use of biological resources.

In the Brixton complex there are 4 rare plant species and 10 priority listed species under the provisions of the Wildlife Conservation Act. There are also numerous vegetation communities, some of which are uncommon. The winter wet areas are particularly diverse, and the flora includes a suite of specialised short-lived winter plants. The local flora is also known to contain elements normally associated with Darling Scarp habitats.

The proposed Brixton Street flyover would cause an additional break in the vegetation's continuum and be detrimental to the ecological sustainability of the separate reserves.

FAUNA

The fauna of the area is correspondingly rich. As well as supporting many bush birds and waterbirds, the area provides habitat for mammals, with colonies of the rare southern brown bandicoot. Other mammals likely to occur in the area are the honey-possum and up to 9 species of bats.

Southern Brown Bandicoot

Most of the habitat of this delightful Western Australian animal is under threat. It requires secure habitat and prefers heathland associated with winter wet areas, which provides it with some protection from predators. Many bandicoots die on the roads, and road deaths must be considered to be a factor affecting their long term survival capacity. If they are required to cross open ground they are very vulnerable to attack.

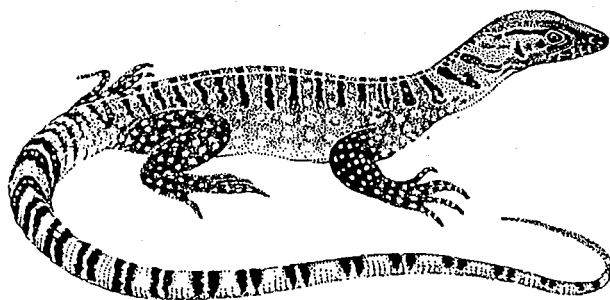
Many Western Australians have never seen this uniquely Australian animal, and yet in the Brixton Street wetlands they are still found.

If this precious animal is to survive, special care will need to be taken to meet its habitat needs. One consideration is to ensure that the bandicoots can move safely between the different areas. This is vital if part of their territory has been burnt as they will need to recolonise alternative territory pending the regrowth of the burnt area.

Roads create a barrier to fauna movement as well as causing casualties. Increasing the width of roads and volume of traffic would create a further barrier to fauna movement. This together with other pressures could in the long term bring about the extinction of the bandicoot colonies in Brixton Street.

Rosenberg Monitor

Numerous geckos, legless lizards, dragon lizards, skinks and monitors are found in the area. The Rosenberg Monitor - an uncommon goanna is present. This remarkable reptile lays its eggs in termite mounds where they are kept safe for approximately 9 months of the year, until the female returns to dig out the young. There are very few recorded sightings of this particular goanna in the metropolitan area. However its presence was confirmed by members of the local community and W.A. Museum records.



CLOSURE OF PART OF BRIXTON STREET

There are 5 options for Brixton Street currently being considered by the Environmental Protection Authority, as part of the Public Environmental Review on the Roe Highway Extension.

One of these options is to close Brixton Street between Alton Street and the railway line, dispersing the traffic via the Roe Highway and Albany Highway. To date no scoping studies have been done to accurately determine the traffic patterns. This needs to be done.

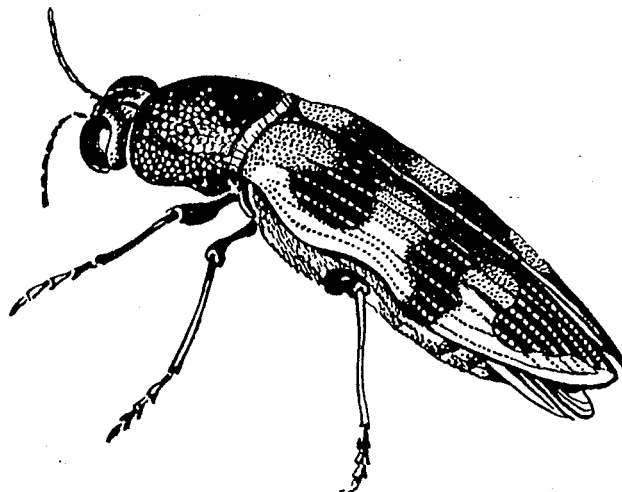
We propose that Brixton Street be closed to traffic and replaced with an attractive timber pedestrian and cycleway broadwalk which would be elevated to overlook the reserve. This broadwalk would link the Beckenham and Kenwick areas greatly benefiting local people. It would also make the proposed amalgamated reserve more viable for fauna, particularly mammals.

Children could safely use the cycleway if travelling the short distance between Kenwick and Beckenham. They are unable to do so now, due to the speed of traffic and the dangers of cycling on this type of road.

Currently Brixton Street appears to be predominantly used by through traffic to join up with William Street. Undoubtedly when the Roe Highway is built there will be a significant shift in traffic patterns and much of the fast traffic currently using Brixton Street will use the Roe Highway instead. Other environmentally sound possibilities should be pursued to provide an alternative east west link.

Freeways truncate the existing fabric of suburbia bring about dislocation of communities and a constant noise and air pollution nuisance to nearby communities. Yet weighing it up, people appear to consider the convenience outweighs the substantial disadvantages.

The proposal to close through traffic on Brixton Street would be likely to have a small impact on some motorists, however the overall gain for the whole community exceeds the small disadvantage.



COMMUNITY NEEDS

Some people may say that an urban community should be happy with footpaths, roads, ovals and other basic facilities. However many people feel that "quality of life" issues should also be considered. Urban dwellers increasingly are seeking natural bushland areas where they can enjoy a quiet walk away from the noise and stress of daily living.

Unfortunately for many people living in the inner suburbs, the "green areas" have gone, replaced with bitumen and concrete. Those residents must travel to Bold Park, Kings Park, Bungendore Park etc. These bushland areas are extensively used and enjoyed by thousands of people.

The Yule Brook Nature Reserve would provide a marvellous opportunity for school children. Children could gain a great deal from being able to experience and learn about a relatively intact natural ecosystem. If the road was replaced by a pedestrian/cycleway broadwalk between the two reserves, there would be further opportunities to observe the clay pans and the plant and animal communities, without impacting on some of the more sensitive areas.

It is proposed that the pedestrian/cycleway broadwalk would be taken over the Roe Freeway to link up with Brixton Street on the Beckenham side of the Roe Highway.

A large well-managed reserve which amalgamates Government owned land in the heart of Kenwick would be a valuable asset for the whole community, but particularly for Beckenham and Kenwick residents who would have their own "Kings Park bushland" right on their doorstep.



PROPOSAL

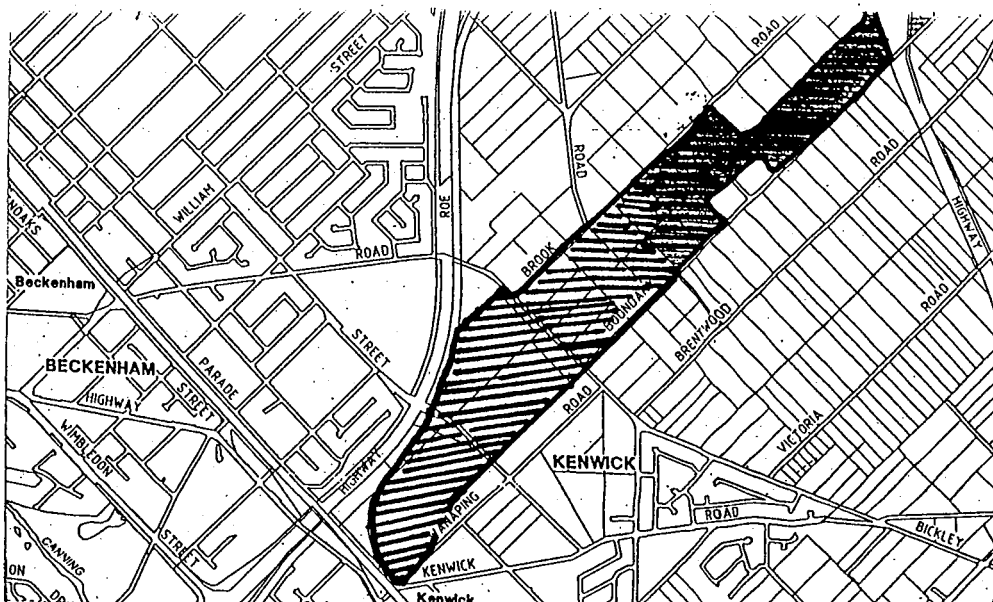
An opportunity exists now to create a large continuous reserve which would incorporate the existing and proposed reserves into one area, making the area ecologically sustainable for mammals particularly the bandicoots and honey possums. On-going management costs would be substantially reduced with a consolidated reserve.

It is therefore proposed that the area bounded by the railway, Wanaping, Boundary and Brook Roads and Tonkin Highway and Welshpool Road (refer to map below) be incorporated into one Nature Reserve to be managed by the Department of Conservation and Land Management.

Specifically the area would include -

- 1) Lots 37 and 47 Brixton Street (19 ha) which is currently proposed as a Nature Reserve.
- 2) Adjoining wetlands, being Lot 48 and Lot 35. (30 ha). Lot 48 has been recommended for acquisition by the EPA to provide a link to proposed and existing reserves to the North. Lot 48 is currently privately owned and should be acquired. Lot 106 Wanaping Road should also be included.
- 3) Botany Reserve (System 6 area M69), known as the Kenwick Swamp (35ha) The University recently considered disposing of the Reserve to the Department of Conservation and Land Management with provisions for the Botany Department to continue to use the area for scientific studies. No decision to proceed has yet been made.
- 4) Foothills Metropolitan Region Scheme Amendments (Kenwick) including Lots 17, Lot 19, part Lot 21, part Lot 23, Lot 25, 27, 29 31, 33 Boundary Road, and part Lot 19 and 20, Lot 22, part Lot 24 Brook Road and part Lots 340 and Lot 341 Tonkin Highway (53 ha).

This would enable a relatively compact reserve of approximately 137 ha to be established.



The Friends of Brixton Street and the Conservation Council of W.A. submit this proposition for the establishment of a Yule Brook Nature Reserve, with a small section of roadway in Brixton Street being replaced by a timber pedestrian and cycleway broadwalk so that the two proposed reserves could be amalgamated.

This could occur in conjunction with the Roe Highway extension so as to not inconvenience motorists.

This proposal would enhance the quality of life of local residents and increase property values over time, due to the proximity of such a fine reserve.

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Wildlife Art by Margaret Wilson