



# Potoroo Postings

Issue # 2021/2



## CONTENTS

Calendar	1
From the Chair	2
Middle Island Update	3
Volunteering	5
Fundraising & Community Awareness	7
Merchandise	10
Membership & Donation Form	12

## CALENDAR

**NOTE: All volunteers undertaking field work require a DBCA Dieback Green Card. See details on page 4.**

**Members will be emailed with more details on upcoming events and volunteering opportunities as dates etc firm up. Events will also be advertised on social media, community calendars etc.**

**August/September (exact dates to be confirmed):** Vegetation surveys at Two Peoples Bay. These are continuing the surveys started in 2020 to repeat transects done by Sarah Vetten in 1996.

**September 4:** Launch of the Gilbert's Potoroo Genome by former WA Chief Scientist Prof Lyn Beazley followed by afternoon tea 1-4 pm. Location and booking details coming soon. This is a free event but bookings are required for catering and COVID distancing purposes. The reference genome was prepared by DNAZoo as a very generous \$80000 in kind contribution to GPAG's small State NRM grant.

**October (exact dates & details to be confirmed):** Launch of *One Potoroo: A story of survival* by Penny Jaye, illustrated by Alicia Rogerson.

**Spring (exact dates to be confirmed):** Assisting DBCA with the servicing of motion sensing cameras at Two Peoples Bay. Exact dates will depend on the availability of DBCA staff.

## CALENDAR (contd)

**December 4-5:** South Coast Threatened Species Forum 2021 to celebrate 20 years since the formation of GPAG and 60 years since the rediscovery of the Noisy Scrub-bird, protection of which indirectly led to the rediscovery of Gilbert's Potoroo. Theme: Citizen Science/Volunteering in Threatened Species recovery. Booking details coming soon.

## Potoroo Ponderings

Beginning with this issue of the newsletter, Western Australian artist and committed GPAG member Marnie Giroud will be contributing an original cartoon that relates to one of the items in the newsletter. Enjoy!!



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)

Follow us:  @gilbertspotoroo  @GilbertsPotorooActionGroup

## FROM THE CHAIR

### The Long Haul

When Gilbert's Potoroo was rediscovered in 1994 in Two Peoples Bay, about 45-50 animals were thought to have survived the 170 years of European occupation of the south-west corner of WA. We may never know how widespread and populous the potoroos were 200 years ago, but their original abundance can be guessed from the comments of John Gilbert himself in the 1840s when he reported to John Gould that the local Nyungar people caught them in "immense numbers" on a single hunt.



The rediscovery of the potoroos, after 120 years of presumed extinction, caused huge excitement in the zoological community and hopes of an eventual restoration of the species to its former status, but a combination of exotic predators, disease, habitat destruction and a devastating bushfire in 2015 has severely impeded efforts to conserve the species and ensure its survival.

Above: Gilbert's Potoroo. Photo: Dick Walker & GPAG

This issue contains the welcome news of the recent visit by Tony Friend and Anne Cochrane to Middle Island and their discovery that animals transplanted there from Bald Island in 2018 are in good health and are breeding. However, despite the strenuous and focussed efforts of wildlife scientists and GPAG members and volunteers over more than 25 years it is likely that there are still only 70–100 animals in total. Significantly, these are now distributed over a larger range than the original population, and when Two Peoples Bay recovers from the bushfire it should once again be able to support potoroos, but it is obvious that we are all in this for the long haul.

It is likely to be decades before Gilbert's Potoroo can be taken off the list of critically endangered species, but we know that your support will help to achieve that goal and we need your continuing commitment to the recovery of this increasingly well-known W.A. marsupial.

GPAG is very fortunate to have members and supporters who stay the distance and recognise the importance of sustained effort. The alternative to success is unthinkable.

Alan

Below: View towards Mt Gardner in Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve. Photo: Leigh Whisson



## UPDATE: MIDDLE ISLAND SURVEY

### How are the Middle Island potoroos doing?

**By Tony Friend and Anne Cochrane**

It was with some trepidation that we headed out to check the cage traps on Middle Island, in the Recherche Archipelago, early in the morning of 24<sup>th</sup> April this year. We had arrived on the island the previous day on the first trip to monitor the Gilbert's potoroos translocation since 2018, the year in which ten potoroos had been released there. Middle Island is 500 km east of Two Peoples Bay, well outside the historic range of this species, in a region where annual rainfall is significantly lower than in its known habitat.

Clearly, a drier climate is likely to be less suitable for an animal with a diet of truffle-like fungi. Would we find any potoroos still alive after three years?

After the loss of most of the Two Peoples Bay potoroos in the catastrophic fire of 2015, a site for a new population was urgently needed. An island without potoroos predators would be an obvious choice, especially given the success of the translocation to 809-hectare Bald Island in 2005-2007. Unfortunately, there are few islands of similar size off the south coast of WA: only Middle (1080 ha) and Mondrain (810 ha) Islands in the Recherche Archipelago are in the same league. As Mondrain Island supports a large population of carpet pythons, easily capable of preying on potoroos, it was not considered.

Due to the uncertainty about the ability of Middle Island to support potoroos, two trial releases of four animals were carried out, in winter 2017 and late summer 2018. In both trials, survival and weight maintenance were high and so approval was given for a translocation to go ahead. In total, four male and six female potoroos were transferred to the island in 2018, comprising the four animals from the second trial in February 2018 and six translocated in July 2018, after approval was granted.

As DBCA Research Associates and volunteers, we spent five nights on Middle Island, trapping across the known potoroos sites for four nights. With our gear and food, we disembarked on 23<sup>rd</sup> April on Belinda Bay beach on the north side of the island, after making the 12-kilometre crossing from the Thomas Fisheries beach on Cape Arid in the DBCA Esperance boat, ably skippered by Steve Butler and assisted by Tas Douglass, both of DBCA Esperance. After setting up camp, we headed west along the coast, then inland to reach the trapping sites after walking for about an hour. The paths through dense regrowth that our colleague Tim Button and his volunteers had used in 2017 had become very overgrown, making it challenging to find some of the traps that had been in place for three years!



Above: Sunrise over the eastern arm of Middle Island as we left camp to check the traps. Photo: Anne Cochrane



Above: The survey team at the summit of Flinders Peak on Middle Island, Mount Arid on the horizon. Photo: Anne Cochrane

Although we operated 30 traps during the trip, we only managed to set 12 on the first afternoon before heading back so we could reach camp before dark. Checking the traps the next morning, things were looking a bit grim, until we came to the last trap – and there was the unmistakable profile of a potoroo sitting at the back of the cage!

Over the four nights, we caught six individual potoroos: three previously known and three new animals, obviously born on the island. No females had pouch young when translocated from Bald Island, but it was possible that one or more females were carrying early-stage young in suspended development (embryonic diapause) from matings on Bald Island.

The known animals we captured included two females released in February 2018 and one female from the July 2018 release.

One of the February trial females (right) was in extremely good condition (somewhat obese, in fact) but neither she nor the other showed signs of recent breeding. The female from the July release, however, had an enlarged teat from which milk could be expressed, indicating that she was caring for a young-at-heel.

The new potoroos were two males and a female. Based on dental development and tooth wear, one male and the female were less than two years old, indicating that they had been bred and born on Middle Island. Only the other male was old enough (2-3 years of age) to have been translocated as an embryo in diapause.

As well as trapping, we downloaded images from one of three camera traps deployed on the island with the assistance of Sarah Comer's DBCA ground parrot team in September 2020. The images included potoroos, showing females with much smaller young-at-heel, providing further evidence of breeding on the island.

On the fifth morning, we packed up camp in time to meet Steve Butler and Emma Adams when they arrived in the boat to take us back to the mainland. After a fairly hairy and wet time getting us and our gear onto the boat, we battled a strong northerly wind back to the Thomas Fishery beach on the mainland.

We were able to draw two important conclusions from our survey: firstly, that potoroos have been able to survive on Middle Island for three years, with varying rainfall totals, and secondly, that conditions on the island are suitable for breeding. So far, the translocation has been a welcome success!



Above: The first potoroo capture of the trip, female 416, arrived on Middle Island in February 2018 for the second trial and still very healthy in April 2021. Photo: Anne Cochrane



Above: A female potoroo and her young-at-heel are joined by a mystery adult at the camera trap bait container. Maybe he just wants to be friends. Photo: DBCA

Funding for the Middle Island translocation was provided by the Commonwealth Government's Threatened Species Fund under the National Landcare Program, with funding delivered through the Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group. The trials and the full translocation were implemented by DBCA Biodiversity and Conservation Science with support from the South Coast Region and Esperance and Albany Districts. Subsequent monitoring has been funded through South Coast NRM under the Regional Land Partnerships Program.

## VOLUNTEERING

### **\*IMPORTANT REMINDER ABOUT VOLUNTEERING\***

#### **All volunteers require a DBCA Dieback Green Card**

To comply with DBCA requirements, all volunteers working with GPAG on our various field projects are required to complete Dieback Green Card training. The training can be done at home and takes about an hour to complete. The card can then be either posted out or collected at the DBCA office in Albany. If you think that you might be interested in volunteering sometime in the future, even if you are not planning to immediately, it is a good idea to complete your training and get your Green Card as soon as possible so that you are able to participate at short notice when opportunities arise or you are available. Please email Jackie Courtenay on [mail@potoroo.org](mailto:mail@potoroo.org) if you want to undertake the training and she will email you the training materials.

#### **Feral predator monitoring**

Our second field trip replacing camera batteries and SD cards was completed on May 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021 with Alan Danks (who took on the task on behalf of DBCA). Unfortunately the field work was organised at very short notice and so GPAG volunteer Neil Houghton was the only person who was available to help out and ended up volunteering on both days!

Thanks to both Neil and Alan for their hard work. This project is funded by our Large State NRM Community Stewardship grant. The next service is expected in the spring and we will notify members by email to organise volunteers as soon as dates are confirmed with DBCA.



Volunteer Neil Houghton doing the battery and SD card changes for the old and new motion sensing cameras at one of the camera stations (left) and enjoying the spectacular view looking out over Sinker Reef towards Albany (right). Photos: Alan Danks

## Vegetation Surveys at Two Peoples Bay

In mid-May Leigh Whisson, Jackie Courtenay, Alan Needham and Lily Mercer completed the eighth vegetation transect originating from the northern most of the two start points. The transects we have completed are marked in yellow and those still to do are in white. This eighth transect completes half of the vegetation surveys required to repeat the work done in 1996 by then Honours student Sarah Vetten so we can begin some analysis to identify changes in the vegetation structure since the 2015 fire which may help understand more about whether the recovering habitat is suitable yet for recolonisation by potoroos.

We are aiming to complete the remaining transects as soon as the weather dries out and we are able to access Two Peoples Bay again. If you are interested in volunteering for the remaining surveys, please let us know on [mail@potoroo.org](mailto:mail@potoroo.org) and we will contact you as soon as dates are organised. Remember that if you do wish to help with these transects you will need to complete a DBCA Dieback Green Card if you have not already. The vegetation surveys are funded by our Large State NRM Community Stewardship Grant.



Left: The area on Mt Gardner where the surveys are being undertaken showing the eight 340 m transect lines radiating out from each of two starting points. The yellow lines show the completed surveys while the white lines show the surveys still to do. Satellite image from Google Earth.



Above left: Alan Needham and Lily Mercer measuring out a transect. Above centre: The last segment of the 340 m transect was almost impenetrably thick (only Alan went into it!). Above right: The spectacular view towards Two Peoples Bay and Lake Gardner from the granite near the end of the transect. Photos: Jackie Courtenay

## FUNDRAISING AND COMMUNITY AWARENESS

### Ongoing Fundraisers

#### Containers for Change

The Containers for Change program is providing a small but steady flow of donations to GPAG while helping to reduce litter in Western Australia (win-win!). Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group can be supported by donating your refund to GPAG by entering the GPAG Scheme ID at the drop off point and we are very grateful to all the people who have already done this (although we would of course love to see more people participating if you can).

#### **GPAG Scheme ID: C10289767**

Since our last newsletter at the end of April generous supporters have donated \$70.70 in refunds (that's 707 drink containers!!). Each donation may not seem like much, but all the small donations do add up and are much appreciated.

You can find information on drop-off point locations and on what types of containers are accepted for refunds at <https://www.containersforchange.com.au/wa>.

Thank you for any support you can give us & Gilbert's Potoroo.

### Awareness Raising

#### How the Noisy Scrub-bird saved Gilbert's Potoroo

We had a great turnout on a cold, stormy day in Albany on June 20 to hear Alan Danks talking about "How the Noisy Scrub-bird saved Gilbert's Potoroo – and other Two Peoples Bay conservation stories" which was our latest event funded by our Large State NRM grant. Alan's talk was followed by a terrific truffle-themed afternoon tea again catered by Ocean and Paddock. Thanks Alan & everyone who came along - it was a major storm and despite the fact it was threatening (and the heavy rain started during Alan's presentation) we still had an (almost) full house!

Alan gave a fascinating talk on the rediscovery of the Noisy Scrub-bird in 1961, explained how Prince Philip was instrumental in persuading the then State Premier to stop a proposed housing development at Two Peoples Bay and instead have the area declared a nature reserve, and talked about how work to protect the Noisy Scrub-bird (and other threatened species at Two Peoples Bay) from fire, cats and foxes unknowingly helped protect Gilbert's Potoroo, thus allowing it to survive to be rediscovered 33 years later in 1994.



Above: Alan Danks starting his talk on "How the Noisy Scrub-bird saved Gilbert's Potoroo to a full house in the Co-op building of the Museum of the Great Southern, Albany. Photo: Leigh Whisson

While the title was attention catching, Alan made the point that it was an obvious overstatement that the Noisy Scrub-bird “saved” Gilbert’s Potoroo because, with fewer than 100 known alive, Gilbert’s Potoroo is far from "saved". There is still a very, very long way to go before this beautiful, critically endangered species is safe from extinction.

Thanks again to Alan Danks, Ocean & Paddock, everyone who braved the weather to attend and to State NRM for generously funding the event.



Above: Conservation vs Development. Alan Danks discussing how the discovery of the Noisy Scrub-bird brought this perennial debate to the fore at Two Peoples Bay and how Prince Philip (pictured on the right of Alan’s slide) was instrumental in Two Peoples Bay being declared a Nature Reserve. Photo: Leigh Whisson

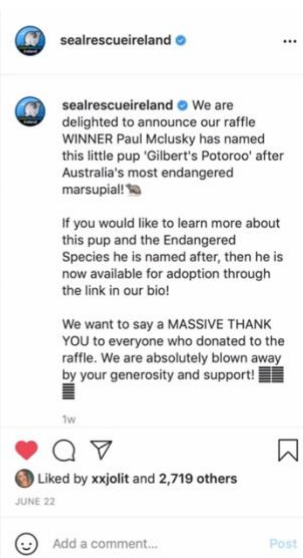


Far left and left: The delicious, truffle themed afternoon tea catered by Ocean and Paddock. Photo: Leigh Whisson

## Gilbert’s Potoroo the rescued Common Seal

On July 2<sup>nd</sup> we were delighted (and somewhat puzzled) to discover that there was a cute rescued Common Seal pup named Gilbert’s Potoroo being cared for by Seal Rescue Ireland. It took a day or two to hunt down the back story as to how this came about but Kim Townsend-Smyth, the Community Engagement Manager, explained that Seal Rescue Ireland is a charity organisation that works tirelessly to rescue, rehabilitate and release native seals found sick, injured or orphaned anywhere around the coast of Ireland.

Each season, which begins with the arrival of the first Common (Harbour) Seal pup of the year, they choose a different naming theme for the seals that come into their care. This season they decided to name their seals after Endangered Species so they could help raise awareness of other species in need while people are following, adopting or learning about their seals! They held a raffle to raise funds



Above: The Seal Rescue Ireland Instagram post that explained how a Common Seal in Ireland came to be named “Gilbert’s Potoroo”. Source: @sealrescueireland on Instagram.



and the raffle prize was “naming rights” for the first rescue pup of the season and the person who won the raffle, Paul Mclusky, chose to name him “Gilbert’s Potoroo”!

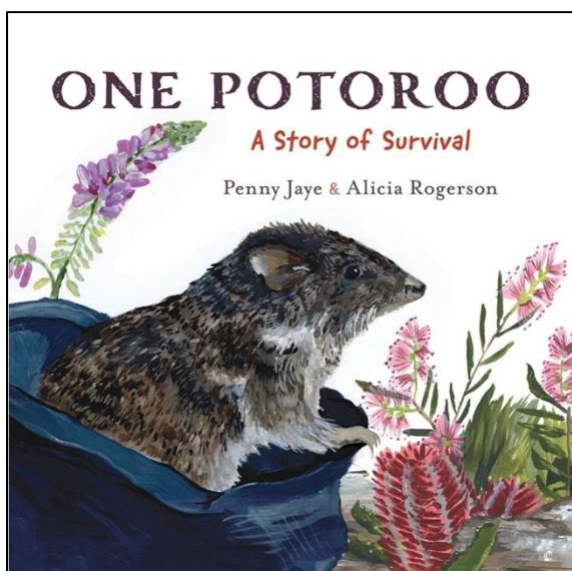
Since becoming aware of our social media presence, Sea Rescue Ireland have been tagging GPAG into all their posts about little “Gilbert’s Potoroo”. A recent Seal Rescue Ireland post on Facebook showing “Gilbert’s Potoroo” the seal pup blowing bubbles and chasing his tail (and which directed people to our Facebook page for more information about Gilbert’s Potoroo) attracted 407 Likes and Loves on their Facebook page and 2663 Likes on Instagram. This publicity to their large followings has already increased our social media followings by nearly 40 people across Twitter, Facebook and Instagram thereby helping us raise awareness among a new audience. The video of “Gilbert’s Potoroo” the Common Seal pup can be seen on our Facebook page at the following link:

<https://www.facebook.com/GilbertsPotorooActionGroup/posts/1418493648513708>

Thanks so much to Seal Rescue Ireland for all you are doing to help injured and orphaned seals and for promoting the work we do to try and help save Gilbert’s Potoroo to your many followers and supporters. It is much appreciated and we are looking forward to continuing to work with you on awareness raising over the next few months.

### **Upcoming Launch of *One Potoroo: A Story of Survival***

*One Potoroo: A Story of Survival* by Penny Jaye (and beautifully illustrated by Alicia Rogerson) will be released by CSIRO Publishing on August 2<sup>nd</sup>. We were lucky enough to be sent a review copy of this gorgeous book and here is what our Secretary, Jen Merritt and 7 year old Tristan had to say about it.



“A delightful story which explains in simple but educational terms the plight of Australia’s most endangered mammal and the world’s most endangered marsupial Gilbert’s Potoroo. In the story we travel from Two Peoples Bay near Albany a little further East to a safe enclosure in Waychinicup National Park. Here we give thanks to the expertise and compassion of our wildlife carers who look after the surviving potoroo from a wildfire.” Jen M for GPAG

“A very interesting story with detailed pictures and good colour. I am pretty sure it’s a good resemblance to a real potoroo. I have learnt how native animals are cared for in wildfires”. Tristan, Aged 7

GPAG are planning some events in October to celebrate the release of this book. Members will receive emails notifying them of the details which will also be announced on social media as dates and details firm up. Really looking forward to this book being out there in the world and helping young kids to learn more about Gilbert’s Potoroo and conservation rescue operations after fire.

## MERCHANDISE



**WATERCOLOUR 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.

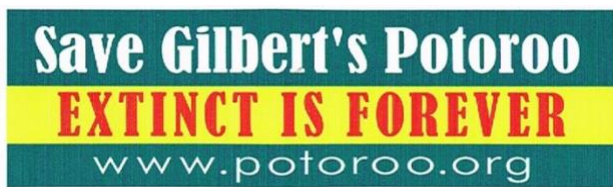


Printed by the Environmental Printing Company on 100% recycled paper using vegetable-based inks. Blank inside.  
\$5 each or 5 for \$20.

**JO HARRIS CARDS:** Quality cards featuring a painting of Gilbert's Potoroo by Jo Harris based on a photograph by Dick Walker.



**BLACK & WHITE CARDS:** Quality cards featuring a pen and ink drawing of a Gilbert's Potoroo by Jackie Courtenay from a photograph by Katrin Witt. Printed by the Environmental Printing Company on 100% recycled paper using vegetable-based inks. Blank inside.  
\$5 each or 5 for \$20.



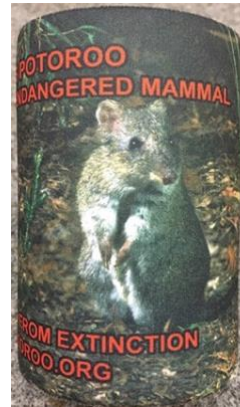
**BUMPER STICKERS \$2.50**



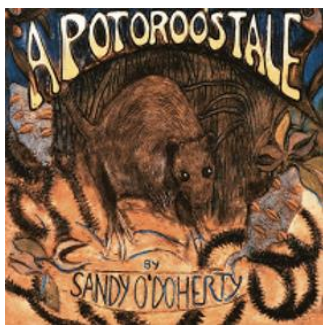
**POSTCARDS:** Featuring a photo of Gilbert's Potoroo by Dick Walker and information about the Potoroo on both the front and back  
\$1.00 each



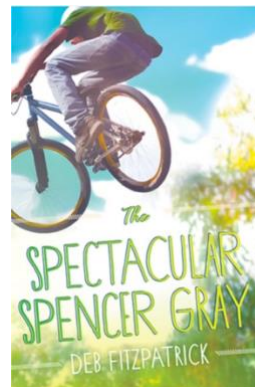
**TEATOWELS:** Printed on 100% cotton with some key facts about Gilbert's Potoroo! Tea towel design by Sandy O'Doherty  
\$10 each or 3 for \$25



**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



**THE SPECTACULAR SPENCER GRAY:** The award winning adventure story by Deb Fitzpatrick featuring Gilbert's Potoroo and the return of Spencer Gray in a spectacular adventure. 30% of the sale price of the book will go to Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group.  
\$15 each

## MERCHANDISE ORDER FORM

ABN 75 191 68 479 (Tax Invoice when paid)

Item	Cost/item	Quantity	Total Cost
Watercolour Cards (ea)	\$4.00		
Watercolour Cards (5 pk)	\$16		
Jo Harris Card	\$5		
Jo Harris Cards (5 pk)	\$20		
B&W Potoroo Cards	\$5		
B&W Potoroo Cards (5 pk)	\$20		
Postcards (ea)	\$1.00		
Bumper Stickers (ea)	\$2.50		
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 & Foey Roey (set of 2 bks)	\$20.00		
Spectacular Spencer Gray	\$15		
		<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:** Bendigo Bank BSB: 633-000; Account Number: 164 347 999

Please include your surname and "Merchandise" in the Reference line and email order form to

[treasurer@potoroo.org](mailto:treasurer@potoroo.org)

**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 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

**Subscription \$22 per year**

Includes GST

### Payment Methods

**DIRECT DEPOSIT:** Bendigo Bank; BSB: 633-000; Account Number: 164 347 999

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:** Bendigo Bank; BSB: 633-000; Account Number: 178 804 555

Please include your surname and Donation 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