



RHHFFPS

Wallumetta

Newsletter of the Ryde-Hunters Hill Flora and Fauna
Preservation Society Inc.

Website: <http://rydehffps.org.au/>

Member of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC)
and founding member of the Powerful Owl Coalition

No. 302

OCTOBER

2023

We acknowledge the Wallumedegal, original inhabitants of the Ryde – Hunters Hill area.

PRESIDENT'S NOTE

The independent review of the Biodiversity Conservation Act NSW (2016) led by Ken Henry AO was published in August this year and has made 57 recommendations. Some of these are for improvements to the biodiversity offsets scheme which would improve the performance of that scheme, for example *Recommendation 12: Amend the Act to require a net gain for biodiversity by setting credit obligations for all development and clearing assessed through the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme at, say, 120% of calculated biodiversity loss.*

While the recommendations to improve the biodiversity offset scheme have merit there is the underlying question of why an offset scheme is necessary.

The recommendations generally address the need for a new nature positive architecture for NSW. The most interesting is recommendation 55 in respect of intersections with other Acts. *Consider whether the current institutional arrangements could be improved to ensure environmental considerations have the primacy required for achieving a nature positive outcome.*

At the moment development considerations are given far more weight in planning decisions and if adopted, giving primacy to environmental considerations could have a profound impact. This raises the question as to what are environmental considerations with particular reference to biodiversity.

For example the review states (page 23) that *Outcomes achieved through the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme must be strengthened by identifying upfront 'no-go' areas where development cannot occur.*

But this would be limited to development impacts that present, or contribute to, a risk of species extinction or ecosystem collapse.

Again, while the recommendations of the review have merit, the focus is on areas that currently have high biodiversity value. Although this is essential, it is not clear where native vegetation more generally would receive a higher priority in development applications.

Frank Breen,

President

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PAST EVENTS:

City of Ryde National Tree Day

Scheduled for 30 July at ELS Hall Park, North Ryde, supplies were delayed so the event was held two weeks later. An estimated 200 people took part in the event to improve a wildlife corridor along Shrimptons Creek. Ryde Council provided a free BBQ, managed by East Ryde Scouts.



Sunday 17 September 2023 – “Music on Mars”



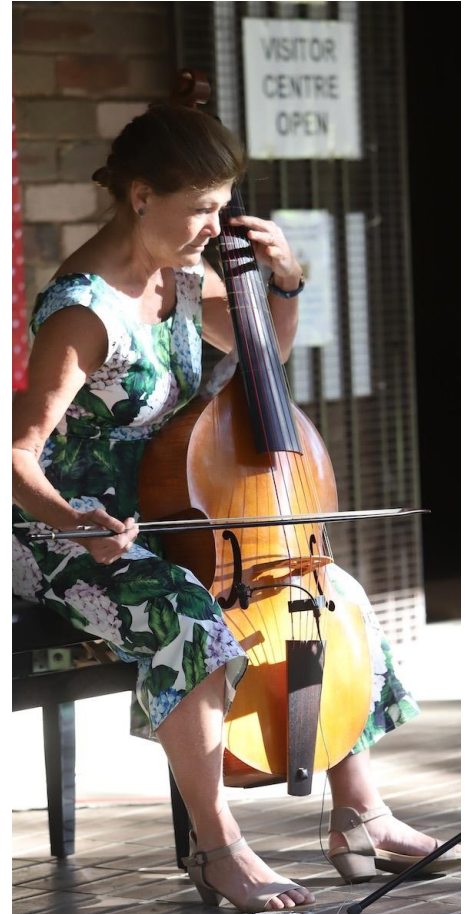
We thank Lindsay Mar for the photos of the Music on Mars event, above and on the next page.

It was a wonderful afternoon! Our day's activities began with a bird walk led by our knowledgeable guide, Cathy Goswell. We then had a barbecue-and-salad lunch before the music began. Approximately 70 people attended in the cool riparian environment of the Reserve where our Visitor Centre veranda formed the stage, and the large Casuarinas formed a well-ventilated roof for the audience... while the rest of Sydney sweltered with temperatures above 30°C.

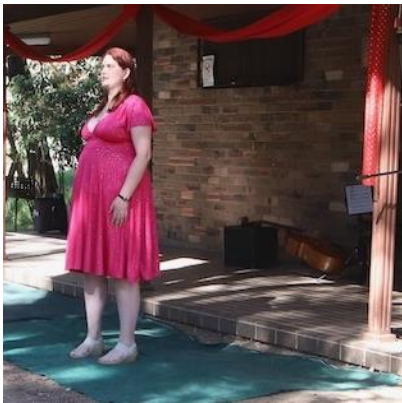
We thank the entertainers and all who contributed to the event, especially Suzanne Maslen who provided keyboard accompaniment for two singers, and our Coordinator Alfred Vincent, who was the inspiration and driving force for day's success... but you had to be there to enjoy the music!



SydneySiders Express Harmony Chorus



Jennifer Eriksson, artistic director of the Marais Project, on viola da gamba.



Kirsten Busby, soprano



Peter Hogg, baritone

NEWS FROM THE FIELD OF MARS

COMING EVENTS

Sunday 19 November 2023 – BIRD WALKS

Walks will depart from the Visitor Centre at **8.30am** and **10.30am**, led by our resident expert Cathy Goswell of the Cumberland Bird Observers Club. Bookings are essential as numbers are limited. Contact Alfred Vincent: 98796067 / alfred.vincent@bigpond.com



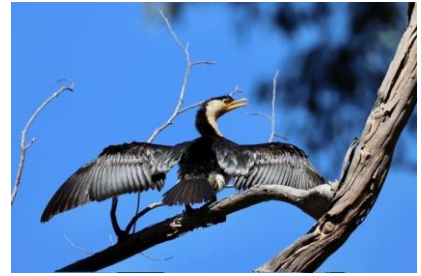
Suzanne Maslen, accompanist

Sunday 3 December 2023 from 12pm – MEMBERS' END-OF-YEAR GATHERING

Members, with family and friends, are invited to join us from midday at the Visitor Centre, when we light the gas for a barbecue + salad lunch and chat. We may reminisce about an eventful year!

WILDLIFE

Recent visitors to the Reserve have been excited to spot a variety of animals, including wallabies, water dragons, red-bellied black snakes and birds. One casual visitor, Susan Lim, kindly sent us several photos of birds, a selection of which are here:



And wildlife is becoming even more visible around the Visitor Centre as evidence by these photos:



Swamp Wallaby in our Memorial Garden near the Visitor Centre – photo by Sanford Larson, 24.9.23

► *Spot the Water Dragon on a log behind the Visitor Centre!*

Unfortunately, reports of ticks are increasing in bushland areas around Sydney, so we advise visitors to take sensible precautions including the use of insect repellent and showering soon after being in any bushland area.



BUSHCARE

Work continues in all volunteer bushcare areas of the Reserve, but there have been some recent setbacks. At the Cemetery Creek 2 site, there are instances of rubbish being dumped along the cemetery boundary, presumably by people driving into the cemetery and throwing it down the embankment. A month ago it was the old wheelbarrow, and more recently an old lawnmower and other outdoor rubbish.



New members are welcome in all our teams – phone the City of Ryde Council on 9952 8222 and tell them you would like to volunteer. Sadly, some active members have been less active recently owing to injuries and illnesses. And two weeks ago Sandra, our well-liked and respected City of Ryde Council Natural Areas Manager, was involved in a road accident and spent several days in hospital in Darwin. We wish Sandra all the best as she recovers from her injuries.

VISITOR CENTRE



For our faithful team of volunteers it's mostly been business as usual. Sadly, we farewell Michele who recently moved to her new home on the Central Coast. So once again we invite members to **JOIN OUR VISITOR CENTRE TEAM!** to keep the Visitor Centre open 9am-5pm on weekends and public holidays. Our roster of 4-hour shifts is negotiated according to members' availability. No specialised skills are required, and Alfred happily provides the training needed. Most visitors' questions are answered in the maps and range of free leaflets we have available.

DEFIBRILLATOR

Following advice and policy of the City of Ryde Council, we have installed the new Automated External Defibrillator (AED) inside the Visitor Centre building. It is above the first aid equipment on the bench near the kitchenette, and easily visible as soon as you walk in the main door.

Members are advised to make the defibrillator immediately available to anyone who asks for it; a likely scenario would be a bushwalker assisting a person with cardiac arrest somewhere along one of the bush tracks in the Reserve. Even with a person applying Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), the chances of survival decrease with the time taken to apply the defibrillator.

NO TRAINING IS REQUIRED – ANYONE CAN USE IT.

However, for all adults we do recommend first aid training; courses are run by St John Ambulance, Red Cross, Royal Life Saving Society and several commercial organisations.

There are written instructions but, **as soon as the AED is opened, it talks and tells you what to do.**

Survival rates for persons suffering from cardiac arrest are not high, but the chances of recovery are drastically improved with ready access to an AED.

DOGS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON BIRDS...

Research exploring the effect of dogs on native birds is minimal when compared to research work on cats, but a [2007 study in the urban fringe of Sydney](#) found that dog walking in woodland leads to a 35% reduction in bird diversity and a 41% reduction in abundance.

In 2018, BirdLife Australia published a [report](#) on adverse impacts of dogs on beach nesting birds. It highlighted major issues of disturbance, egg predation, egg crushing, and chick predation.

The Field of Mars Reserve is a Wildlife Protection Area Category 1, so dogs are not allowed into the Reserve at all, not even when on a leash. Nevertheless, our volunteers continue to report seeing many dog owners bringing their dogs in, with the typical excuse being that they did not see any notices banning dogs. When the Visitor Centre is open we log our sightings, but we have no doubt that there are many more dogs being brought in to the upper areas of the Reserve, as evidenced by dog droppings and sightings by walkers and bushcarers.

... PLUS CATS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON ALL WILDLIFE

The Invasive Species Council has disturbing news about feral cats, which have caused more carnage in Australia than they have on any other continent. They have already played a leading role in the extinctions of 25 native animals and threaten at least 124 native species with extinction including greater bilbies, numbats, and night parrots.

Their adaptability, stealth and intelligence makes it a challenge to eradicate feral cats, but the Invasive Species Council is working to ensure every state allows the full suite of feral cat control tools. These will give land managers the best chance of driving down cat numbers, to save the surviving bilbies, numbats and night parrots, and many more Australian birds and animals.

Currently, NSW has:

- Pet cat microchipping
- Pet desexing by 4 months
- A suite of feral cat control tools

And the Invasive Species Council would like to see:

- 24/7 pet cat containment
- Councils produce animal management plans

And roaming pet cats have an impact on Australian wildlife:

On average, over a year each roaming and hunting pet cat in Australia kills 186 animals. This includes 110 native animals (40 reptiles, 38 birds and 32 mammals).

Birdlife Australia have published a factsheet based on latest Australian research – see https://www.birdsinbackyards.net/sites/www.birdsinbackyards.net/files/article/attachments/pet_cat_impacts_fs_june_2023.pdf

The factsheet contains references to recent research and provides suggestions for cat owners and for local councils.

CLIMATE CHANGE IS MESSING WITH PHOTOSYNTHESIS IN UNEXPECTED WAYS

Increases in CO₂ in the atmosphere from human activity was expected to increase the rate of photosynthesis in plants and perhaps increase plant growth and indeed it has been increasing across our planet, but now there is evidence the rate has slowed and might soon plateau.

During photosynthesis plants take water and CO₂ and convert it into oxygen and carbohydrates – storing carbon inside the plant and soil. A higher availability of CO₂ increases the rate of this process, acting as a sort of brake on global warming by sequestering more CO₂.

However, a new study [see <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.adf5041>] found that the increase in photosynthesis has slowed since 2001 due to an adverse effect of climate change.

The study looked at satellite images of various environments covered by foliage – such as savannas, croplands, and forests – and used machine-learning to find changes, such as leaf colour, to reveal rates of photosynthesis. They also studied data on CO₂ and water vapour levels in the air between 1982-2016. Combining these datasets, they modelled changes in global photosynthesis rates from 1982 to 2016 and found that, as CO₂ levels rose from 1982 to 2000, global rates of photosynthesis also increased significantly.

But from the year 2000 onwards, this increase in the rate of photosynthesis began to slow.

The researchers think this is probably due to an increased Vapour Pressure Deficit (VPD), which is difference between the amount of moisture in the air and how much moisture the air can hold.

If this trend continues, the resulting impact on photosynthesis is expected to be long-lasting.

The study concludes, “...human reliance on nature-based climate sinks to achieve [carbon] neutrality may be undermined by the adverse effects of climate change.”

REVEALED: 11 SYDNEY SUBURBS TO BE REZONED TO FIX THE HOUSING SHORTAGE

Abridged from a Sydney Morning Herald report by Michael McGowan and Anthony Segart, August 10, 2023

Over 3000 sites were identified by the Minns government as public land suitable for redevelopment as housing, including current and former psychiatric hospitals and disability centres.

The documents – contained in briefings to Housing Minister Rose Jackson and obtained by the *Herald* under freedom of information laws – also reveal a list of 11 suburbs that have been prioritised for state-led rezoning and could be ready for large-scale development by the middle of next year. In May, Premier Minns ordered ministers to find vacant blocks of public land to rezone for housing as the new government seeks to boost the state's flagging supply of new homes.

Separately, the documents show a list of 11 suburbs shortlisted for major redevelopment, with **rezonings due to be complete by the middle of next year**. The list includes Camellia, where developers want the Minns government to put a new Metro station before the development of 10,000 new homes, Eveleigh, Parramatta North, West Schofields and St Leonards. A 12th suburb, Broadmeadow, near Newcastle, was put on indefinite hold after Newcastle MP Tim Crakanthorp was referred to the NSW anti-corruption watchdog over his family's property holdings.

The audit is ongoing with an initial review of public land finding 3231 potential development sites. **Other sites include the Macquarie Park development of up to 7650 new properties.**

Those major redevelopments are in addition to the surplus land evaluated by the government as part of its land audit. **Among potential development sites is the 43-hectare Macquarie Hospital.**

Minns has been critical of the former government for failing to take advantage of the North West Metro line by adding increased housing density, but Ryde Mayor Sarkis Yedelian insisted he would not support housing on the site because the area was already dense enough.

"Thirty years ago [the state government] wanted to build social housing there [at Macquarie Hospital] and the local community fought against it," he said.

NSW Health referred questions about the hospital's future to the Planning Department, which said the government was still "completing due diligence" on the audit.

"There have been no government decisions about individual government-owned sites and we will have more information available in time," a spokesman said.

The government may only look to develop the expanse of parkland surrounding Macquarie Hospital. But the *Herald* has learnt that it is one of a handful of current and former psychiatric facilities which may become surplus to requirements after the former government spent \$700 million on new mental health infrastructure projects.

Other potential development sites identified during the audit include Tomaree Lodge, a former residential centre for disabled people on the waterfront in Port Stephens, and the Stockton Centre, an 84-hectare former psychiatric hospital and disability centre near Newcastle which closed in 2020. Government sources told the *Herald* that other sites, including the 1200-hectare former Morisset Hospital in Lake Macquarie, are also under consideration for development...

Our comment:

NSW Health did not demonstrate good stewardship of the natural values of their land when, in 2009, an area of remnant Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest was destroyed for a building project within the grounds of Macquarie Hospital... even though it could easily have been done in adjacent open grass areas. The development was reported in the Northern District Times, March 2009 under the heading, "Tree Change For Hospital's Native Flora".

PLAN FOR NSW COASTAL WETLANDS

- a message from Dr Brad Smith, Acting CEO, Nature Conservation Council (NCC)

From mangrove forests teeming with life, to crystal clear waters with turtles and dolphins playing in the shallows, [the NSW Coastline is] one of the things that makes our state so amazing to live in.

Wetlands work hard. They purify our water, protect us from storms and store vast amounts of carbon.

They are also some of the most productive and biodiverse ecosystems on the planet, providing habitat and nurseries for countless threatened species, and a haven for birds that travel thousands of kilometers to nest and feed.



Wetlands are among the fastest disappearing landscapes in the world, with 70% lost since 1900.

In NSW, coastal wetlands are being decimated by inappropriate coastal development, habitat destruction and the over-extraction of water.



This is why today, NCC is announcing a new campaign to protect and conserve our coastal wetlands.

Today's laws fail to protect the estuaries, lagoons, rivers, marshes, lakes, floodplains and mangrove forests that connect the land to the sea. NCC's new campaign seeks to fix these laws so they take a holistic view of the interconnected needs of our wetlands.

With climate change and sea level rise changing the face of our coastline, it will take time to develop a comprehensive analysis of the regulatory reforms required to protect our coastal wetlands.

In the meantime, **there are two simple measures the NSW government can take immediately to stop making the problem worse.**

Firstly, reverse the changes introduced last year that tripled the volume of water that private dams along the coast could take.

This reckless and scientifically baseless decision will see salt water creep further inland, creeks and streams run dry, and cause severe damage to coastal ecosystems and the communities who depend on them.

Secondly, the state government must address the "zombie" developments threatening environments and communities up and down the coast

'Zombies' are the thousands of development approvals that were granted before laws requiring environmental, cultural heritage, bushfire and flood risk assessment were enacted.

They are being dusted off and used to enable a developer onslaught that is destroying our fragile coastal wetlands, and fundamentally changing the character of NSW's coastal villages.

We are also seeking case studies of estuaries, lagoons, rivers, marshes, lakes, floodplains and mangrove forests that are being threatened by inappropriate development or the destruction of upstream wetlands.

If you are aware of any such instances, please email Sam Johnson, Coastal Wetlands Community Organiser at sjohnson@nature.org.au

CAN KOSCIUSZKO NATIONAL PARK BE PROTECTED?

News from the National Parks Association of NSW (NPA)

There's not only feral horses damaging our highest national park...

One of the most damaging developments facing a national park in NSW is the construction of overhead transmission lines as part of the Snowy 2.0 project.



Back in 2006 the Kosciuszko Plan of Management mandated that all future lines must be placed underground to reduce their environmental impact. But the former NSW Government went ahead and approved the construction of the largest transmission towers and clearance of the widest easement ever placed in a NSW National Park.

If it goes ahead, the result will be massive habitat destruction, landscape fragmentation and permanent scarring of the alpine viewscape. This is not acceptable, especially when there is a much less damaging alternative, namely the use of underground lines.

We cannot stand by and allow this devastation to take place.

Editor's note: During his career in the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, our Society's former president Rod Wallace was instrumental in the decision to construct the Skitube Alpine Railway, as a means of providing access to the snowfields at Blue Cow Mountain and the Perisher Valley without destroying vital wildlife corridors.

In 2016, the Field of Mars Reserve faced the threat of powerlines cutting across the bushland as Ausgrid was replacing the power supply link from Ryde to Lane Cove. At the time, we were told that the initial construction of overhead powerlines is about 10% that of the cost of underground lines. Fortunately, we were successful in convincing Ausgrid that the destruction of a swathe of bushland through the Reserve would be unacceptable, and the power line now passes underground around and not through the Reserve.

NEWS FROM THE "STOP ADANI DESTROYING OUR LAND AND OUR CULTURE" CAMPAIGN

by Senior Nagana Yarrbayn Wangan and Jagalingou Cultural Custodian Adrian Burragubba.

We are standing our ground in resistance to Adani's mine expansion and to hold them to account for the damage they are doing. [See <https://youtu.be/UevSTYtxWgg>]

It is our legally protected human right, as First Nations people, to be present on our Country to practice culture and perform ceremony to protect the land. The greatest threat we face today is Adani's destructive coal mine.

But the Queensland Government is failing to do its job and enforce the law against Adani, allowing them to harm the environment and interfere with our cultural rights, which are now protected under the Queensland Human Rights Act.

So, we acted... [our lawyers delivered a letter to Queensland's Environment Minister](#), Leanne Linard, requesting that she step in and take enforcement action against Adani for breaching its Environmental Authority under the Environmental Protection Act.

We are calling on the Queensland Government to do its job and stop the damage to our Country and the abuse of our human rights...

We are being adversely affected by mine pollution that exceeds the emissions limits for noise and dust. The government is failing to monitor Adani's coal mine, and this is interfering with our cultural life, our ability to learn and teach cultural practices, and to engage in traditional activities on Country. Adani's failure to reign in their pollution violates our rights as well as the conditions of their Environmental Authority. That's why we have called on the Queensland Government, demanding they enforce their own environment and human rights laws against Adani.

And then in August 2023:

Queensland Police are investigating Adani after operatives of the coal company blocked my family from accessing one of our most significant sacred sites - Doongmabulla Springs. Adani obstructed, intimidated, and threatened us with police action if we didn't do what they told us.

But we refused to be provoked or intimidated and turned the tables on Adani. **I lodged a complaint with the Queensland Police because Adani has no power or authority to prevent my family from accessing our sacred sites.** Our human rights lawyers are assisting us.

The Doongmabulla Springs are a desert oasis of great cultural significance to the Wangan and Jagalingou First Nation. They are sacred to our people. They are the source of all life.

My family and I were travelling to the springs, as we have done on many occasions, for a cultural ceremony. We were introducing my recently born grandchildren to the sacred waters.

Adani's workers followed and overtook our cars, then obstructed the road into the springs, blocking our vehicles. **The Adani workers, wearing body cams, approached my family, and falsely claimed they were acting on the request of the station owner to prevent us from accessing the sacred site.** This went on for twenty minutes.

Our sacred springs are located within a Nature Refuge on a pastoral lease, which graziers lease from the State. The leaseholder recognises our cultural rights, and we have a long-standing relationship with them and access to the area. They deny asking Adani to prevent us from going to the Springs.

NAMMULDI ROCK SHELTER: ANOTHER JUUKAN GORGE?

Three years on from Rio Tinto destroying the sacred rock shelter in Western Australia, they've been forced to admit they damaged another site in the Pilbara. This time, it's a rock shelter important to the Muntulgura Guruma people.

Represented by the Wintawari Guruma Aboriginal Corporation, The Muntulgura Guruma people are addressing reported impacts to an ancient rock shelter site in the Hamersley Ranges, located on their country.

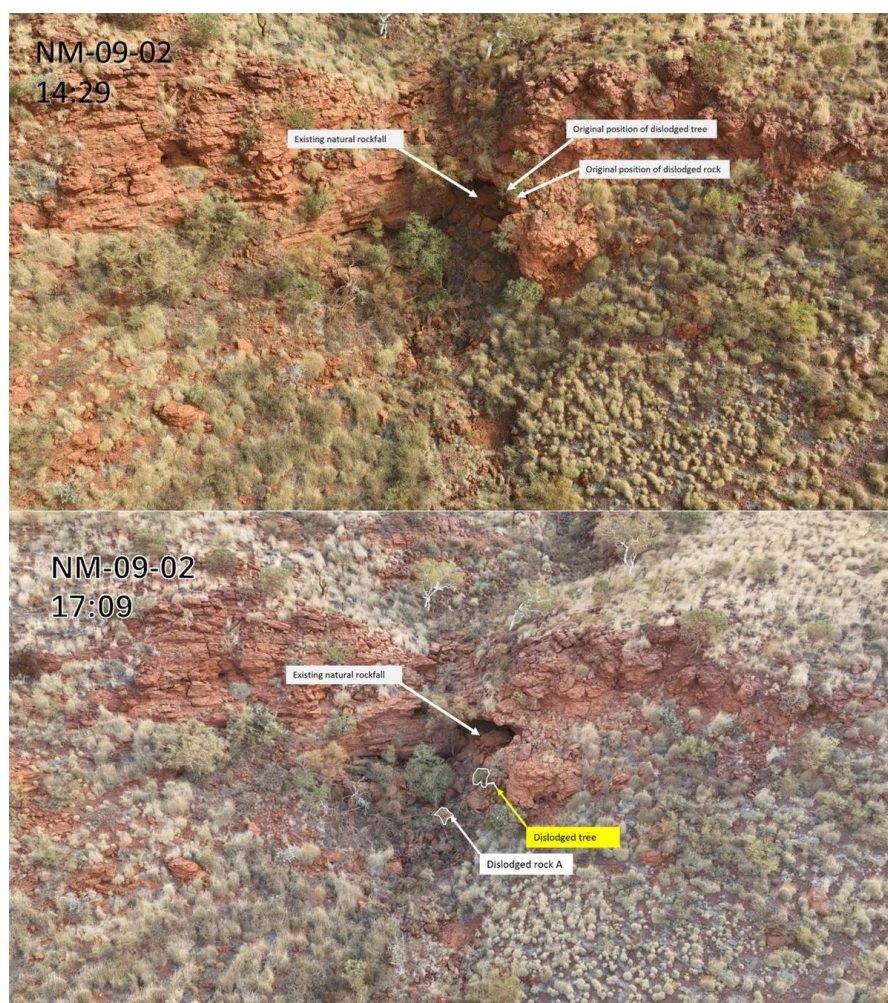
The site, somewhere between 40,000 and 50,000 years old, was 150 metres from a Rio Tinto blast zone where Traditional Owners, the Muntulgura Guruma people, had previously warned that it is an important area that requires protection.

Rio Tinto said photos taken before and after the blast showed a large rock and a scrub tree had fallen from an overhang above the cave entrance.

"As part of our cultural heritage monitoring and management processes, last month we identified the fall of a Pilbara scrub tree and a one square metre rock from the overhang of a rock shelter in an area adjacent to the Nammuldi mine site," Rio said in a statement.

"As soon as we identified this, we paused work which was occurring 150 metres away, and notified the Traditional Owners of the land, the Muntulgura Guruma people."

According to Rio Tinto, initial assessments taken by drone haven't found structural damage to the rock shelter or impacts to any cultural materials.



Members of the First Nations Justice team from the *Widjbul Wia-bul, Gooreng Gooreng, Warlpiri, Luritja-Pitjantjatjara, Wakka Wakka, and Gubbi Gubbi Nations* stated: "This kind of damage – and flagrant disregard for sacred sites – by mining corporations is exactly what Traditional Owners have been warning the government about for decades.

"Since election, the Albanese Government has dragged their feet on promised federal cultural heritage protections. What's happened in Western Australia shows clearly that mining corporations can't be trusted, and that we need strong national protections *now*."

Before and After shot of the Nammuldi Rock Shelter, north of Tom Price in WA's Pilbara region. (Image: @Gergyl on X via The West Australian)

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE DUE BY THE END OF THE YEAR

Typically, payments and donations from our members account for 40% of our total income, half of which is used to pay for our Society’s membership and support for other environmental organisations. Most remaining funds are used for our own operating expenses and insurance. We invite you to renew your membership and consider making a donation towards your Society’s activities for 2024. Members gain early notification of our special events. enjoy active involvement in our Society’s activities to support the protection of our natural environments, and receive this “Wallumetta” newsletter. **See below for details of fees payable and payment methods.**

NEW MEMBERS WELCOME!

Please pay by direct transfer to our Bendigo Bank account: RYDE HUNTERS HILL FLORA AND FAUNA PRESERVATION SOCIETY INC, BSB 633-000, Account number 190716589.

Include your name in the transaction description; and email your name, address and phone number to rhffps@gmail.com

Alternatively, you may pay by cash or cheque: Complete and hand in this form with payment in a sealed envelope at the Field of Mars Visitor Centre or post to: RHHFFPS, PO Box 552, Gladesville 1675.

NAME:

Address:

Phone:

Annual Membership (add \$10 for paper copies of our newsletter to be sent via Australia Post): \$

Individual \$ 15 (+ \$ 10)

Family \$ 35 (+ \$ 10)

Concession \$ 10 (+ \$ 10)

(Students/Pensioners) Donation

Total Payment:

Email address - please print clearly:

WIN A NEW YARNKNIT* RUG

TO USE, GIFT OR DONATE TO A CHARITY

Tickets \$2 each / 3 for \$5 – at the Visitor Centre...

or pay to Bendigo Bank account:

RYDE HUNTERS HILL FLORA AND FAUNA PRESERVATION SOCIETY, BSB 633-000, Account number 190716589.

Put “Raffle” + your name and phone number in the comment, and we will then make the tickets for you.

Proceeds support the work of our Society.



The winning ticket will be drawn at our Society’s next Annual General Meeting.

* Hand knitted and kindly donated by members of the Holy Spirit Yarnknit Group.