

Bushland Sub-Committee AGM Report 2023

Background

The Bushland sub-committee of the School Board was established to manage the conservation and regeneration of the area of bush within the school grounds and to support the School staff in the development of educational and conservation programs that will actively engage students with the bushland.

The sub-committee, with the guidance of Gemma Broderick, developed a Bushland Management Plan which was initially adopted by the School Council in 2011. The Plan is updated annually and reviewed every 3 to 5 years. It is available to Association members through the School office. The current Plan was approved by the Board in December 2021.

Membership

The sub-committee is convened by a member of the School Board and membership is open to all members of the School community. In 2023 the sub-committee was: Peter Cardy, Laila Miller, Ruth Bradley and Joy Chela. Thank you to the sub-committee members for volunteering their time and expertise.

Anyone interested in joining the sub-committee should speak to Laila Miller or leave their name at the School office.

Regeneration program

The program — begun in 2015 with the upper and lower primary students — of regenerating native species in degraded areas of the bushland, continued in 2023.

A vegetation condition survey was completed in December 2023 by Powderbark Environmental Consulting (Powderbark). The survey yielded positive results compared to a previous survey by Hummerston (2017) as follows (Table 1; Figures 1 and 2):

- The area surveyed in 2023 was 1,275 m² larger than in 2017, with the extra area included being alongside the Lower Primary and Shammai buildings, and around the hard court.
- The areas of 'very good' and 'good' condition both increased by nearly 600m² each from 2017 to 2023. Taken together, this is an increase from 51% to 62% of the 2017 survey area.
- There was an overall decrease of 281 m² in the area of 'degraded' vegetation condition in 2023 compared to 2017. This is notable, given it includes the extra areas included in the 2023 survey.
- There was an increase of 371 m² in the 'completely degraded' area, including the north boundary along the carpark, the west boundary and in the south west corner between the firebreak path and the fence. The Bushland Subcommittee had already been targeting the fence line and south west corner for weeding and replanting by students in the past few years. The Subcommittee has requested logs from the construction site be placed along the northern boundary with the carpark, to assist revegetation by creating conditions more conducive to seedling survival.
- The Bushland sub-committee will implement recommendations by Powderbark (2023) for further improvements in bushland health in 2024 and beyond
- The School is to be commended for its efforts in improving the conservation health of the bushland.

Table 1. Comparison of 2017 and 2023 Vegetation Condition Mapping Areas

Vegetation Condition	2017 (m ²)	2023 (m ²)	Difference (m ²)
Very Good	1142.4	1737.3	594.9
Good	3917.6	4507.3	589.7
Degraded	3954.7	3673.4	-281.3
Completely Degraded	927.5	1298.8	371.2
Total Area (m ²)	9942.2	11216.8	1274.5



Figure 1. Spring 2017 Vegetation Condition Mapping (Hummerston, 2017)



Figure 2. December 2023 Vegetation Condition Mapping (Powderbark, 2023)

In August 2023, under supervision by the sub-committee, lower primary students planted out 40 native plant seedlings in the retaining wall west of the Pre-Primary buildings and in the southwest corner of the bushland. Students also tended the retaining wall seedlings (weeding and watering) during 2023. Materials were provided to the upper and lower primary classrooms to aid in weed identification. In the upper primary classroom, a series of jobs is available which focuses on the native species planted and their characteristics.

Revegetation work conducted from 2015 to 2018 on the hard court banks continues to be informally monitored. No new plants have been planted in that area since 2019.

Sub-committee members and volunteers watered all new plants during the warmer months (October 2022 through March 2023 and October 2023 through March 2024) to help improve survival rates. Thank you to all volunteers and their families who assisted.

School bush walks

The School hosted the annual series of bush walks during the second week in September 2023. Staff and students invited parents to walk the perimeter of the bushland along the firebreak and take the opportunity to identify plants and wildlife. These activities are supported by the sub-committee who maintain plant identification signs at various locations along the walk.

Grants

During 2023 the Bushland sub-committee planted native plants with the support of the Northern Suburbs Branch of the Wildflower Society of Western Australia, with its nursery located at Landsdale Farm. Thank you to Joy Chela, David Pike and the Society for their support.

During 2023 the Bushland sub-committee was successful in applying for funds through the State Natural Resources Management Program (NRM) sponsored by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. This grant will provide for weed control during 2024 and 2025. Thank you to NRM for their support.

The Bushland sub-committee was also successful in 2023 in obtaining funding through the City of Joondalup Community Funding Program. The City of Joondalup funding supported consultant fees for a vegetation condition survey in 2023, and for supplies for the 2024 bushland regeneration program. Thank you to the City of Joondalup for their support.

Fire Protection

A contractor was engaged by the School in October 2023 to clear the School's firebreak and the area between the firebreak and the boundary fence. This included removal of overhanging branches encroaching on the firebreak and removal of substantial fallen branches/tree trunks.

Volunteer parents and staff attended a Busy Bee on 11 November 2023 to clear the Fire Safe Building area west of Pre-Primary. Thank you to the small but hard-working group of volunteers and their families who make these Busy Bees enjoyable and productive.

Weed control

The ongoing program of weed control was continued in 2023 with the employment of a contractor during the July school holiday period to undertake the annual spraying of veldt grass. This program was repeated in October 2023 due to persistence of veldt grass. No other weed spraying was done in the bush during 2023.

During August and September 2023 the Bushland sub-committee supervised interested upper primary students in removal of weeds along the east, south and west boundaries of the School bushland firebreak. Students were taught the names and identification of weed species. This program was carried on from 2021 and 2022 and continues to be highly successful with much enthusiasm amongst students and a significant improvement in weed control and aesthetic of the bushland along the firebreak. Thank you to the upper primary students and staff who support this important program.