



Swan Region Snapshot

No: 1

Focus on Perth Hills District

Welcome to the first **Swan Region Snapshot**. It is designed to keep everyone in the loop regarding the many projects that Swan Region has in train. Each **Snapshot** will focus on a different issue and record and celebrate your contributions to *our environment, our future*.

Paul Brown

Paul Brown
Swan Regional Manager



A view of one of the new interpretative signs and the meandering paths which encourage visitors to take in the landscape. Notice the modern slim profile of the sign. Photograph: Jamie Ridley

Capital works funding to reinvent Beelu National Park

With close to 35,000 visitors during the last two years, Beelu National Park and Fred Jacoby Park are a recognised great day out. This year, \$75,000 has been allocated to build a railway landing as the entrance to the hilltop section of the park. The beautifully built, local stone wall and wide concrete steps on to the platform recalls the workers returning home after cutting timber to drive the boilers for the water pumps to the Goldfields.

The train station offers a gateway to the histories of the park and leads to the extensive picnic grounds which have been used since the 1930s.

The path gradient accommodates easy access for all visitors creating a leisurely walk which meanders into the park. It offers many opportunities for use of the new barbeques and seating which are to be installed later this year.

Stephanie Wharton, the project's landscape architect, has created many vistas with most having the old oak tree as a focus. The 1.8 metres wide accessibility path also passes a healthy looking cork tree.

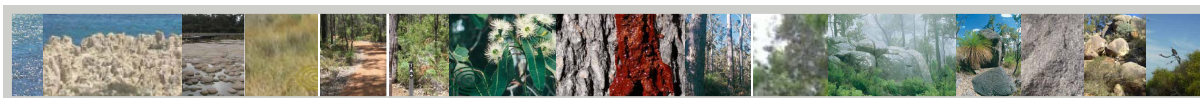
It is hoped that the final 1500m will be ready for use in Spring.



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Beelu National Park Landscape as history

Fred Jacoby Park, situated within Beelu National Park, has been native forest, a vineyard, orchards, a railway siding and even a golf course.

Its latest reincarnation is as a park which acknowledges all of these histories.

Jamie Ridley, District Parks and Visitor Services (PVS), and Clinton Hull, Project Manager, have overseen its development.

From the newly constructed steps visitors can view the entire park. The construction of Portagabra railway station, containing information about the park, will allow visitors to choose the nature of their experience.



Clinton Hull, Project Manager, at the steps that will lead down to the Portagabra Station from where visitors can view the whole of the park.
Photo by Jamie Ridley

Rock, water, fire, wildlife

The Whadjuk clan of the Noongar people lived in the native forest and saw rock, water, fire and wildlife as the resources of most value to them. This landscape would have been the scene of ceremonies involving song, dance and art.

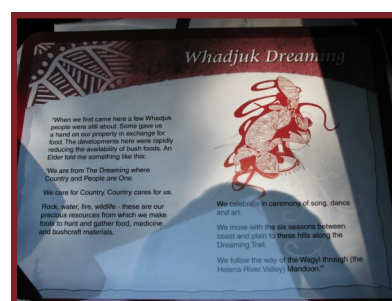
Visitors can experience the sense of this understanding of the land by following the creek line and observing the indigenous bush surrounding the park.

When the plans to replant the water-course with appropriate trees and shrubs are implemented, visitors will be more able to appreciate the sense of the original bush.



This avenue of lemon-scented gums forms the new one-way entrance to the park.

Photo: Jamie Ridley



This new sign enables visitors to appreciate the Whadjuk Clan's use of this area.



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Pioneer Stories

In 1829, Ensign Robert Dale, temporary assistant government surveyor to Surveyor-General John Septimus Roe, explored the region and seems to have been a gifted mapmaker as he mapped the journey. This map is recorded on one of the interpretative signs.



Above: A view of Walter Jecks's oak tree from one of the paths.



A view of the entrance to the walkway under the oak tree showing the gentle accessibility slope. Photo: Jamie Ridley

A tree to make a home

An oak tree was planted by Walter Jecks shortly after he took up the property in 1882. This tree is not only one of the oldest in the State but it reminds visitors of the pioneers' longing for home. Recently, it has received a great deal of tender loving care with injected minerals and a beautiful, spiral floating platform. The platform was designed to protect the roots of the tree. The wooden walkway is proving a popular wedding photo opportunity. A reception has even been held in the vicinity. A charge is only made if people wish to reserve an area.

A sketch of the valley as it may have been when Jecks settled there creates a sense of the isolation and hard work Portagabra Farm would have been.



A stunning photo taken from a cherry picker showing the spiral walkway. One can see why it is a popular place for wedding photos.



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C Y O'Connor

Individual Brilliance

The CY O'Connor museum with its fascinating engineering displays emphasises the power of the individual to influence a society. The Beelu National Park reminds visitors of his great contribution because the silver water pipes to the Goldfields form a boundary of the park.

Choose your own adventure

One of the innovative aspects of the design of Beelu National Park is that one can create one's own special experience. Perhaps a walk across the weir; a look through the C Y O'Connor Museum; a saunter through the park itself to pick a picnic spot; a book on a rug, a book over the face, a nap. Unfortunately, one must fold the checked red blanket, pack the car, and drive down from the heights to the ordinary plains.

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