**The Powerful Owl is listed as vulnerable by Denise O’Hagan**

This feathery-coated, creamy-collared

Yellow-eyed predator now finds himself,  
If only he knew it, in an unprecedented

Situation: the Powerful Owl is listed as  
*Vulnerable*. What match his slow blink,   
His heavy winged progress in the dark   
Hours before dawn with the metallic wink  
Of the imminent bulldozer; his vast wing-   
Span and perilous claws with the bloated  
Ambitions of local government?

But the future won’t happen for a little

While yet. Still he nests high in the

Hidden hollows of ancient eucalypts,

And still he cries as he glides the night,

Staking out his territory before roosting

Season as Council prepares to *revolutionise*

The movement of humans across the city,  
And gash the gully for a tunnel. For while

It isan *offence to harm a protected animal,*

Their habitat, though a designated

*Wildlife protection area*, would seem

Fair game for all. Ironies nestle

In the ways of the law, and rhetoric

Has got the better of us: we can  
Persuade ourselves of anything now.

**Note**: The Powerful Owl (*Ninox strenua*) is Australia’s largest owl, inhabiting the forests and bushland of the east coast. It is the male who hunts and defends their territory, bringing food to the nesting female (hence the poem’s use of the male gender). As a predator of rodents, possums and small birds, it is a natural guardian of biodiversity. They are currently under threat from the development of city infrastructure.

The italicised words and phrases are quotes from the *Biodiversity Conservation Act (NSW) 2016 (No. 63)*; the NSW Government Beaches Link Willoughby fact sheet, Nov. 2019;andthe *Companion Animals Act (NSW) 1998 (No. 87)* (under which Council declared Flat Rock Gully a ‘wildlife protection area’).