

RESPONSE TO PINJARRA TOWN CENTRE REVITALISATION PLAN

Having been born at Murray Districts Hospital in the 1950s and subsequently attending Pinjarra Senior High School in the late 1960s I have always retained a fondness and affinity for Pinjarra. A recent drive around the central part of the Pinjarra Town reminded me of its rustic charm, historic and heritage sights, and its pre-eminent location on the beautiful Murray River. Pinjarra reminds us of those similar iconic country towns dotted all over Australia which connect us to our pioneering history and also retain that rural and rustic charm.

Understandably the population of Pinjarra will increase substantially in the next few decades for all the reasons articulated in the Revitalisation Plan, but it would also be a shame, as noted in the Plan, if Pinjarra became another part of the ever burgeoning metropolitan sprawl, losing its unique character and identity and hence its appeal in regard to a lifestyle and tourist destination.

From an environmental point of view, the Plan should be commended for giving due sensitivity to the retention of natural vegetation, waterfront and wetland areas within the town to allow “Green Space Links” throughout the planned area with appropriate pedestrian routes to allow a green walkway. During my recent drive through the town area I was impressed with the diversity of native trees including a range of Eucalypts (Jarrah, Tuart, Marri, Flooded Gum, River Gum or Rose Gum) both natural to the Pinjarra area and others introduced from other parts of Western Australia. These trees appear to be of various ages, including a number of old trees which provide nesting sites for a variety of birds and habitat for other indigenous creatures. The diversity included clumps of Eucalypts close to the riverfront as well as some impressive avenues of introduced gums, such as the beautiful drive along Roe Avenue with its stately Rose Gums (*Eucalyptus Grandis*).

Retaining as much of this local vegetation as possible is highly recommended to support the required “Green Space Links” ; and the importance of old trees, with their potential nesting hollows needs due consideration.

Also, some consideration needs to be given to the replanting of new trees in the area of the Plan. Recently some non-native deciduous trees have been planted in the area behind the new shopping precinct along Murray and James streets. While they may look attractive they are not part of the natural Australian ecology and habitat and also make a substantial mess when the leaves fall. Locally, where I live in Greenfields, some streets, such as Mississippi Drive and Bortolo Drive have had a verge planting of the dwarf variety of the red flowering gum (*Corymbia ficifolia*) which creates a beautiful vista during its summer flowering as well as supporting local bees and nectar loving birds.

One of the existing highlights of Pinjarra is the parklands and wetlands adjoining the Murray River in the town centre and adjacent areas. As articulated in the Plan, “the wetlands and areas of biodiversity value within the strategy area therefore need to be protected and accommodate within open space areas, reserves and conservation links as part of the revitalized Town Centre.” While the majority of wetlands within the town area are deemed “Conservation Category Wetlands”, the retention of wetlands in general needs a priority consistent with the fact that so many wetland areas along the Swan coastal plain and adjoining areas have already been lost to development, never to be seen again; and with that loss is a substantial negative impact on biodiversity.

It is also worth considering that eco-tourism will only become more valuable and more important in the future as the environmental conscience and interest of the general populace continues to develop and grow. People are more likely to protect those aspects of the natural environment that they are aware of, or made aware of. Hence, there is some scope for interpretive signage and information, along the riverbank and the small tracts of bushland, describing the names of the flora and fauna that one may encounter, such as the beautiful and fascinating water birds that inhabit the Murray River close to the town centre. Even a few name tags on the trees and the importance of various species to the history of Pinjarra and the Peel area could be of interest to a casual tourist, who may not get to the Tourist Information Centre.

I have recently been made aware of the fact that some see the Tourist Information Centre as being mediocre in what it offers to the passing tourist. Pinjarra is not only the administrative centre of the Murray Shire, but also the gateway to those beautiful natural areas and reserves that are found within the shire, such as Lane Poole Reserve, including one of the most pristine sections of the Bibbulum Track as it winds through the Murray River valley, as well as the lesser known Munda Biddi and Marrinup Trails. Providing interpretive and educative material at the Centre would be highly valuable and assist with the growing interest in eco-tourism. Again, people are more likely to support the protection of those areas and aspects of the natural environment that they are familiar with or aware of.

It is also important that the Plan incorporates a modern and environmentally friendly waste collection and removal system. While there currently is a collection of re-cyclable materials for residents, the permanent “rubbish” bins along the main streets seem to be of the generic type with no facility for separating those items which can be recycled. Having dedicated bins for different waste materials not only reduces the amount of waste material going in to landfill, but also has an educative component in raising or maintaining environmental awareness in both locals as well as the casual visitor.

Overall it is apparent that a lot of thought, consultation and consideration has already gone in to the very substantial Town Centre Revitalisation Plan. Hopefully the ideas and suggestions raised in this response will also be considered in regard to protecting and enhancing some of the beautiful and important aspects of the Pinjarra Town area.

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