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Harrismith Walk Trails Opportunities Plan

for the Shire of Wickepin

2014



Project design and documentation by:



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1.1 About This Report

This Walk Trails Opportunities Plan has been prepared to assist the Shire of Wickepin (the Shire) enhance its existing trail network in the town of Harrismith.

This Plan has been prepared to highlight opportunities to improve the existing Harrismith trails network, which radiates from the Visitor Information Bay and largely focuses on the wildflower trails around the Town. This plan seeks to identify broad strategies to:

- improve legibility and enhance accessibility of the trails
- increase usage of the trails by locals and visitors alike
- elicit curiosity and raise awareness of the history and natural beauty of the town

1.2 Background

In the early part of the twenty-first century local residents, with support of the Shire, developed a walking and driving trail, which radiates from the Harrismith Visitor Information Bay and wraps around the Airstrip.

In 2013, the Shire applied for and was successful in obtaining grant funding from Lotterywest for the development of a Trails Master Plan for Wickepin, Harrisimith and Yearlering. The primary focus of the Master Plan was on the town of Wickepin. However, broad strategies for the towns of Harrisimith and Yearlering were also sought. This Opportunities Plan provides these requested broad strategies.

2.0 Place

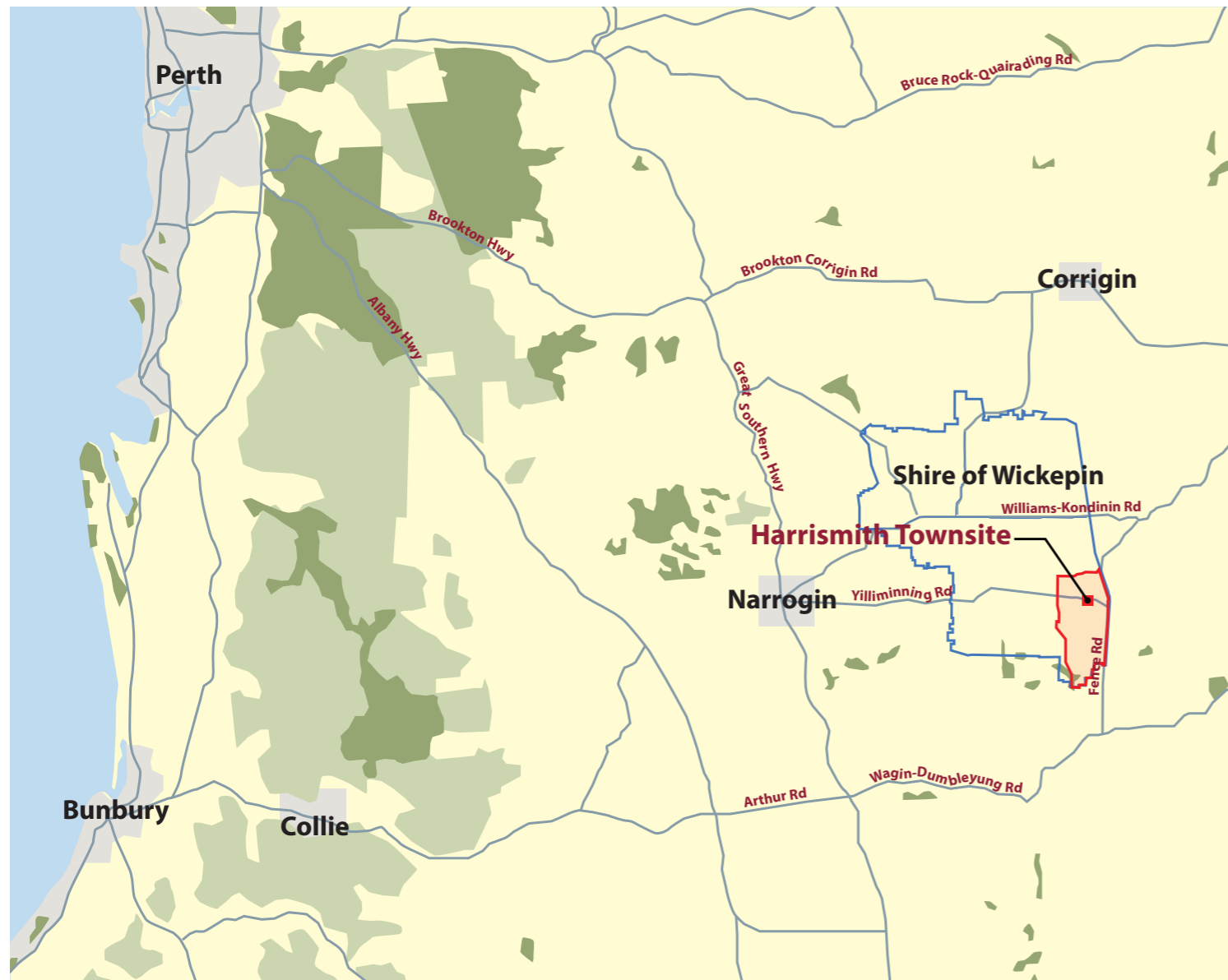
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2.0

2.1 Context

Harrismith is located approximately 260 kilometres south-east of Perth between the towns of Wickepin and Kulin. The town of Harrismith was gazetted in 1915 and forms part of the Shire of Wickepin, a broadacre grain and sheep farming area.

2.2 Regional



Regional Context Plan

2.3 Local



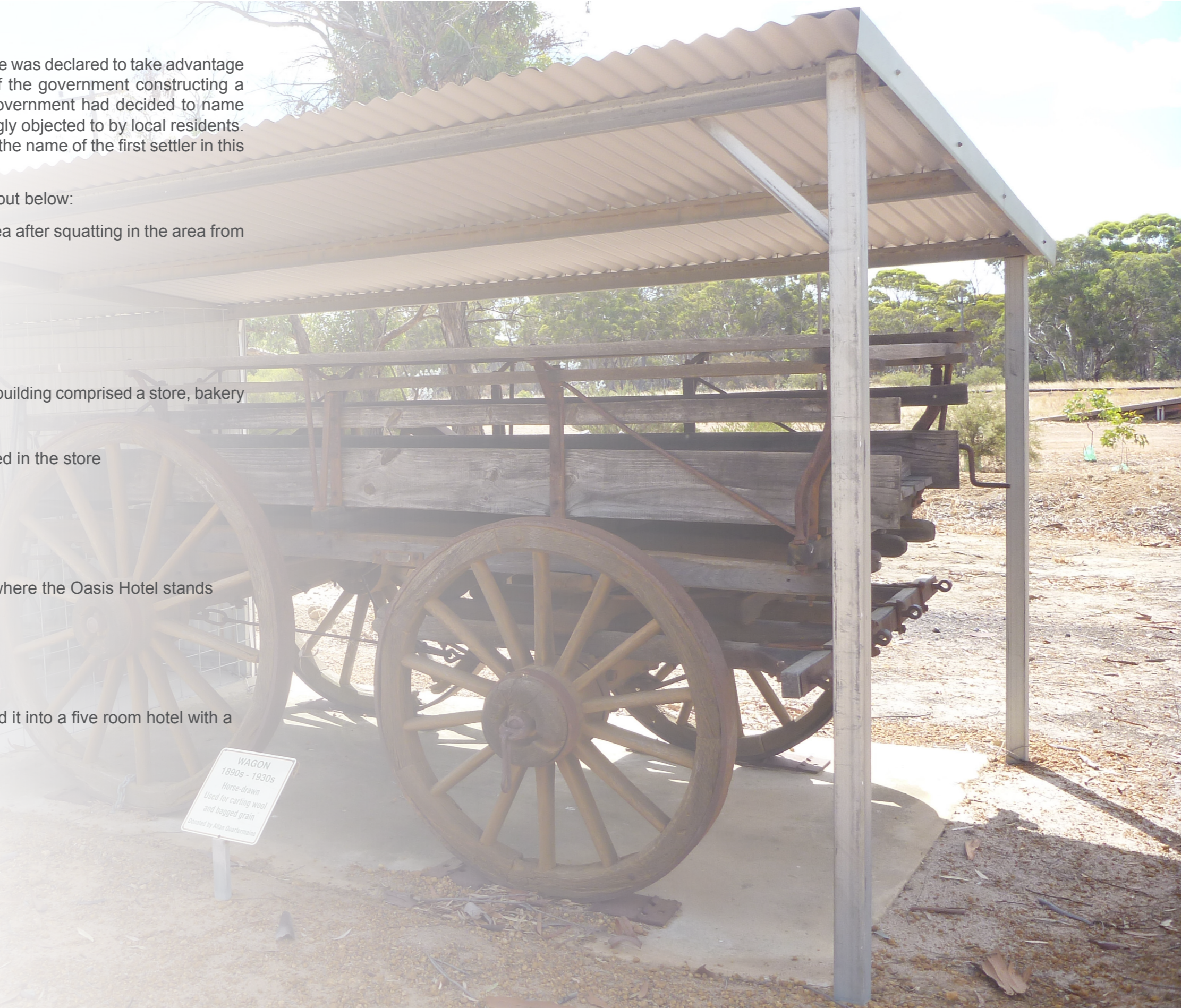
Local Context Plan

2.4 Historic Context

The town of Harrismith was gazetted in 1915. The town site was declared to take advantage of growth in the area, which came about as a result of the government constructing a railway line from Yillimining to Kondinin in 1914. The government had decided to name the siding here “South Dorakin”, but the name was strongly objected to by local residents. They suggested the name Harrismith, after Harry Smith, the name of the first settler in this vicinity. The name was approved in 1914.

Some key dates in the development of the town are set out below:

- 1896 William Justice Smith granted first block in the area after squatting in the area from about 1868
- 1906 Rabbit proof fence was built through the area
- 1914 Railway line complete
- 1915 Harrismith was gazetted
- 1916 First shop opened in Harrismith by Mr Moore. The building comprised a store, bakery and residence.
Later that year a post and telephone office opened in the store
Recreation land set aside in Harrismith
- 1917 The cemetery was set aside on Location 13990
- 1919 First school built in Harrismith was opened.
- 1926 The Kira Ora Hostel (Boarding House) opened, where the Oasis Hotel stands
- 1937 CHB weighbridge constructed
- c.1950 Goods Shed constructed
- 1958 Uniting Church and Hall built
- 1962 Ruth Astbury purchased the Hostel and converted it into a five room hotel with a new façade
- 1971 The Harrismith School was closed
- 1982 Last parcel freight to Harrismith
- 1999 Goods Shed relocated to Visitor Information Bay



2.5 Existing Town Places

Harrismith is located 45km south east of Wickiepin. It is a small town with a population of approximately of 99 people. The town has a small hotel, a caravan park, a golf course, sports oval facilities, a playground and an airstrip. Other services are offered from nearby Tincurrin.

Off the main street the visitor-resting bay has been lovingly planned with displays of historical machinery assembled by local community members. It also includes information about the Rabbit Proof Fence and contains a relocated Goods Shed, which is located adjacent to the railway line. The Shed is open to the public and contains memorabilia about the town and information on the wildflowers for which the area is renowned.

There is an existing walk trail and drive trail, which takes visitors around the natural bush surrounding the air strip in search of wildflowers.

Whilst the town is small in size its renowned for its Christmas parties at the Oasis Hotel hence the town's slogan:

“Wildflowers & Wildtimes”
HARRISMITH
 We've got it all!



Entry Statement



Goods Shed



Community Centre



Hotel

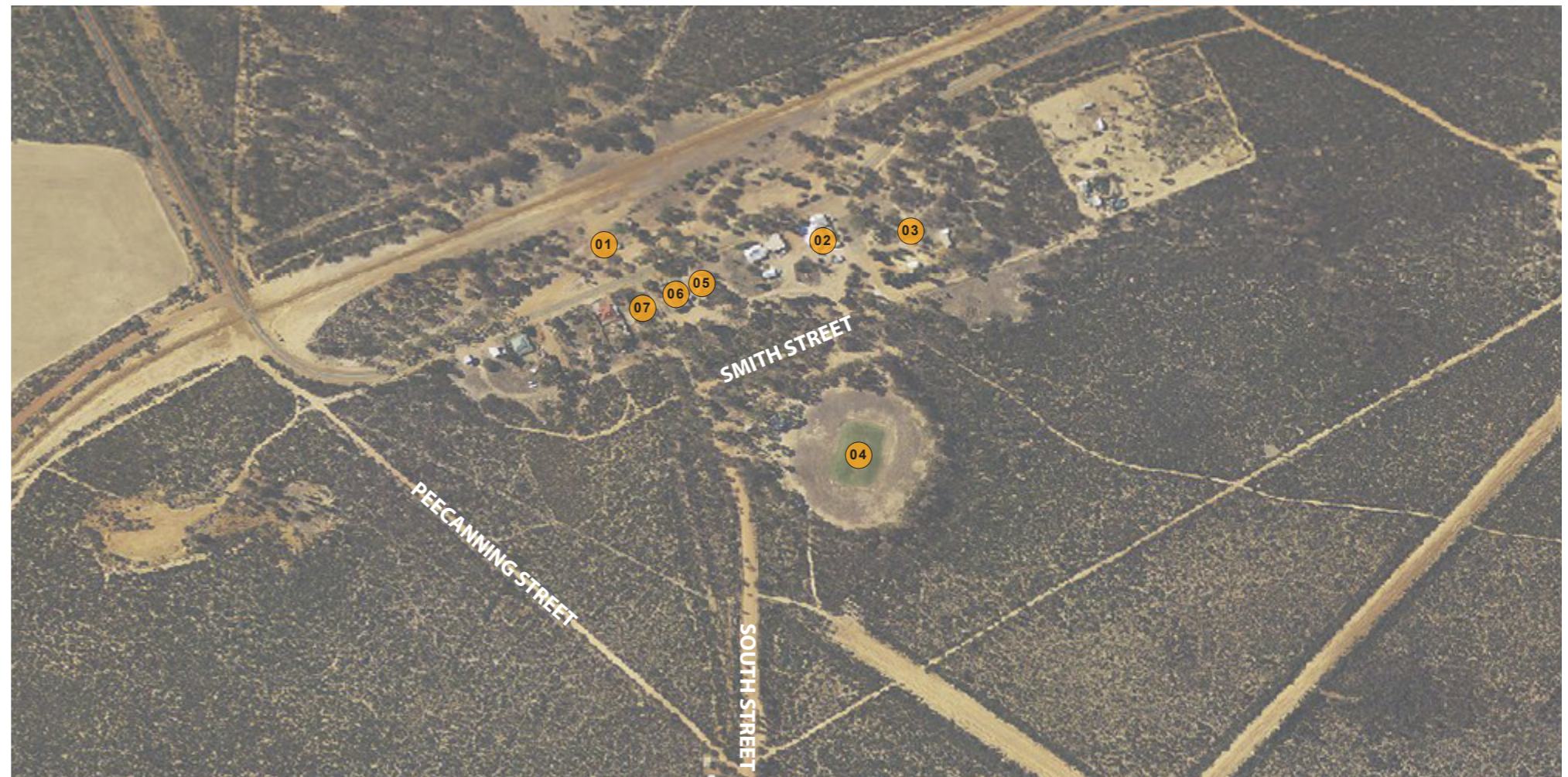


Diagram of Existing Town Places

LEGEND

- 01** Machinery Display
- 02** Oasis Hotel
- 03** Caravan Park
- 04** Sports Ground
- 05** PlayGround
- 06** Harrismith Community Centre
- 07** Uniting Church



Interpretive Sign



Wild Flowers



Machinery



Visitor Information Sign

2.6 Existing Trail Condition

In spring time the bush surrounding Harrismith is abloom with a wide variety of wildflowers including orchids, verticordias, grevilleas and banksias. The Wildflower Walk Trail and Drive seeks to capitalise on the beauty and rarity of these flowers.

The entrance to the Wildflower Walk Trail is approximately 700 metres from the Visitor Information Bay, south of the caravan park on the boundary of the sports oval. The walking trail has three length options, which meanders through the natural bush and along the side of the airstrip.

The gravel trails are lightly timbered but with a predominance of low shrubs. There are timber directional signs along the length of the walks with arrows corresponding to the various walk options.

The Wildflower Drive commences at the Visitor Information Bay. The visitor bay has machinery with explanatory signage; a goods shed providing information on the history of the town and about the wildflowers; an interpretive panel showcasing the Rabbit Proof Fence; and covered seating facilities.

A directional sign, which is a faded blue street sign grouped with five other similar signs, tells motorists to head down South Street to commence the journey. There are timber directional signs with yellow arrows providing direction to drivers along the route. The trail includes an expedition up and down the airstrip.



Diagram of Existing Heritage Precinct Trail Conditions

The Harrismith walk and drive trail and supporting heritage displays have been carefully considered and laid out. The following opportunities seek to support the existing initiatives to improve legibility and enhance accessibility of the trails; and to increase usage of the trails by locals and visitors alike.

3.1 Wayfinding Improves the Journey

The wildflower walk and drive has been carefully considered with a header board and various directional markings. However, there are sections of the path where the next direction point cannot be seen and the desire to continue the journey may wain.

- Walk the trail and identify spots where additional directional signage would be beneficial.
- Consider providing additional colour to the signage so that they are more visible for long distances.
- The connection to the drive trail from the header board at the walk entrance (to the end of Balyon Street) is not clear. Equally, signage firmly establishing the route of the drive is not as strong as it could be.
- Provide larger directional signage along the drive to help motorists navigate the journey.

3.2 Update Trail Headers

The trail header board at the end of Balyon Street could be updated to improve readability and to include text to entice a visitor to venture out onto the walk.

- Update graphics of header board to clearly demarcate the routes of the walk.
- Add text to explain that the wildflowers are best seen in the springtime and to challenge visitors to explore. Also highlight that walking/driving on the airstrip as shown on the information panel is intended/acceptable.
- Provide additional panels with a picture, names and details of common wildflowers found in the area to inform the novice wildflower watcher.

3.3 Caravan Park Connection

The caravan park is a source of potential trail users. However, there is no information available at the park to encourage or explain to guests how they can connect with the nearby trail.

- Trail information on the location of the wildflower walk should be provided at the caravan park – for example on the side of the toilet block.

3.4 Visitor Information Board

Improvements could be made to the Visitor Information Board to improve way finding to the Wildflower Walk and to provide an understanding to visitors of the history of the town.

- The Visitor Information Board should be updated to clearly show how to get to the start of the wildflower walk and drive. Graphics (maps) should be simplified. Complementary text should also be provide to:
 - » Welcome visitors to the town
 - » Challenge visitors explore the town through embarking on the wildflower walk or drive
 - » Provide some historic context to the establishment and evolution of the town.

3.5 Faded & Inconspicuous Interpretive Signage

There are many timber signs dotted throughout the town with text (such as a former street name or building names) etched in. The text appears to have been once painted, but the paint has long gone leaving the signage difficult to read.

- Undertake an audit of the timber signs to understand where they are located and what they represent.
- Repair and make legible the text on the signs.
- Consider whether these provide sufficient interest for their own walk trail.

3.6 Playground a Lost Opportunity

A wonderful mural has been installed on the fence of the playground opposite the Visitor Information Bay. However, this obscures views to the playground and would obstruct views of children playing whilst their parents take a break from driving.

- Provide a cross walk to the playground from the Visitor Information Bay
- Consider relocating the mural to the back wall of the playground to open view lines to the facility.

3.7 History

There is much history about Harrismith in the Goods Shed. Care should be taken to care for and value add to this repository.

- Ensure all information displayed in the Goods Shed is copied and catalogued by the Wickiepin Library (contained within the Community Centre).
- Undertake Oral Histories of residents and former residents to ensure stories about the town are recorded.
- Consider preparing interpretive panels, which collate all the information on the history and evolution of the town.

4.0 Projects

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4.0

4.1 Sign Upgrade



Updated trail header board to include picture or diagrams of wild flower varieties

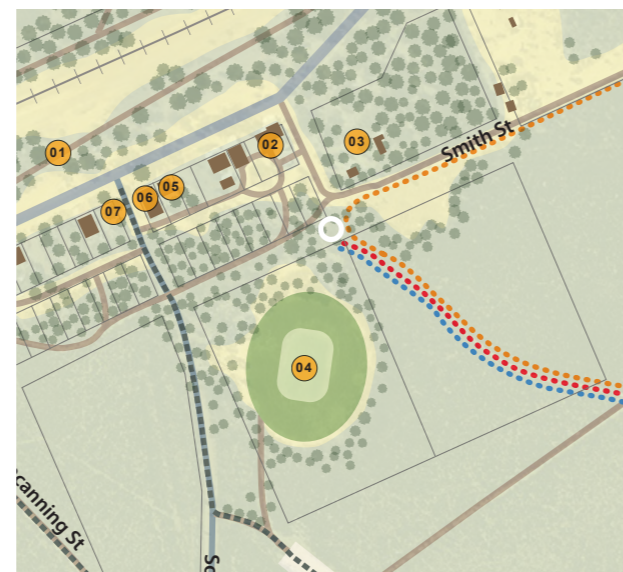
4.2 Trail Upgrade



Improvements to drive trail to include coloured bollards and signage to direct and entice cars along the journey



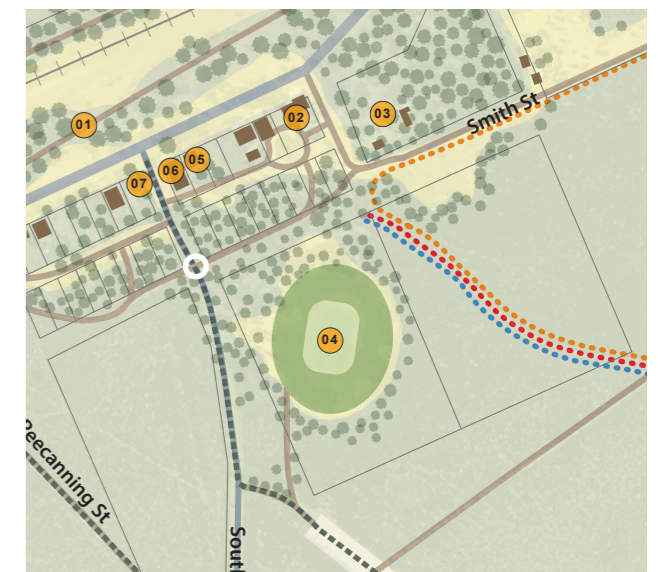
Photo of existing sign



Plan showing sign location



Photo of existing drive trail



Plan showing location of trail improvements

