



# Potoroo Postings

Issue # 2020/2



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## CALENDAR

**May 2020:** Online launch of our new website.

Members will be advised by email and the dates of the event advertised on social media.

**June 2020:** Second of the quarterly fungi surveys at Two Peoples Bay (coronavirus physical distancing rules permitting). If it goes ahead, volunteers will be needed so if you are interested keep an eye out for updates and calls for volunteers.

**July 2020:** Deployment of motion cameras at Two Peoples Bay and subsequent checking of SD cards to see what species have been recorded (coronavirus physical distancing rules permitting). Volunteers will be needed so if you are interested keep an eye out for updates and calls for volunteers.

**August 2020:** Vegetation survey in one burnt area at Two Peoples Bay (coronavirus physical distancing rules permitting). Volunteers will be needed so if you are interested keep an eye out for updates and calls for volunteers.

**Oct or Nov, 2020:** QV1 abseil. The abseil was delayed from May due to coronavirus and it is hoped that it will go ahead in October or November. Keep an eye out for updates.

## FROM THE CHAIR

2020 started off with a rush of activity getting all the projects funded under the State NRM grants to their commencement point, but unfortunately this was all bought to a halt as the Corona Virus took hold. With some work completed there is still much to do & we look forward to restarting the field work as soon as possible, in the meantime the focus has been on getting things like our new website up and running.

Here's hoping life returns to normal soon - stay safe everyone.

**Ken Bushell**



Contact us: Email: [mail@potoroo.org](mailto:mail@potoroo.org), Mail: PO Box 654, Albany, WA 6331

Visit us: [www.potoroo.org](http://www.potoroo.org)

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## RECOVERY PROGRAM UPDATE

By Tony Friend and Steph Hill, DBCA

The DBCA team has been busy since Christmas organising and running a citizen science radio-tracking project inside the 380-hectare potoroo enclosure in Waychinicup National Park, in early March. This was the first part of a joint project between DBCA and GPAG with funding from WA State NRM under the Community Stewardship Grants program. The object of the project was to map the home ranges of several potoroos living in the enclosure, built by DBCA in 2008 specifically to support a new potoroo population.



Gilbey pointing out the features of the enclosure's floppy-top fence. Photo from a video by Jen Merritt

The 8.2-kilometre long fox- and cat-proof floppy-top fence encloses several different vegetation types and provides us with the opportunity to discover which kind of vegetation the potoroos prefer. This in turn will help in selection of suitable areas in which to establish future colonies. Knowing how much area each potoroo needs and how much their home ranges overlap can also tell us how many potoroos could be supported within a given area.

About 25 potoroos currently live in the enclosure and the plan was to trap some in one part of the enclosure and fit them with radio-transmitters

which would fall off after 4-6 weeks. For the first two weeks their movements would be followed through the night by keen volunteers sitting at four tracking towers around the site, taking bearings on each animal every 20 minutes. Later the position of each animal at each time point could be calculated by triangulation and plotted over the vegetation map of the enclosure.



The tail of a Potoroo showing the two transmitters taped to its base. Photo: Ken Blechynden



Tony fitting transmitters to the Quokka (close ups in the Volunteering section below). Photo: Ken Blechynden

As it turned out, we were able to trap and fit transmitters to seven potoroos for the exercise. For comparison and interest, a resident quokka was also radio-tagged. A side project was to test out DBCA's newly-acquired tiny GPS units, programmed to take fixes at 20-minute intervals: four of these were fitted to potoroos as well as the transmitters (photo above right). The quokka was fitted with an older model GPS. Once the units fall off the animals and are collected and downloaded, we will be able to compare the fixes from tower tracking with the GPS data.

Two back-to-back teams of 12 radio-trackers were needed to staff the towers for a week each to cover the fortnight. The opportunity to be involved was offered in early January to GPAG members and other community members who had previously shown interest in helping in Gilbert's potoroo projects. The teams quickly filled with willing volunteers of a range of ages and occupations, from university students to retired community members.



The Week 1 volunteers Photo: Tony Friend

We are very grateful to all those who willingly sat out in the dark for their six-hour shift each night, braving wind and rain to help us learn more about potoroos.

The feasibility of the project relied on availability of accommodation near the tracking site, so we were extremely fortunate to have the willing cooperation of the Rae family, who own the King Creek farm overlooking the site of the enclosure. Through their generosity, we were able to base the volunteer team at the four-bedroom farmhouse on the property, only a 15-minute drive to the closest radio-tracking tower. We borrowed extra beds from the Two Peoples Bay research quarters and for those who wished to camp there was lots of room to pitch tents and park caravans and campers near the house.



A tent pitched out of the wind behind a shed near the Rae family farmhouse Photo: Val Hack

We were also very lucky to find two wonderful and capable people, Helen Parsons from Frankland River and Elise Parker from Busselton, who were prepared to be caterer/cook to the group for a week each. This job involved planning the menus, buying the supplies, and preparing meals and snacks for 14 people each day. They both went far beyond the call of duty and we were treated to fantastic and varied meals, as well as baked goodies for snacks on the tracking towers and to sustain us all throughout the days and nights. We were all very appreciative of the effort Helen and Elise put in and the way they made us all feel very much at home.

Data processing from the tracking project is still in progress and Steph has run another two weeks of trapping, at Two Peoples Bay and in the enclosure.

We've also been sorting through over 500 stored DNA samples from Gilbert's potoroos, collected over 20+ years, to submit a collection of around 250 samples from Two Peoples Bay, Bald Island and Waychinicup to the DBCA genetics lab in Perth for analysis. This work is funded under another State NRM grant to GPAG and will show us how successfully DBCA's translocation program has transferred the full genetic makeup of the original Two Peoples Bay population to the new sites.



Above: Vials containing the DNA samples. Right: Tony packing the samples to send to the DBCA genetics lab. Photos: Tony Friend, Abby Berryman



## VOLUNTEERING

### Intensive Radio Tracking at the Enclosure at Waychinicup National Park

#### Pre tracking preparation by Ken Blechynden

I spent February 27 and 28 helping with the last two days of the pre-trapping for the fitting of transmitters and with the erection of the radio-tracking tents in preparation for the two weeks of tracking which unfortunately I wasn't able to participate in. We only caught one Potoroo when I was there and it was an RT (re-trap) so already had its transmitter and GPS attached to it (see photo in the Recovery Program

Update section above). Tony and I did catch a Quokka though which they are also tracking this time to compare their habitat use to the Potoroos.



Tony Friend attaching the two transmitters to a Quokka. From left: Starting the taping; attaching the radio-transmitter; attaching the GPS transmitter; the tail with both transmitters attached. Photos: Ken Blechynden

Steven Thomas from GWN7 came out for the first tower set up and produced a great piece about the tracking which was aired on February 27 and can be viewed at this link [bit.ly/32zs8zP](http://bit.ly/32zs8zP) if you missed it.



Above: Erecting one of the towers while Steve films the action. Photo: Ken Blechynden

After all the effort of putting them up, two of the towers were flattened before the first use due to storms so the Week 1 trackers had an extra task to do re-erecting them before tracking could start. It would have been quite a challenge getting them back up in what looked like very bad weather.



Right : Steve filming the tent and tower. The tracking tents were handmade in 2011 by GPAG volunteer Charmaine Saunders with materials purchased by GPAG with a LotteryWest Grant. Photo: Ken Blechynden

## Week 2 radio-tracking by Val Hack

I arrived at the farmhouse which was the headquarters of the radio-tracking over 2 weeks just as the other eleven volunteers, Tony, the research scientist, Steph, the technical assistant and Elise, the cook were assembling for introductions. It is a beautiful property with views of granite studded hills and the Southern Ocean with various farm sheds and facilities dotted around the large yard. Tony explained the purpose of the radio-tracking and that it was funded by State NRM as a citizen science project. We were given a rundown of our rosters and teams. There were 3 teams of 4 on a rotating basis and the shifts were 2pm – 8pm, 8pm – 2am and 2am – 8am. Several of the volunteers had already been tracking for a week.



The Week 2 volunteers. Photo: Shane Parker

The previous week had been extremely windy so all the accommodation tents had been erected behind a building of some sort. There were no buildings unused and I wasn't keen on having my tent blow away in the middle of the night so I put mine up in a large shed (see picture in the section below on making trapping bags).



The Week 2 team at their induction on Sunday morning learning how to take the readings etc. Photo: Val Hack

I was on team C and not going out till 2am Monday, so Sunday was a day off except for the induction in the morning to visit the tracking towers and have a demo of how the tracking was done and recorded. I went to bed at 7.30 that night in

preparation of getting up at 1 am but couldn't get to sleep. Come 1.15 am we headed out on the rough track to the towers.

We were tracking 7 potoroos and 1 quokka. The receiver towers were 6 metres high. There is a circular handle about a metre from the ground to rotate the receiver with a 360° dial to take the reading. The direction of the animal (transmitter on the tail of potoroo or quokka) is indicated by the sound (or lack of) beeps, the signal. The direction is indicated by sweeping around the dial and finding the area of clearest, loudest beeps. The reading is taken from the null, a gap or reduced sound in the middle on the beeps.



The tracking tent set up (left) & close up of the dial while working at night (right).

Photos: Val Hack

Concentration was required, especially at first, to tune into the sounds and beeps. When the wind was strong, as was often the case, it required serious concentration. We were to take readings every 20 minutes. I was the timekeeper for our first shift and was rudely interrupted on my first round when one of my teammates called out over the 2-way – “Weren't we supposed to start our 2<sup>nd</sup> reading 2 minutes ago?”. I was only just over halfway through the first readings!

I did improve and was able to complete the full set of readings from then on, as I became accustomed to the beeps. There were 2 or 3 potoroos that were often “no signal”. These, I surmised, lived on the other side of the hill. If that was the case, they did venture closer sometimes as there were occasionally faint signals from them.

When the wind wasn't too strong or it wasn't raining, it was beautiful being out in the bush in the moonlight or darkness just listening to the night sounds between taking readings. It was beautiful when the daylight started filtering in and then the sunrise. The call of the Noisy Scrub bird was heard from several of the stations (if you have never heard a Noisy Scrub bird call Leigh Whisson recorded one at Two Peoples Bay while helping with the fungi surveys discussed below and you can hear it – and see the bird if you look closely – at this link

[https://twitter.com/leigh\\_whisson/status/1241570495033556992?s=20](https://twitter.com/leigh_whisson/status/1241570495033556992?s=20). Make sure you un-mute the sound on the video and have your volume right up on your device).

Elise, our cook, was wonderful. Plenty of delicious food and in plenty of time if we were on the 8pm to 2am shift. She was waiting when the 2pm to 8pm shift came back in. We soon fell into the routine of tracking, sleeping and doing a bit of sightseeing. There were lovely beaches close by and a thickly vegetated creek on the property.



The tracking tent at night. Photo: Val Hack

There was always someone trying to sleep during the day so others were doing their best to be quiet, not helped by the tradesmen working on a building not far from the house with angle grinders and tractors used as they were going about their business.

Even though lacking sleep, there was a tremendous feeling within the group. It is so wonderful to be with like-minded people working on such a cause as the Gilbert's Potoroo.

## Fungi survey at Two Peoples Bay

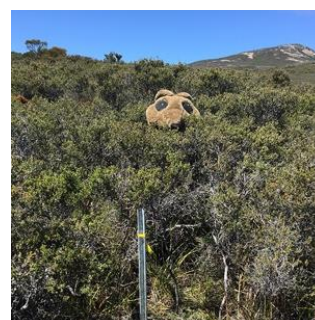
Fungi specialist, Katie Syme and a small group of volunteers had a great few days from Mar 7-9 getting 50m x 5m plots set up and completing all the surveys for our first quarterly fungi survey at Two Peoples Bay. This project is another of the four citizen science projects funded under our State NRM Community Stewardship Large Grant and the aim of the project is to investigate the food resources available for the Critically Endangered Gilbert's Potoroo in both unburnt and recovering burnt vegetation. After consultations with Dr Tony Friend from DBCA we selected four sites - two in unburnt vegetation and two in recovering burnt vegetation and measured out two plots in each site for a total of 8 plots in all. The unburnt vegetation was incredibly thick!

Katie Syme gave us lessons in how to search for underground fungi taking care to minimise disturbance and area impacted. We particularly concentrated our searches around mammal diggings (almost certainly mostly Quenda rather than Potoroo). You can view a short video of Katie explaining the survey technique on YouTube at the following link <https://youtu.be/gfDcFWR7ioE>.

We didn't find any native truffles but we did find at least two types of mycelium (the mass of branching filaments that provides water & nutrients to the fruiting body of the fungus) as well as several above ground fungi species. Gilbey came out to help us one day but she didn't have any luck finding the underground fungi either!



Katie Syme & volunteer Patrick Morris measuring & flagging a plot at one of the unburnt sites. Photo: Jackie Courtenay



Gilbey helping with the search for truffle like fungi at one of the unburnt sites. Photo: Jackie Courtenay.



From left: White and yellow mycelium possibly from truffle-like fungi species, a wood fungus *Stereum hirsutum*. Above: Bracket fungus *Pycnoporous coccineus*. All photos: Leigh Whisson

A survey completed by Katie Syme in March 1998 only found one species of truffle-like fungus despite the Potoroos trapped at about the same time having 20 different species in their droppings (clearly they are MUCH better at finding truffles than we are!). Katie is now looking at some Potoroo droppings (scats) collected during more recent trapping by DBCA to see how many species the Potoroos have found.

Thanks to Katie Syme, Tony Friend, 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 early June (coronavirus restrictions permitting) when hopefully we'll have some more luck at finding fruiting native truffles.

## New Black Trapping Bags for the Potoroos

In between undertaking the intense work of radio-tracking, GPAG Treasurer and long term Gilbert's Potoroo volunteer, Val Hack, spent hours of her "down time" sewing 70 black holding bags for use in Potoroo trapping. The black bags help the animals stay calm and comfortable while being handled or transported. Val took cutting tables, a sewing machine, an overlocker, iron and ironing board out to the farmhouse and set them all up in the shed where she quietly worked away for hours to create the pile of bags to donate to DBCA for use in the Gilbert's Potoroo recovery program. The materials for the bags were purchased with funds from donations to the Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group by our many generous supporters or supplied by Val herself. Thanks Val for a fantastic effort creating so many of the much needed bags.



Val's tent and black bag sewing work station set up in the shed! Photo: Val Hack

## FUNDRAISING AND COMMUNITY AWARENESS

### Current and Upcoming Fundraisers

#### QV1 Abseil

The QV1 abseil, originally scheduled for May 1 & 2, has had to be delayed due to coronavirus physical distancing requirements. At this stage, it is hoped that the abseil will be able to go ahead in October or November this year. We currently have 4 people signed up to do the abseil who between them have already raised \$600. The Team Gilbert's Potoroo fundraising page is still open for donations at <https://www.mycause.com.au/page/222533/team-gilberts-potoroo> or if you want to sign up to participate you still can via the Urban Descent website <https://urbandescent.org.au/event/qv1-descent-2020/>. After the abseil being such an amazing fundraising success last year it is disappointing that it has been so disrupted this year, but hopefully when it is rescheduled it will be equally successful.



### Recently Completed and Ongoing Fundraisers

#### 2019 Wine Fundraiser with Jingalla Wines

Late last year the Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group once again offered a selection of Jingalla's award winning wines with proceeds going directly towards the conservation of Gilbert's Potoroo. Thanks again to Shelley and Barry of Jingalla Wines for their continued support and to everyone who supported us by buying wines. Overall the wine sales in 2019 raised \$2395.



## Caversham Wildlife Park Fundraiser

Due to the urgent need for funds for the Western Ground Parrot which again had its habitat at Cape Arid National Park burnt during the 2019-2020 fires, the annual Caversham Gilbert's Potoroo fundraiser was swapped from February to March. Unfortunately, this meant that the fundraiser was running in the early weeks of the coronavirus crisis but, despite that, many generous people still donated to help support GPAG and the Potoroos. Late in 2019 we had provided Caversham with two A3 sized laminated information posters which were included in the fundraising display for the first time. While the total donated was much reduced from last year, the fundraiser still raised a much appreciated \$276. Thank you to everyone who donated and as always to Chadd and the team at Caversham Wildlife Park for their ongoing support.



The display at Caversham Wildlife Park. Photo: Chadd Banfield

## Edge Pledge

With the current coronavirus 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](http://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](mailto: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 has become the most important aspect of our ongoing work since mid-March.

## Website launch

After a lot of work and some unavoidable delays, our new website is now live at <https://www.potoroo.org/>! It's not completely finished and we are still ironing out some last minute glitches so we will be continuing to add more information and making improvements over the next few weeks and months. We had originally planned an event at the Albany library to launch the website as the first of our State NRM funded awareness raising events (and another opportunity to sample some truffle canapés!) but due to uncertainties over coronavirus lockdown restrictions we have decided





instead to have an online launch as soon as possible in May. The date is yet to be confirmed as we still have some logistics to sort out to maximise the impact of the launch in an online setting. GPAG Members will receive email notification when the launch date is set and it will be advertised on social media, on the website itself and through as many other channels such as media outlets, community calendars etc as we can organise. We are planning some fun activities and quizzes to accompany the launch and hope that as many people as possible will be able to participate.

## **Facebook**

We were very excited to welcome our 1000<sup>th</sup> Facebook follower on March 28 and despite having less to post about in the last few weeks our following has continued to grow so that at the time of writing we now have 1010 followers. We are trying to maintain communication by posting about interesting citizen science projects that can be done from home (April is Citizen Science month) and other conservation related articles that we can relate to Gilbert's Potoroo, as well as gradually reporting on our completed surveys or progress on ongoing projects (such as the DNA study) to keep posts coming fairly regularly and stay connected with our followers.

## **GRANTS AND SUBMISSIONS**

### **State NRM Community Stewardship Grants**

Again, due to coronavirus restrictions, many of our planned activities under our State NRM Community Stewardship Grants have had to be postponed. However, State NRM have been extremely supportive of the need for community groups to delay or reorganise their activities and we feel confident that we will be able to meet our grant obligations, although perhaps a little later than planned for some of them. As noted above, our website launch, which was intended to be our first event for the year held as a face to face event at the Albany library, will now be conducted as a purely online event at a date to be determined (but very soon...). Other field work and awareness raising events will be held later in the year when possible. Applications have now opened again for the 2020 round of State NRM Community Stewardship Grants but, with so much going on with our current grant, we have not yet decided whether we will put in another application this year.



Our acknowledgment poster displayed at all of our citizen science projects funded by the State NRM Community Stewardship grants & undertaken in collaboration with DBCA

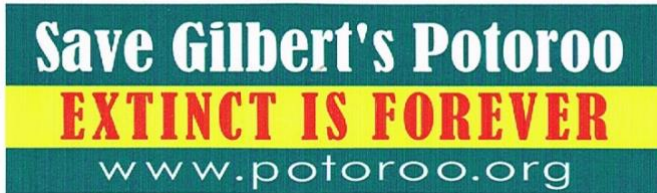
## MERCHANDISE



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.



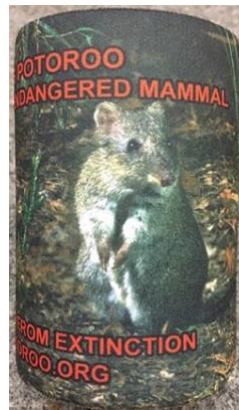
POSTCARDS: Featuring a photo of Gilbert's Potoroo by Dick Walker and information about the Potoroo on both the front and back  
\$2.50 each



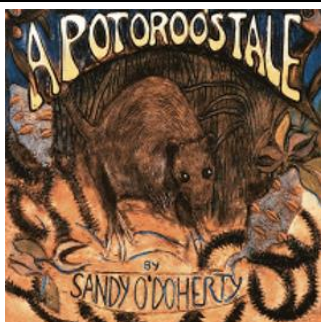
BUMPER STICKERS (left) \$2.50 BOOKMARKS (above) \$2.00



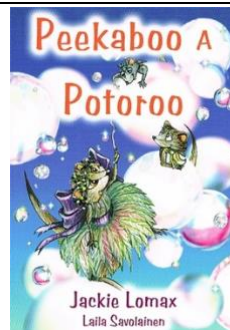
TEATOWELS: Printed on 100% cotton with some key facts about Gilbert's Potoroo!  
\$10 each or 3 for \$25



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.  
\$15 each



PEEKABOO POTOROO & FOOEY ROEY: Two gorgeous stories by Jackie Lomax about the adventures of Lyla a lost Long-footed Potoroo finding a new home with Gilbert's Potoroos at Two Peoples Bay.

Beautifully illustrated by Laila Savolainen.  
\$20 for the pair

## 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 & Fooley Rooley (set of 2 bks)	\$20.00		
		<b>Product total</b>	
		<b>Postage &amp; packing (&lt;500g)*</b>	\$10.00
		<b>Add a donation?</b>	
		<b>Total Cost</b>	

\* 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

**DIRECT DEPOSIT:** 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

To become a member of the GILBERT'S POTOROO ACTION GROUP INC, fill out the form below and either pay your subscription by direct deposit and email the form to [treasurer@potoroo.org](mailto:treasurer@potoroo.org) or print out and return by mail with a cheque enclosed.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth if Under 15 Years \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Tax Invoice

### Annual Subscription \$11

Includes GST of \$1.00

#### Payment Methods

**DIRECT DEPOSIT:** National Australia Bank; BSB: 086-518; Account Number: 54-316-8395

Please include your surname and "Membership" 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

**Privacy Policy:** The information you have disclosed other than your name and contact details is restricted to committee members. No one outside the association is given access to your personal details without your permission.

OFFICIAL USE ONLY	Nominated By: _____	Receipt No _____
	Membership Accepted: YES/NO	Date Paid ____/____/____
		Register _____

## DONATIONS

As a Nationally Registered Environmental Organisation the Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group Inc. offers tax deductible donation facilities. To claim **tax benefits**, your donation must be a **minimum of \$2** and made payable to the **GPAG Public Tax Deductible Donation Fund**. Tax deductible donations can also be made through our website [www.potoroo.org](http://www.potoroo.org).

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

#### Payment Methods

**DIRECT DEPOSIT:** National Australia Bank; BSB: 086-518; Account Number: 57-064-2101.

Please include your surname in the Reference line and email this form to [treasurer@potoroo.org](mailto:treasurer@potoroo.org)

**CHEQUE:** Please make cheques payable to **Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group Inc Public Tax Deductible Donation Fund**

Send To: The Treasurer  
Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group Inc  
PO Box 654  
Albany, WA 6331