

# Environmental Condition Report

## Churchlands Bushland

*(Newman College & Pearson Street Areas)*



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## 1. Overview

This report provides a summary of the current condition of the bushland area in Churchlands commonly referred to as the Churchlands Bushland. This bushland includes the area located immediately south-west of Newman College as well as the bushland located along Pearson Street (former Police Stables site).



The observations are based on a recent site walk-through and are intended to provide an objective snapshot of current conditions, along with opportunities for improved management.

## 2. Land Status and Access

Signage around the bushland (along Coneflower Corner, Dolomite Court, and Empire Avenue) indicates that the land is managed by Main Roads WA and is not intended for public access. Warnings include “Keep Out, Trespassers Prosecuted” and “No Access, No Dumping of Rubbish”.

However, in practice:

- The bushland is easily accessible from multiple entry points
- Existing fencing is incomplete or has deteriorated
- Well-defined tracks indicate frequent public use

There is a clear inconsistency between the intended restriction of access and the current level of accessibility.



### 3. Evidence of Public Use

The bushland is being actively used by members of the public, including:

- Pedestrian traffic (numerous informal walking tracks)
- Bicycle activity, including constructed dirt ramps and trail features
- Informal recreational use

In addition, there are visible access points from Newman College, including paths and steps leading from the school grounds into the bushland.



#### 4. Litter and Waste

There is a noticeable presence of litter throughout the site, including:

- Food packaging
- Drink containers
- Building waste
- General waste

Litter appears to be more concentrated along the western boundary near Newman College.



## 5. Vegetation and Tree Condition

Observations include:

- Numerous tree stumps across the site, indicating past tree removal
- Some stumps appear relatively recent, though the reasons for removal are unclear
- At least one tree observed with pink marking tape (purpose unknown)
- Presence of large dead trees

While some areas appear disturbed, other sections of bushland remain dense and healthy.



## 6. Informal Tracks and Ground Degradation

The bushland contains:

- Wide, well-worn tracks
- Multiple intersecting pathways
- Areas of sparse ground cover

These features suggest sustained and unregulated movement through the site, contributing to gradual degradation of vegetation and soil stability.



## 7. General Site Condition

In several areas, the bushland presents as unmanaged, with:

- Piles of branches and organic debris
- Makeshift structures (e.g. cubby-style constructions)
- Rope swings and informal installations

These elements contribute to an overall impression of a site that is being used but not actively maintained or protected.



## 8. Overgrown Vegetation (Empire Avenue)

Along Empire Avenue, vegetation is overgrown over the footpath in several sections.

This impacts pedestrian accessibility and further indicates a lack of routine maintenance or monitoring of the area.

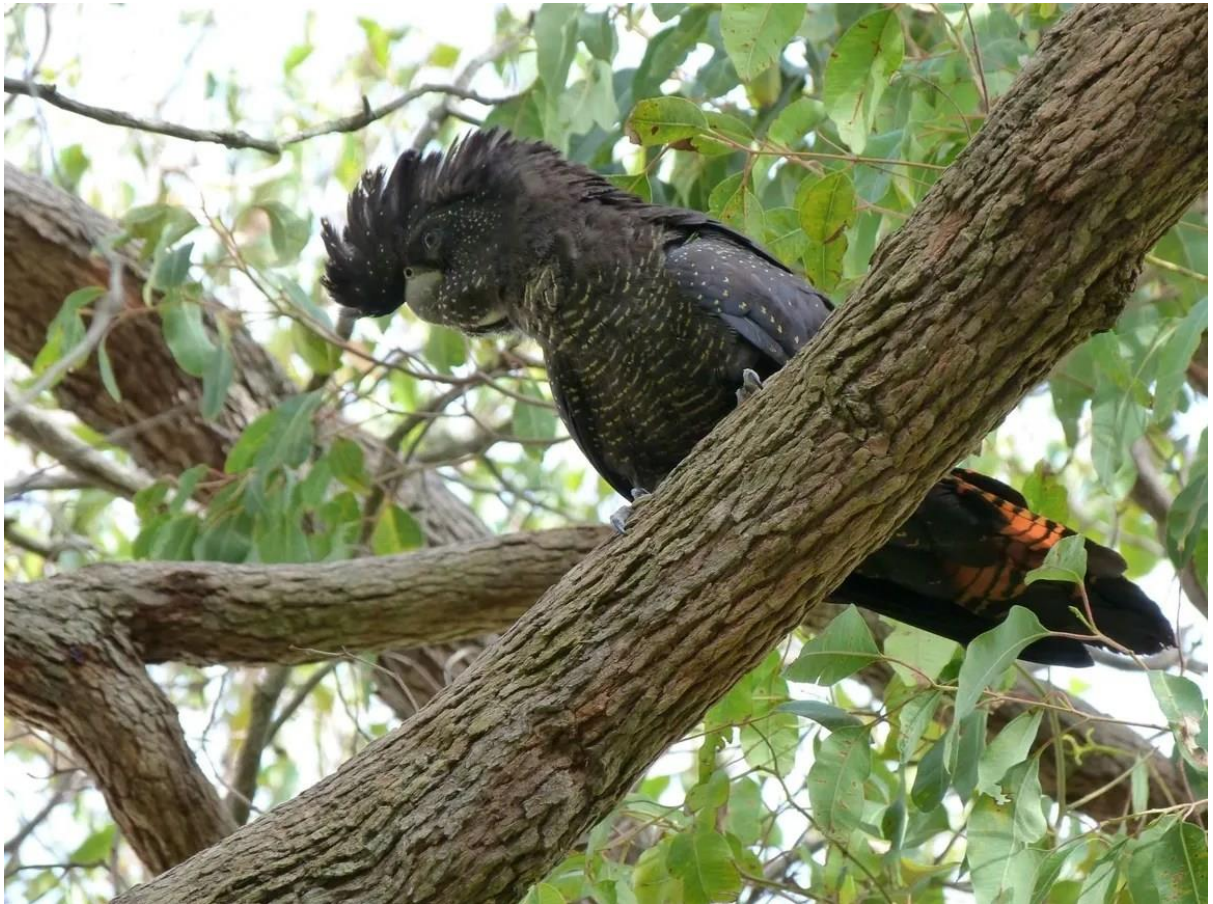


## 9. Positive Environmental Attributes

Despite the issues identified, the bushland retains important environmental value:

- Sections of dense, relatively undisturbed native vegetation
- Potential habitat for local wildlife
- Contribution to local tree canopy and urban cooling

These attributes highlight the opportunity for preservation and restoration.



## 10. Key Observations Summary

- The bushland is currently accessible despite being signed as restricted
- There is clear evidence of regular public use and recreational activity
- The site shows signs of degradation, including litter, track formation, and vegetation disturbance
- There appears to be limited or no active management or maintenance
- However, the site retains significant environmental value



## 11. Environmental Value and Strategic Importance

The Churchlands Bushland areas represent a valuable remnant of native vegetation within Perth's urban environment.

They contribute to air quality, soil stability, and local water management, while also supporting urban cooling in the context of Perth's declining tree canopy. Importantly, these areas provide habitat for native flora and fauna and form part of a broader ecological linkage connecting green spaces such as Herdsman Lake.

Beyond environmental benefits, the bushland also holds community value, offering opportunities for passive recreation, nature appreciation, and access to natural landscapes within a suburban setting.

Given increasing pressure on urban green space, the protection and thoughtful management of established bushland such as this is important to ensure its environmental and community value is retained for future generations.



## **12. Recommendations**

The following recommendations are proposed to support a clear, practical, and balanced management approach for the bushland that combines possible public access with preservation measures.

### **1. Clarification of Land Use and Management Intent**

- Clearly define whether the bushland is to be publicly accessible or formally restricted
- Ensure that signage, access points, and on-ground management are aligned with this position

### **2. Perimeter and Pathway Control (If Public Access is Permitted)**

- Establish a clearly defined perimeter, supported by appropriate fencing
- Introduce a formalised pathway network to guide pedestrian movement
- Use low-impact materials (e.g. limestone or compacted gravel paths)
- Reinforce pathways with fencing or natural barriers to discourage movement outside designated areas

### **3. Rehabilitation and Protection of Vegetation**

- Identify degraded or recovering sections of bushland
- Undertake targeted rehabilitation, including replanting of native vegetation where required

### **4. Site Clean-Up and Removal of Disturbances**

- Undertake a comprehensive clean-up of the site, including:
  - Removal of litter and waste
  - Removal of informal structures (e.g. bike ramps, cubby-style constructions)
  - Clearing of debris associated with human activity
- Restore affected areas to a more natural condition

### **5. Ongoing Maintenance and Monitoring**

- Implement regular litter collection and site inspections
- Manage vegetation overgrowth, particularly where it impacts surrounding infrastructure (e.g. Empire Avenue footpath)
- Monitor tree health and provide transparency around any tree removal activities

### **6. Community Education and Engagement**

- Communicate clearly to local residents and nearby schools that the area is a protected bushland environment
- Encourage responsible use, including staying on designated paths and respecting restricted or rehabilitating areas
- Promote awareness of the ecological value of the site

### 13. Reference Model – Abbeybrook Reserve

Abbeybrook Reserve (managed by City of Stirling), located in close proximity to the subject bushland areas, provides a strong local example of how urban bushland can be effectively managed to balance environmental protection with community access.

The reserve demonstrates a clear and consistent management approach, including:

- Defined perimeter boundaries, supported by appropriate fencing
- Clearly designated limestone pathways that guide movement through the site
- Pathways designed to accommodate walking, dog walking, and bike riding
- Signage that reinforces appropriate use and environmental awareness
- Active maintenance and ongoing site management

This approach has successfully:

- Reduced informal track formation
- Protected sensitive vegetation from ongoing disturbance
- Maintained a clean and visually appealing natural environment
- Enabled a high level of public access while preserving environmental integrity

Importantly, Abbeybrook Reserve demonstrates that public access and environmental preservation are not mutually exclusive. With appropriate planning and management, both can be achieved simultaneously.

Given the proximity and similarity of the sites, Abbeybrook Reserve provides a practical and immediately relevant model that could be adapted for the Churchlands bushland areas. The contrast between the two sites highlights the opportunity for improved management, without the need to develop a new approach from first principles.



## 14. Conclusion

The Churchlands Bushland represents a valuable remnant of native vegetation within an increasingly urbanised environment. While sections of the site remain healthy and intact, current conditions indicate a lack of clear management, resulting in ongoing degradation through unrestricted access, littering, and informal use.

As outlined, this bushland provides important environmental benefits, including biodiversity support, urban cooling, and ecological connectivity, as well as meaningful value to the local community.

Without intervention, there is a risk that these values will be progressively diminished. However, with clear direction and appropriate management, there is a strong opportunity to preserve, restore, and enhance this area in a way that balances environmental protection with responsible community access.

These measures would support an outcome that allows appropriate community use while protecting and strengthening the long-term environmental value of the bushland.

This represents an opportunity for Main Roads WA to demonstrate proactive environmental stewardship within a key urban corridor.

