

# Bushland threatened

**Calls are growing to save a green corridor southwest of Brisbane, writes Philip Hammond**

**A** BAND of virtually uninterrupted bushland sweeps more than 30km from the south of Ipswich deep into Brisbane's southern suburbs.

From rock wallaby hill country to duck swamps and extensive tracts of lowland eucalypt forest, it is a little-known natural feature steadily being nibbled away around the edges by "progress".

So when Ipswich MP, runner and bushland orienteer Rachel Nolan stood up to speak about the "Flinders-Karawatha Green Corridor" in State Parliament this month, there were several blank expressions across the front and back benches.

You could be excused for never having heard of it, because the corridor is not officially protected or recognised. At best, a loose partnership of officials working for several councils abutting Brisbane's southside, the Defence Department and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, have for two years been talking about mutually acceptable management issues, such as fire control.

From the imposing profile of Flinders Peak, south of Ipswich, the green band sweeps east through Ips-

wich City Council's other showpiece bushland reserve; the White Rock conservation park, across the military training area at Greenbank and past industrial estates through to Brisbane City Council's Karawatha Forest reserve.

"Recreational gardens and bushland are not just a desirable add-on to urban living," Nolan said in Parliament. "They are crucial if urban living is to work. Central Park makes New York the world's greatest city ... if Brisbane is to be a great, liveable city in the future, we must get its infrastructure right," she said.

"Preservation of the Flinders-Karawatha Corridor could and should be one of the most significant legacies of the Beattie Government.

"If completely preserved, the corridor has the potential to act as the lungs of the growing western corri-

**A 'pincer movement' of development eating into the bushland from both sides ...**

dor, to protect a number of threatened species and to provide recreational open space for the thousands of people who will move to the region in the next 20 years."

Satellite images of bushland across the area show it is growing dangerously narrow in places. And that's a big concern to National Parks Association of Queensland chief executive officer Martin Taylor.

"This is a corridor which is just being eaten away. It has no protection under the regional plan. The whole Springfield Lakes development is essentially destroying the corridor as well as the huge Woolworths industrial estate around Oxley Creek on the Logan Motorway," he said.

"Our great fear is the spread of Springfield Lakes which is threatening the last really wild forest between Greenbank and White Rock conservation park. Nobody has really tackled the major problem that development is destroying it."

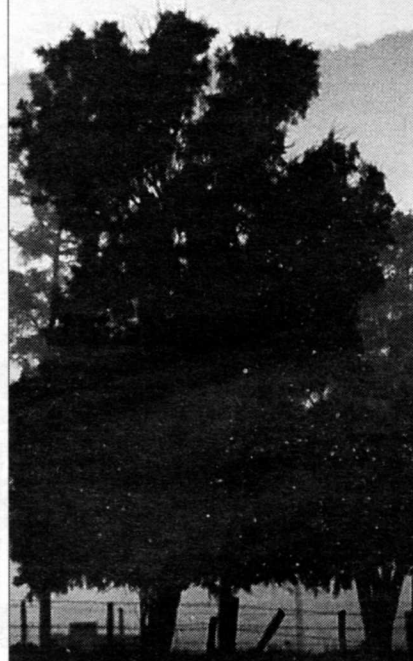
Taylor fears that once development severs the green belt, the disrupted movement of wildlife will change things dramatically.

"If you look at the Toohey Forest, it's a biological desert ..."

Griffith University urban wildlife researcher Dr Darryl Jones said: "With increasing urbanisation, that corridor is utterly critical. It's exceptionally important and we have to keep it connected. If areas get isolated they will be in strife. The first animals to suffer are mainly the land-dwelling mammals because they can't get across roads."

**MARTIN TAYLOR** believes the area centred upon the Greenmount military training zone is "the last great tract of eucalyptus forest, apart from Karawatha, close to Brisbane".

"The regional plan completely sacrificed this area and did nothing to recognise the corridor. The State Government has just let this area go, and that's unbelievable, considering the amount of research and evidence

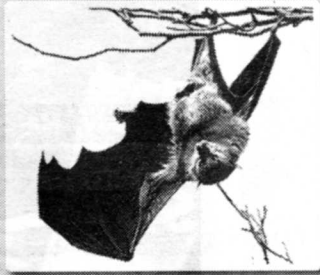


**KARAWATHA and its creatures ...**

to show why it is already an Environmental Protection Agency designated wildlife corridor.

"Our concern is the Government has really just abandoned this area to conservation and all they are talking about is a patch-up job after the fact. To talk about a green corridor is increasingly a joke. It's becoming a little archipelago of desert islands. And what the Government should be doing is bringing what's left into national park, so it is protected forever."

Taylor talks about a "pincer movement" of development eating into the bushland from both sides. His main concerns are the area where the



and its creatures ... from left, dunnarts, western grey kangaroos, a grey-headed flying fox, an echidna, a brush tail possum and swamp wallabies.

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Springfield development moves further south and the corridor between Greenbank and Karawatha which "is in quite a tenuous state".

Nolan says parts of the corridor are listed on the Register of the National Estate, others have significant and sacred Aboriginal sites, and the belt is extensively used for mountain biking, birdwatching, walking, horse riding and orienteering.

**A KEEN WALKER**, the Pro Vice-Chancellor of Queensland University's Ipswich campus, Professor Alan Rix, believes the corridor would lend itself to a long distance "Great

Walk" through mostly lowland eucalypt forests, and should be linked as a series of conservation areas, along the lines of the Daisy Hill koala belt.

As a supporter of the Government's Recreational Areas Management Bill, Nolan envisages "the corridor should be split up and managed in different parts for different purposes ... this vision is not beyond our reach. It will require further land acquisitions and co-operation with private landholders both in and adjoining the corridor".

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) involving the interested bodies is planned, but, according to a

spokeswoman for Environment Minister Desley Boyle, its signing is not imminent.

Taylor said: "We are worried the MoU is too cautious, but I think it's a good start."

#### IPSWICH CITY COUNCILLOR

David Morrison, who chairs the council's Conservation, Parks and Sport Committee, said: "We would like the State Government to purchase more land for green open space. They have bought very little in the Ipswich area — as low as 1 per cent."

Ipswich's 1997 Enviroplan identified the importance of the western

end of the corridor a years bought 4500 ha creating council ma gional parks at Flind White Rock. It has g bates and weed contro owners prepared to p land.

Morrison said: "Th strategic places we v purchase but I wou bought 90 per cent o would like to have. looking at ways to e manage the green bought. We've ente agreement with Beau



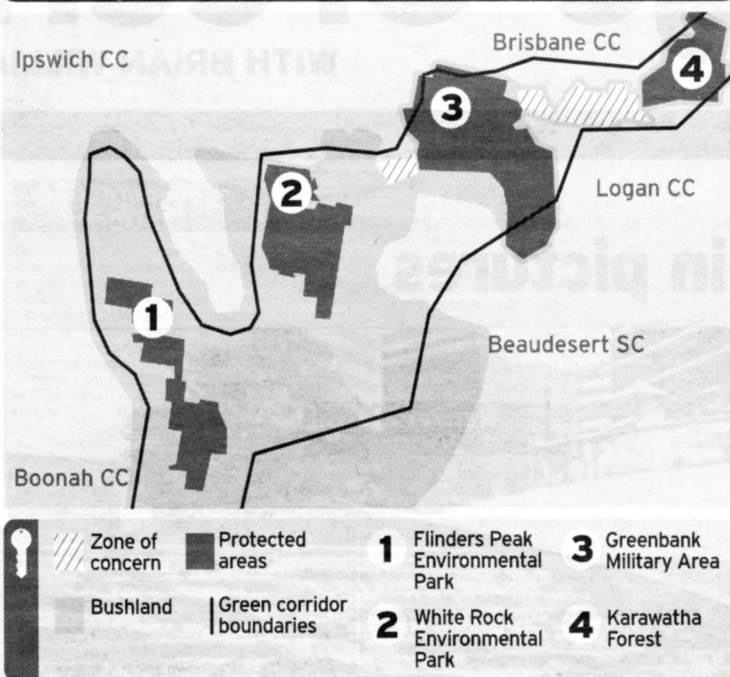


and swamp wallabies.

end of the corridor and in recent years bought 4500 ha of bushland, creating council maintained regional parks at Flinders Peak and White Rock. It has given rate rebates and weed control subsidies to owners prepared to preserve bushland.

Morrison said: "There are still strategic places we would like to purchase but I would say we've bought 90 per cent of the land we would like to have. Now we are looking at ways to embellish and manage the green space we've bought. We've entered into an agreement with Beaudesert for fire

## Green corridor



management and horse riding trails and possibly other joint projects. We are also very keen for the State Government to recognise open space as being just as important infrastructure as railway stations and roads."

Morrison gave an assurance that the green belt isthmus immediately south of the Springfield urban development would not be broken.

"The isthmus is still green land and we have planned through the Springfield development that all that land will be kept as environmental land. We have tried to keep a healthy balance with the Springfield development. It's just under 3000ha. Out of that, almost 1000ha is designated green open space and the area that has got a bit thin is compensated by the adjacent area which Beaudesert Shire has tagged for conservation," he said.

**A STATEMENT** from Brisbane Lord Mayor Campbell Newman's office outlined the council's commitment to the MoU and preparation of terms of reference for the land owners' partnership.

It went on: "It would be contrary to the spirit and intent of the MoU for the Flinders-Greenbank-Karawatha

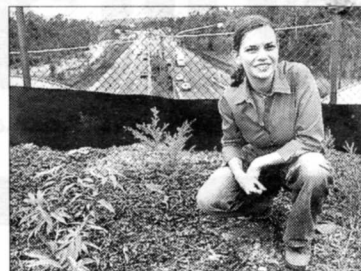
corridor to be declared a Recreational Management Area. The corridor includes Defence land that is not open to public access and would therefore be excluded.

"There is no need to establish another statutory framework over the existing management arrangements. This would effectively be another layer of bureaucracy that could work against the spirit of co-operation underpinned by an agreed MoU.

"The main benefit of the partnership, as proposed by Ms Nolan, appears to be a hastily conceived idea to secure a viable ecological corridor between Flinders Peak and Karawatha Forest. BCC is now working with its partners and other stakeholders to this effect — so what benefit would the creation of a Recreational Management Area serve?"

BCC, the spokesman said, had, over the years, used the equivalent of \$40 million of ratepayers' Bushland Preservation Levy funds to buy bushland west of Karawatha Forest.

"The MoU marks a commitment to regional collaboration that is a great step towards co-ordinating management of conservation and recreational values of this important ecological area," he said.



HIGH hopes ... Amy Bond at the bridge and, below, a rope bridge.

## Crossings for all creatures

A 1.3KM stretch of road on Brisbane's southside has more wildlife crossings than anywhere else in the world, according to Griffith University urban wildlife researcher Dr Darryl Jones.

Last year's \$10.4 million upgrade of Compton Rd incorporated a land bridge, two tunnels and three trapeze-like overpasses designed to allow wildlife in Karawatha Forest to cross safely.

"I was reasonably optimistic and thought it would take animals a long time to get used to it but, within three weeks it was being used," Jones said.

Science graduate Amy Bond monitored animal tracks and other indicators to record a build-up from 20 tunnel crossings a week up to 100. Small animals such as dunnarts and antechinus have a "shelf" running through each tunnel, while possums and koalas can walk along a log railing. Echidnas and bandicoots trot along the floors, which are scattered with logs, rocks and other cover.

On the land bridge, hares are big users, along with red necked and swamp wallabies and grey kangaroos, while glider poles have been set up to encourage four species of gliders.

