

Afternoon Tea

*The significant
ecological values of
the Blackburn SLO
areas.*

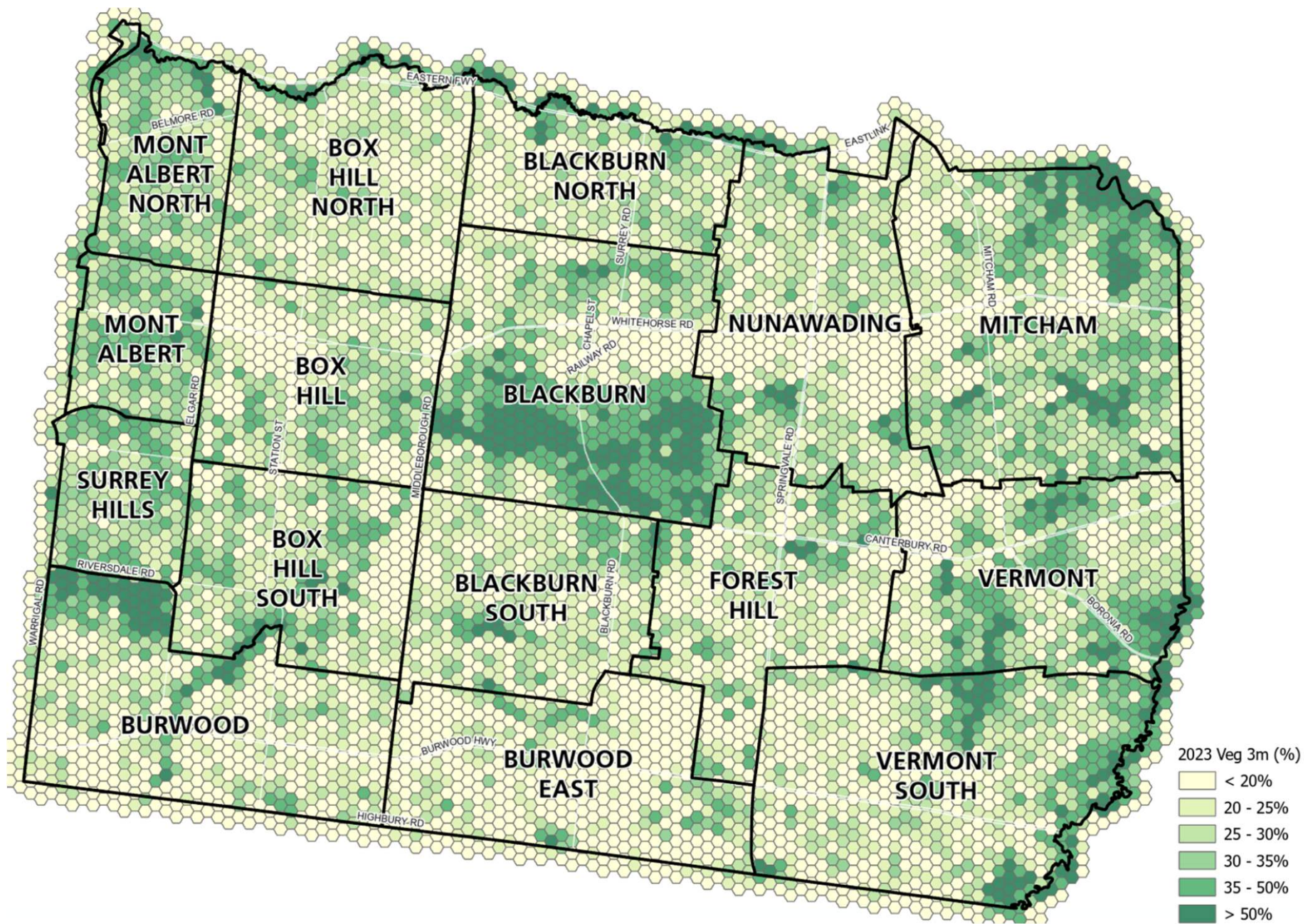
*Will rezoning to
medium density
impact local ecology?*

Megan Short





Laurel Grove North, March 2021



City of Whitehorse canopy cover (2023) – for vegetation above 3 metres

(Reproduced with the permission of Whitehorse City Council)

Vegetation dominating roadways



**Canopies
dominating
skyline**



Will we lose species
with rezoning to
medium density?

Yes –if SLOs are not retained.

- Loss of vegetation, and the tall mature canopy trees in particular, will have dire consequences for the biodiversity of our local area
- Taller buildings will mean more ambient light at night, more noise night and day disturbing nesting and night time feeding
- Denser housing will mean more cars, wider roads ..less kerbside vegetation

So what does a mature tree provide?



Oxygen

*Nesting sites
and hollows*

*Food for Sap
sucking
insects*

*Spiders & other
invertebrates
under bark*

*Protection &
nutrients for
understorey
plants*

*Roots -> cicada
nymphs, beetle
grubs*



*Flowers &
fruits -> food
for bees ,
birds, ants*

*Shade ->
reduction in
temperature*

*Habitat for
caterpillars*

*Leaf fall->
mulch ->
habitat for
invertebrates*

Carbon store

Even dead trees have value.....



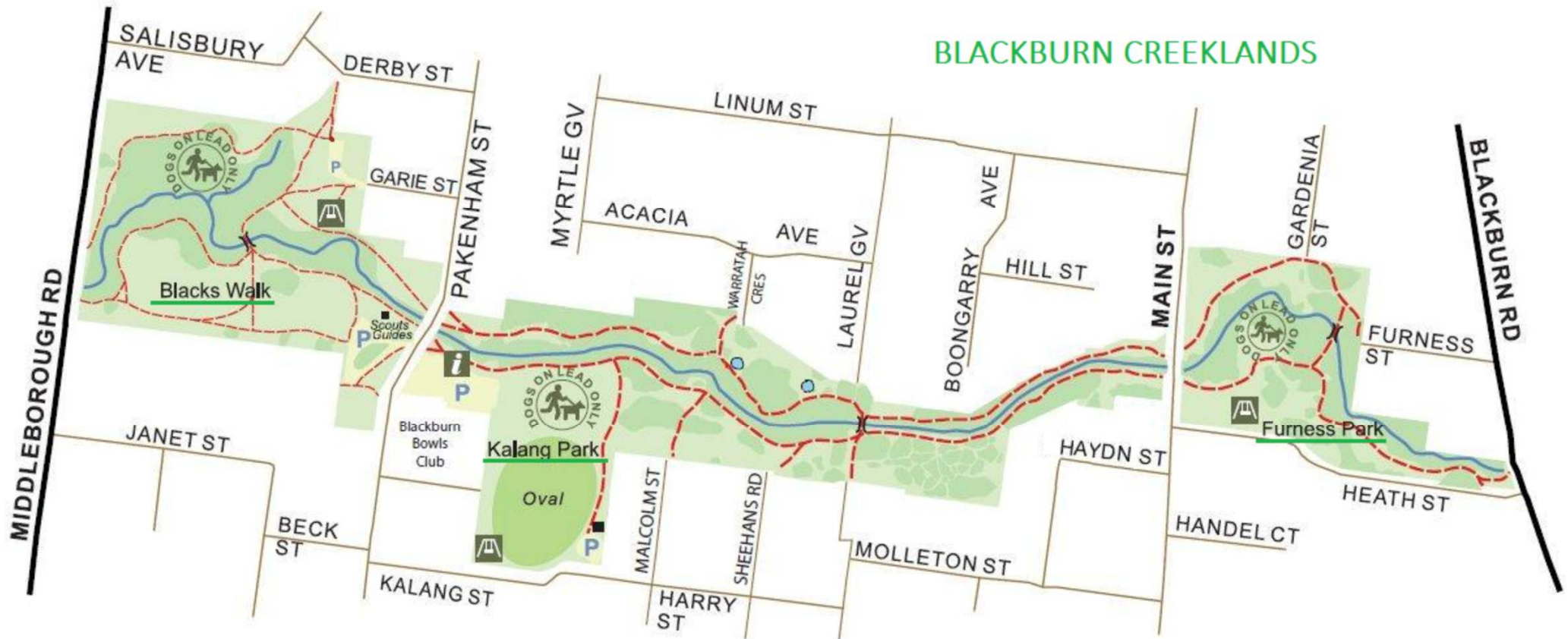


Bell Miners : Learning from the past –

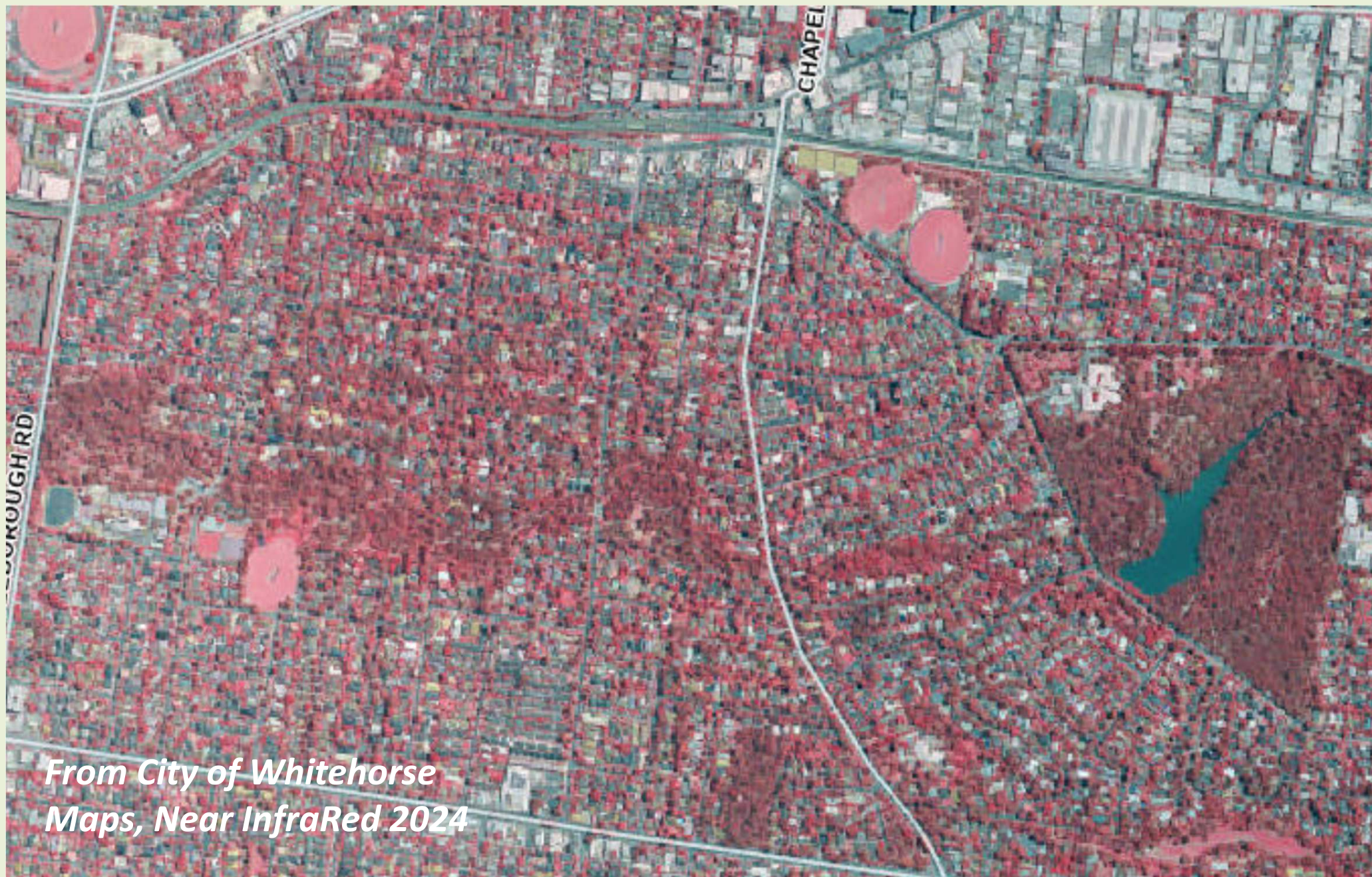
- The area is still named after a species no longer to be found locally.
- The calls were so evocative of a bushland setting
- As the “Bellbird area” became more built up, with gardens with less dense midstory thickets for their nests, the bellbirds disappeared.

Photo: Brian Sullivan, Banyule, 2013

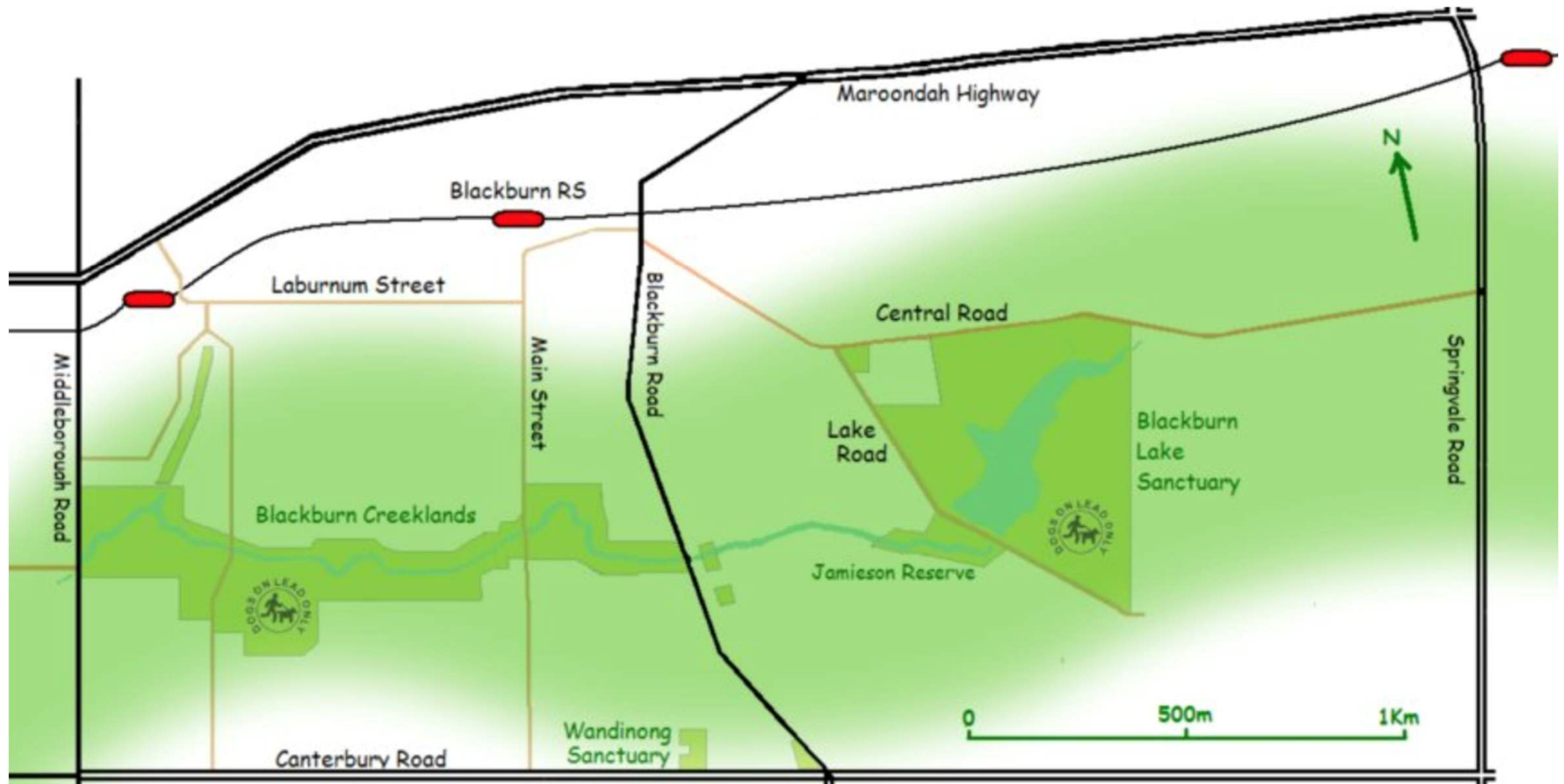
The Blackburn Creeklands



Surrounded and protected by Significant Landscape Overlays



Blackburn bushland corridor.....



.....Not just the parks



White-faced Heron

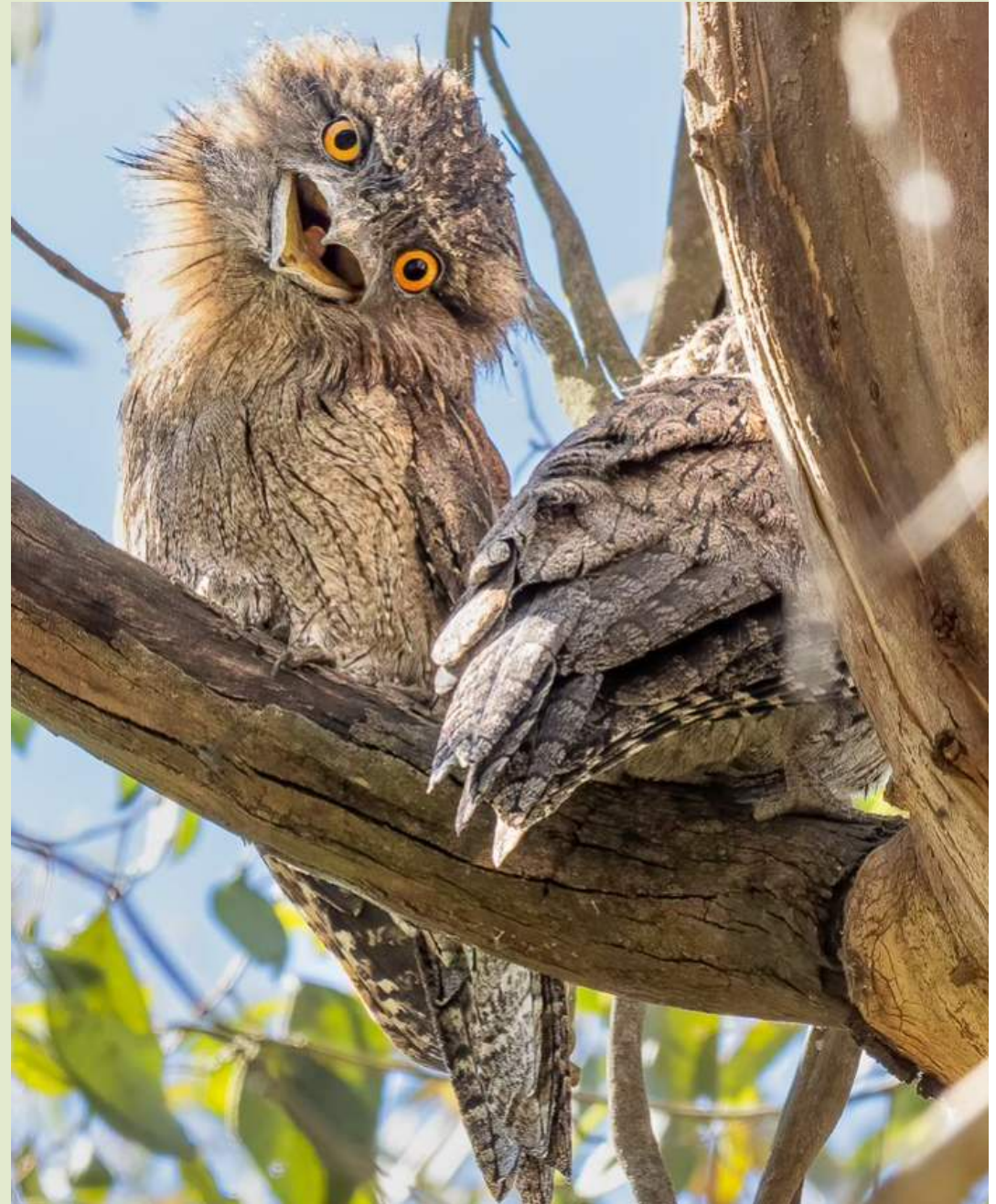
For a few years
they bred around
the SLO-1 area
– but seemed to
have moved
somewhere else
more recently

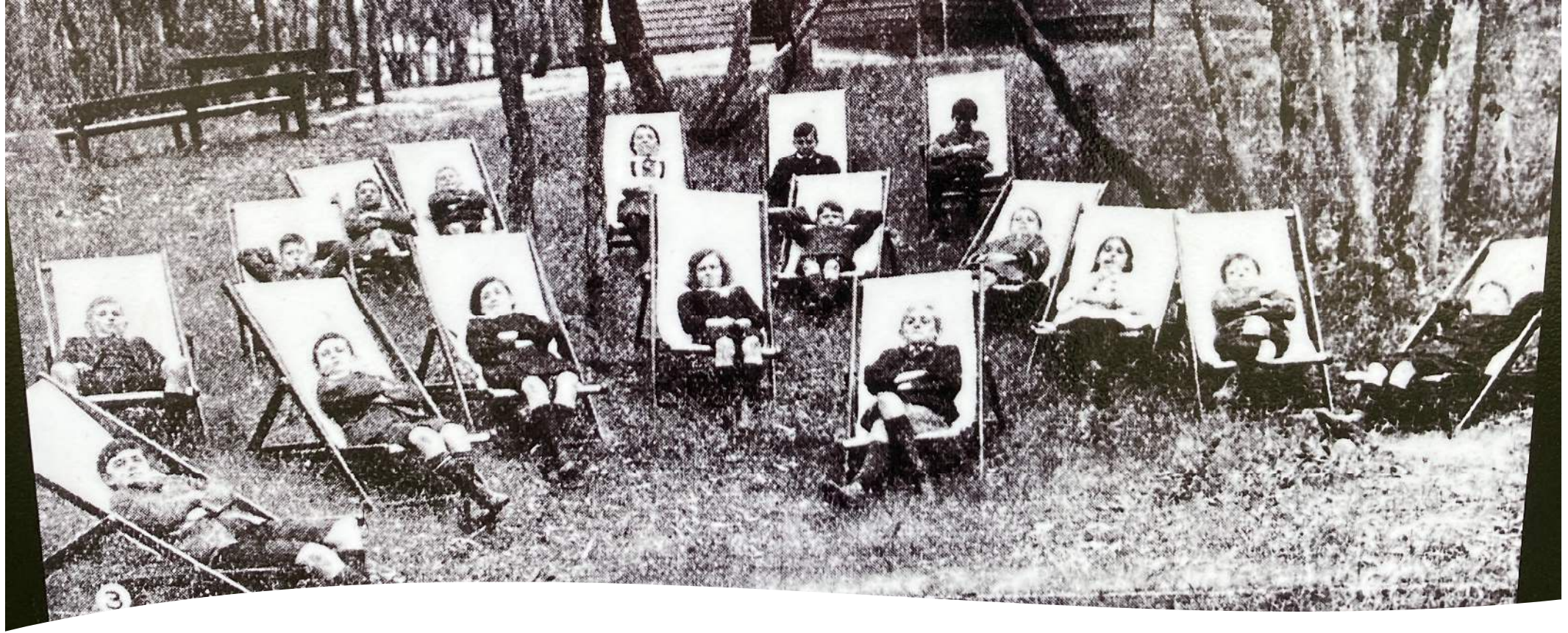


White-faced Heron

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Tawny Frogmouth - what will it need to keep living in Blackburn?





Trees and bushland settings shown to provide mental and physical health benefits to people...

- Providing passive recreational activities such as ... stress reducing walks, jogs, informal social interaction

Views of trees from windows provide benefits

Will be especially valuable for increasing numbers living with little or no gardens

Thank you!



A photograph of a paved road lined with mature trees, with a car visible in the distance. The road is flanked by dense green foliage and large trees with thick trunks. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day. A semi-transparent text box is overlaid on the upper part of the image.

SLOs – Past, present and (hopefully!) future

What you can do to help

CROWAG/BRAG/BVRG Forum
9th November 2025

About me

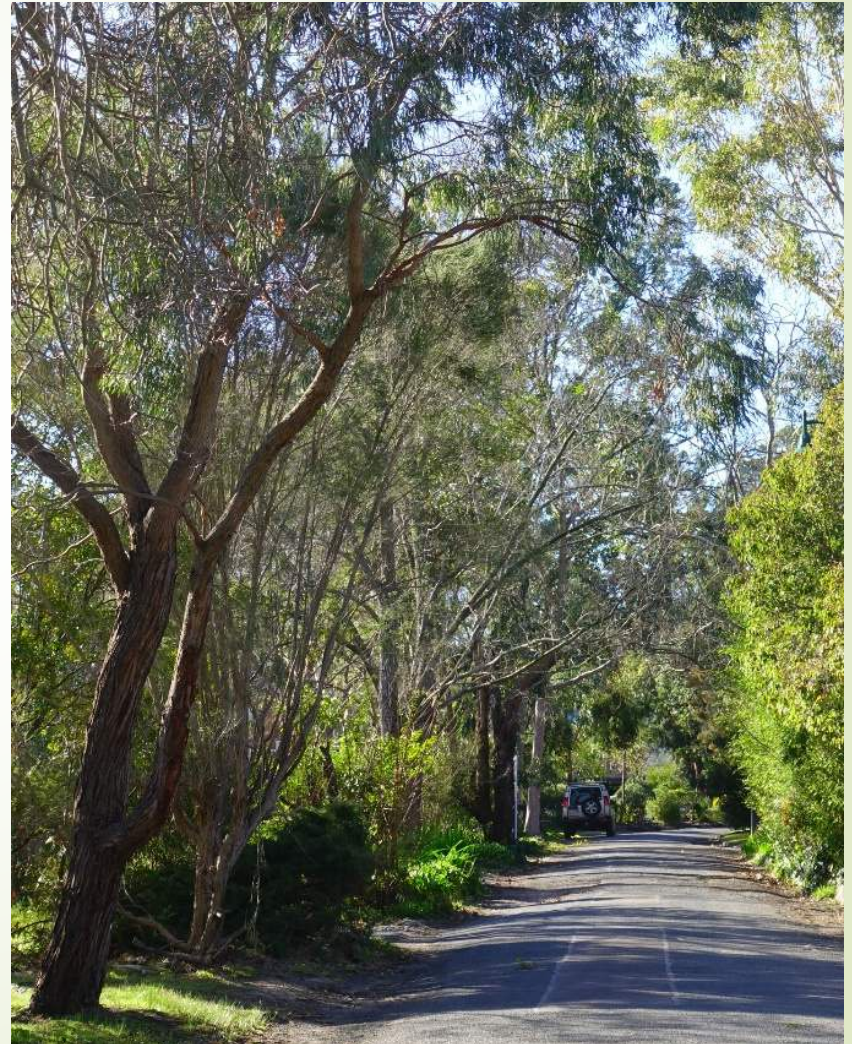
- Rob(ert) Weiss
 - Grew up opposite Blackburn Lake (34 Lake Rd)
 - In Bellbird Area since 2000 (13 Boongarry Ave)
 - President, Bellbird Residents Advocacy Group
- Bellbird Residents Advocacy Group (BRAG)
 - We work constructively to protect and enhance the values that led to National Trust Classification
 - Formed Feb 2017, formalised in Feb 2021
 - Builds on history going back to the late 1950s
 - Website blackburnbrag.wordpress.com
 - Contact: blackburnbrag@gmail.com

Agenda

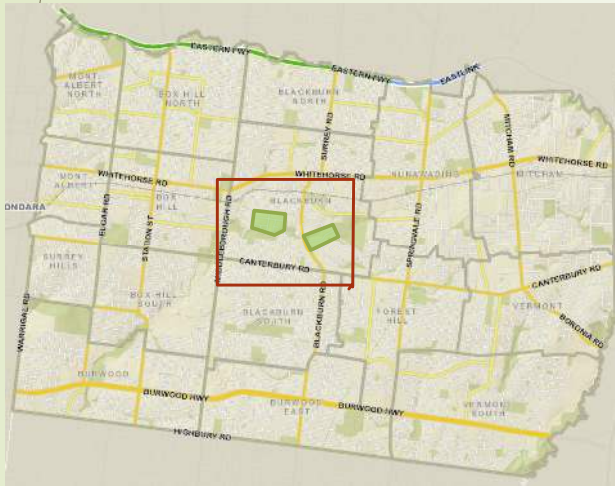
- Aim: learning from the history of the last 65 years, what can we all do to protect our special Bellbird Area?
- What is the Bellbird Area?
- Development from 1950s to 1980s
- What we have learnt about influencing the Government
- What we have done so far
- What you can do!
- Happy to take questions at the end

What is the Bellbird Area?

- National Trust Classified streets in Blackburn & immediately surrounding properties
- Retains a “country lane” feel
- vegetation dominates
- Haven for birdlife along the wildlife corridor
- Unique in mid to inner Melbourne



Where is the Bellbird Area ?



Linum St
 Laurel Grove N
 Boongarry Ave
 Hill St
 Acacia Ave
 Waratah Cres
 Jeffery St
 and immediately
 adjacent
 SLO2 properties



151 blocks (SLO1) + 106 (SLO2) = 257 total
 3.2 Ha approx. 0.5% of City of Whitehorse

Jeffery St



Linum St



21 Laurel Grove North



1951

9

1951- Flower farms & orchards



- Southern edge of Blackburn township
- Unmade roads
- Sparse vegetation

1963/4

10

1960s – Residents pushback



- Residents take responsibility for roads
- Road Association maintained roads
- Thin bitumen sealing applied leaving existing road alignment

1975

11

1976 – National Trust Classified



- Blackburn Lake under threat from development
- 1976 National Trust classified the Lake and seven surrounding streets (now SLO1)
- Note increased tree cover

1987

12

1980s – Spec Res Zone 5



- Council acts promptly after 400-strong public meeting Oct 1982
- Interim bylaw
- 1986 SRZ5 in planning scheme replaced bylaw

1996

13

1990s – SRZ5 becomes SLOs



- Major changes to State Planning Scheme in 1990s
- 1999 SLO1 and SLO2 replaced SRZ5
- Similar provisions

Lessons learnt over 65 years

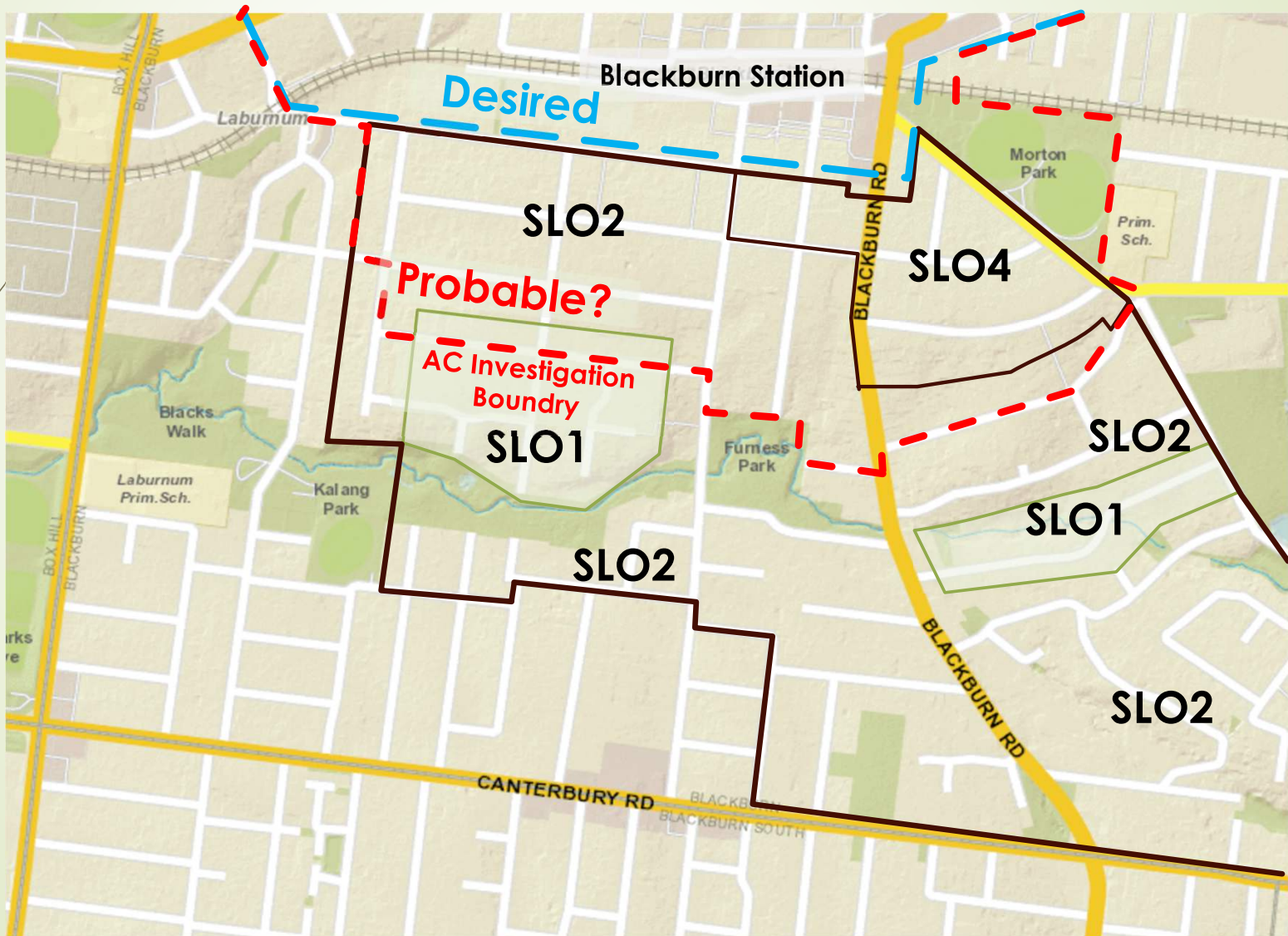
- Active community involvement is critical
 - numbers matter
- Try to work WITH Government first using our representatives
 - if that fails, then make lots of noise!
- Build relationships at all levels
- Constant vigilance to work proactively to head off issues
- Have courage to challenge authorities
- Appreciate those trying to do the right thing

What is an “SLO”?

- Significant Landscape Overlay
- Its purpose is “to conserve & enhance the character of significant landscapes”
- Requires a permit to (for example):
 - remove protected tree(s)
 - construct a building higher than 2 storeys
 - set back less than 12m at the front
 - build closer than 4m to protected trees
 - exceed max building coverage
25%, 42% total (SLO1); 33%, 50% total (SLO2)

NRZ1

- A Zone defines allowed uses of a lot
- NRZ1 - Neighbourhood Residential Zone
Schedule 1 covers dwellings to be built in Bush Environment Areas (the SLO1 and SLO2 areas)
- The AC Catchments implement much less restrictive Zones (HCTZ1 and HCTZ2)
- a development must comply with **both** the Zone and any Overlays but
- Overlays are only **permit triggers**, so if they conflict with the Zone a permit can override them; both must be in harmony



What have we done so far?



- Lobbied the Minister directly and through Lower House member Paul Hamer
- Minister Kilkeny visited the area on 2nd September with a local guide – thanks Paul
- Contributed to The Age Blackburn article
- The permanent SLOs will be retained
 - according to the Minister's office (see Paul's FAQs flier)
- Lobbied the Minister directly to exclude SLOs 1,2 & 4 from the Activity Centre
- Paul asked the Minister in Parliament to commit to this (stay tuned for her response!)

What can you do?



- Keep lobbying to convince the departmental planners
- Be constructive
 - avoid “Not In My Backyard” NIMBY attitude
 - try “Thoughtfully In My Backyard” instead!
- Consider more than just the SLO areas
 - Blackburn Village impact
 - Parking, traffic
 - Infrastructure etc.
- Refer to the handout for suggestions

Your To-Do List!



- Complete the online survey
 - numbers & diversity matter!
- get your friends involved!
- Email the Planning Team
 - at activity.centres@transport.vic.gov.au
- Deadline: **30th November**
- supporting material
 - for survey link & questions (handouts)
 - for longform emails (CROWAG & BRAG websites)
- attend drop-in sessions
 - **22 & 27 November**, Nunawading & Blackburn

21

Thank you!

Questions welcome!



What Next?

