

Centenary and District Environment  
Action Incorporated  
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## IN THIS ISSUE

### The Story of Westlake Bush Park

**Date Claimer:** Celebration of World Environment Day, Sunday morning, 4<sup>th</sup> June, 2023, at Pooh Corner Environment Centre, 100 Wolston Road, Wacol



### PROGRAM:

- 7.00am **Guided Bush Walk** – Pooh Corner Bushland Reserve (no more tickets available!)
- 9.00am Various activities outlined in separate flyer and via Councillor Hutton's Facebook page. Please note that there is a photography competition (one entry per person). Entry required by Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2023.

**FREE! Public invited!**  
**Bring your friends!**

Centenary and District Environment Action (CDEA) advocates on behalf of local residents concerning environmental issues. The following article continues the theme in the previous, February, Newsletter (Issue #57), and is one of a number of successful campaigns related to retention of bushland.

## THE STORY OF WESTLAKE BUSH PARK

*(Shealagh Walker)*

### Saving the bushland

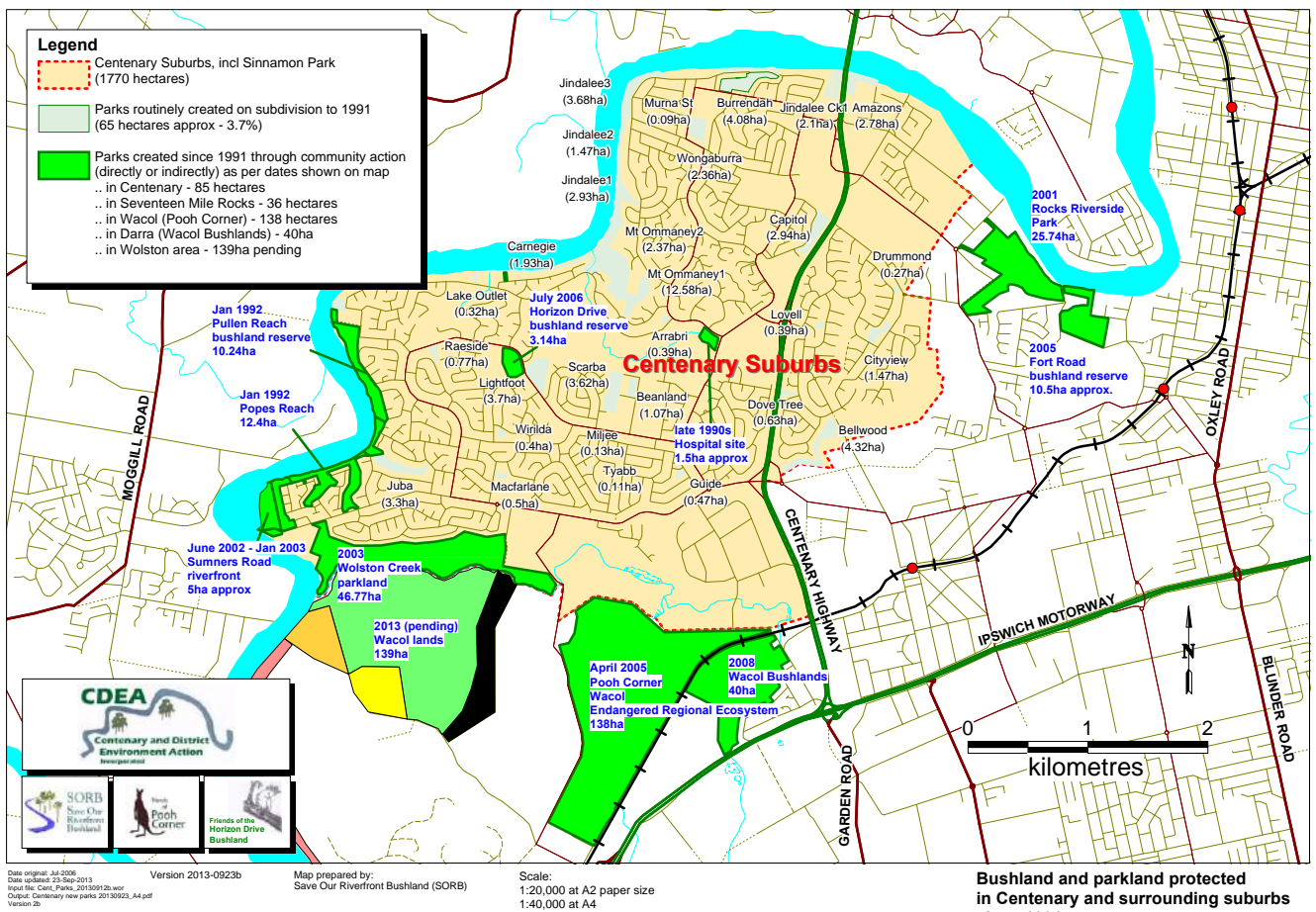
As you go past the Westlake Bush Park on Horizon Drive (see <http://www.brisparks.com.au/qld/westlake/westlake-bush-park>), Westlake, are you aware of the community action that saved one of the last areas of open bushland in the Centenary suburbs? The park was very close to becoming edge to edge units with few, if any, of the original trees.



**Entrance to Westlake Bush Park at 154 Horizon Drive, opposite Peter Lightfoot Oval (Photo © Shealagh Walker, 17 May, 2023).**

Back in the 60s, when Westlake and the neighbouring suburbs were originally laid out, the 3.16 hectares of land was zoned for a Catholic school. However, in 2006 the longtime landowners decided that a school was no longer needed and that funds were required for another project.

In March 2006, a local resident alerted **Centenary and District Environment Action** (CDEA), that public notices had been put up on the bushland site for a proposal to build 90 units. CDEA immediately arranged a meeting with representatives of the church and the developers to see what was being planned. Street elevations showed multi-story units against a background



**This map of the Centenary and neighbouring suburbs was drawn in September, 2013, and shows the original parks (light green) plus those that have been established since 1991 (dark green), which totals 299 hectares. You can access the PDF version of this map on the CDEA web site.**

of trees. However, on studying the plans, it was clear that most of these trees would have to be removed! We knew the bushland had koalas and wallabies living in it as well as a multitude of native birds. We had to come up with a solution that would save the bushland and provide funds for the landowners.

The community environmental group also saw this imminent sale as an opportunity to increase the amount of public parkland in this area of the western suburbs as the Centenary suburbs were low in open space provision. Since the late 90s the **Centenary Riverfront Advisory Committee** (CRAC, later renamed CDEA) had been working to save areas of bushland to become public parks and to preserve the local natural environment.

There were only three weeks available for community feedback! CDEA immediately started a campaign to save the bushland. The group compiled a proforma submission so that members of the public could just add their particulars to it and send it in to Council. We

also started a petition. CDEA liaised with local councillor, **Felicity Farmer**, who was definitely on side. The campaign was to persuade **Brisbane City Council** to purchase the land with the **Bushland Preservation Levy** we all paid annually for just such a purpose.

A local resident, **Joanne Robertson**, started a separate petition to Save the Horizon Drive Bushland and a new group was formed – **Friends of the Horizon Drive Bushland** (FOTHDB). Local businesses had the petition on their counters and the signatures came rolling in. The local community newspapers entered the fray, publishing photographs, articles and letters. (Sadly, we have these community newspapers no more.) CDEA put a copy of the petition on its new web page. The signatures kept rolling in until there were nearly 3000 names on the petition.

Other community members had their own petitions and many wrote their own letters and submissions to Council. Some people thought there was no need at the time for housing and

that the extra cars would cause traffic congestion. Altogether, the unit proposal was unpopular with the local residents.

CDEA conducted fauna and flora surveys and mapped ecological connections to make a case based on hard facts to give to Council. Not surprisingly, these surveys were far more thorough than those provided by the planning consultants of the proposed unit development. The late **Ric Natrass**, well-known wildlife expert, came and identified koala scratch marks on nearly every smooth-barked Eucalypt he looked at! He showed CDEA and FOTHDB how to do the same. We knew the bushland was used by koalas and wallabies so it was pivotal that we had hard proof. We took GPS readings of koala scratch marked trees, mapped and photographed them, recorded all the tree species and sizes and submitted the information to BCC (see map over page).

The developer's consultants had reported old koala scratchings. However, we pointed out that as they were on smooth barked Eucalypts that shed their bark every year, all the visible scratchings would be no more than a year old.

Another important aspect CDEA emphasised was that the bushland was ecologically connected to the Brisbane River corridor: along the side of Peter Lightfoot Oval, through



**Ric Natrass explaining koala scratch marks to Felicity Farmer, Shealagh Walker & Joanne Robertson (top) and Ed Parker (bottom) (Photos © Ed Parker, 23 June, 2006)**

McLeod Golf Course to the Mount Ommaney Bushland Reserve.

CDEA and FOTHDB both wrote letters to Lord Mayor **Campbell Newman** outlining why this purchase would be such a benefit to the community and to the environment. Finally, Cr Farmer went to Civic Cabinet to put the case for the community. **Success! On 3 July 2006, CDEA was informed that Civic Cabinet had approved the purchase of 154 Horizon Drive for the Brisbane community.**

In September, as President of CDEA, I received a letter from Lord Mayor Campbell Newman saying that council had refused the development application. In addition, he wrote: "to prevent another application being lodged, I am pleased to advise that council is negotiating with the owners to acquire the site for our children and future generations."

3 This was a very good result all round.



**Koala scratch marks on trunk of eucalypt tree (Photo © Shealagh Walker, 2006)**



Mapping by: EP  
Date: 13-Jun-06  
File: Horizon-Dr\_Sandringham\_GPS-060623.wor



Scale: 1:2,500  
(at A4 paper size)

Imagery derived from Google Earth  
(downloaded 13-Jun-06)  
GPS survey 23-Jun-06

**154 Horizon Drive, Westlake  
and abutting Sandringham bushland**

**Survey of trees with Koala markings**

***Survey of trees with koala markings in Westlake Bush Park and abutting Sandringham bushland, prepared by Ed Parker in June, 2006 (see PDF version on the CDEA web site).***

## **Adjoining bushland loss**

The one downside of the bushland site was that part of it had been incorporated into the neighbouring housing estate, Sandringham, where the Boral quarry had been. The developers were allowed to tack long strips of land, stretching into the bushland, onto adjoining house sites. These strips were protected by Vegetation Protection Orders. This benefited the developers and others but not the bushland nor the community. The private land was supposed to be left native and not be fenced off to local wildlife on the Council-owned land. Compliance has been shaky.

## **Formation of a Bushcare Group**

Soon after council acquired the bushland, Cr Farmer began arrangements to form a Bushcare Group to rehabilitate parts of the site needing it (see **CDEA Newsletter Issue #5, August, 2007 p 4**). Later, in September 2007, BCC granted permission to form a new Bushcare Group and local resident, **John Vanlint**, volunteered to become Group Leader



***Councillor Felicity Farmer addressing a group of interested residents at the site of the future Westlake Bush Park (Photos © ?? Saturday, 16 June, 2007)***

of the new Horizon Drive Bushcare Group.

About 30 volunteers arrived for the first working bee and were briefed by Habitat Brisbane Officers before getting down to work removing weeds to help preserve native plants. John Vanlint's newsletter reports it as a very social, friendly event. Cr Farmer joined in as did **Ed Parker** and I, representing CDEA and SORB respectively. **Shirley Gilkens** provided home-made muffins for morning tea and Cr Farmer provided a Sausage Sizzle. At the end of the meeting, the group decided to carry on and to meet on the second Sunday of each month.



*John Vanlint with other members of Horizon Drive Bushcare Group in background (Photo © Ed Parker, 10 Nov, 2007)*

Over time, planting followed the clearing of weeds but there was no water on site. Members used to each bring about 4 litres of water in milk cartons or soft drink bottles when they did new planting. This was no longer necessary when, in 2008, a picnic shelter was built with a water tank next to it to collect water off the roof.

After many years, John Vanlint retired and original members, **Chris** and **Cheryl Elefsen** took over leadership and carried on the good work of the group for a good many more years.

## Demise of the Bushcare Group and the Bushland

However, over the last several years, volunteering generally has taken a knock throughout Brisbane to many different volunteer groups. People are leaving to retire,

5 live elsewhere, have too many other commitments, or for other reasons. Unfortunately, they are not being replaced and the numbers in many volunteer groups have dwindled. Sadly, this has happened to the Horizon Drive Bushcare Group. After many years leading the group, the Elefsens retired in January 2022, and there was no one willing to take up the leadership. Finally, stewardship of the bushland, now called Westlake Bush Park, has passed to Brisbane City Council. The bushland park is looking in need of attention.

This is not helped by parts of it being cordoned off with bright orange plastic fencing. This is because many paths have been damaged by young cyclists digging holes and making dirt ramps. These paths have had to be closed to help prevent further damage and to stop walkers from tripping and being injured. The cyclists also chopped down quite large trees in their building efforts, which is not acceptable. There are nearby BMX tracks they can go to, namely Newcomb Park BMX track in Sumner Road and the Darra BMX track in Monier Road. However, there is a wide, groomed fire track around the side and back perimeters, which is pleasant to walk along. As for the rest, the wildlife don't mind if the park is a bit unkempt, which is fortunate. Hopefully Council will allocate some funding to maintain the bushland and make it more amenable to users.

## Local Bushcare Groups

There are several other Bushcare Groups in the Centenary suburbs, they would all love some new members. If you wish to join one, please contact Cr Sarah Hutton's Jamboree Ward office on 3407 7000. You will be most welcome.

You will also benefit in many ways especially by spending time in pleasant bushland surrounding, doing a worthwhile job with friendly people. I have been doing bushcare nearby with Jindalee Bushcare Group in Mount Ommaney Bushland Reserve since 1997 and I still find it very rewarding in many ways; doesn't that say enough?