Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand

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BREAKING THE BARRIERS

INNOVATING TO IMPROVE ECOLOGICAL OUTCOMES ON TRANSPORT AND OTHER LINEAR INFRASTRUCTURE

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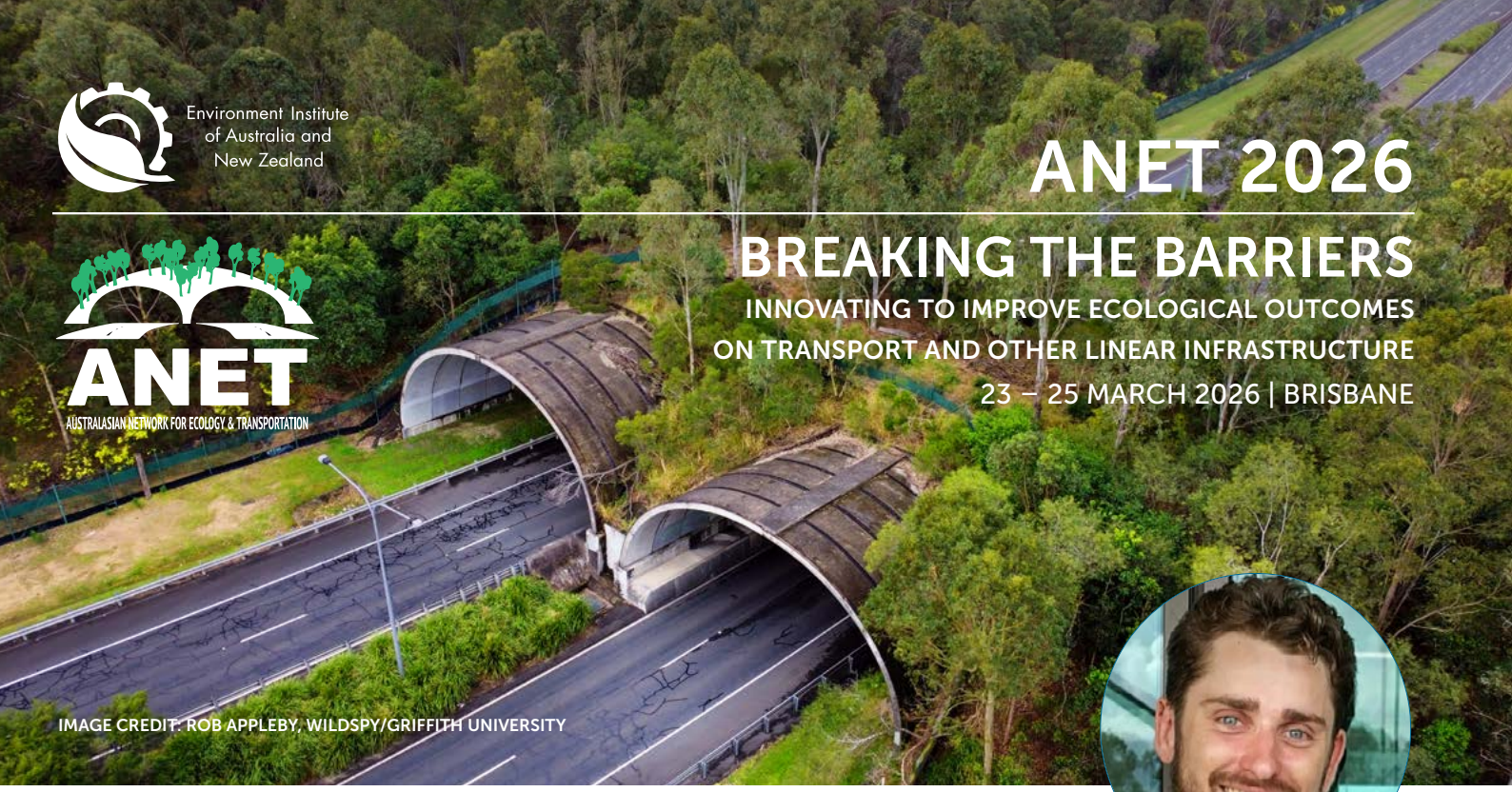

IMAGE CREDIT: ROB APPLEBY, WILDSPY/GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY

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POSTER ABSTRACT

Restoring a benchmark: reviving Brisbane's Compton Road wildlife overpass through science–community–council collaboration

The Compton Road fauna array in Brisbane – comprising a vegetated wildlife overpass, underpasses, glider poles and rope bridges – was built to reconnect Kuraby Bushland and Karawatha Forest within the Flinders–Karawatha Corridor. Over two decades, it became a touchstone for fauna-sensitive transport infrastructure. Yet, by the late 2010s, condition assessments showed a gradual decline in ecological function: simplified understorey vegetation, slope erosion, degraded "wildlife furniture" in underpasses, and water and sediment accumulation at dry culvert entrances. Individually modest, these issues compounded to reduce effective permeability for small birds, reptiles and ground-dwelling mammals. In response, local community groups – the Karawatha Forest Protection Society and Bulimba Creek Catchment Coordinating Committee – commissioned a focused restoration plan grounded in site surveys and current practice. Rather than a full rebuild, the plan prioritised targeted, low-cost works to restore function: in-fill planting (>500 native tubestock) to rebuild the understorey; habitat structure (logs, rocks, mulch); water-retention measures (mulch, polymers, scheduled watering); soil microbial inoculation; repairs to underpass/culvert elements; and programmed follow-up maintenance (watering and weed control). Crucially, the advice translated directly into delivery. Brisbane City Council adopted the recommendations, coordinated implementation with bushland managers and community partners, and a local councillor fully funded overpass restoration using discretionary funds. The project catalysed broader stewardship actions: additional condition audits across the array, minor rectifications on aerial structures, and planning for culvert desilting and vegetation works. Equally important, routine monitoring and maintenance are now being treated as core asset management, not an optional add-on. For ANET, three practice lessons emerge. First, design is only the starting point: without resourcing for maintenance, flagship linkages will drift out of specification. Second, science plus community advocacy changes timing and traction, aligning ecological works with decision windows. Third, policy wins can begin locally: embedding condition audits and upkeep in municipal asset systems creates durable ecological performance for transport infrastructure. This case shows how targeted, evidence-based restoration – backed by community and council – can rapidly recover a benchmark crossing and re-centre long-term stewardship in everyday transport practice.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Maintenance Is Critical for Long-Term Ecological Function
2. Community-Led, Evidence-Based Restoration Can Be Highly Effective
3. Local Policy Integration Enables Broader Stewardship

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY

Christopher Johnson is a Senior Environmental Scientist and Ecologist with over ten years of industry and research experience, and more than fifteen years in community-based environmental leadership. His work sits at the crossroads of ecological restoration, infrastructure planning, and environmental management, bringing together science, policy, and practice. Chris has led large-scale rehabilitation projects, ecological fire programs, and collaborative research into transport ecology and acoustic monitoring. He's passionate about translating evidence into real-world outcomes that improve biodiversity, support ecologically sustainable development, and build community capacity to care for the places they live and work.

Martha Rees is a Program Officer in Brisbane City Council's Natural Environment, Water and Sustainability branch, where she manages the Wildlife Management Solution program, delivering infrastructure that enables safe wildlife movement and reduces vehicle-wildlife collisions. She has over 15 years' experience across both the public and private sectors, including extensive work as an environmental consultant. Martha is passionate about biodiversity conservation and protecting Australia's wildlife, particularly from the impacts of urbanisation and expanding human populations.