



Friends of Native Wildlife Inc.  
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Elley Thomas  
Biodiversity and Foreshore Planning Officer  
Bayside City Council  
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Dear Elley,

Re: Draft Wangara Road Master Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Master Plan. We recognise that a number of passive recreational activities should occur on the site. Our comments relate to how these can be integrated with biodiversity protection and ecological enhancement. A key issue that needs to be rectified in the plan is more effective protection of the locally rare Bronzewing Pigeons.

#### Bronzewings

Important Bayside Bronzewing habitat is at risk with the Draft Wangara Road Master Plan due to the proposed unrestricted access to the site's southern and southwestern slopes and track which are part of this shy, easily startled, ground dependent, bird's home range.

Bronzewings have been using the secluded site for years and, with Council's support, we have been working with volunteers to improve Bronzewing habitat there.

Bronzewing numbers are very small in Bayside and Wangara Road is one of only a handful of sites where they congregate in "large" groups. In February this year, FoNW provided information to Group GSA who have prepared the Draft Master Plan, advising that numbers of the bird are estimated to be at least 12 and possibly 24. The largest groups (9-12 birds), had been seen only on the golf courses and abutting residential properties. Most sightings recorded were only of single birds or pairs and these were in naturally vegetated areas (such as Cheltenham Park, Long Hollow, George Street, Tulip Street, Ricketts Pt and Wangara Rd) rather than in sporting reserves or other open parks.

Since February, more information has emerged confirming that the Wangara site is one of the most important Common Bronzewing sites in Bayside. We carried out wildlife camera monitoring on the Wangara site over nearly 5 weeks in February and March 2024. We found many species, including Bronzewings, utilising the entire southern slope of the site, as well as both sides of the vehicle track along the south and west sides. We also spoke to Matthew Hutchins, pest controller from Citywide, who regularly visits the site. He frequently observes groups of up to 11 Bronzewings

along the western side of the site. He shared with us some dashcam footage of a group of 5-6 individuals towards the northern end of the western vehicle track.

These recent findings confirm that the area of the Wangara Rd site commonly used by the birds is larger than the GSA background report indicates. The birds were often seen all along the south facing bank, as well as much further north on the western side of the site.

The fact that Bronzewings require seclusion because they spend most of their time on the ground and on low branches where they are vulnerable to attack from predators and thus easily startled and disturbed, seems to have been overlooked in the Draft Master Plan even though this characteristic behaviour was mentioned in the earlier information we submitted to the project.

Opening up the area to humans and providing a poorly surveilled (in terms of dog activity) perimeter track is therefore not beneficial. Doing so will disturb the Bronzewings' critical feeding and resting time and possibly nesting. It will reduce their ability to use the site as part of their range. This may reduce the population within Bayside.

At Wangara Rd Council has the opportunity and responsibility to help ensure the continued existence of the Bronzewing in Bayside. The key Bronzewing area is only a small part of the Wangara Road site. We suggest that a more effective refuge for these birds (and other fauna) would be ensured by providing a fenced habitat area (**refer attached plan**). The fence would be high enough to discourage people and dogs from traversing the area. An alternative route for the "perimeter trail" could be provided in the adjoining road reserves as indicated on the attached plan.

#### Other Matters

The Draft Master Plan could be more fauna-friendly in a number of other ways.

- **Water for Wildlife and Water Filtration**

Bronzewings are well-known as being very water dependent and are usually found not far from water.

Potentially, the proposed swale on the site could be designed to hold some water as a small wetland (**refer attached plan**). It could also be a series of wetlands providing bio-filtration of pollutants. A self-filling water bowl could be installed and/or access could be provided to volunteers to maintain water bowls in the refuge. FoNW has a network of volunteers who maintain water bowls. Provision of water inside a Bronzewing refuge would also benefit other fauna. For example, a small wetland may assist dispersal of frogs from nearby Pobblebonk Park.

- **Native Grassland/Meadow**

Our recent wildlife monitoring on the site found a rich and diverse microbat population on the site. We observed that after mowing of the area, the presence of microbats decreased markedly. The microbats, Bronzewings and other seed eating birds that use the site, such as Eastern Rosellas, would benefit from an unmown or infrequently mown native grassland area close to the refuge. It would be an asset for such fauna, would discourage Noisy Miners, increase biodiversity and would provide an educational opportunity for users of the site. A potential area for this is indicated on the **attached plan**.

- **Spatial Arrangement: Lighting, Buffers, Activities**

We suggest that a generous buffer of plantings be provided between the dog off-leash area and the refuge area to reduce visual, light and noise disturbance close to the refuge (**refer attached**

**plan**). There could also be a small, lower height, buffer to demarcate the more quiet and relaxed Meadow area.

Council is aware of the impacts of lighting on fauna. Activities which require significant lighting such as fitness equipment, should be relocated further north on the site. Lighting should also be in accordance with Council's Fauna Friendly Lighting Policy. Care needs to be taken with lighting the off-leash area in particular so that it is not over-lit and does not spill light to the south.

- **Woodland Walk**

Along the eastern side of the site, infill plantings could create a pleasant "Woodland Walk" to build on the existing trees near the boundary, provide a nature-based walk experience and provide privacy to the Cemetery. If trees cannot be planted over the entirety of this area, heathy shrubs may be an alternative.

- **Rock Pile(s)**

There is at least one rock pile on the site (located in south-east corner). In sunny locations, these are excellent habitat for reptiles and should be retained wherever possible.

- **Demolition**

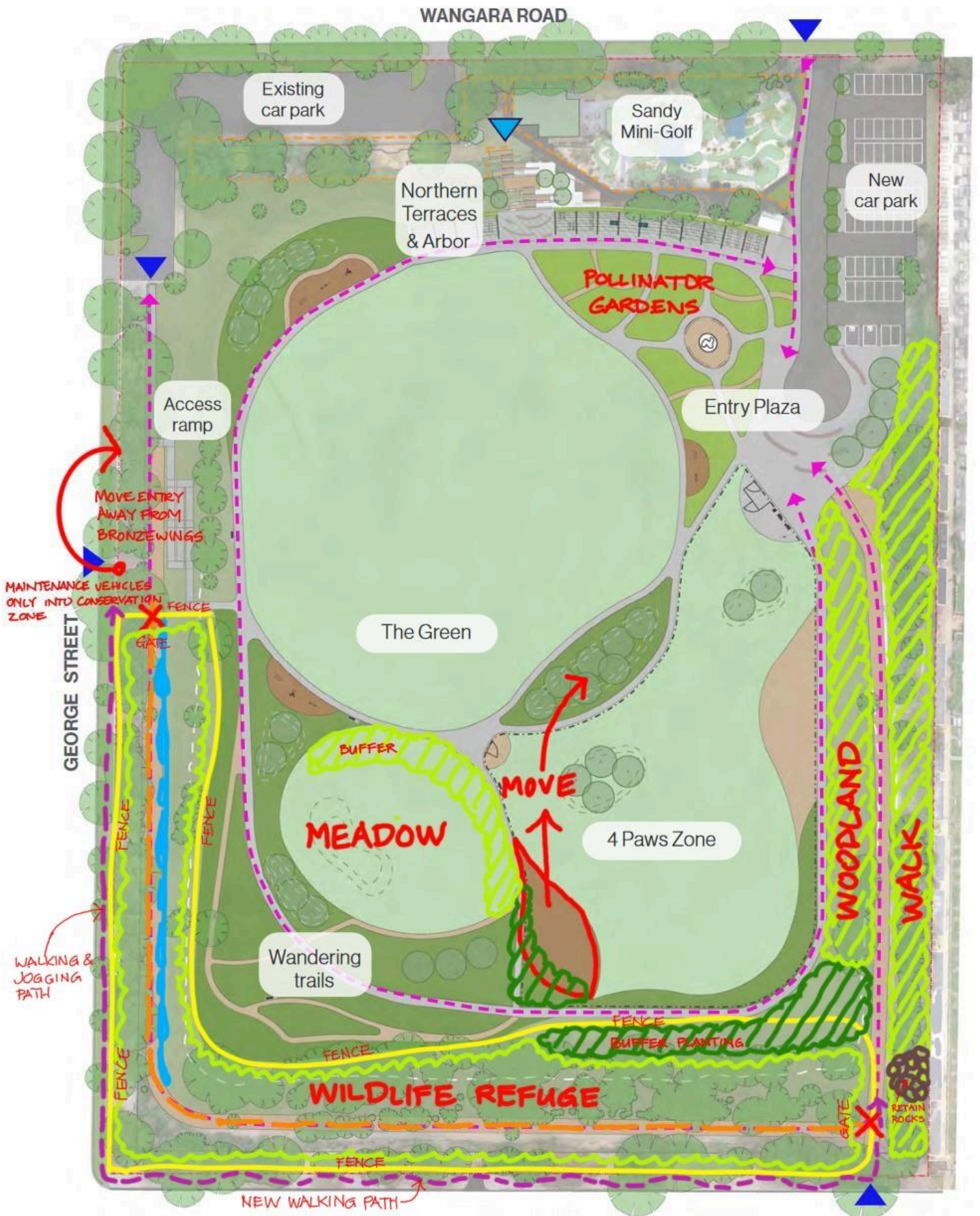
We suspect that the existing built structures on the site may provide homes for microbats and rock piles, homes to reptiles. More detailed investigation is required prior to demolition so that the work is carried out sensitively.

Council would not wish to threaten the persistence of a local species such as the Common Bronzewing. At Wangara Rd Council has the opportunity to help ensure the continued existence of the Bronzewing in Bayside. A properly designed "wildlife refuge" is necessary on part of the site for protection of the Bronzewings and would be an asset for both fauna and humans. It would increase the likelihood of park users seeing rare local fauna and would bring public attention and significance to truly effective conservation activities on the site. A refuge, in conjunction with some additional fauna assets, such as water provision, a grassland/meadow, greater separation of activities with buffer plantings and based on lighting requirements, would enable the successful integration of conservation and recreation, for a more sustainable outcome.




Yours sincerely,








Anne Jessel  
President  
Friends of Native Wildlife Inc.



**Legend:**

-  DDA accessible entry points
-  Stair case entry point and access
-  Primary circulation

-  MAINTENANCE VEHICLES ONLY
-  WILDLIFE REFUGE (FENCED)
-  BIO-SWALE WETLANDS
-  LOW NATIVE SHRUB BUFFERS OR FENCING
-  TALL NATIVE SHRUB BUFERS