

# Toodyay



## Walk Tracks Forum Report

Compiled by  
Toodyay Friends of the River Inc

April 2022



*Toodyay Friends of the River acknowledge the Noongar peoples as the First Peoples and Traditional Custodians of this land on which we walk and meet.*

*We pay our respects to their elders past and present and their emerging leaders.*



# Toodyay

## Walk Track Forum



The Toodyay Friends of the River (TFOR) invite community members to have their say about walking and hiking in Toodyay. Hear about exciting new projects & ideas. Afternoon Tea provided.

### **Presenters:**

Greg Warburton – *Toodyay Shire and TFOR*

Peter Weatherly - *Avon Valley Environment Society*

Helen Shanks – *Noongar Kaartdijin Aboriginal Corp.*

- Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2022 at 1.30pm
- CWA Hall, Stirling Terrace.
- For catering and COVID Safe please RSVP to [info@toodyayfor.org.au](mailto:info@toodyayfor.org.au)



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## 1. Overview of the Walk Tracks Forum

*"That there is so much excitement, interest and a plan being developed"*  
(participant feedback)

On 13 March 2022, the Toodyay Friends of the River Inc (TFOR) with support from the Shire of Toodyay held a very successful Walk Tracks Forum.

The purpose of the forum was to provide an opportunity for community members to have their say about walking and hiking in Toodyay and to hear about exciting new projects and ideas.

The Forum was advertised locally and on Facebook, and was held in the CWA hall. The numbers were limited to 37 because of COVID and the forum was fully subscribed before the day. Of those attending, about one third were TFOR members and the rest were members of the broader community.

This report summarises the input from the community at the forum. It includes the key ideas presented by the speakers and those generated by participants.



Helen Shanks addresses the Forum (Photograph Wayne Clarke)

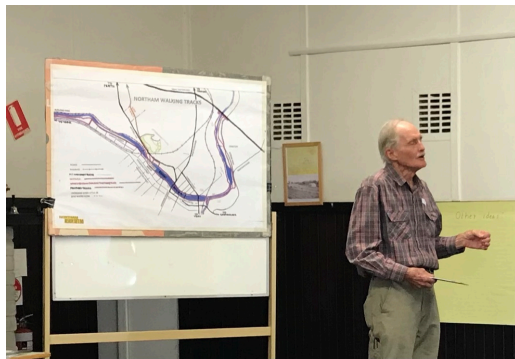
### ***The Speakers***

*"Great presentations, very good forum"*  
(participant feedback)

Three speakers provided a comprehensive background to the discussion.

Greg Warburton, Shire Reserves Manager and TFOR Project Officer, spoke about the various walk tracks and trails in the Toodyay Shire and their history, including the popular Bilya Walk Track created by the Friends of the River nearly 10 years ago. Greg raised the idea of

building a trail hub near the Anglican Church as a central point for walk track information, with informative maps, shelter and seating for walkers.



Peter Weatherly with a map of the Northam walk tracks (Photograph Bridget Leggett)

Peter Weatherly from the Avon Valley Environment Society told of his 30 years advocating for and developing walk tracks in the Northam Shire. Currently, the group maintains about 70 kilometres of walk tracks including the 20 kilometre Dorntj Koorliny (Walking Together) Track and sections of the Kep Track.

Peter enthusiastically talked about the many benefits of having and using walk tracks including health, appreciation of nature and increasing tourism. The Shire of Northam is currently creating a Trails Master plan.

Helen Shanks from Noongar Kaartdijin Aboriginal Corporation spoke about the proposed Noongar Trail in Toodyay, which will have eight to ten places of interest with appropriate interpretive signage. This project builds on existing installations at Red Banks Pool, Pelham Lookout and the Aboriginal Burial Ground and is supported by the Shire through its Reconciliation Action Plan.

### ***Collecting input from participants***

*“Thank you, very engaging”  
(participant feedback)*

Ideas from participants were collected three ways. All of the data has been collated and has been used as the source material for this report.

On arrival, each participant was given a TFOR pen (to keep) and a number of post-it stickers. They were encouraged to write their ideas and opinions onto the stickers throughout the event and put them on the various themed charts around the room.

Photo right: Cr Charmaine Duri adding an idea to one of the charts (Photograph: Bridget Leggett)



During the general discussion which followed the speakers, ideas and suggestions were recorded on a white board and later transcribed.

Feedback sheets were provided to all participants. The questions on these asked individuals for their priorities and their interest in a track walking group. There was also space to put forwards any ideas of comments not otherwise covered in the afternoon.

### ***Ideas generated***

The need for improved access was recognised as a priority, as was the need for more interpretive signage including information on Aboriginal culture.

The ideas generated ranged from major initiatives such as a walk and trail-running track from Walyunga through the Avon Valley National Park to Toodyay or Northam, to small scale improvements which may be able to be implemented immediately. Signage at the Drummond Drive end of the walk track in Majestic Heights, picnic tables in Leeder St, West Toodyay and a seat in the Rugged Hills Reserve were amongst the ideas in this latter category.

It was generally agreed that a Master Plan for walk tracks in Toodyay is needed. There is also a need for a Plan for the whole of the Avon Valley, something like the *South West MTB Master Plan* that exists for mountain biking.

The full range of ideas generated at the Forum have been included in this Report. The suggestions recorded do not necessarily represent the views of TFOR.

### ***Moving forward***

*“There are many opportunities to increase the use [of walk tracks],  
and benefit the Toodyay community”  
(participant feedback)*

The Walk Tracks Forum was a huge success by any measure: the quality of the talks, interest from the community and the level of engagement were high. The range of ideas contributed by participants and the enthusiastic feedback received showed there is a real interest in Toodyay Walk Tracks.

The challenge for TFOR and the Shire is to build on the community enthusiasm and capitalise on the opportunities to improve and develop Toodyay's walk tracks and walking experiences. To achieve this it will be important to capitalise on a range of funding opportunities as well as the willingness of TFOR and other volunteers to get involved.

## **2. Priorities for action**

The following priorities for action emerged from the Forum.

- 2.1 Plan and construct a trail hub / walk terminus in Toodyay. This should provide
  - maps showing clusters of tracks with relevant information
  - seating
  - shade
- 2.2 Create a master plan for walk tracks and trails in Toodyay, to include
  - Indigenous culture in the walk tracks planning
  - existing, and intended tracks
  - a maintenance strategy for all tracks / initiatives
  - improved accessibility on selected tracks and track sections for the less agile and those with young children
  - a focus on the tracks that are most used

- 2.3 Establish the proposed Noongar trail in Toodyay.
- 2.4 Provide better information / interpretive signage along existing and new tracks re
  - Aboriginal history and culture
  - flora and fauna (include Aboriginal, scientific and common names)
- 2.5 Upgrade the bridges loop track so that it is sealed and accessible to all.
- 2.6 Create a tree trail loop walk in Julimar Conservation Park using existing tracks and roads.
- 2.7 Develop the Bilya Walk Track as a loop track.
- 2.8 Establish a track walking group.

### **3. Longer term priorities**

Looking beyond the immediate, and beyond the Shire, participants offered a range of suggestions that would connect Toodyay to Walyunga, and to Northam. They emphasised the need for planning and suggested that something similar to the *South West MTB (Mountain Bike) Plan* would be appropriate. The following specific suggestions were made.

- 3.1 Create a master plan for tracks for the Avon Valley
  - link Toodyay, Northam and York (loop trail preferred)
- 3.2 Establish walk trails from designated stopping points on roads in the Toodyay Shire, working with Main Roads where appropriate.
- 3.3 Extend the Bilya Walk Track
  - to Slaughterhouse Bridge
  - to Dumbarton
- 3.4 Develop an internationally recognised walk track / running trail / bike track from Walyunga National Park and the Avon Valley National Park to Toodyay.

### **4. Site specific suggestions**

Some of the suggestions were quite specific and related to existing reserves and tracks.

#### ***Pelham Reserve***

There is interest in the WW2 history at Pelham Reserve. The following improvements were suggested

- make it more accessible for older people by putting chains on the sides of steep slopes etc
- locate, map and restore more of the WW2 sites of interest
- provide signs to and about the Bunkers – include QR codes
- create a .gpx file with key locations marked with way points



See section on Resourcing for ideas as to how this could be funded.

### ***West Toodyay***

Install picnic tables at Leeder St in West Toodyay.

Move the signage in West Toodyay to the correct locations, away from the road and on walk tracks instead.

Extend the West Toodyay Wander to create a loop track on both sides of the river.

### ***Other***

Acacia Reserve: Parking area needed.

Majestic Heights Reserve: needs better signage at the start (off Drummondi Drive).

Cobbler Pool: Create a loop walk track incorporating the campsite.

Rugged Hills: Seating area with shade needed.

## **5. People's favourite walks and why**

Participants were asked what were their favourite walks and why. The answers here highlighted the different ways people like to use walk tracks.

The Bilya Walk Track received most nominations, it is varied and is good for dog walking. The section from Millard's Pool to the Cemetery is particularly appreciated because it has a firm surface and no hills, and the track is sealed with disabled access.

Other nominations were

- Pelham Reserve – for running and training
- Rugged Hills – challenging

## **6. Important features of a track**

Participants were asked to identify what they considered were important features of walk trails. They identified the following

- shade, shelter and a bench to rest
- direction markers and clear signage to and at starting points of tracks
- adequate parking areas at the beginning of tracks
- good walking track with a firm surface
- designated tracks sealed and suitable for prams, wheelchairs, Gophers, etc
- being dog friendly
- being a loop trail rather than an 'out and back' walk
- retaining the natural state as much as possible; hills and views
- interpretive signage along the tracks giving information on Aboriginal history and culture

- signage along the tracks giving information on flora and fauna

## **7. Suggestions for other types of trails**

Although the forum was specifically about walk tracks, the issue of dual use trails was raised. Different perspectives were offered.

- The advantages of having dual use trails – for walkers and mountain bikes – working together for mutual outcomes and benefits.
- It is important to have some tracks designated for specific uses: some just for walking, some for bikes etc.

Other types of trails were also suggested.

- An art trail along the town part of the river - between the bridges with art and theatre installations.
- Augmented reality trail as per Mornington Peninsula.

## **8. Promotion and events: encouraging use of the tracks**

Set up a track walking group.

Hold events promoting the tracks and the town

- annual trail running festival (as Pemberton)
- annual marathon / half marathon and 8km run (combined) during autumn or spring
- mountain bike trail event / race
- festival involving a fun run

Events and services encouraging track use by locals and visitors

- Indigenous cultural walks
- track to track: from train track to walking track
- walk trail special events, inviting walking groups around WA
- night walks for kids and families – spotlighting
- bus drop-off and pick-up service for the Bilya Walk Track to allow people to walk in one direction only
- nature based community workshops ie cloth dye from native flora

## **9. Resourcing maintenance and track development**

The importance of ongoing track maintenance was reinforced by speakers and participants. Participants were asked for suggestions as to how the planning, the development of walk tracks and their maintenance could be funded. Ideas generated included local initiatives and external funding.

### ***Local initiatives***

Adopt a track – eg your favourite neighbourhood track

- involve the school and other community groups to assist in maintenance and further development

Set up a walk group to raise funds.

Hold fund raising events – see above.

### ***External funding***

Seek external funding from:

- Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (capitalise on grant opportunities)
- Road Safety Commission for walk tracks from stopping points on Toodyay Road.
- Army / RSL for renovation of WW2 Rifle range, bunkers etc. If pitched as an army project, this would increase the value of the asset with no cost to the Shire
- Legacy Project for Toodyay
- Lottery West
- Chalice Mining

## **10. Concluding comments**

This Report documents the community consultation undertaken by the Toodyay Friends of the River Inc with support from the Shire of Toodyay. In particular, it records the ideas presented to and generated by participants.

The Report is being presented to the CEO and Councillors of the Shire of Toodyay, and to the local officer at the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries. Copies are being sent to Forum participants and the report is being published on the TFOR website.

The organisers hope it is the first step in a decade long project to enhance the walking experience of locals and visitors to Toodyay.