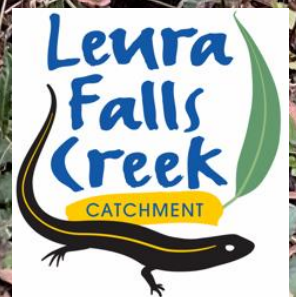




Banksia Streamlet and environs





This document has been produced by the Leura Falls Creek Catchment Group. The group is an independent environmental conservation planning and advocacy body consisting of local residents and Bushcare volunteers who take an interest in the natural areas of Leura Falls Creek catchment.

The catchment group works closely with Blue Mountains City Council and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and staff of both organisations have greatly assisted preparation of this document with factual information and documentation. However all opinions expressed, and all suggestions of proposed actions, are those of the community members of the catchment group itself, and do not in any way represent the positions of BMCC or NPWS. More information can be found on the group's webpage: <https://leurafallscreekcatchment.bushcarebluemountains.org.au/>

The members of the Leura Falls Creek Catchment Group pay their respects to Traditional Owners and Custodians past, present and emerging. Their continuous and deep connection to Country, and its great cultural significance to Indigenous Australians both locally and in the region are acknowledged.

We are mindful and respectful of the presence of cultural places and items within the catchment.

First edition, July 2024

It is expected that this document will be updated from time-to-time, and the most recent version will be found on the catchment group's webpage above.

Acknowledgements

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Cover photo: *Banksia Streamlet, looking west from bridge on Prince Henry Cliff Walk, 2023*

Banksia Streamlet

...and environs

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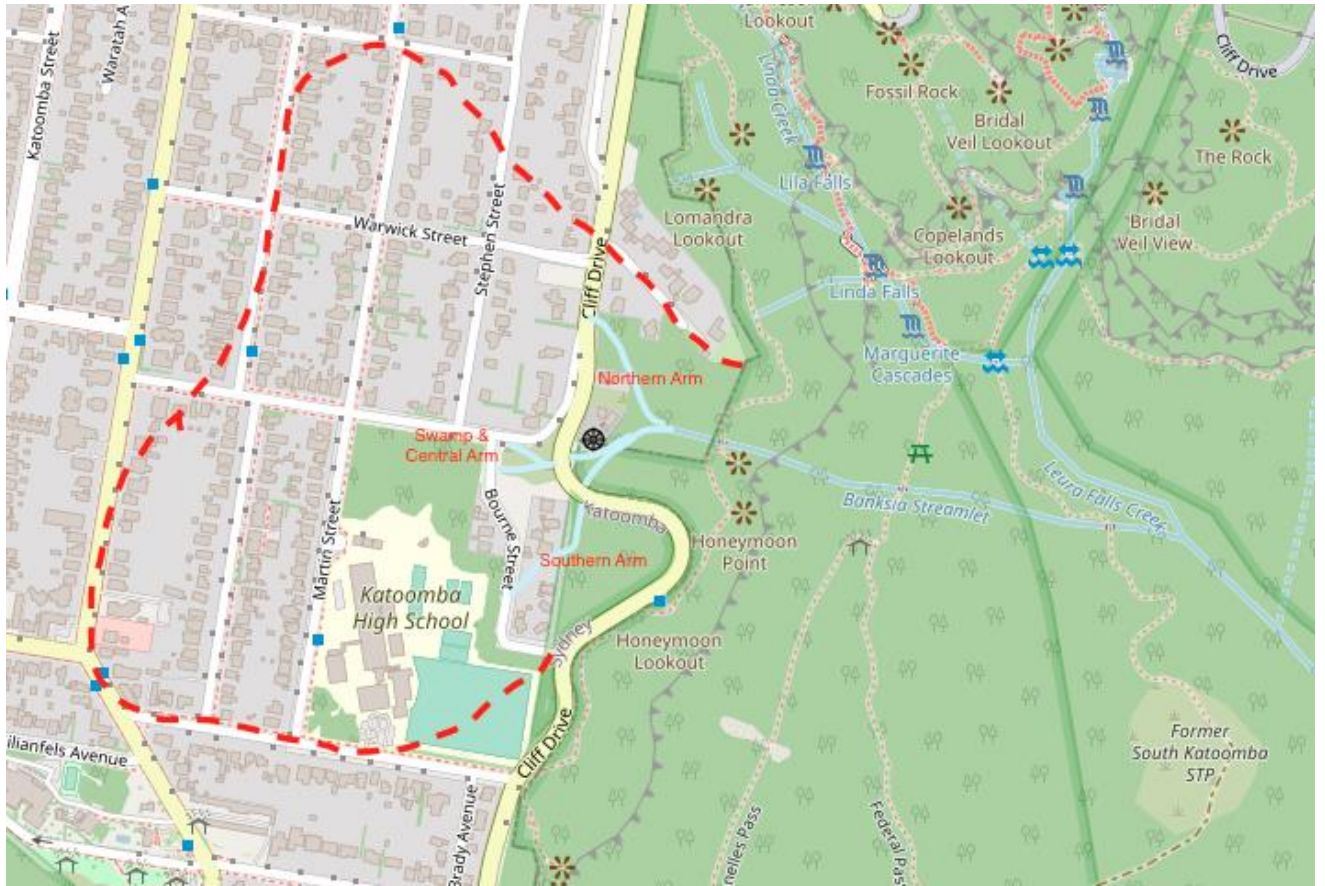


Figure 1 Source Map: OpenStreetMap

Banksia Streamlet and its catchment – a sub-catchment of Leura Falls Creek

Introduction: content and purpose of this document

From a starting point with a focus on Bushcare concerns, this document has expanded and evolved to encompass elements of history, development, land ownership and broader environmental issues. It might now be characterised as “everything we know about Banksia Streamlet”.

While this broad context and background information will be interesting and enlightening for many of us, the focus on weeds and drainage issues remains key. The document ends with a summary of the current state of play in each of the areas of Banksia Streamlet, with priorities for action, which will be updated from time to time.

Where is Banksia Streamlet?

Located in Gundungurra country, Banksia Streamlet is one of the tributaries of Leura Falls Creek. The Banksia Streamlet sub-catchment originates in what is now an urbanised area of Katoomba: to the East of Lurline Street, roughly between Raymond Road in the South, and Oatley Street to the North (outlined in red in the map opposite). Water is diverted into Katoomba’s network of stormwater drains and underground pipes until it nears the escarpment and emerges back into the daylight.

The streamlet flows through an extensive swamp, through culverts under Cliff Drive, and under a bridge on the Prince Henry Cliff Walk, and then makes the long drop to the valley below. It flows through the Leura Forest picnic area and crosses the Federal Pass walking track, before it joins with Leura Falls Creek just above the location of the old sewerage treatment works.

Above the escarpment, Banksia Streamlet comprises three main arms:

- The **central arm** emerges from three stormwater pipes and flows into and through a swamp, located between Bourne Street and Cliff Drive, and bounded on the northern side by Kurrawan Road. It flows through a culvert under Cliff Drive into the National Park, where it joins up with the southern and northern arms.
- The **southern arm** emerges from a stormwater pipe on the verge of Bourne Street, then through two private gardens and out into Banksia Park. It then passes the backs of three more houses, and under a culvert into the National Park, where it joins with the central arm.
- The **northern arm** is the least visible. It emerges from the stormwater system on the escarpment side of Cliff Drive, in a steep bushy area. From there it descends to a junction with the combined central and southern arms; the streamlet then continues on through a series of gentle cascades before dropping off the edge of the escarpment.

Map of the Municipal District of Katoomba, 1891 (detail)

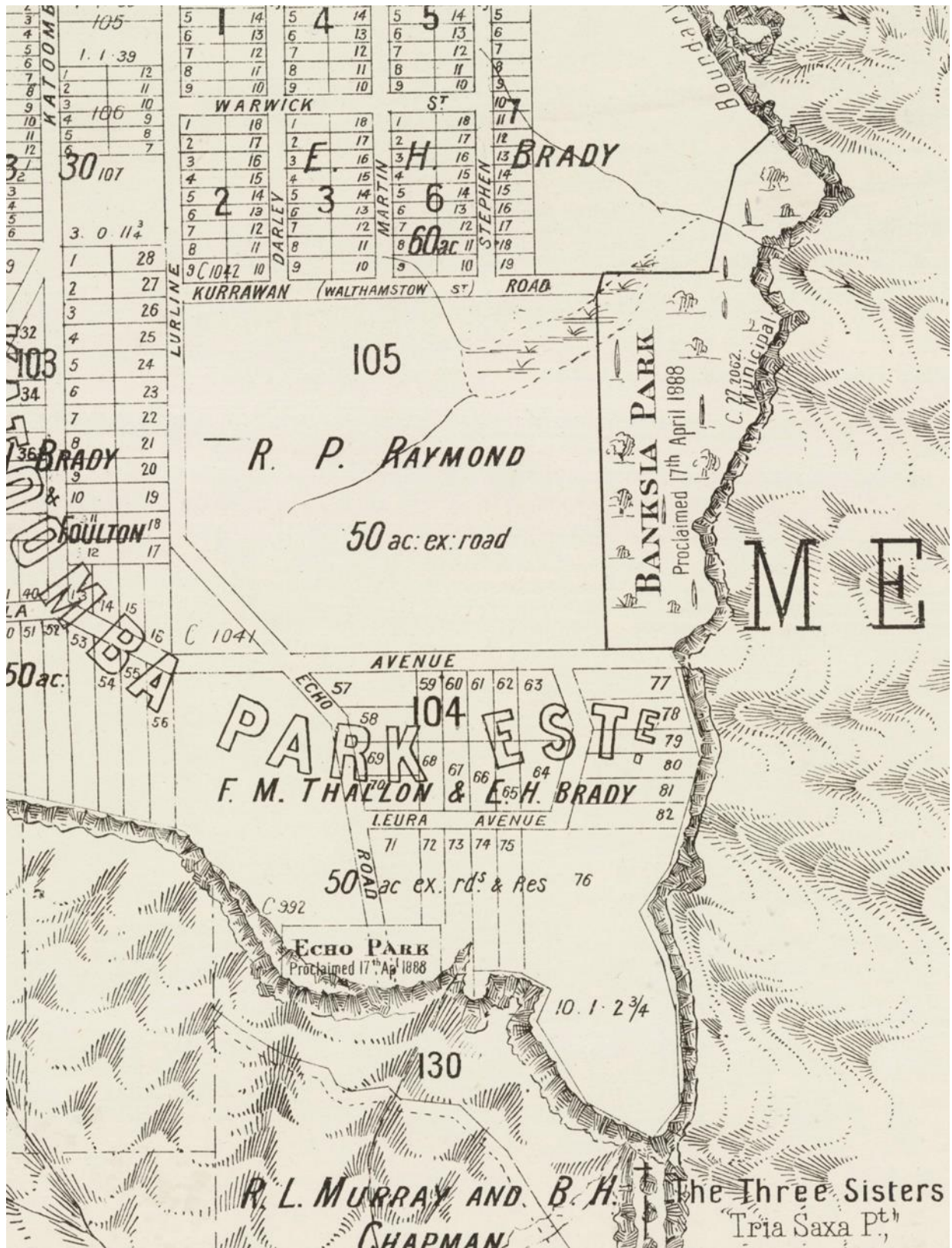


Figure 2 Source: State Library of NSW

History: Banksia Streamlet and Banksia Park

Katoomba is on Gundungurra country, and has been home to Indigenous communities for tens of thousands of years. Older Gundungurra Traditional Owners have memories of water holes in the area that is now within the Birriban area of the high school.

The name Banksia Streamlet was first recorded in a Katoomba town map in 1890¹. The English name of the creek is no doubt related to the name of the park through which it flows: Banksia Park. In 1883 Banksia Park was one of the earliest pieces of land set aside for public recreation in the Blue Mountains, and in 1888 this was confirmed when the NSW Government Gazette proclaimed an area of 17 acres 2 roods 13 perches to be “a public park, within the meaning of the Public Parks Act 1884, and that it be known by the name of ‘Banksia Park’”². Banksia Park was gazetted on the same day as three other important parks in the Katoomba/Leura area: Katoomba Falls Reserve, Leura Park, and “Echo Park”. Prior to this time, virtually all the land above the escarpment had already been granted to private individuals, much of it in large 50 acre lots. A Katoomba town map from 1891 (Figure 2, opposite page) shows the location of Banksia Park bounded to the west by R.P. Raymond’s 50 acre estate, and to the north by the estate of E.H. Brady.

By the time this map was made in 1891, development was already taking off on the southern boundary of Banksia Park, and further west and north. The Governor appointed some prominent local citizens to a Board of Trustees, to be responsible for developing and managing all four of the newly gazetted parks. The Trustees retained responsibility for the reserves until 1911, when they all resigned and management responsibility was handed to Katoomba Council³.

It is intriguing to note that the 1883 notification in the Government Gazette said that the land was being set aside not only for public recreation, but also for “water supply”. Was there an idea that Banksia Streamlet might be dammed? There is no evidence that this has ever happened, or that it was ever seriously considered. Indeed, it seems very unlikely since the major part of the catchment was *not* reserved and was left free for development. However there can be no doubt that the existence of Banksia Streamlet had been noticed, and that the creek was part of the reason that this piece of land was set aside and protected from development in the first place.

The other three parks – set up on the same day - remain prominent names, well known to tourists and locals alike, while the name and location of Banksia Park has all but disappeared from public consciousness. The reason for this is that almost all of Banksia Park has now been absorbed into the Blue Mountains National Park, with the exception of two remnant areas of bushland on the Western side of Cliff Drive: a very narrow band at the back of the high school oval, and a bigger area of land opposite Honeymoon Lookout, backing onto the houses on Bourne Street (See map Figure 3 below). This remaining section of the park (13,935 square metres) is still classified as a Crown reserve, managed by council as community land.

Given its long existence, it is somewhat surprising that there is very little information about Banksia Park in the historical records. While the park appears in many old maps, there is a dearth of documentation in the documentary records and photographic archives. It appears that, from the very beginning, Banksia Park has always been outshone by its flashier sister parks!



Figure 3 Present day Banksia Park. Source: BMCC

Subdivisions

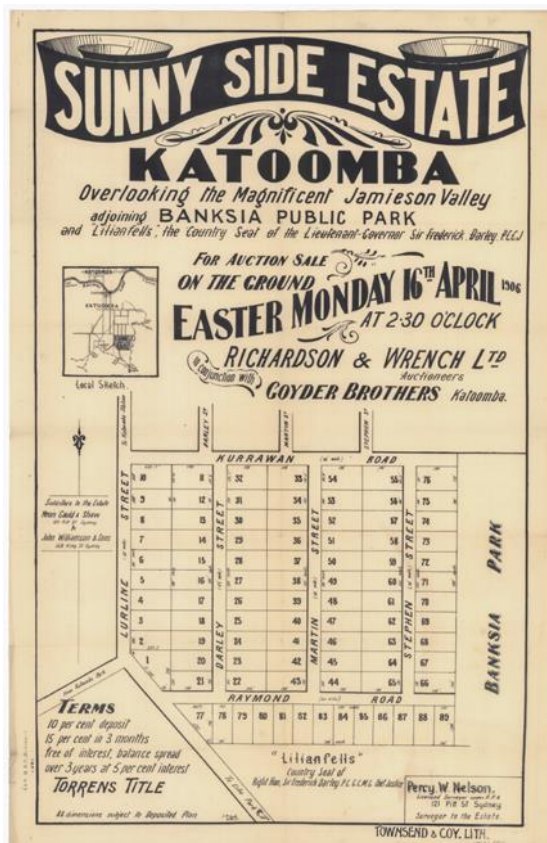
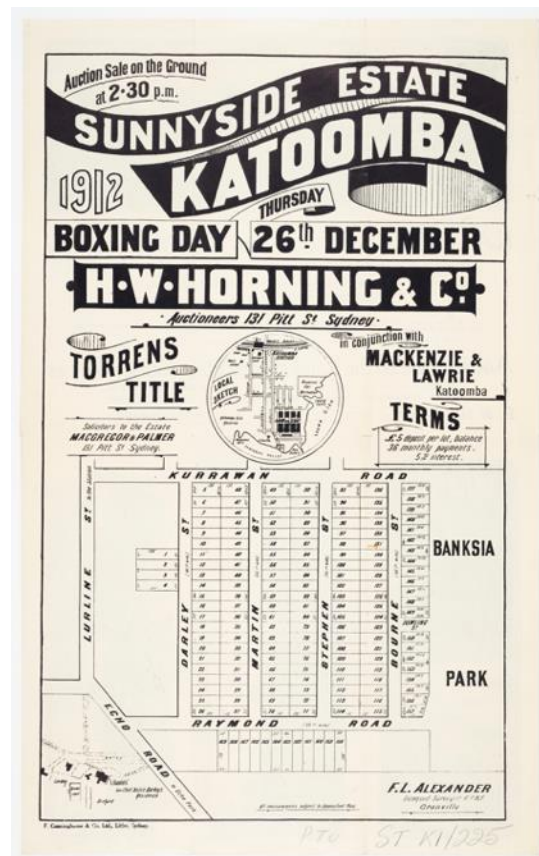


Figure 4 Source: State Library of NSW

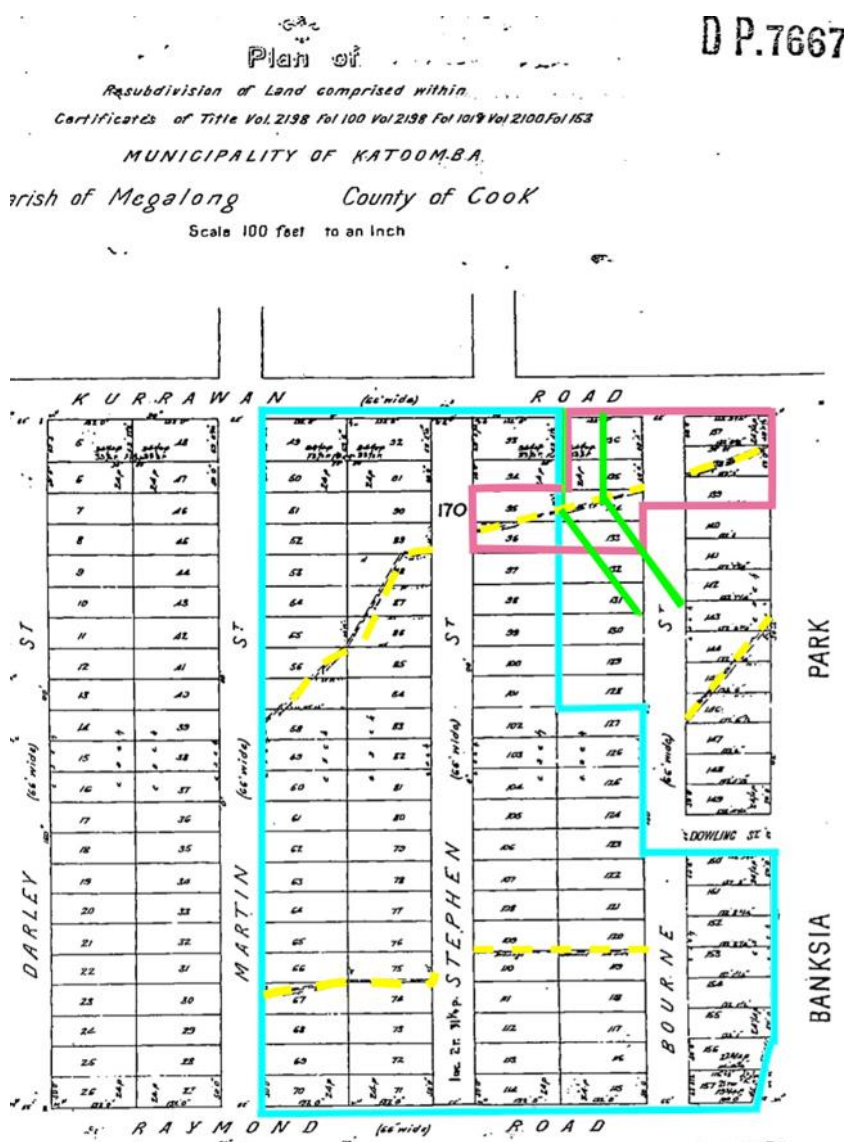


The **Sunnyside Estate** first went on the market in 1906 (above left), a subdivision of the old Raymond estate between Lurline Street, Kurrawan Road, Raymond Road, and the Banksia Park border to the east. Sales apparently did not go well, because by 1912 (above right) it had been re-subdivided to make the lots much smaller, and to almost double the number of lots, from 89 to 169. In order to fit in more lots, proposed streets within the estate were realigned, and an extra street was added, Bourne Street. An advertising flyer from 1912 says that “All these lots are magnificent building sites, not covered with rocks, but level and sloping towards the roads, which have all been formed and taken over by the local Shire council. The Estate in appearance is park-like, beautifully wooded, and surrounded by good properties.” The photograph below is taken from that advertising flyer.



Figure 5 Source: State Library of NSW

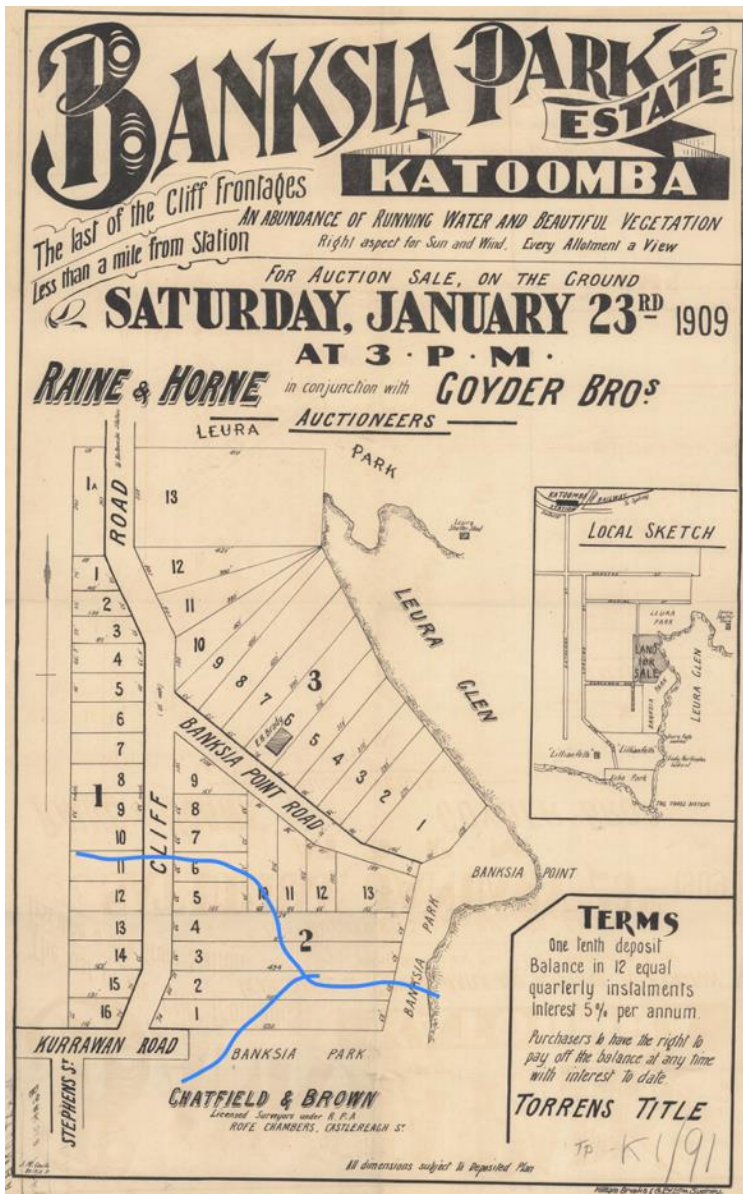
In the sales materials for Sunnyside Estate, there is no mention of any creek or swamp. From these documents, it appears that the developers had not taken account of these geographical features in laying out the residential lots and streets. However these realities had to be recognised on the ground, and the deposited plan for the re-subdivision, lodged with the Registrar-General in February 1913 (below), shows a number of drainage easements (highlighted in yellow) reflecting the location of the central and southern arms of Banksia Streamlet and its swamp. The drainage easements were included in the certificates of title for these lots, giving “full right and license at all times to enter... with horses carts and other vehicles laden or unladen and with workmen and servants to make and construct maintain and repair a drain three feet wide”. It can be seen that the drainage easements extend right up through the present high school area, as far as Martin Street.



In addition, the existence of the swamp drew the attention of the Board of Health, which issued an order in February 1913 under the Public Health Act to the effect that nine of the lots within the Sunnyside Estate could not be built on, without a number of steps being taken⁴. The lots covered by the order were lots 95, 96, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, and 139 (outlined on the map in pink), the area of the swamp. This was not done in order to protect the swamp – to the contrary! The order required that, before any building could be commenced, the swamp had to be filled with soil or sand to the level of surrounding streets and then concreted, with water diverted into stormwater drains. In fact these lots have never been built on, and have since been taken over by council, or fall within the school boundaries (outlined in light blue). Recognising the difficulty of building a road across the swamp, Bourne Street was also realigned (outlined in green).

The grand vision of the Sunnyside Estate was never realised. Much of it remained undeveloped, and in 1947 sixteen acres of the estate were resumed by the Department of Education for the construction of Katoomba High School⁵. The high school was opened in 1960.

To the north of Sunnyside, **Banksia Park Estate** went on the market in 1909, promoted as “the last of the cliff frontages... every allotment a view”. Again, the map on the advertising flyer does not show the presence of Banksia Streamlet, though the “abundance of running water” was seen as a selling point! The approximate location of the streamlet is superimposed in blue.



It can be seen that the blocks on the northern side of Banksia Park Road extend right down to the edge of the escarpment. This changed in 1932 when the council resumed the northern edges of these blocks (“keeping as near as practicable to the cliff face”) for the construction of the Prince Henry Cliff Walk.

Today, one of the few reminders of Banksia Park’s existence is seen in the name of Banksia Park Road, which is now a dead-end street off Cliff Drive. Originally called Banksia Point Road, it was the entry point for the northern part of Banksia Park, now absorbed into the National Park. Unfortunately the end portion of Banksia Park Road was sold to the surrounding landowners in 1944, becoming private property and cutting off direct access to the lookouts and Prince Henry Cliff Walk⁶.

On the southern side of Banksia Park Road, the council – at some point - also took ownership of lots 3,5,6,7, and part of lots 12 and 13, presumably due to drainage and sewerage issues. Lots 1,2, and 4 in Section 2 of this map are now owned by the Australian Buddhist Vihara.

Figure 6 Source: State Library of NSW (creek location added)

Land ownership and management

Although encompassing a relatively small area, addressing the environmental issues of Banksia Streamlet and its catchment area is complicated because of the diversity of ownership and interests, forms of land title and types of administration. They are:

- Banksia Park, Crown reserve managed by Blue Mountains City Council
- Road reserve, Blue Mountains City Council
- Community land, Blue Mountains City Council
- Katoomba High School
- Australian Buddhist Vihara
- Blue Mountains National Park, managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service
- The site of the former sewerage treatment works, which remains excised from the national park, but is now under the administrative responsibility of the National Parks and Wildlife Service
- Private residential land

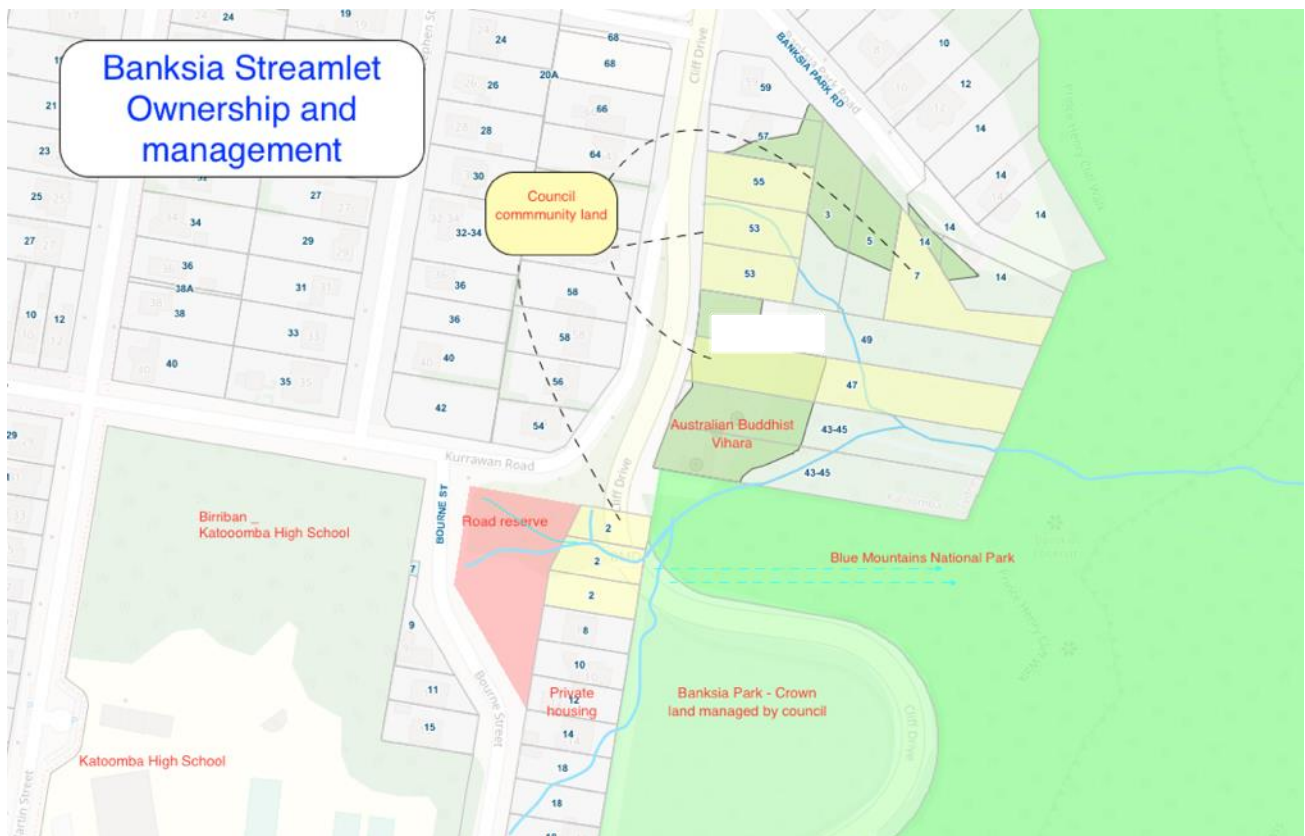


Figure 7 Base map: BMCC

Sewer lines were built through the middle of the swamp, and also adjacent to the northern and southern arms of the streamlet. A sewerage treatment works was built in the valley below Leura Falls, just below the junction of Banksia Streamlet with Leura Falls Creek. The sewerage system was originally built, managed and maintained by Katoomba Council, later Blue Mountains City Council. In 1980 responsibility was transferred to the Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board (now Sydney Water). Following construction of a tunnel to the new facility at Winmalee, the sewerage treatment works on Leura Falls Creek were closed down in 1998⁷.

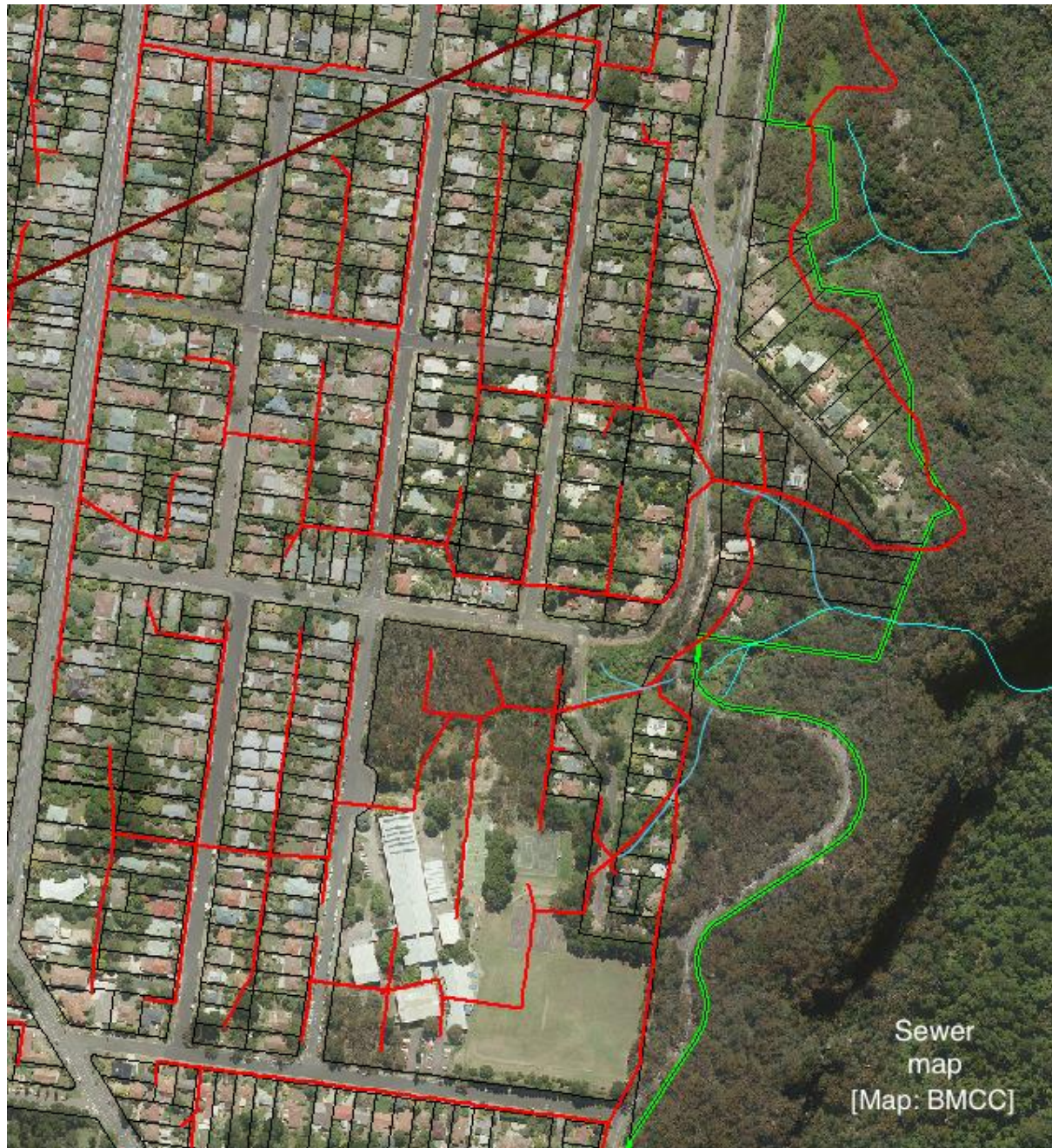


Figure 9 Source: BMCC (creek locations corrected)

When the high school site was resumed in 1947, it was very far from being virgin bushland. All the blocks had been sold off to private owners and some houses had been constructed⁸. An aerial photograph taken in 1958, before school construction started, shows that Stephen Street extended right through the area from Kurrawan Street to Raymond Road. Bourne Street also extends through to Raymond Road – through the area now covered by the school oval. In addition to the streets, it can be seen that there were many informal tracks through the area. Before resumption, council had also constructed sewers and water mains through the site. After the whole area was resumed, council sought compensation for this infrastructure from the Department of Education⁹.



Figure 10 Source: NSW Spatial Services

Over time, radiata pines were planted in Banksia Park along its western boundary, in some of the surrounding gardens and in the school. Willows and bamboo were planted in and around the swamp, and adjoining residents built and maintained a lawn over part of the swamp. Houses were built, native forest was cleared, and European gardens were established. Weeds spread down the creek and into surrounding bushland, and there is evidence of dumping of building materials and other rubbish in some areas of the bush. Increased stormwater flows have led to creekbank erosion, landslip and headcuts. Specific developments and impacts on the different areas of the streamlet, and their current status, are considered below.

Vegetation

Blue Mountains City Council's vegetation mapping shows the area of Banksia Park and Birriban (and the wooded area in the southwestern corner of the high school) as *Eucalyptus sieberi*/*Eucalyptus piperita* Open Forest. In addition to these canopy trees, this part of the catchment also has significant numbers of Black She-Oak (*Allocasuarina littoralis*), not to mention the various species of Banksias that give the park its name, and communities of Grass Trees (*Xanthorrhoea* species).

The extensive Blue Mountains swamp, on both sides of Cliff Drive, is not shown at all on council's vegetation mapping, an unfortunate omission. However the swamp is shown in Peter and Judy Smith's 1995 Flora and Fauna Study¹⁰, conducted for council. Around the swamp, and along the creek, are found dense colonies of *Blechnum nudum* and Coral Fern (*Gleichenia dicarpa*), and beautiful stands of mature tree ferns (*Cyathea australis*/*Dicksonia antarctica*).

The areas between Cliff Drive and the escarpment edge are classified by BMCC as *Eucalyptus oreades* tall open forest (2G). The three arms of Banksia Streamlet come together in a sheltered gully below Cliff Drive, and many rainforest-margin plants can be seen here, such as Bleeding heart (*Omalanthus populifolius*), Five leaf water vine (*Cissus hypoglauca*), and Native Mulberry (*Hedcarya augustifolia*). There are also lots of Black She-Oak (*Allocasuarina littoralis*) between here and the edge of the escarpment.

On the valley floor, below the escarpment, is rainforest, dominated by Coachwood (*Ceratopetalum apetalum*) and Sassafras (*Doryfora sassafras*).

In 2024, the Gun Gun and Banksia Park Bushcare Groups have begun to conduct a comprehensive plant survey of the area. When the survey is further advanced, this document will be updated with plant lists.

Wildlife

As a supplement to the plant survey already begun, the Gun Gun and Banksia Park Bushcare Groups propose to put together lists of birds and other wildlife seen in the Banksia Streamlet area, and these will also be included in future updates of this document.

Pending gathering of information for those lists, there are two species – often seen around Banksia Streamlet – which are worthy of particular note:

- Lyrebirds. The Banksia Streamlet precinct might be characterised as “lyrebird central” - lyrebirds are a constant daily presence in the area. Living below the escarpment, they cross Prince Henry Cliff Walk and Cliff Drive every morning to come and forage particularly in the domestic gardens of Bourne Street, in Banksia Park, and in the Birriban area. At most times of day, the area is alive with the distinctive sounds of lyrebird song.
- Glossy Black-Cockatoos – classified as an endangered species - are regularly seen in the area, feeding on the stands of Black She-Oak (*Allocasuarina littoralis*) close to the edge of the escarpment.

Bushfire issues

According to the *Katoomba Masterplan Strategic Bushfire Study 2023*¹¹, no wildfires have been recorded in the area of Banksia Streamlet (or the whole eastern edge of South Katoomba) in the past 60 years. The study comes to the conclusion that this area of Katoomba is at relatively low risk –

compared to the western edge of Katoomba, and other areas of the mountains - because of its easterly orientation, and because of the rainforests in the valley below.

However the very real risks are shown by two “near misses” in recent years. The first was in 2011, when there was a fire in the Katoomba Falls area, lit by an arsonist, which spread around the escarpment almost as far as Echo Point. Although some distance away, there was a strong westerly wind blowing, which carried embers across to the Banksia Streamlet area, bringing the risk of spot fires. The high school was evacuated, and residents were on high alert, but the fire was quickly brought under control and confined to the area between Katoomba Falls and Echo Point. In November 2019 there was a fire on the edge of Cliff Drive adjacent to Honeymoon Lookout, opposite Banksia Park, also lit by an arsonist. It was on a day of extreme high fire danger. It was quickly spotted and brought under control, and only a small area of bushland was burned in the national park. It did not spread across the road into Banksia Park.

Addressing environmental issues of Banksia Streamlet

Banksia Park Bushcare Group was formed in 2010 by local residents. From its inception it has received strong support from council through provision of equipment and supplies, and technical guidance from a Bushcare officer. The group meets monthly, with its main focus on the swamp, and the central and southern arms of the streamlet.

Birriban Landcare is an initiative of Katoomba High School and is supported by the council Bushcare Officer as well as staff from council’s First Nations team and Natural Areas team. It is also supported by staff of Scenic World, Greater Sydney Landcare, and Farm It Forward. Students are trained and supported to care for the land in the natural bushland area of the school, with particular focus on indigenous culture and values.

Vihara Landcare involved supporters of the Australian Buddhist Vihara with local residents to address weed issues around the grounds of the temple, along the creek banks and the adjoining areas of the national park. This initiative was supported by the National Parks and Wildlife Service through provision of equipment and technical support. The group met four times a year, between about 2013 and 2019.

Gun Gun Bushcare took over where Vihara Landcare left off in 2019, expanding to focus particularly on the section of Banksia Streamlet sitting within the national park, and along the fringes of the national park between Banksia Streamlet and the Echo Point area. Gun Gun (“running water” in the Gundungurra language) meets monthly, and is made up of local volunteers. The group is supported with equipment, supplies and technical support from the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

In addition to its support to Bushcare Groups, Blue Mountains City Council has undertaken consistent restoration activities in and around Banksia Streamlet over many years. Council’s natural areas team has deployed professional bush regenerators to address weeds, removal of willows and radiata pines, and stormwater projects. The “re-naturalisation” of creeklines has been particularly beneficial to Banksia Streamlet.

National Parks and Wildlife Service has also deployed bush regeneration contractors from time to time to address weed issues in the Banksia Streamlet area of the national park.

Banksia Streamlet section by section: issues and current status

General issues for the overall catchment

The only signposts identifying Banksia Streamlet are inside the national park, at the bridges on Prince Henry Cliff Walk and in Leura Forest. The lack of creek signposting outside the national park is a problem throughout the Leura Falls Creek catchment area, and generally through the Blue Mountains. Watercourses through urban areas have historically been thought of as drains – with infrastructure to match – and only perceived as creeks once they reach natural areas. Consistent with Blue Mountains City Council’s commitment to water sensitive urban design, signposting of creeks in urban areas would help to raise public consciousness that they are in fact creeks, and of the need to look after them.

Council maps do not consistently show all arms of Banksia Streamlet. For the purposes of this document, excerpts of council maps have been edited by superimposing correct locations of all arms of the creek. Accurate maps – on council’s website and elsewhere - will contribute to increased public awareness.

It is notable that a significant number of the weed and stormwater hotspots in the overall Leura Falls Creek catchment area are located along a short stretch of Cliff Drive between Elysian Restaurant and Silver Mist Park – including (but not confined to) the Banksia Streamlet catchment¹². Eight of the total 35 hotspots are in this area. Of the 13 hotspots identified as “highest priority”, four are situated in this area. Locations along Cliff Drive are not only highly visible and heavily toured, but also very environmentally sensitive since they sit right on the boundary of the national park.

Swamp and central arm

The swamp area has been the main focus of the Banksia Park Bushcare since its inception in 2010, due to the fact that the swamp was very seriously degraded and affected by a range of weeds. There were mature willows at the edge of the swamp – removed by council in 2011 – and a forest of bamboo along the Bourne Street side of the swamp. The bamboo was largely removed by the Bushcare group in around 2014. Other problem weeds in the swamp area are privet, blackberry, tutsan, and honeysuckle. There are also well-established patches of montbretia and vinca, which are receiving ongoing treatment. Supplementing the work of the Bushcare Group, council has engaged contractors to carry out concentrated treatment of weeds. Large woody weeds – notably privet and



cherry laurel - remain along the northern edge of the swamp, bordering Kurrawan Road, and continuing to the intersection of Kurrawan Road and Cliff Drive.

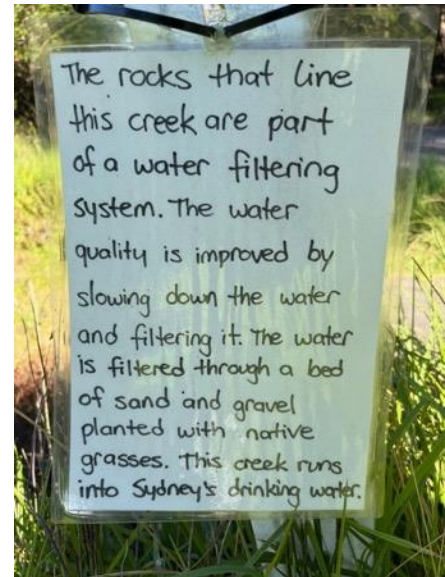
Apart from weeds, there have also been major issues with stormwater erosion, and with the sewer, in the swamp.

In 2016 the council engaged contractors to line sandstone along a section of the creek through the swamp, below the Bourne Street culvert. In that part of the creek, this has proved to be very effective in protecting the creek banks from erosion. However, due to the heavy rainfall events in recent years, there has been very serious erosion of the banks in the parts of the creek that have not yet been treated (pictured left).

Additionally, the sewer goes right through middle of the swamp, and there have been several instances of leakage over the years. In 2022 Sydney Water engaged contractors to replace the pipes, however the ensuing disturbance led to further serious erosion in the area. With the assistance of council, this area has now been stabilised.

Southern arm and Banksia Park

During construction of Cliff Drive in the 1930s, the previous flowline of the southern arm was displaced, and its original junction with the swamp and central arm was disrupted. The southern arm was diverted into a culvert under Cliff Drive and then spilled out across the slope below. This caused serious erosion and weed spread over a significant area within what is now the national park – previously part of Banksia Park. Due to more frequent heavy rain events, this problem was exacerbated in recent years. A blockage of the culvert and subsequent flooding of the road in 2019 caused council to address the problem by building a major stormwater structure on the northern (national park) side of Cliff Drive which has been effective in slowing down the flow of stormwater, removing some of the pollutants, redirecting the water towards the main channel, and reducing erosion. Council has built a lot of these structures in recent years, many of them in places where they are not likely to be seen by the public. This structure, being immediately adjacent to Cliff Drive, is highly visible, and is a good advertisement enabling visitors and locals to see the good work being done by council. A local resident and Bushcare volunteer has put up a handwritten sign explaining the function of the stormwater structure, which often attracts interest from passers-by.



Council has also engaged contractors to re-naturalise two other sections of the Southern arm:

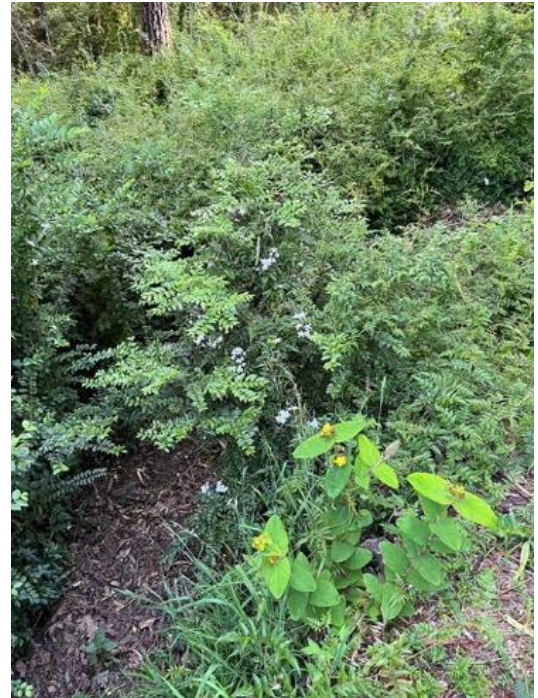
- In 2017, council's contractors did work in rehabilitating the area of the drainage easement through the private garden in Bourne Street (lots 44 to 46, as discussed above). As part of the process, council staff conducted an onsite workshop for local residents, explaining the rationale for the work and council's new approach to stormwater management. Ivy and other non-native species along the creekline are being gradually removed and replaced with ferns.
- In 2020, council contractors rehabilitated a length of the streamlet immediately to the south of Cliff Drive. It had been in very poor condition, a weed-choked drain running in a straight line. It has been transformed into a winding stream, with a number of pools, bordered by plantings of *Blechnum nudum* and other native plants (pictured at left). As part of the process, two mature radiata pines were removed, in addition to heavy

infestations of privet, jasmine, montbretia and other weeds. Weeds in this section of the creek are now being adequately managed by the Banksia Park Bushcare Group.

Beyond this area to the south, the main part of Banksia Park is in reasonable condition: weeds are mainly around the Cliff Drive edge, particularly the narrow strip of land between the school oval and Cliff Drive, and the corner of Dowling Street, where mature agapanthus and a verdant patch of montbretia still await sustained attention. Agapanthus and other weeds have spread across the road from this area into the national park. Otherwise, through the main body of Banksia Park there is a regular sprinkling of bird-spread weeds – holly, ivy, broom etc - which require regular checking and follow-up.

Over recent years council has been progressively removing mature radiata pines along the edge of the park, backing onto the Bourne Street houses.

One remaining length (of around 20 metres) of the southern arm remains to be rehabilitated. Still heavily weed infested (see picture at right), this section of the creek is in dire condition and in urgent need of attention



Northern arm



The northern arm of Banksia Streamlet is disgorged from a stormwater drain on the eastern side of Cliff Drive, into a steep fern-filled gully which is not easy to access. It is not visible from surrounding roads or walking tracks. The creek descends through a series of pools towards the main creek, weaving from council community land, through the bottom of a couple of residential blocks, back into council community land, and then joins the main creek in the property of the Australian Buddhist Vihara.

There is sewerage infrastructure in the top part of the creek, and in recent years there has been a history of sewer leaks from time to time. Consequently Sydney Water is planning to reline the pipes through this area. It appears that the watercourse has been subject to erosion in the past, but there are large tree ferns growing along the banks and there does not seem to be active or recent erosion. There is serious weed infestation in the upper part of the creek (pictured left), in the area immediately adjoining Cliff Drive,

but there are less weeds further down, and by the time it reaches the junction with the main creek there are virtually no weeds at all.

There is no bushcare group with coverage of the northern arm of Banksia Streamlet. Council contractors have recently done some good work on the weeds there, but much remains to be done.

Blue Mountains National Park

There have been great improvements in recent years in the section of Banksia Streamlet within the national park between Cliff Drive and the boundary of the Australian Buddhist Vihara. Part of the swamp lies in this area, and the central and southern arms come together here. These improvements have been driven by three factors:

- construction (by council) of the biofilter structure on the southern arm, below Cliff Drive – pictured at right
- establishment of the (NPWS-supported) Gun Gun Bushcare Group, meeting monthly, with a particular focus on this part of Banksia Streamlet
- improved and enhanced focus of NPWS on bush regeneration, with increased use of contractors on priority areas



Further downstream, NPWS's considerable investment in improvement of walking tracks has resulted in two new bridges across Banksia Streamlet: one (above the escarpment) on Prince Henry Cliff Walk, and another (below the escarpment) on Federal Pass in Leura Forest.

Birriban/Katoomba High School

Katoomba High School occupies a very significant part of the Banksia Streamlet catchment area above the escarpment, roughly one third of the area. Therefore the school has an important responsibility to manage weeds, and to ensure that pollutants and other rubbish do not come into the streamlet from the school via the stormwater system. The school has done good work in recent years in removing large amounts of holly, privet and cotoneaster, particularly around the edges of the oval.

Within Birriban - the area of natural bushland which is attached to the school - there is a rescue population of *Zieria covenyi*, a threatened species found in the wild only on Narrow Neck.

As already noted, the Birriban Landcare program, with support from council's Bushcare Team, provides opportunities to raise awareness about environmental issues – in particular the significance of water catchments, and the importance in indigenous cultures of caring for country. There are plans to reinstate ponds in the former swamp area of the site.

However Birriban still has serious weed problems. Students are not permitted to use Glyphosate, so woody weeds such as privet, cotoneaster and broom are not directly addressed by the Landcare program. There are plans to hold special events – outside school hours – for Bushcare volunteers to target woody weeds.

Aerial view of Birriban area, showing Banksia Streamlet flowline

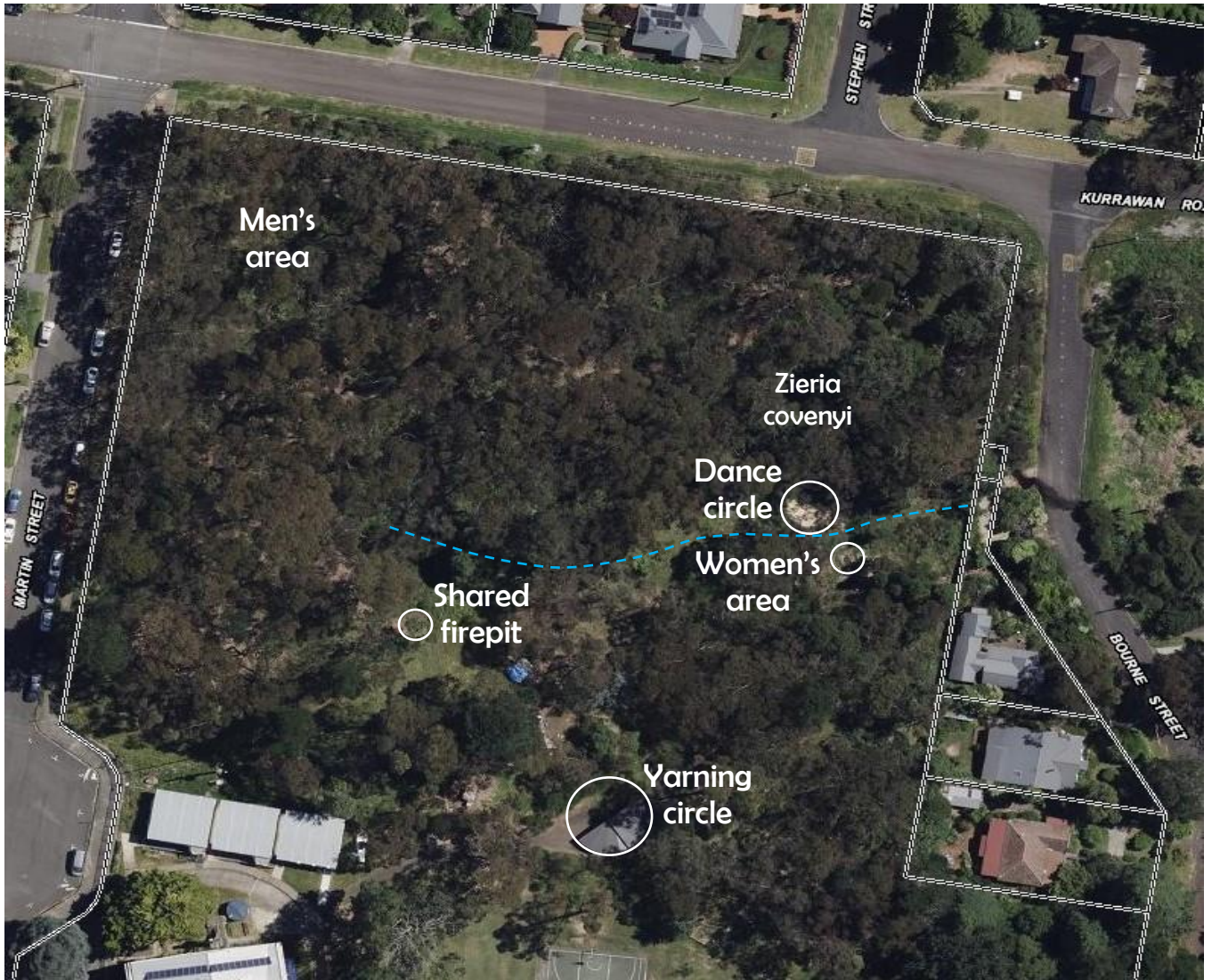


Figure 11 Source: BMCC Bushcare

Priority actions

Priority actions – general

- *[BMCC] place signposts announcing Banksia Streamlet at the point where it crosses Cliff Drive*
- *[BMCC] review and update all council mapping to show all three arms of Banksia Streamlet*
- *[BMCC and NPWS] to agree on a coordinated and staged action plan to address priority weed and stormwater issues along the stretch of Cliff Drive between Elysian Restaurant and Silver Mist Park*
- *[Sydney Water] continue to upgrade ageing sewer infrastructure to reduce incidence of sewer leaks into all parts of Banksia Streamlet system*

Priority actions for swamp and central arm are:

[BMCC]

- *review and update council's vegetation mapping to show the existence and extent of this significant Blue Mountains Swamp*
- *address the head cut and erosion issues through the swamp area, through to the top of the culvert under Cliff Drive*
- *address area of woody weeds along the edge of Kurrawan Road bordering the swamp, and running north to the intersection of Cliff Drive with Kurrawan Road*
[UPDATE: The process of addressing the Kurrawan Road weed hotspot has already begun, with a special event on 30 May 2024 involving Bushcare officers, volunteers, and BMCC's Natural Areas team. Further follow up is planned involving the Woody Weed Wanderers Bushcare Group jointly with Banksia Park Bushcare.]

Priority actions for southern arm are:

[BMCC]

- *rehabilitate the remaining length (of around 20 metres) of the southern arm*
- *continue removal of radiata pines in Banksia Park*
- *remove agapanthus around the intersection of Dowling Street and Cliff Drive, now spreading across the road into the national park*
- *place a more permanent, appropriately worded educational sign on the biofilter next to Cliff Drive*

Priority actions for northern arm are:

- *[BMCC] further weed eradication and follow-up work on community land in the upper part of the creek*
- *[Catchment Group] coordinate with other landowners, including the Australian Buddhist Vihara, to jointly address weed issues on their properties*

Priority actions for national park area of Banksia Streamlet are:

[NPWS]

- *continue planting of appropriate species below the biofilter to stabilise slope and regenerate natural bushland*
- *engage contractors to treat areas of heavy infestation of montbretia, honeysuckle and jasmine below Cliff Drive*

Priority actions for Birriban are:

[Katoomba High School]

- provide continued support to Birriban Landcare as an ongoing component of the school's program, in collaboration with council's Bushcare program
- continue to manage weeds on school grounds both through grounds staff and Birriban Landcare
- improve rubbish management throughout the school to reduce pollution of Banksia Streamlet and the national park

ENDNOTES

¹ Brian Fox, Michael Keats, John Fox, *Blue Mountains Geographical Encyclopaedia*, 2023

² *NSW Government Gazette*, 17 April 1888

³ *Blue Mountain Echo*, 10 March 1911, p.6

⁴ *Government Gazette of the State of NSW*, 26 February 1913

⁵ "Katoomba High School", in *Old Leura and Katoomba*, Rotary Club of Katoomba, p.114

⁶ *Government Gazette of the State of NSW*, 26 May 1944

⁷ "Sewage plant turned off", *Blue Mountains Gazette*, 1 July 1998, p.30

⁸ "Katoomba School Site", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 May 1946, p.2

⁹ "Compensation Claim on Education Department", *Blue Mountains Advertiser*, 13 August 1948, p.8

¹⁰ Peter Smith and Judy Smith, *Flora and Fauna Study for Blue Mountains Environmental Management Plan*, Study Area 2: Katoomba to Wentworth Falls, April 1995

¹¹ EcoLogical Australia, *Katoomba Masterplan Strategic Bushfire Study*, prepared for Blue Mountains City Council 2023

¹² *2024 Hotspot Priorities*, Leura Falls Creek Catchment Group, 2024