



We acknowledge the Whadjuk Noongar People as the Traditional Owners of the Derbal Yerrigan and surrounding country in which we are privileged to work. We pay our respects to their Elders who have handed down and continue to hand down their deep connection to country to future generations.

Ferry Expansion Project

Background

SERAG has attended two briefings at UWA on the Ferry Expansion Project, given by the Public Transport Authority, which has responsibility for the project. The only request for feedback related to the exact location of the UWA Terminal, so participants were asked to send feedback relating to pros and cons of the proposed locations.

From SERAG's position of protecting all life of the Swan Estuary, there is a very real risk to river life from high speed ferries, such as dolphin strikes, and loss of bird life due to constant disturbance of their feeding and resting areas in the Swan Estuary Marine Park.

The least damage will be to recognize that the frequent (and, in the case of CAT's, free) bus services that currently operate to and from the city to UWA & QEII, are sufficient during off-peak times for the needs of staff, students and tourists alike, and smaller ferries mainly at peak times, with slow approach speeds, would reduce the environmental impact of this proposed project considerably.

The summary below covers aspects of the project that are particularly relevant to SERAG, that is, things that affect the Pelican Point Marine Reserve.

Summary of Ferry Expansion Project Presentation

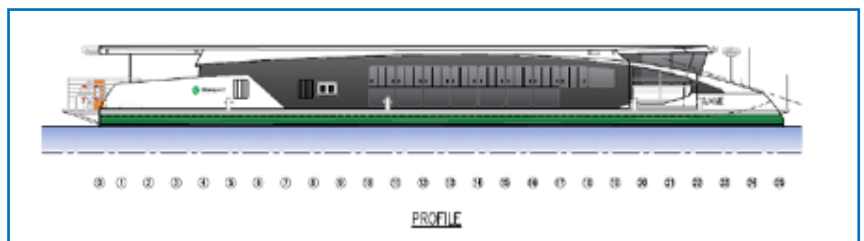


1. Ferry Expansion Project overview
(courtesy Public Transport Authority)

We were told that the Ferry Service Expansion Project aims to enhance public transport in Western Australia by introducing new electric-powered ferries and expanding ferry routes.

Stage 1 proposes to include two new terminals at UWA and Applecross, five electric ferries, charging infrastructure, and upgrades to existing facilities.

The ferries will accommodate over 100 passengers, operate from 6am to 12:30am, and offer a 15-minute trip between terminals.



2. Ferry Design (courtesy of Public Transport Authority)

The exact site for the UWA Terminal has yet to be decided.

The map below shows the approximate location of four possible sites, Matilda Bay North, Central and South, and Nedlands Foreshore.



3. Approximate locations for UWA Terminal
(courtesy Google and SERAG)

Feedback from SERAG

Utilisation of Melville Water and Matilda Bay

Since Perth was founded in 1829, Melville Water has mainly been used by recreational sailing boats. Unlike Sydney Harbour, it is a shallow estuary with dredged channels for larger power craft that are present in small numbers, and this has continued until the present day.

The shallow nature of the estuary allows waves from craft, which are reflected and resonated at river walls, to travel across Melville Water and impact the natural banks along the sides of the estuary.

Matilda Bay in particular is favoured for recreation because it is sheltered from the prevailing winds, and has shallow, placid waters and sandy beaches.

Pelican Point Bird Sanctuary and Marine Park

The value of Pelican Point as a bird sanctuary was recognised early in the 20th century, and it was officially declared as a Sanctuary in 1936, in time to save (to some degree) that small part of the river from the reclamation and building of seawalls that destroyed the environmental integrity of the rest of the Nedlands foreshore.

After the war, the State Government had to fight the Federal Defence Department to regain control of Pelican Point as its importance to the Perth community was recognized as an environmental jewel close to Perth as well as a home for its traditional sailing clubs and recreation in Matilda Bay.

At a later stage, about 1968, a fence was installed to discourage access into the sanctuary. This was quite effective because it extended into the river and prevented access at all but the lowest tides.

By 1990, it was recognised that the seagrass meadows of the shallows to the south of Pelican Point (along with those at Alfred Cove and Milyu) were an important natural resource, and the Swan Estuary Marine Park was created to preserve them.

Damage by Disturbance

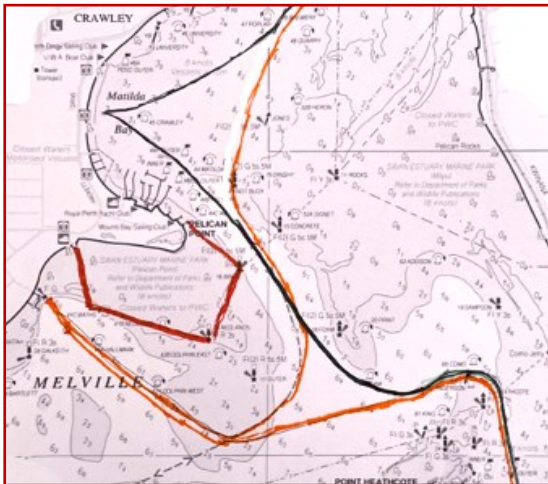
In 2006, the boundary fence was rendered ineffective by removing the extensions that discouraged access to the shallows and the bird sanctuary.

Since that time, disturbances within the reserve have increased. Fishers on the shore and out in the shallows; people jogging around the shore, and walking with dogs; kayakers, wind and kite surfers dragging their craft through the shallow water.

Despite many public requests, very little is done to discourage such activities, which are officially seen as desirable even though there are serious environmental consequences – trampled Saltmarsh, nesting failures and deaths of birds through entanglement.

Ferries and Ferry Terminal

Below is a crude, non-artists impression of the possible ferry routes between Elizabeth Quay, Nedlands/Crawley, and Applecross.



In **black** is the route for a terminal in Matilda Bay (the exact location of the terminal does not matter in this context). Note that the route passes quite close to the northeastern side of the Marine Reserve, which is marked in red. Ferries will be passing this point every 12-13 minutes, for 18 hours per day, assuming a 25 minute departure frequency.

In **orange** is the route for a terminal on the Nedlands Foreshore (commonly known as JoJo's). Note that the effect on the northeastern side is identical to the previous route, but the southwestern side of the reserve will be subjected to ferry wakes every 6-7 minutes.

With the advent of a new ferry service, the frequency of wakes at the Point would increase from perhaps as few as 2 per day to 86 per day, if the terminal is at Matilda Bay, and 260 per day if the terminal is at JoJo's or at JH Abrahams Reserve.

The size of the environmental impacts of the ferry terminal will be significant, whichever the location. For either JoJo's or JH Abrahams location, the impact could be largest, with ferry movements every few minutes.

As ferries approach or depart a terminal, the accompanying deceleration and acceleration creates deep pressure waves which would travel across the seagrass shallows of Pelican Point and thump on the shoreline, eroding and disturbing the feeding, resting and nesting areas of the birdlife, causing erosion of the southwestern shore of Pelican Point and possibly disrupting seagrass growth in the extensive shallows. The birds that regularly use the waters of the Point for feeding, such as the Federally Threatened Fairy Terns will no longer be able to do so, and the flocks of waterbirds that rely for resting on this last remaining sandy stretch on the northern side of the Lower Swan will likely be lost from the river.

For the northernmost Matilda Bay Terminal location, perhaps located just north of Wonil Hotel with the Sailing Club relocated, the erosion of Pelican Point would be the lesser of an issue, with a third as many ferry movements, and less direct impact on the shallows of the Marine Reserve.

Conclusions

The Ferry Expansion Project will see a dramatic increase in river traffic, which will not be appreciated by people who recognize the incredible fortune of having our unique Marine Park with its birdlife and beauty so close to our city, and who love the placid reaches of Melville Water and its natural surrounds, and engage in quiet activities such as picnicking, sailing, rowing, paddle boarding and bird watching.

In the case of impacts on the Marine Reserves and the life of the Estuary, which are SERAG's main focus, maximum damage will be caused by large ferries operating frequently. The minimum damage will be caused by smaller, well-designed ferries approaching and departing with greatly reduced speed, operating as infrequently as possible mainly at peak times, and with frequent buses, not ferries, servicing UWA, QEII and Matilda Bay at other times.

Boorloo Heritage Event at Pelican Point - April 12 2025

"What a fantastic opportunity to hear from such a wise teacher!".

Such were the comments heard by some of the 30+ participants attending this event, arranged by SERAG. Chairperson, Margaret Matassa, had invited Professor Stephen Hopper to speak of the "*Trees of Matilda Bay.*" Before speaking, Stephen advised that local Noongar Elders had been approached to approve of him speaking of this place and its uses, understanding that in Aboriginal Culture, only a local person has the right to speak of the country on which they stood. He had much to say of both the indigenous peoples' use of the area and the native *Eucalypts*, as well as more recent plantings, which he euphemistically called "Art Deco Style" - plantings after the re-alignment of Matilda Bay shorelines of the 1920's using several Eastern States species, which have since hybridised with local eucalypts.

First, we met on the Southern shore, at Abrahams Reserve, which was a very significant gathering place for Whadjuk peoples. He invited us to take a handful of sand, as is Noongar custom, to acknowledge the Waugal and ask for the good Spirits to protect us all. This was a most suitable gathering place because food was plentiful, enabling negotiations for ceremony, initiations and marriages. They used cool weather fire practices to keep the big space open, careful to protect the big old trees.



Old growth trees were very important, the base of some managed to assume a pond like font, to ensure spirit water for ceremonies. Large old trees recover after fire, but smaller saplings were dispensable, all giving the area an open park like character.

Moving further along, we noticed a change in the area, more fire prone, as the lower vegetation became much denser with few big trees, revealing different/current management. Then we passed a freshwater stream and wetland area exhibiting another community of trees of *Melaleuca* and rushes, with associated *Rhagodia* providing different resources.

A sumptuous morning tea was served near the DBCA Buildings under lovely shady Gums, after which Stephen Hopper needed to leave, with others also leaving. But our activities continued with different persons arriving to be advised of other historic events such as the Catalina Landing area of the Second World War and the current sites and activities of various Sailing Clubs.

We then moved into a bushland pathway that our PP Volunteers are developing, to encourage locals to use to access a bird viewing site, an alternative to walking along the Southern Shorelines and disturbing the resting and/or breeding shorebirds. Though on that early afternoon there weren't many birds sighted, advice on what nature experiences could be found, without negatively disturbing the site, was much appreciated by those attending.

The Committee and Sue Graham Taylor are to be thanked for a very successful event.

Article - J Ginbey

Photograph - T Graham-Taylor

Season of Makuru - June to end July

This Noongar Season is represented by the colour dark blue.
It is the time that the weather cools and the rain and cold weather begin.

SERAG's display at Bottle Top Hill

Bottle Top Hill (BTH) invited SERAG to have a display at their February event, held every 2nd Saturday at the City of Melville Environment Hub (formerly known as the Piney Lakes Environment Centre).

BTH provide a drop-off point not only for bottle tops and plastic jar tops but for an amazing range of hard to recycle stuff. They even organise a youth team to collect and help prepare for shipment oral waste such as old toothbrushes and even razor blades (kept separately). It all helps to reduce litter and the danger it poses to wildlife.

Thank you Bottle Top Hill!



Always cut open rings upon removal from bottles and jars to reduce the chance of them catching around the bodies of wildlife, and remember to dispose of all fishing lines thoughtfully to avoid entanglements.

For more information see <https://www.melvillecity.com.au/things-to-do/events/whats-on/bottle-top-hill>

Article & Photographs - M Paterson

Volunteer Corner

Hi! My name is Harshit Sinha.

I moved to Perth from Ranchi, India - a city known for its stunning waterfalls and cricket icon MS Dhoni - to pursue a Master of Environmental Science at UWA in February 2023.

Eager to engage with local conservation efforts, I began volunteering with SERAG at Pelican Point in September 2023. That first experience sparked a profound passion for environmental restoration and community action.

In February 2024, I was honoured to step into the role of UWA Guild Volunteering Program Coordinator for SERAG, where I organised monthly volunteering sessions. Leading teams of dedicated UWA students in planting, weeding, and habitat restoration became more than just hands-on environmental work - it was a transformative leadership experience.

I gained valuable skills in project management and stakeholder engagement, but it was the post-session chats over morning tea that truly stood out. These informal, thoughtful conversations about sustainability and the environment became a highlight of every event, deepening my commitment to conservation and making volunteering a genuinely meaningful social experience.

After graduating in December 2024, I passed the torch to a new group of passionate student leaders in 2025. While I no longer coordinate, I continue to volunteer as an active community member.

My journey with SERAG has created a unique bridge between my roots in Ranchi and my new life in Perth. It has reinforced a lifelong dedication to protecting our natural ecosystems and reminded me of the power of collective environmental action.



Article - H Sinha Photographs - UWA Guild Volunteer Leaders

Want to go fishing in the Swan?

SERAG is helping but needs your cooperation!

NO FISHING IN THE SWAN ESTUARY MARINE PARK

For fifteen years now, SERAG has been pulling out one lot of plants and replacing them with others all along the stretch of foreshore that borders the Marine Park in the Swan.

You might wonder why all the bother and what's this got to do with fishing?

It's all about achieving healthy river shallows and healthy seagrass meadows by preventing toxic (and smelly) algal blooms.

And these seagrass meadows are the nursery grounds for our flathead, crabs, and prawns as well as the powerhouse of oxygenation of the river and mudflats.

But trampling by people through the foreshore plants and through the samphire border and through the seagrass shallows is seriously damaging this vital ecosystem.

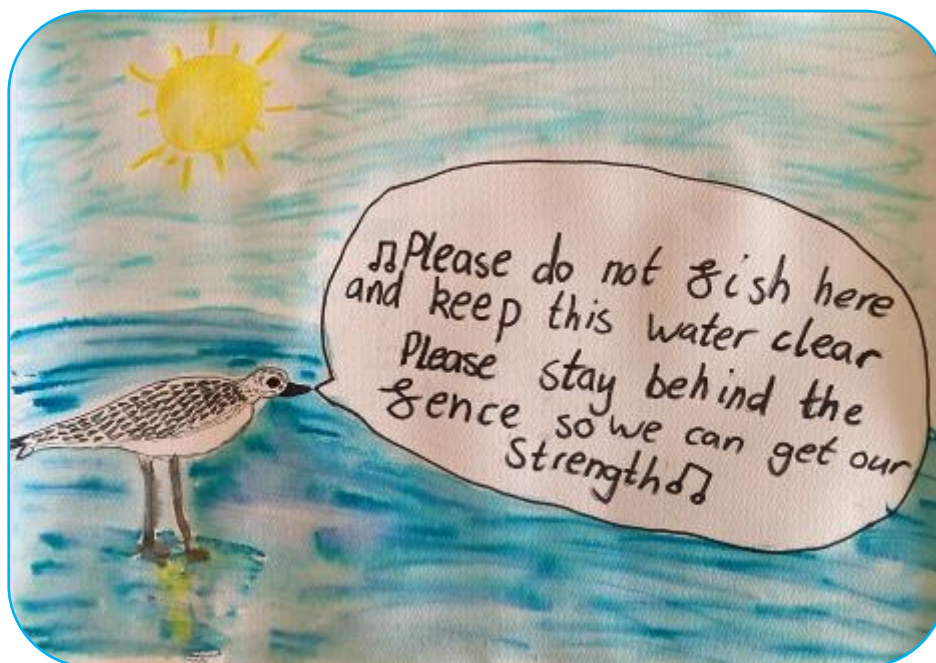
It creates runnels for surface water that stops the cleansing effects of saltmarsh. It introduces weeds whose shallow roots are unable to trap nutrients and pollutants that cause excessive algal growth. In contrast the deep roots of sedges and of saltbushes and estuarine plants can trap up to 90% of nutrients from reaching the river as well as preventing erosion .

And dragging fishing vessels across the shallow seagrass beds creates scars that take years and years to regrow.

So stopping fishers in this small section of the Swan can improve the fishing for everyone everywhere else.

Then there's the constant disturbance of the shorebirds that for thousands of years have fed and rested here, some of which have a life cycle dependent on it, let alone those losing their lives through entanglement.

SERAG believes there is no time to lose, and is asking the Government to legislate NOW!



Djinang Djidimya update

As many people have noted, the vegetation planted in the Djinang Djidimya site has fared very well over the warm summer months. Much better than we at the City expected! Recently, we learned the reason why.

There were three tuarts that were planted in 2023 that came from the City's streetscape program. These trees were not watered the summer of 23/24 but for some reason appeared on the watering program for 24/25. Unknown to the Natural Areas team, the eastern area of Djinang Djidimya was watered weekly between the 13th November and 18th March!

While the vegetation has fared well, this was quite a blow as the area is a trial site. Our intention was to only water the site when necessary to encourage resilience in the plants for longer term success. To fulfil the vision of the Attadale Alfred Cove Foreshore Masterplan, there is a lot of foreshore buffer to extend, and we are trialling different methods to ensure that we can create long term self-sustaining areas. As we know, watering can be labour intensive and does not always guarantee long-term site success.

I would like to assure our community, that while the weekly watering has ceased, we continue to monitor Djidimya and if required, we will water the site. We may still be able to build long-term resilience which remains the aim. We are invested in the site and I look forward to continuing to share the lessons the site teaches us.



Article - Jem Stirling, City of Melville Foreshore Officer

Photograph - R Weir

Get To Know Our Plants



<i>Juncus kraussii</i> (Sea Rush)	1.2 m high – forms a dense clump. Dark green round stems. Brown flowers in summer.	Occurs in saline habitats. Shade tolerant.
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We plant the sedge, *Juncus kraussii*, near the waterline as it thrives near salty water and is an excellent stabiliser of estuary banks, preventing erosion as well as providing biofiltration (i.e. processing waste water, capturing harmful chemicals from surface run-off, providing microbial oxidation of contaminants in the air and capturing excess nutrients from groundwater).

It also provides excellent fibre for weaving and was traditionally used by Indigenous Australians for string, fishing lines, woven rugs and baskets.

Article - J Connolly

Photograph - Courtesy of APACE and Florabase

Point Waylen Revitalisation Project

You may start to notice some changes down at Point Waylen, Troy Park soon! A new fence is being installed and massive ground preparation works will start to take place to prime the site ready for planting in 2026!



Vegetation Mixes:



- a Woodland Mix**
 The woodland area will feature a variety of large tree species and a species rich understory. Providing habitat to local terrestrial bird species.



- b Woodland/ Foreshore Mix**
 This mix will feature a combination of species from the woodlands mix and the foreshore transition mix. Serving the purpose of creating a natural blend between the two mixes.



- c Foreshore Transition Mix**
 Comprising of estuarine tolerant species. Medium to low vegetation will allow sightlines of the Swan River from throughout the site.

Lookout Views:



WA Wildlife Hospital

SERAG is part of a broader community, all doing our part to look after nature.

WA Wildlife is a non-profit organisation involved in the rescue, treatment and rehabilitation of injured, sick, orphaned, and displaced native wildlife. While SERAG works to improve habitat and safety for native animals along the Swan River foreshore, WA Wildlife Hospital is there to support them whenever they need medical care. It also runs education programs, manages the Wildcare Helpline and operates a wildlife ambulance. The hospital was formerly known as Native ARC and operated from a small house next to Bibra Lake. In 2019 it started to be redeveloped into a 700m² fit-for-purpose wildlife hospital, funded by the City of Cockburn, with fit out by LotteryWest.



In 2021 the completed hospital opened as WA Wildlife and is now able to house up to 10,000 animals a year, and treats about 250 different species, from frogs and geckos, to ospreys and kangaroos. During a recent tour a juvenile South-Western Snake-Necked Turtle was observed being treated to remove an ingested fishing hook.

The hospital has a surgery room (with a visitor viewing area), intensive care ward, species specific recovery wards, disease isolation ward with decontamination chamber, laundry, and a kitchen for meal preparation. Outdoors are the enclosures where animals prove they are ready to survive when released. One enclosure has a deep pond where waterbirds can prove their diving skills.



WA Wildlife also provides a permanent home for many animals who have become 'institutionalised' by being in human care for too long and no longer have the skills to survive in the wild. Visitors doing the tour can meet these diverse residents, including a friendly black cockatoo.

So, if you happen upon a wild animal in need of care WA Wildlife Hospital may be the nearest place for it to go. Due to the inherent risk in handling wild animals, it is best to first call Wildcare Helpline on 08 9474 9055 for guidance. They may be able to put you in contact with a group who can come and help. If you would like to learn more about the hospital, tours can be booked via their website – wawildlife.org.au.

SERAG Calendar of Events for June

June 2025 - Season of Makuru (June-July)

The NOONGAR Season 'Makuru' is represented by the colour dark blue as it symbolises rain and cold weather. It is the best season for dry land planting.

How appropriate – due to the delayed onset of winter rains we have rescheduled our May plantings of dry land plants to June and July which will make for 2 busy months.

If you would like to get involved in this rewarding activity, please contact us.

- 01-05 - *National Reconciliation Week* continues
- Wed 04 - (Instead of Treemendous Tuesday), Attadale - Planting (7:30am- 9:30am)
- Thurs 05 - *World Environment Day*
- Sat 07 - UWA @ Pelican Point - Wetland Planting (8:30am - 10:30am)
- Sun 08 - *World Oceans Day*
- Mon 09 - Monthly Monday at Milyu - Rubbish pick-up (7:30am - 9:30am)
- Tues 10 - TREEmendous Tuesday, Attadale - Planting (7:30am - 9:30am)
- Tues 17 - TREEmendous Tuesday, Attadale - Planting (7:30am - 9:30am)
- Sat 21 - Monthly Bird Count, Alfred Cove (3:00pm - 5:00pm)
- Tues 24 - TREEmendous Tuesday, Attadale - Planting (7:30am - 9:30am)



Please contact Margaret at SERAG if you are interested in helping with any event by email (admin@swanestuaryreserves.org)

Thanks and a Reminder!



We are very grateful that our membership has grown to over 120!

In the near future some of you will receive a reminder to renew your membership for the start of the new financial year.

If you don't receive a reminder this most likely means that you are still financial but you can always drop us a line to check. It might be a new email address that has caused us to miss you.

Regular Events for Your Calendar

- **TREEmendous Tuesdays** - Bush Care activities - Alfred Cove 7.30am - 9.30am
- **Saturday @ Pelican Point** - Bush Care activities 8:30am - 10:30am
- **Monthly Bird Count** - please contact SERAG for dates & times
- **Monthly Mondays at Milyu** - Foreshore Rubbish Clean-Up 7.30am - 9.30am

Please contact SERAG to register your interest in any of our events.

Contact SERAG ~

Swan Estuary Reserves Action Group Inc.

Phone: 08 9330 1791

Email: admin@swanestuaryreserves.org

Website: <https://swanestuaryreserves.org>