

# PIONEER PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2018



Prepared by the Shire of Manjimup  
Draft Completed March 2017

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Pioneer Park is named in remembrance of its role as a the Main Camp for settlers arriving in the Walpole District as a result of a State Government special settlement scheme on land in the area of the Walpole-Nornalup Inlets in 1930.

The Park currently forms part of the adjacent National Park, vested with the Conservation Commission of Western Australia. However, processes are underway that will result in Pioneer Park being excised from the National Park in order to create a separate crown reserve, with its management to be vested with the Shire of Manjimup.

Currently the reserve provides an invaluable rest stop for Tourists travelling the South Western Highway, with ablutions and other basic facilities to cater for the needs of this tourist traffic and passive recreation for local residents.

As the home of the Walpole-Nornalup Visitors Centre, the Park is used to disseminate a wide range of information regarding the Walpole Wilderness Area, trails and other tourist attractions, both natural and man-made in the Region. The park also provides various passive recreation opportunities for the Walpole Community.

The purpose of this Management Plan is to facilitate the development and consolidation of Pioneer Park as a gateway to the Walpole Wilderness Area and an important tourist rest stop, being located between the regional centres of Bunbury and Albany.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Land Description**

Pioneer Park is legally known as Part Lot 12776, being Crown Reserve 31362 South Western Highway, Walpole. The Park, which has an area of approximately 22ha, is located in the southern section of the reserve, on the northern side of the South Western Highway within the Walpole Townsite.

An aerial photograph detailing the reserve and its location is shown overleaf as Figure No 1.

### **2.2 Tenure**

Reserve 31362 is an "A" class Crown Reserve under a Management Order to the Conservation Commission of Western Australia in accordance with the Conservation and Land Management Act 1984. It forms portion of the Walpole Wilderness Area.

That portion of the Reserve known as Pioneer Park, was subject of a 21 year lease to the Shire of Manjimup. The lease, which commenced in 1984, expired in March 2005. At that time the Commission and the Minister for the Environment gave approval for the lease area to be excised from the reserve, allowing Pioneer Park to be the subject of a separate Management Order in favour of the Shire. The parties agreed that the lease would continue on a monthly basis until the excision was finalised.

Given the time that had elapsed, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2016, Council resolved to proceed with a new 15 year lease as a more suitable temporary arrangement. The new lease grants the Shire the authority to enter into sub-lease agreements. The Department of Parks and Wildlife administrate the lease under delegation from the Conservation Commission.

At the time of this Management Plan being prepared, the excision process was yet to be finalised.

### **2.3 Walpole-Nornalup Tourism Association Inc**

The Walpole Nornalup Tourism Association (Inc) have operated the Walpole-Nornalup Visitors Centre from one of the buildings in Pioneer Park for many years. Currently there are no formal lease arrangements in place given the previous Lease from the Conservation Commission of Western Australia did not grant the Shire authority to enter into any sublease arrangements.

At its Ordinary Meeting held on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September 2016 to enter into a 5 year lease with the Tourism Association with an option to extend the lease by a further 5 years. It is anticipated that Pioneer Park will be created as a separate Crown Reserve vested with the Shire of Manjimup prior to the expiry of the lease.

A new lease will be required once the excision process is finalised to reflect the revised land description and reserve tenure.



## 2.4 Local Context

Pioneer Park is located within the Walpole Townsite in the South Ward of the Shire of Manjimup. The reserve is located on the South Western Highway directly opposite the Walpole Commercial Precinct on Nockolds Street.

Walpole, is primarily a service centre for surrounding rural businesses and for the tourism in the area. With a population of approximately 566 people (2011 census), Walpole is located on the northern shores of the picturesque Walpole-Nornalup Inlet Marine Park.

With the exception of the Walpole Light Industrial Area to the north east of the Town, urban development in Walpole is located on the southern side of the South Western Highway.

In addition to rural land holdings, various Rural-Residential developments exist in the hinterlands to the north of Walpole. These developments, together with the Walpole townsite are enveloped by the Walpole Wilderness Area, being a 363,000 ha wilderness area, which is recognised as a biodiversity hot spot with international importance.

Servicing the tourism associated with this area and members of the public traversing the South Western Highway, Walpole contains a range of tourist accommodation options including two caravan parks, two motels, holiday homes and lodging houses.

## 2.5 Regional Context

In a regional context, Walpole is located approximately 120km south of the Manjimup Townsite and 64km west of Denmark. Being within the South West Statistical Division, the town is located midway between the regional centres of Manjimup and Albany on the South Western Highway.

Walpole is surrounded by the Walpole Wilderness Area, which contains numerous natural attractions that are considered to be significant on a local, regional, state, national and international level.

As described within the "Walpole Wilderness and Adjacent Parks and Reserves" Management Plan 2008, *"the Walpole Wilderness is a vast natural and wild landscape embracing the essence of the southern forests and coast of Western Australia. Old Majestic jarrah, karri and tingle forests surround imposing granite peaks, peaceful rivers, heathlands, wetlands and tranquil inlets, and overlook picturesque sandy beaches, sheer coastal cliffs and the Southern Ocean."*

## **3.0 Park Description**

### **3.1 History**

In response to unemployment rates associated with the Great Depression, the State Government proposed a special settlement scheme on land in the area of the Walpole-Nornalup Inlets. This resulted in the area being surveyed and 120 men arriving at "Main Camp", now known as Pioneer Park, in August 1930. A few were accompanied by their families.

Facilities within Main Camp were basic, with tents used for accommodation and dining facilities. Buildings were limited to a small tin shed used by the blacksmith and a depot for the storage of tools, stockfeed and seed. Mr Bob Nockolds used a tin shed to operate the local store/post office, but soon replaced it with a new store now developed with Pioneer Store on Nockolds Street.

Cattle were brought in and allocated one for each farm. Horses arrived in 1931 and were used on a shared basis. Horseyard Hill is located to the north of the current Pioneer Park and can be accessed via walking trails.

Residents of the camp were initially employed for road construction and land clearing, with the majority wishing to become farmers. In two ballots held in October and November 1930 a total of 75 blocks were allocated, each being around 120 acres (48ha). Ultimately 100 blocks were partially cleared, although 15 were returned to the Forest Department, having been deemed unsuitable.

The townsite was subsequently identified in 1932 and officially named Walpole in 1934.

### **3.2 Landform**

#### **3.2.1 Description of Topography**

Pioneer Park sits below the South Western Highway, generally sloping downward as you move north, falling some 5 metres from its southern to northern boundary.

#### **3.2.2 Existing Vegetation**

The majority of the Park consists of parkland cleared Peppermint Trees, although a more significant stand of vegetation is located to the north of the Visitors Rest Stop described in section 3.5 of this Management Plan.

#### **3.2.3 Hydrology**

A natural stream is located adjacent to the northern boundary of the Park, located to the north of an existing strategic firebreak.

#### **3.2.4 Drainage**

Given the topography of the land, surface water generally flows northward across the reserve. Several open drains associated with the South Western Highway traverse the Park, draining to the stream to the north.



### **3.3 Available Services**

Pioneer Park is connected to both Western Power's overhead power supply and the Water Corporation's reticulated water service.

The adjacent Walpole urban development is serviced with a reticulated sewerage service, which passes the site along Nockold Street in the adjacent townsite to the south. Due to the location of the existing buildings and the topography of Pioneer Park the buildings are connected to the reticulated sewerage system via a storage and pump system.

Telecommunication Services are available to the site.

### **3.4 Access**

Pioneer Park has frontage to only one gazetted road, being the South West Highway. Access into the Park is currently provided via two, two way asphalt crossovers to the Highway. The more western of these two crossovers is considered the main entrance to the Park.

Additional informal access ways shown on the aerial photography were established as part of a strategic firebreak along the northern boundary. Access points where the firebreak connects to the South Western Highway have been deemed by Main Roads WA as unsuitable, except in emergencies.

### **3.5 Trails**

The Walpole Wilderness contains numerous trails, catering to both walkers and cyclists. Information regarding these trails is available within Pioneer Park, both through the Visitors Centre and several information boards located within the Park.

The Mundi Biddi cycle trail is a world class 1000km nature based off-road cycling experience that has been established through an undeveloped natural corridor from Mundaring to Albany. Pioneer Park is an identified trailhead and rest stop for users of the trail.

The significant walking trail of the Bibbulman Track which also stretches 1000km from Kalamunda in the Perth Hills to Albany, winding through the scenic South West, passes through the Walpole Townsite. Whilst the track does not pass through Pioneer Park, it traverses connects to the South Western Highway on the western edge of the Walpole Townsite in extremely close proximity to the western edge of the Park. Being visible from the track, Pioneer Park provides a trailhead rest stop opportunity for the trail users within the Walpole Townsite.

Numerous other trails are located in the area, including Horseyard Hill, being a 2km bush walking trail from Pioneer Park to Horseyard Hill, where horses were kept before being passed onto early settlers of Walpole. The track includes an interpretative plaques, illustrated by two local artists, explaining the local flora and historic aspects of the area.

## **3.6 Existing Development and Use**

### **3.6.1 Visitors Centre Building**

The Walpole-Nornalup Visitors Centre occupies the most predominant building within Pioneer Park, being a single storey timber framed and clad building with a zincalume roof.

Built in 1987, the building was constructed as a joint venture between the community then named the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM - now known as the Department of Parks and Wildlife). The building was modelled on an early settlers cottage, typically built in the area and was built with the idea of housing CALM literature and tourist information.

Due to increasing demands, the building was extended to its current form in 1999.

The Visitors Centre is located towards the center of the Parks frontage to the South Western Highway. The building is well setback adjacent to the northern boundary of the Park, making it barely visible from the Highway.

Access to the centre is provided via a gravel carpark located to the south east of the building and a footpath from the South Western Highway. The carpark is accessed via a sealed driveway from the Highway.

### **3.6.2 Ablutions/Rest Stop**

A substantial brick and colourbond ablutions building is located to the east of the Visitors Centre building, providing separate amenities for males, females and includes accessible facilities,

Access to the ablutions is provided via a sealed driveway from the South Western Highway that facilities access to the Visitors Centre carpark area (being of gravel construction) and a substantial asphalt carpark, established as a tourist rest stop, As shown on the aerial photograph on page 4, the rest stop is located south east of the ablutions building.

A secondary carpark area, located in proximity of the Visitors Centre is currently an informal carpark area of gravel construction. The carpark surface and the associated access to the Visitors Centre is not suitable in terms of access for many people with a disability, being a sloped area with informal drainage and a loose gravel surface.

### **3.6.3 Effluent Disposal**

As detailed in section 3.3, effluent disposal within the Park is facilitated by a storage and pump system. This system is located between the Visitors Centre and the Ablutions.

#### 3.6.4 RV Dump Point

In addition to servicing the existing buildings, the effluent disposal system services a Recreational Vehicle Dump Point that is located between the Ablutions Building and the visitors Centre.

The Visitors Centre have raised concern over the potential for conflict between vehicles accessing the dump point and pedestrians walking between the ablutions/carpark and the Visitors Centre building.

#### 3.6.5 Tourist Information

In addition to information provided within the Visitors Centre, tourist information is currently provided at several locations on separate structures. These are located adjacent to the rest stop and in the centre island of the Visitors Centre carpark.

#### 3.6.6 Visitor Numbers

Statistics relating to the number of visitors attending the Walpole-Nornalup Visitors Centre are available and reflected within the "Warren Blackwood Visitor Servicing Business Plan". No statistics are however available on the total number of visitors to Pioneer Park.

#### 3.6.7 Other Infrastructure

Facilities to service the rest stop and facilitate recreational use of the reserve are provided in the form of a large covered barbeque area of timber pole and frame construction. The barbeque area has a concrete floor and wash up area for visitor use. Several picnic tables and benches, in various conditions are located within the treed area of the park.

#### 3.6.8 Community Markets

In addition to the tourist information centre, rest spot and trailhead facilities, Pioneer Park is used by the Walpole community for Community Markets, positioned to attract the passing tourist traffic.

Up to 10 market days are held each year between October and April each year. The markets generally take the form of 3x3 marquee's with portable tables with food orientated stalls being concentrated within area of the roofed barbeque shelter.

## **4.0 Land Use Considerations**

### **4.1 Purpose of Management Order**

As detailed within section 2.2 of this Management Plan, Pioneer Park forms portion of a greater crown reserve, being Reserve 31362. A Management Order for the reserve charges the Conservation Commission of Western Australia with management of the reserve as an "A" class reserve, being for the purpose of a National Park.

That portion of Reserve 31362 known as Pioneer Park was previously the subject of a 21 year lease to the Shire, which expired in March 2005. Whilst it has been proposed for many years that the lease area would be excised as a separate reserve to be vested with the Shire, the excision is yet to occur.

It is anticipated that once Pioneer Park is created as a separate Crown Reserve, a Management Order will be issued to the Shire for the purposes of Recreation, with an appropriate power to sub-lease portions of the park for Community Purposes.

### **4.2 Strategic Documents**

#### **4.2.1 Warren-Blackwood Regional Planning Strategy**

The Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC) prepared the Warren-Blackwood Regional Planning Strategy (1997) to provide a 20-25 year planning framework for the region, comprising the Shires of Manjimup, Nannup, Bridgetown and Boyup Brook. The Strategy was based on five specific strategies covering Urban and Infrastructure, Rural Land Use, Resource Development, Conservation and Coastal.

Along with many other recommendations, the Strategy recommended the preparation of a Coastal Management Strategy for the Augusta to Walpole Coastal area.

#### **4.2.2 Augusta-Walpole Coastal Strategy**

In July 2009 the Western Australian Planning Commission finalised the Augusta-Walpole Coastal Strategy. The purpose of the strategy is to outline a broad planning approach to assist the WAPC and local governments in making decisions in respect of local land use and local coastal planning over until 2024.

Objectives detailed within the Strategy include, but are not limited to:-

- ensure that development complements the natural landscape and wilderness
- provide opportunities for sustainable and responsible tourism and recreation.

In respect of the Walpole Townsite, the Strategy recognised that the town has “a major function along this stretch by virtue of its main road location and its accessibility to Demark and Augusta.” The Strategy furthermore recognises Walpole’s fascinating history and recommends that every effort should be made to conserve and interpret heritage at all levels of planning, acknowledging that appropriate use and interpretation of heritage sites provides depth of meaning to places for visitors and residents alike, being a key factor in drawing visitors.

#### 4.2.3 Walpole Wilderness Area

In 2008 the Department of Environment and Conservation and the Conservation Commission of Western Australia prepared a Management Plan the ‘Walpole Wilderness and Adjacent Parks and Reserves’. The Management Plan was prepared with the assistance of the Walpole Wilderness Area Community Advisory Committee and local officers of the Department which was then known as the Department of Conservation and Land Management.

As reflected within the Management Plan, the ‘Walpole Wilderness Area’ totals approximately 325,116ha that is recognised for its:

- Unique natural, cultural, scenic and landscape values (CALM 1990);
- Wilderness qualities;
- Old-growth forests;
- Outstanding and complex mosaic of landscapes;
- Location within an internationally recognised ‘biodiversity hotspot’;
- Many rivers that originate within and pass through the area;
- Range of recreation and tourism opportunities from wilderness hiking to world class facilities such as the Tree Top Walk; and
- Rich Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural heritage.

A significant portion of the Management Plan relates to Visitor Management and Opportunities. As stated on page the objective is to “provide visitors with a range of sustainable nature-based experiences to the extent that they are consistent with conserving the natural and cultural values of the area and minimising conflict between visitors”.

Liaising with regional Tourism Associations and potential off-site tourism infrastructure (focusing on provision of opportunities that cannot be catered elsewhere) are identified as key elements to achieving the objective.

The Management Plan also acknowledges the importance of ensuring access for visitors with a disability, where appropriate. The Plan highlights that the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that 18% of the population has a disability.

### **4.3 Local Planning Scheme No 4**

The provisions of the Shire of Manjimup Local Planning Scheme No 4 (LPS No 4) identifies Pioneer Park as a "Local Reserve" for the purposes of Park and Recreation.

As detailed in clause 3.4.1 of LPS No 4, "A person must not commence or carry out development on a Local Reserve without first having obtained planning approval, under Part 10 of the Scheme." The provisions of clause 3.4.5 clarify that a person, by definition shall include the local government.

Given the provisions of LPS No 4, the Shire of Manjimup must therefore grant planning approval prior to any development within Pioneer Park.

### **4.4 Threat of Bush Fire**

Given the location of the "A" class National Park reserve on the northern boundary, vegetation to the north of Pioneer Park represents a real and present danger to infrastructure within the Park.

### **4.5 Summary of Identified Issues/Constraints**

Constraints to the development and use of Pioneer Park are summarised as follows:

#### **4.5.1 External Access**

As the South Western Highway is a major road under the care and management of Main Roads WA, Main Roads approval is required for any modification to the existing access arrangements.

#### **4.5.2 Internal Access**

The current gravel carpark located adjacent to the visitors centre is not suitably constructed to facilitate access by people with accessibility issues. Upgrades to the carpark surface and associated path network are therefore strongly recommended.

#### **4.5.3 Standard of Existing Furniture**

The standard of existing Park Infrastructure such as seating ranges significantly in terms of its appearance, standard and condition. It is recommended that the existing infrastructure such as seating and bins are progressively replaced with a standard suite of Furniture, reflecting the recently updated furniture within the adjacent Walpole Central Business District.

#### **4.5.4 Effluent Disposal**

The ability to establish other buildings within the Park that require connection to reticulated sewerage is limited given the need to use pressure pumps to deliver effluent to the Water Corporations reticulated sewerage system in Nockolds Street to the south of the Park.

#### 4.5.5 Existing Vegetation

Whilst the existing vegetation provides a significant contribution to the amenity of the Park, the location and density of trees limits the ability to establish additional infrastructure without clearing.

Should any clearing be proposed, prior approval must be obtained from the Department of Environment and Regulation.

#### 4.5.6 Existing Signage

There appears to be a lack of both internal and external signage relating to Pioneer Park. For example, there are no advanced warning signs identifying the park entrance and/or the location of the Visitors Centre.

#### 4.5.7 Potential Traffic Conflicts

The Walpole-Nornalup Visitors Centre has previously raised concern with the Shire over the location of the RV Dump Point and the potential conflicts with vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

Shire Officers consider that the informal nature of the current carpark and directional signage (within the site) are a major contributor to this issue. For example, whilst the gravel carpark is intended to be one-way, the associated infrastructure including signage result in many vehicles travelling in the wrong direction when entering the carpark area.

## **5.0 Proposed Management Plan**

### **5.1 Purpose**

The purpose of this Management Plan is to facilitate the development and consolidation of Pioneer Park as a gateway to the Walpole Wilderness Area and an important information point and tourist rest stop, being located between the regional centres of Bunbury and Albany.

### **5.2 Aims and Objectives**

This aims and objectives of this management plan are:

- a) To increase the use of Pioneer Park as a physical and educational gateway to the Walpole Wilderness Area and the region, by:
  - Improving access to the Walpole-Nornalup Visitors Centre, including the installation of accessible pathways and access to the building for those persons with accessibility issues;
  - Increasing the exposure of the Visitors Centre through appropriate signage and the selective clearing of trees located between the building and the South Western Highway;
  - Ensuring that information regarding tourist attractions, both natural and built are kept up to date and conveyed to the public in a co-ordinated manner within the Park;
  - Increasing the attractions for passing tourist traffic to stop and explore the park, townsite and region.
  
- b) Increase the number and duration of tourist stops in Walpole, with particular reference to tourists transitioning between tourist attractions through:
  - Improving external and internal signage relating to Pioneer Park and the Visitors Centre.
  - Increasing the number and range of activities located within the Park;
  - Improving vehicle and pedestrian access to the whole of Pioneer Park;
  - Improvements to existing park infrastructure such as seating and shelters; and
  - Continuation of Pioneer Park as the site of the Walpole Community Markets.
  
- c) Recognise the role that Pioneer Park played in the settlement and development of the Walpole townsite and region and community aspirations for the park through appropriate interpretative signage and artwork;
  
- d) To clarify the role of the Shire and Walpole-Nornalup Visitors Centre in the development and management of the Pioneer Park.
  
- e) To consolidate the use of the Park as a local passive recreation facility.



### **5.3 Day to Day Management and Operations**

In accordance with the lease arrangements between the Conservation Commission and the Shire of Manjimup, the Shire is solely responsible for day to day maintenance and management within the Park. That said, the Walpole-Nornalup Visitors Centre is responsible for the Visitors Centre building and its immediate surrounds.

With the proposed Pioneer Park Reserve to be vested with the Shire of Manjimup, the Shire will continue to be responsible for the day to day management, maintenance and development of the Park. Once the new reserve is established a new formal lease will be entered into with the Walpole-Nornalup Visitors Centre.

### **5.4 Potential for Future Development**

Given the area of land available and the likely future Management Order, there is a significant potential for the Park to be further developed for non-commercial recreational and tourist needs.

### **5.5 Draft Development Concept Plan**

Seeking to support applications for grant funding, the Walpole-Nornalup Visitors Centre has prepared a Draft Development Concept Plan has been prepared for the Park. A copy of this plan is shown attached.

## 6.0 Recommendations

### 6.1 Management

- a) The Shire continue to progress the excision of Pioneer Park from the adjacent
- b) Day to day management of Pioneer Park remains with the Shire of Manjimup;
- c) Proposals for improvements and/or alterations to the existing park and infrastructure be referred to the Walpole-Nornalup Visitors Centre, Walpole Town Centre Revitalisation Committee and the wider Walpole community.

### 6.2 Proposed Improvements

Utilising grant funding (where possible) and Shire of Manjimup funds, that the following improvements be implemented within Pioneer Park

- a) Improve access to the Walpole-Nornalup Visitors Centre, through:
  - i. the upgrading of the existing gravel carpark for a formally drained and constructed carpark with an asphalt surface with appropriate signage;
  - ii. The the installation of accessible pathways and access to the building and other park infrastructure for those persons with accessibility issues;
- b) Improving external and internal signage relating to Pioneer Park and the Visitors Centre.
- c) Increase the exposure of the Visitors Centre through appropriate signage and the selective clearing of trees located between the building and the South Western Highway;
- d) Update and progressively expand the existing Park Furniture using the suite of furniture recently established within the adjacent Walpole Town Centre.
- e) Complete an update of existing information regarding tourist attractions, within both the natural and built environment;
- f) Ensure the information signs are kept up to date and conveyed to the public in a co-ordinated manner within the Park;
- g) Increase the attraction for passing tourist traffic to stop and explore the park, townsite and region through an upgrade of the existing park infrastructure including shelters and seating;
- h) Increasing the number and range of activities through the construction of a nature based playground within the Park;
- i) Improving vehicle and pedestrian access to the whole of Pioneer Park;
- j) Improvements to existing park infrastructure such as seating and shelters;
- k) Continuation of Pioneer Park as the site of the Walpole Community Markets;
- l) In order to monitor the current visitor numbers and impact of this Management Plan, a program using traffic counters at the entrances to the park be implemented to establish a base-line data on visitor numbers;

m) Development of formal proposals in consultation with the Walpole-Nornalup Visitors Centre and Walpole Heritage Society to recognise the role that Pioneer Park played in the settlement and development of the Walpole townsite through appropriate interpretative signage and artwork.

## **7.0 Review**

To ensure that the recommendations of this Management Plan are progressively implemented, it is recommended that the Shire of Manjimup have regard to the recommendations of the plan as part of the annual budget process.

It is furthermore recommended that this Management Plan be formally reviewed within 5-7 years of its adoption.