



Irwin Districts Historical Society Inc
Maintaining the identity of the Irwin District

Comments on Irwin River Walking Trail Amenity Upgrades Masterplan,
 Revision A, dated 7 September 2021

| Section | Comment |
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| 01 Intro | First para, last sentence – it would be better to say the river connects or links the two towns, rather than divides them – the Masterplan needs to reinforce a holistic sense of the greater estuary area as a distinctive place in its own right rather than as a boundary on the edge of two other places. We generally support the key aims (although perhaps the 5 th point could be better expressed as ‘recognising its, at least, regional significance’) |
| 02 Background | We generally support the objectives. We note the summary of public consultations, including preference for any footbridge to be located in the vicinity of Walton’s Ford not Armstrong Street; need for maintenance of built facilities; and support for nature conservation areas. |
| 03 Analysis (p4) | We support the recommendation, repeated from numerous earlier reports, for the whole area to be managed as a crown reserve. We note the freehold areas defined as problematic (due to tenure) – unfortunately there is no corresponding action for a solution, such as Shire or philanthropic acquisition of these areas, or land-swaps with Shire owned land, and so on. |
| (p5) | The Heritage Map is very useful and we support its inclusion (although there is a slight error with the maternity home location). This is the sort of map that would have been useful in the Foreshore Masterplan. Environment – we support the statement that development needs to anticipate flood events, and we support the statement that unfiltered road run-off impacts on river water quality. Infrastructure – we support the observations about the condition of the boardwalk and some tracks. Heritage/Culture – we support the observations about limited or lacking interpretive signage, and the identification of Wattandee and colonial heritage places. |
| (p6) | We support the observations that nature-based experiences need to be balanced with controlling access and reducing disturbances, such as dogs, and need to retain a ‘natural feel’ to the trails. |
| 04 Design Principles | Generally, we support the design principles, especially consideration of the cultural value of some weed species; all the ‘celebrate heritage/culture’ principles including archaeology; universal access at key access points; a place naming strategy, and balancing more lighting with ecological and light pollution issues. We strongly support the principle of creating a single continuous crown reserve for the area. |
| 05 Masterplan | We generally support the precincts defined on the map, and the inclusion of the area east of the bridge – this is a more logical precinct arrangement than in the draft plan. |



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| | <p>We support the inclusion of Russ Cottage and its grounds in the plan. We support reviving the term ‘Old Port’, but would prefer the historic terms ‘track’ or ‘path’ rather than ‘trail’, as discussed in our submission on the original plan.</p> |
| 06 Central (Civic) | <p>We generally support the design strategies, but with regard to pedestrian bridges, we do not support a Denison House-Armstrong Street or Denison House-Church Street bridge. The concept was sketched as a student design exercise 25 years ago, and its realisation since has remained problematic. We think it is time to end the fantasising about such a structure and to remove it once and for all as a consideration. Any bridge built at the Walton’s Ford site, or below the road bridge structure, should be capable of rapid removal in case of anticipated flooding – ideally a floating structure that will not impact historical archaeology or natural features. We support the filtering and better management of road run-off (which ideally would not be entering the river at all), especially with the recent large increase in hard surfaces at the east end of Moreton Terrace that will increase the volume of polluted run-off into the river.</p> |
| 07 Eastern | <p>We note the Society has a direct interest in this precinct through its management of Russ Cottage House Museum and grounds, which is within the precinct. We note the need in para 1 for freehold land to be transferred to the reserve – an alternate approach may be to develop some sort of agreement between the reserve managers and freeholders to allow the land to be managed as part of the reserve, rather than focus on tenure, although this will require active leadership by the reserve manager.</p> <p><i>North Bank</i></p> <p>We do not object to the idea of a walking track on the north bank, but would need to be engaged with developing the concept to understand its impacts, including connections with the Extended Entry Statement.</p> <p><i>South Bank</i></p> <p>We can support the ‘adventure theme’ for the area between the river bank and St Dominic’s Road as a use that interprets the historical use of much of this area as playing and sports fields for the Dominican Ladies College. We support better connections between Russ Cottage and the river bank area generally; we note that we have just invested considerable resources in building a universally accessible toilet at Russ Cottage; we do not object to the idea of a café/kiosk in the vicinity of Russ Cottage, but would need to be engaged with developing the concept to understand its impacts. We support interpretive approaches to flooding history, including lost buildings and structures, and Wattandee history. With regard to bushfire risk and sight lines, see our comments at ‘15 Bushfire Management’.</p> |
| 08 Old Port Trail | <p>We support making the Old Port Road the key historic interpretive underlay in this precinct.</p> <p>Note our comment in ‘07 Eastern’ about freehold/reserve management.</p> |



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| | <p><i>Bridge to Denison House</i></p> <p>We generally support these strategies, and emphasise the need for archaeological investigation to precede any works.</p> <p>We note fencing that will be acceptable for the interface between the reserve lands and new residential development will need to be defined and managed through the Local Planning Scheme or related planning documents. The Shire will need to take a leading role in implementing such a strategy.</p> <p><i>Riverbend</i></p> <p>We generally support these strategies, and emphasise the need for archaeological investigation to precede any works around the harbourmaster’s house site.</p> <p>A local name for this area is The Elbow, which may be a better precinct name than Riverbend.</p> |
| 09 Lagoon | <p>We generally support these strategies, including rationalisation and better management of informal walking tracks and paths; and a new bird hide that is universally accessible.</p> <p>We do not support replacing the boardwalk unless it is replaced like-with-like and is properly maintained in the future. The simple, rustic style of the boardwalk is suited to the setting and should be maintained in any replacement structure. The current boardwalk condition is a result of poor/no maintenance.</p> |
| 10 Dunes & Lookout | <p>We generally support these strategies, including rationalisation and better management of informal walking tracks and paths.</p> <p>We do not object to the idea of replacing the lookout with something architecturally significant, but would need to be engaged with developing the concept to understand its impacts. The images on page 19 suggest interesting possibilities.</p> <p>we do not object to the idea of creating a link to the cemetery, but would need to be engaged with developing the concept to understand its impacts</p> |
| 11 Planting palette | <p>We generally support the proposed palette, note our comments on ‘13 Weed Management’.</p> <p>With regard to bushfire risk and sight lines, see our comments at ‘15 Bushfire Management’.</p> |
| 12 Material palette | <p>We generally support the proposed palette.</p> |
| 13 Weed Managem’t | <p>We generally support the recommendation, although noting that new planting approaches will need to accommodate some pragmatic level of weed co-habitation – widespread reliance on the use of poisons, especially sprays, to try and control weeds has the potential for further negative impacts, as does continually disturbing areas that, in effect, keep creating new seed beds for weed species, and in turn a continuing cycle of weed removal and regrowth. It would be worthwhile to investigate other methods for long-term weed control and regeneration of native species,</p> |



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| | <p>such as Integrated Weed Management using a variety of techniques including flaming, grazing, mulching and slashing. Ideally, widespread herbicide use should not be the first choice, and this will require dedicated leadership from the reserve manager.</p> |
| 14 Surfaces & Drainage | <p>We generally support the approaches as illustrated.</p> |
| 15 Bushfire Management | <p>We generally support the approaches discussed. We note that the descriptions of desirable higher-level and discontinuous tree canopies, interspersed with non-flammable mulches, are similar to descriptions of the area in the 1850s and 60s when the old Wattandee fire management regime was in place. This was specifically banned in 1870 and enforced by local police. Photographs from the early-mid 20th century still suggest a more open landscape, probably due to intensive grazing by town livestock (horses, milk cows, goats, chickens, etc) and household and industrial firewood gathering. This makes the present landscape of densely-mixed native and weed species a fairly recent form. The reserve manager has an opportunity to engage with Wattandee knowledge holders to reinstate older fire management regimes.</p> <p>We do have some concern that the ‘selective clearing’, as described in this section, could simply facilitate the spread of weeds that thrive by colonising disturbed areas (see comments on ‘13 Weed Management’) and ultimately be counter-productive. The reserve manager will need to take a strong leadership role in successfully and sensitively integrating fire management and the other land management needs identified in this masterplan.</p> |
| 16 Costs | <p>Central – item 6.00, it would be helpful to have some breakdown of the \$1 million costing for a footbridge.</p> <p>Old Port Trail – item 2.05, boardwalk remediation for \$20,000 suggests minimal maintenance works are to be undertaken – is this correct?</p> <p>Lagoon – item 2.01, boardwalk across water + item 2.02, thick concrete paving to replace boardwalk, of 1200m² = total \$240,000 – there is no obvious reference to this in the design strategies for this precinct, either replacing the timber boardwalk with a steel and concrete structure or building a new, separate structure somewhere else in the precinct – this needs much further explanation of what is intended, and how it is consistent with the design principles and considerations for the precinct.</p> <p>Dunes – item 1.06, 20m³ of rock excavation within the precinct for \$7,000 - there is no obvious reference to this in the design strategies for this precinct – this needs further explanation of what is intended, including the site of the excavations.</p> |
| General | <p>There are several initialisms used in the document that could have been defined for a general public audience to make it easier to read. These are RV, WSUD and SPP.</p> |