

Potoroo Postings



Issue # 2020/3

Reminder: Membership renewals are now due. See details below

CONTENTS	
From the Chair	1
Calendar	1
Chairperson's Annual Report to AGM	2
GPAG Annual Membership Renewals	3
Volunteering	3
Fundraising & Community Awareness	7
Grants and Submissions	10
Merchandise	11
Membership Form	13

CALENDAR

Aug 24-25 2020 (weather permitting): Deployment of motion cameras at Two Peoples Bay & subsequent checking of SD cards to see what species have been recorded (COVID-19 physical distancing rules permitting). Volunteers will be needed so if you are interested please email us on mail@potoroo.org.

August 2020: Vegetation survey at Two Peoples Bay (COVID-19 physical distancing rules permitting). Volunteers will be needed so if you are interested please email us on mail@potoroo.org & we will notify you when dates are set.

Late August/Early September 2020: The third quarterly fungi survey at Two Peoples Bay (COVID-19 physical distancing rules permitting). Volunteers will be needed so if you are interested please email us on mail@potoroo.org & we will notify you when dates are set.

October 30 & 31, 2020: The QV1 abseil delayed from May due to coronavirus has now been rescheduled for Oct 30 & 31. Please help us spread the word to potential donors &/or abseilers. See below for more details.

FROM THE CHAIR

It is a privilege to have been elected to chair GPAG at the AGM in June and to take the reins from such dedicated predecessors as Ron Dorn and Ken Bushell. They have presided over the rise of GPAG from humble beginnings to its present position of high importance in the fight to save Australia's rarest mammal. Since taking office I have also come to appreciate the high quality of our Committee members. We have a truly professional and committed team.

I took interest recently in the proposed project to bring the Thylacine back from extinction by the use of DNA from preserved specimens and the use of surrogate female Tasmanian Devils. It would cost millions but there is apparently no shortage of prospective donors. Creating and maintaining a viable population of wild Thylacines would be phenomenally expensive. Sadly there is often more money available for such romantic resurrections than for preventing extinctions in currently vulnerable species. It is part of our challenge in GPAG to convince the community that preventing extinctions is a higher priority than trying to reverse them.

Alan Needham



Contact us: Email: mail@potoroo.org, Mail: PO Box 654, Albany, WA 6331

Visit us: www.potoroo.org

Follow us: 🔰 @gilbertspotoroo 🚦 @GilbertsPotorooActionGroup





By Ken Bushell (Outgoing Chair)

The Year In Summary: The past year has really been one to remember for our small, hardworking GPAG team. With two substantial grants from the State NRM under their 2019 Community Stewardship Grants programme, GPAG is now in its best ever financial position - it has become a major financial supporter and driver of the Gilbert's Potoroo Recovery Plan.

Just as momentum was building with activities under these grants along came the COVID-19 pandemic and its subsequent public restrictions which have postponed numerous activities and forced the group to find alternative ways to get the job done but overall we have managed this and remain largely on schedule.

As required of us, GPAG bedded in a new updated constitution. These new rules also bought some minor changes so the opportunity was taken to also do a full operational review of GPAG procedures. The two State NRM grants also meant GPAG needed a more sophisticated financial reporting system to cater for GST/BAS requirements and to provide detailed reporting on grant activities.

Well done to the GPAG team. Particular acknowledgment and thanks go to Jackie Courtenay and Jen Merritt for all of their efforts and hard work in making this a very successful year.

GPAG'S 3 Aims: Again our 3 aims have seen much activity and success.

Firstly **Awareness Raising**. Most importantly, GPAG's old website which was out of date and well overdue for replacement has been re-constructed onto a modern platform giving easier access, a modern look, and more information. Adding to that, the recent website launch (see further details below), the new format quarterly Newsletters, items on GWN News and in the Albany Advertiser have all helped to continually grow our followers on both Twitter and Facebook, and to slightly increase the level of donations. Membership has also grown to 89 with 3 new Life members and 8 new Ordinary members.

In late 2019 GPAG celebrated the 25th anniversary of the rediscovery of Gilbert's Potoroo with a dinner event in Albany in conjunction with a very successful South Coast Threatened Species Forum and event at Two Peoples Bay funded by South Coast NRM, the University of Western Australia & Edith Cowan University together with support from DBCA.

Fundraising. Our usual fundraising through membership, donations, merchandise, the annual Caversham Wildlife Park Fundraiser and wine sales have all been moderately successful although suffering some impact from the devastating Eastern States fires and COVID-19. The Elfenbrook Christmas Festival event and Trivia & Truffles Quiz night both returned positive results whilst other events are at present on hold awaiting the lifting of public restrictions.

Volunteer Opportunities were offered in conjunction with DBCA through the regular trapping programme, recent Waychinicup Radio-tracking and Fungi Survey exercises. As restrictions are lifted further opportunities will become available under other projects such as the Feral Animal Monitoring and Vegetation Survey at Two Peoples Bay – both also part of the State NRM grant programme.

In finishing up, I need to again state this has been a very successful and busy year for GPAG and all those contributing to that should justifiably be very proud of their efforts. With the momentum now started in rolling out the various activities under the State NRM grants this coming year promises to be a very rewarding one.

GPAG Annual Membership Renewals

At the 2019 AGM on June 25 two decisions were made concerning GPAG annual memberships. Firstly we have decided that our membership year should coincide with our financial year which runs from March 1 to end of February. Currently the membership year coincides with the tax year (July 1 to June 30) but this has created some confusion in our accounting systems so to bring it all into line we have decided to make this change.

Secondly, our membership fee has not changed since the group was first incorporated in March 2002 and with the increasing activities being undertaken by the group (e.g. more events requiring volunteers who need to be insured) and general inflation of insurance and other costs, it has become necessary to increase our membership fees to help offset some of our administrative expenses.

At the beginning of July we sent out our annual membership invoice, so this message merely acts as a reminder to those members where paying might have slipped your mind. Your being part of our group is very important to us and we would love you to continue being a member. A big thank you to those who have already paid and updated their personal details to ensure that our data base is correct.

If you are not currently a member (or are a former member who is no longer financial) we would be delighted to welcome you (or welcome you back) as a member. You will find a membership form on page 13 of this newsletter.

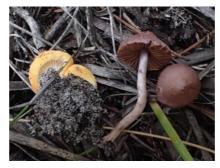
VOLUNTEERING

Second Quarterly Fungi Survey

Our second quarterly fungi survey was completed in two sessions during June. Due to coronavirus physical distancing requirements (and erratic rainfall events) the work was completed by fungi specialist Katie Syme with support from Albany-based volunteers who were able to participate at short notice as weather permitted.

The first four transects (two in an unburnt area and two in a recovering burnt area) were completed by Katie Syme and one volunteer, botanist Kate Brown, on June 10. Two 3 mm fruiting bodies of truffle-like fungi were found on one of the unburnt transects, along with the bright yellow mycelium of *Elaphomyces chlorocarpus* and about 20 species of above ground fungi including several magnificently coloured species (see pictures on following page). The soil was moist and there was lots of evidence of digging by the many species such as Quenda, Bush Rats and Quokkas, as well as Potoroos, that feed on the underground fungi.



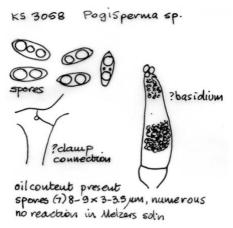




Above ground fungi *Cortinarius archeri* (above left), *Lactarius* sp. and *Cortinarius* sp. (above centre) and *Boletellus obscurecoccineus* (above right). Just look at those colours! Photos: Katie Syme (left and centre images) and Kate Brown (right image)

Surveys in the recovering burnt area did not uncover any truffle-like fungi but again found a number of species of above ground fungi. The soil was drier than the unburnt area (where the vegetation is MUCH thicker) and there were fewer diggings observed. Some "opportunistic searching" was also undertaken and another group of three small white truffle-like fungi was collected which on microscopic analysis was found to be a species of *Pogisperma* (see pictures below). A DNA sample of the fungi was collected by Katie Syme and submitted for analysis.





The specimens of *Pogisperma* sp. collected opportunistically on June 10 (above left) and drawings of the spores as observed through the microscope by Katie Syme (above right). Photos and drawings by Katie Syme.

On June 20, Katie Syme, Val Hack and Steph Hill completed surveying the remaining four transects including setting up two new 50 m survey lines at one of the recovering burnt sites to move it into an area of *Melaleuca* closer to one of the Potoroo trap lines.





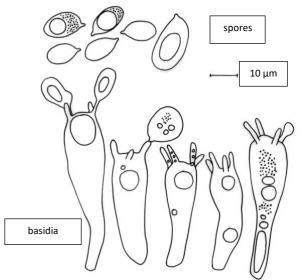


Above left: Setting up the new transect. Above centre: Katie Syme photographing and collecting truffle-like fungi specimens while Val Hack continues searching. Photos: Stephanie Hill. Above right: *Protrubera canescens* in situ before being collected. Photo: Katie Syme

Survey of the two transects at the newly established site resulted in the discovery of four different species of truffle-like fungi - ?Amanita sp., Pogisperma sp., Hysterangium sp. and Protrubera canescens (see photo on the previous page and below).



The specimens of *Amanita* sp. collected on the new recovering burnt transect (above left) and drawings of the spores as observed through the microscope by Katie Syme (right). Photos and drawings by Katie Syme.



Samples of the ?Amanita specimen were also sent off for DNA analysis to confirm identification (see pictures below).





Preparing samples for DNA analysis. Fungi are cut into small pieces using a new scalpel blade for each specimen to avoid contamination. The samples are placed in a plastic Eppendorf tube with silica beads to ensure the sample remains dry. Photos: Katie Syme.

No truffle-like fungi were found in the remaining unburnt site but the vegetation in that site is even thicker than in the other unburnt site with very little bare ground visible which makes it extremely difficult to move through and survey.

If you missed it in the last newsletter, you can view a short video of Katie Syme explaining the survey technique on YouTube at the following link https://youtu.be/gfDcFWR7ioE.

Thanks again to Katie Syme, all our volunteers & DBCA staff, especially Grantly Morton, National Park Ranger at Two Peoples Bay, for their help, & to State NRM for funding the project. The next survey is tentatively scheduled for late August (coronavirus restrictions permitting) and we will again require one or two volunteers per day for two to three days to assist Katie with the surveys. Exact dates are yet to be decided but if you are interested please let us know by emailing us on mail@potoroo.org and we will be in touch when we finalise the dates to confirm who is available.

Feral predator monitoring

Owing to COVID-19 physical distancing restrictions, it was not possible to deploy our new motion sensing cameras in April as originally planned. However, it seems we will now be able to get the cameras out in late August and we are tentatively planning to deploy them on August 24 and 25 (weather permitting). The camera model that was being used by DBCA has been superseded by a new model and to ensure that the data from the new cameras is comparable with the old cameras and there are no glitches with the new

cameras, both the old and new cameras will be run simultaneously for the first three to four months.

Our new cameras have been engraved to identify them as GPAG cameras and all the batteries are charged ready to go! We are very excited that this project will soon be underway and we are looking forward to starting to analyse the SD cards and see what predators and other species (including hopefully Potoroos!) the cameras record.

We will require two volunteers per day on each of the two days to help with deploying the cameras. Volunteers will need to be fit enough to walk considerable distances cross country carrying the cameras and pegs etc. If you are interested, please email us on mail@potoroo.org to indicate your availability.





Photos: Top - The back of the cameras showing the GPAG engraving. Bottom - 16 batteries in the recharger getting charged up ready to be deployed in the field. Each camera takes 12 batteries which means that for the 15 cameras there are 180 batteries to charge. We have 3 chargers, but it is still quite a big job! Photos: Val Hack

Vegetation Survey at Two Peoples Bay

The final citizen science project that we are planning to get underway in late August is the vegetation survey in (mostly) recovering burnt vegetation at Two Peoples Bay. This survey will involve completing sixteen 340 m transects recording the different vegetation types encountered along each transect (not every plant species!). The survey design repeats a survey completed by then Honours student Sarah Vetten in 1996 when the Potoroo population in that area was at its healthiest since the rediscovery. The results of the survey will enable us to compare the vegetation as it is now nearly 5 years since the fire with how it was in August 1996 and see if the vegetation structure is different. This will provide some information on the recovery of the habitat since the fire. The results may also be compared with data collected by Sarah Vetten on the habitat use of the Potoroos to see how the current vegetation structure compares with what the Potoroos were using in 1996. The work will be overseen by a botanist and we will again need volunteers to assist with the field work which will involve measuring out the transects and helping with recording the data. We anticipate that 3 volunteers will be required each day for up to 5 days again in late August (we will not need the same volunteers each day). If you are interested in volunteering, please let us know on mail@potoroo.org and we will contact you when we finalise the dates to confirm who is available.

FUNDRAISING AND COMMUNITY AWARENESS

Current and Upcoming Fundraisers

QV1 Abseil

The QV1 abseil, originally scheduled for May 1 & 2 and delayed due to coronavirus physical distancing requirements has now been rescheduled for October 30 and 31. We currently have 4 people signed up to do the abseil - three committee members as part of "Team Gilbert's Potoroo" and Emma Batten who has signed up separately to raise money for GPAG. So far we have raised \$1370 (\$1270 of that raised



by Emma Batten through 3 large donations – awesome work Emma!). The Team Gilbert's Potoroo fundraising page is open for donations at https://www.mycause.com.au/page/222533/team-gilberts-potoroo and Emma's page is at https://www.mycause.com.au/page/225332/emma-b or if you want to sign up to participate you can do so via the Urban Descent website https://urbandescent.org.au/event/qv1-descent-2020/. No donation is too small, especially in these difficult times for fundraising, so any help you can give us is much appreciated. After the abseil being such an amazing fundraising success last year (raising \$9035 in donations) it is disappointing that it has been so disrupted this year, but now it is rescheduled we can ramp up our fundraising efforts and hopefully achieve some good results again.

You can view a video created by Hamish Longbottom, one of the Saturday abseilers from 2019, at the following link https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Aeo0Vld2RA&feature=youtu.be (content warning if you suffer from vertigo or motion sickness!).

Ongoing Fundraisers

Edge Pledge

With the current coronavirus restrictions limiting normal fundraising activities (and normal activities in general) if you want to challenge yourself to do something different while in isolation, why not visit the Edge Pledge website and choose (or make up) some challenges for yourself that you can do at home and raise some money for Gilbert's Potoroo at the same time? If you want to participate in an Edge Pledge

challenge you can sign up at www.edgepledge.com (be sure to select Gilbert's Potoroo as the species you are supporting!) or donate to support other people who are doing, or have recently completed, challenges. If you do sign up for a challenge please email us at mail@potoroo.org and let us know so we can help promote it.



Awareness Raising

With so many of our activities limited or postponed due to the coronavirus restrictions Awareness Raising was a major focus of our ongoing work over the past three months.

Website launch

Although it had been "live" for some weeks, our long awaited new website was officially launched online on May 17 with simultaneous promotions on Twitter, Facebook and on a special launch mini-site associated with the website. We asked people who were following along to post pictures of their drinks and snacks that they were bringing to the launch and received photos from around Australia as well as a couple from the UK! Photos of the range of "virtual drinks" (or morning coffees for the UK participants!) can be viewed on the mini-site home page at the following link https://event-potoroo-launch.webflow.io/.

The website was launched by the Threatened Species Commissioner Dr Sally Box who provided us with a fantastic 3 minute video introducing the key features of the website and encouraging people to visit and make use of this new updated resource. The video provided by Dr Box can be viewed at the following link https://www.facebook.com/GilbertsPotorooActionGroup/videos/277453653640088/ and we would like to thank her again for all her support and for such a positive endorsement of both GPAG and the new website.

The remainder of the launch consisted of some species identification games involving a total of 10 photos of Potoroos and of species that they are often confused with for people to test their identification skills, and an emoji decoding game where we posted questions with the answers provided in emojis and asked our followers to decode them. These quizzes are still available on the launch mini-website and as Facebook posts in late May. All the answers were also available by exploring the website so if people got stuck with either the animal identifications or the emoji decoding they could visit the website for clues.

Question 2. Where do the four sub-populations of Gilbert's Potoroos occur?

- 1. 🎯 🌦
- 2. 🐽 🏝
- 3. 👫 💃 (🐠 🦝)
- 4. ? 🤔 🖘 🍱

Left: An example of an emoji decoding question. The answers are

- 1. Middle Island,
- 2. Bald Island,
- 3. Two Peoples Bay and
- 4. Waychinicup National Park.

The website launch also included a colouring in competition that ran for two weeks following the launch with the winners and "special mentions" announced on World Environment Day, June 5. The beautiful outline drawings were created by artist (and GPAG member) Marnie Giroud and the competition was judged by both Marnie and artist, retired school Art Department Head and very experienced art competition judge, Jeanette Giroud. We did not receive as many entries as we would have liked but the standard of those we did receive was very high and we now have the outline drawings available for future use at stalls or other events. All of the entries can be viewed on the Colouring Competition page of the launch mini-website at the following link https://event-potoroo-launch.webflow.io/colouring-competition.

The winner in the Age 3-6 category was Alice (age 6) from Adelaide, South Australia. The judges commented on the beautiful rhythm, movement & use of colour in her work & one noted that it reminded them of Vincent Van Gogh's Starry, Starry Night! Axel (age 4) from Melbourne, Victoria, received a Special Mention for his excellent use of contrasting colours. It wasn't specifically mentioned by the judges but we also loved his incorporation of textural media & glitter into his work.





The Winner (Alice, Age 6, left) and Special Mention (Axel, Age 4, right) of the 3-6 year old age category. See above for the judges' comments.

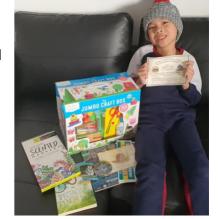
The winner in the Age 7-10 category was Quentin (Age 7) from Brisbane, Queensland. The judges commended Quentin for his use of colour which sensitively & accurately depicted the colour of the natural surrounds and gave a sense of the vulnerability of the Potoroo in its environment. Kathryn (Age 9) from Caversham, UK, received a Special Mention for her careful observation of the colours of the nocturnal environment.





The Winner (Quentin, Age 7, left) and Special Mention (Kathryn, Age 9, right) of the 7-10 year old age category. See above for the judges' comments.

The winners of each category were sent a certificate and prize pack containing some GPAG merchandise, and art materials donated by Marnie Giroud. The "Special Mentions" in each category received a certificate and mini-prize pack with a Potoroo bumper sticker, card, postcard and fridge magnet.



A very happy and proud Age 7-10 winner, Quentin, with his certificate and prize pack. Photo supplied by his mother and used with permission.

GRANTS AND SUBMISSIONS

State NRM Community Stewardship Grants: DNA Grant Progress

Exciting progress has been made on the Gilbert's Potoroo population genetics study over the past three months. This study is funded by our State NRM Small Community Stewardship Grant with in-kind support from DBCA and is analysing the genetic diversity across all individuals and populations as well as investigating parentage to assess inbreeding. The information obtained from the study will be used by DBCA scientists to develop a population management strategy that will optimise the number and selection

of individuals for translocations between the populations to maximise the maintenance of genetic diversity over time.

After a lot of effort sorting through samples collected from trapped Gilbert's Potoroos over the past 20+ years, Dr Tony Friend from DBCA delivered around 250 samples to Dr Kym Ottewell at the DBCA genetics laboratory in Perth in May, as well as a sample of tissue to Associate Professor Parwinder Kaur at the DNA Zoo laboratory at the University of Western Australia. The tissue sample delivered to Parwinder will be used to create a complete Gilbert's Potoroo reference genome over the next few months.



Dr Kym Ottewell (right) and Shelley MacArthur (left) unpacking & examining the tissue samples on arrival.

The DNA has now been extracted from the first batch of samples delivered to Kym Ottewell and we have been told that the results so far are excellent for both recent and older samples. Firstly the samples were mixed with an enzyme that breaks down the tissue to release the DNA. The samples were kept in a warm water bath for 1 to 2 hours (picture below left) as the process works best at about 50°C. The samples were then put into a centrifuge (picture below centre) to spin any remaining tissue such as Potoroo hair etc to the bottom of the tubes leaving the lighter DNA suspended in the fluid (picture below right). The DNA still needs a bit more processing to clean it up further but it is exciting that the early results are promising.







Images of the DNA extraction process as described above showing (from left) the tissue samples mixed with an enzyme in a warm water bath, being placed in a centrifuge & the samples after centrifuging. Photos: Kym Ottewell

After seeing our Facebook post about the successful DNA extraction, the Albany Advertiser ran a story on the DNA project which was published on

July 23. The story can be read at the following link <a href="https://www.albanyadvertiser.com.au/news/

Unfortunately due to COVID-19 restrictions the opportunities for volunteers to be involved in trapping Potoroos to help collect samples have been limited in 2020. We are however planning a community event in Albany at the end of the project (probably March next year) for people to learn about the project and how cutting edge genetics is being used to help with conservation and management of Gilbert's Potoroo.

MERCHANDISE



CARDS: Quality hand-made cards featuring a picture of Gilbert's Potoroo from a watercolour by Jann van der Helder. Blank inside.

\$4 each or 5 for \$16.



POSTCARDS: Featuring a photo of Gilbert's Potoroo by Dick Walker and information about the Potoroo on both the front and back \$2.50 each

Save Gilbert's Potoroo EXTINCT IS FOREVER

www.potoroo.org



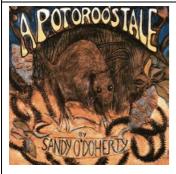
BUMPER STICKERS (left) \$2.50 BOOKMARKS (above) \$2.00



TEATOWELS: Printed on 100% cotton with some key facts about Gilbert's Potoroo! \$10 each or 3 for \$25



STUBBY HOLDERS: Designed by GPAG members featuring a photo of Gilbert's Potoroo by Dick Walker. \$10 each or 2 for \$15



A POTOROO'S TALE: A delightful book written and beautifully illustrated by Albany artist Sandy O'Doherty. All profits from the sale of the book will go to the Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group.



Beautifully illustrated by Laila Savolainen. \$20 for the pair PEEKABOO POTOROO
& FOOEY ROOEY:
Two gorgeous stories
by Jackie Lomax
about the adventures
of Lyla a lost Longfooted Potoroo
finding a new home
with Gilbert's
Potoroos at Two
Peoples Bay.

MERCHANDISE ORDER FORM

ABN 75 191 68 479 (Tax Invoice when paid)

Item	Cost/item	Quantity	Total Cost
Cards (ea)	\$4.00		
Cards (pk of 5)	\$16		
Postcards (ea)	\$2.50		
Bumper Stickers (ea)	\$2.50		
Bookmarks (ea)	\$2.00		
Teatowels (ea)	\$10.00		
Teatowels (3 pk)	\$25.00		
Stubby Holders (ea)	\$10.00		
Stubby Holders (2 pk)	\$15.00		
Fridge Magnets (ea)	\$2.50		
A Potoroos Tale	\$15.00		
Peekaboo Potoroo & Fooey Rooey (set of 2 bks)	\$20.00		
		Product total	
		Postage & packing (<500g)*	\$10.00
		Add a donation?	
		Total Cost	

^{*} Within Australia. Postage for larger and overseas orders will need to be costed individually depending on weight and destination. You will be contacted by the Treasurer with a final quote for postage if your order weighs more than 500g or you need the items sent overseas.

NAME		
ADDRESS		
PHONE (Work)	(Home)	
EMAIL		

Payment Methods

<u>DIRECT DEPOSIT:</u> National Australia Bank; BSB: 086-518; Account Number: 54-316-8395

Please include your surname and "Merchandise" in the Reference line.

CHEQUE: Please make cheques payable to Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group Inc

Send To: The Treasurer

Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group Inc

PO Box 654 Albany, WA 6331

MEMBERSHIP FORM

	WEIGHDERSTIII TORIVI	
	mber of the GILBERT'S POTOROO ACTION GROUP INC, fill ou lirect deposit and email the form to treasurer@potoroo.org	• • •
NAME		
ADDRESS		
PHONE	EMAIL	
Date of Birth if U	nder 15 Years//	
	Tax Invoice	
Subscrip	tion \$11 (this will take you to end February 2 Includes GST	2021), thereafter \$22 per year
Payment Metho	ods	
	National Australia Bank; BSB: 086-518; Account Number: 5 our surname and "Membership" in the Reference line.	4-316-8395
CHEQUE: Please	make cheques payable to Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group Ir	nc .
	The Treasurer Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group Inc PO Box 654 Albany, WA 6331	
	e information you have disclosed other than your name and con e association is given access to your personal details without yo	
OFFICIAL	Nominated By:	Receipt No Date Paid//
USE ONLY	Membership Accepted: YES/NO	Register
	DONATIONS	
donation facilitie	egistered Environmental Organisation the Gilbert's Potoroo s. To claim tax benefits , your donation must be a minimum Conation Fund. Tax deductible donations can also be made t	of \$2 and made payable to the GPAG Public
NAME		
ADDRESS		
PHONE	EMAIL	
Payment Metho	ods	
	National Australia Bank; BSB: 086-518; Account Number: 5 our surname in the Reference line and email this form to <u>trea</u>	
CHEQUE: Please	make cheques payable to Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group Ir	c Public Tax Deductible Donation Fund
	The Treasurer Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group Inc PO Box 654	

Albany, WA 6331