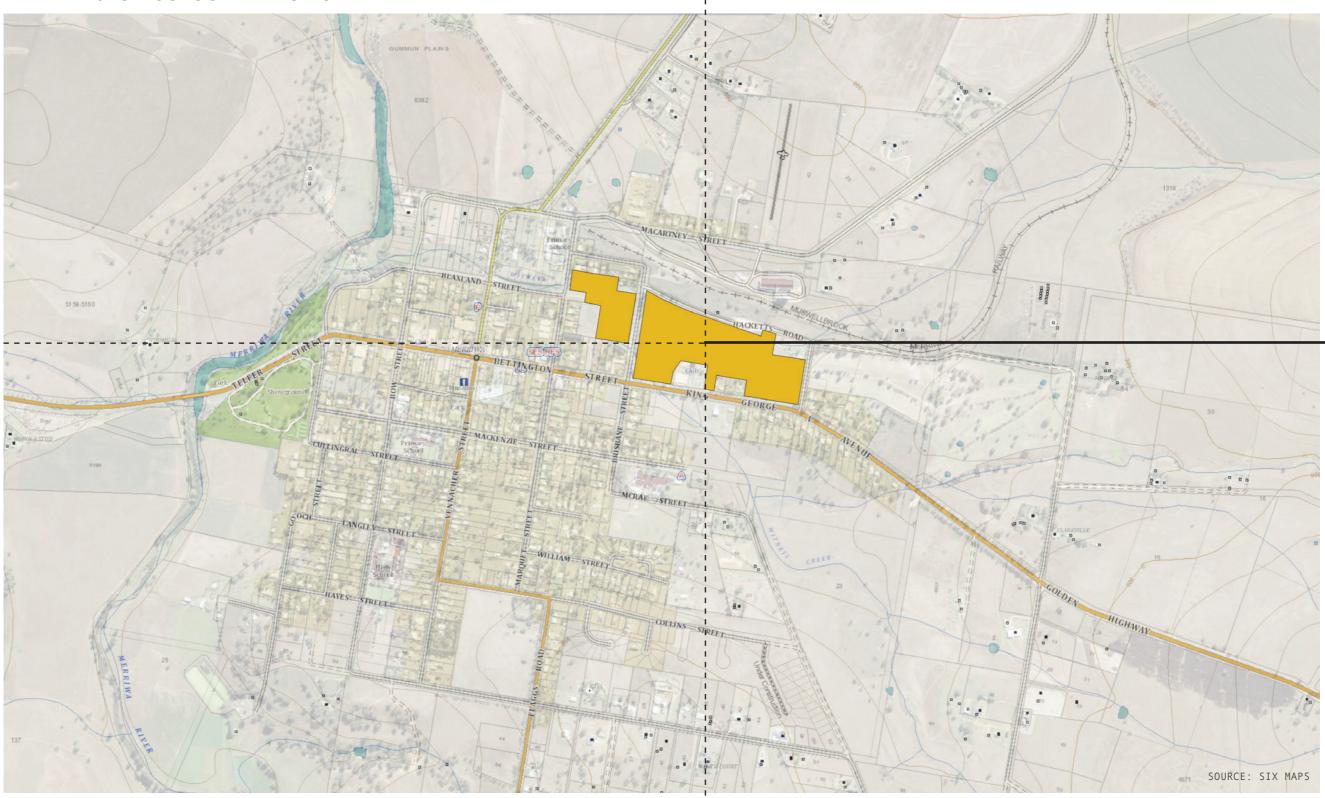
# MERRIWA SPORTGROUND MASTERPLAN

Geawegal Country

Landscape Report | Prepared for Upper Hunter Shire Council

# MERRIWA SPORTSGROUND PRECINCT



### Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live. We pay our respects to the elders past, present and emerging and recognise their continuing connection and contribution to the land, water and culture.

Issue	Date	Reason	Prepared
1	02/12/2024	Preliminary for discussion	SR
2	16/12/2024	Stage 1 Submission	SR
3	17/12/2024	Stage 1 Submission (Master Plan amended)	SR
4	19/12/2024	Stage 1 Submission (Master Plan amended)	SR
5	12/02/2025	Expanded Master Plan Options	SR
6	12/03/2025	Council Review - amendments	SR
7	17/03/2025	Issued for Stakeholder Consultation	SR
8	25/03/2025	Updated following Stakeholder Consultation	SR
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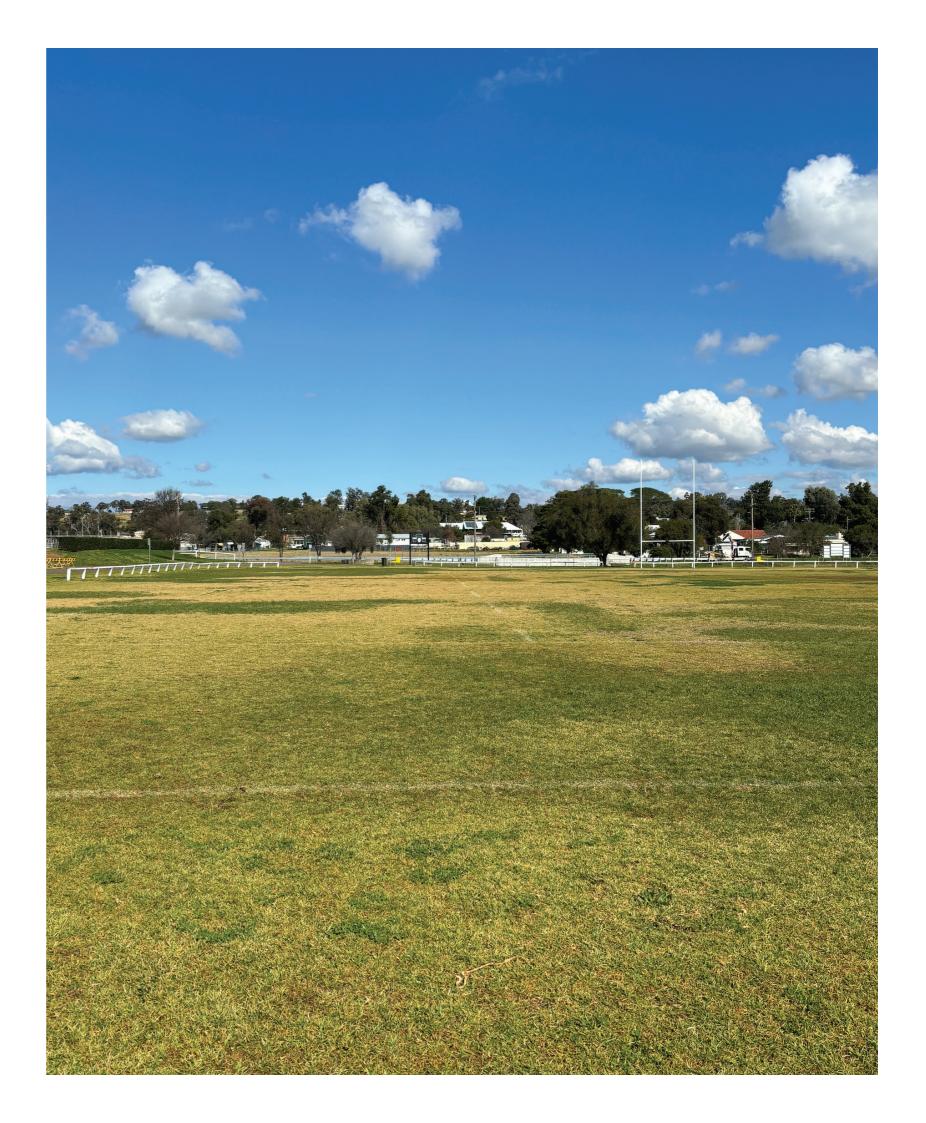
Circulation, Pathway Network and Parking

**Sporting Facilities** 

Vegetation and Ecology

# 01 SITE ANALYSIS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Study of the existing site area, detailing outcomes of the initial site investigation and analysis, and identifying opportunities to inform the development of the master plan.



# INTRODUCTION

### PURPOSE OF THE MASTER PLAN

The purpose of the landscape master plan is to guide the future development of the Merriwa Sportsground precinct.

This document aims to provide the community, stakeholders and Council a clear direction on the future use and development of the site. This will allow for meaningful investment in future upgrade projects and the ability to apply for future funding, including grant applications and development contributions.

A staged consultative approach has been undertaken to develop the master plan, to ensure that it is reflective of current and future users, the wider local community and Council. This approach has been sought to determine the best way forward to serve the local community.

### **CURRENT USAGE OF MERRIWA SPORTSGROUND**

The Merriwa Sportsground precinct is the premier open space resource for the rural township of Merriwa. The sportsfields and associated recreational facilities draw organised sporting groups and also community from the wider area. The precinct is dominated by a large expanse of cleared open space which contains formal playing fields, a golf course and supporting facilities such as club house, cricket net, tennis courts, playground and skate park.

Organised sporting groups include the Merriwa Magpies (rugby league), Merriwa Cricket Club, Merriwa and District Little Athletics Club.

Merriwa Golf Club utilise the central portion of the precinct. Merriwa Tennis Club use the four existing tennis courts.

The playground, multi-court, skate park, tennis hit up wall and amenities provide resources for the general community which can be informally used at various other times.

### **MERRIWA DEMOGRAPHICS SNAPSHOT**

The 2021 Census provided the following data for the region of Merriwa:

- Population 1,825
- Merriwa has a higher percentage of youth aged between 5-14, compared to the NSW average.
- Merriwa also has a higher percentage of those aged 55+, compared to the NSW average.
- The percentage of those aged between 15 and 54 is much lower than the NSW average. This is particularly low for those aged between 20 and 29.

# **REGIONAL CONTEXT**

### **REGIONAL CONTEXT**

Merriwa is a small rural town located in the far west of the Hunter region of New South Wales, Australia. It is located on the traditional lands of the Gaewegal People.

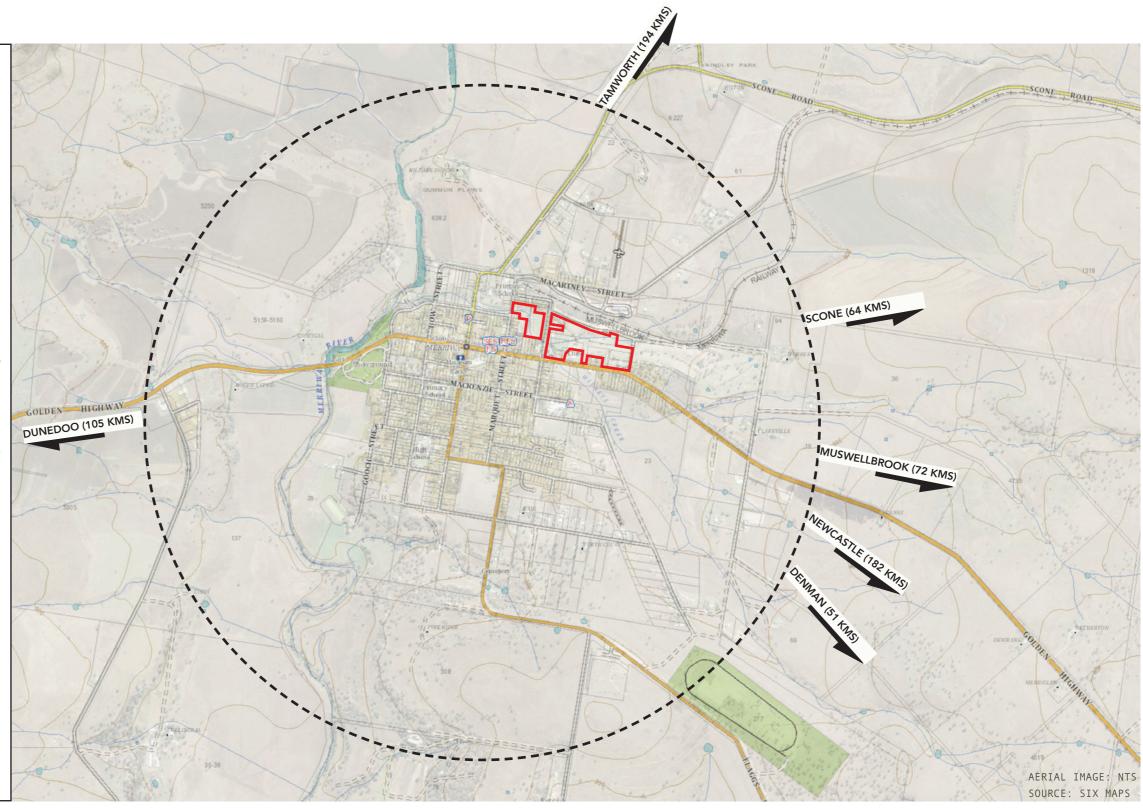
The town is located about halfway between Newcastle and Dubbo on the Golden Highway.

The nearest towns to Merriwa are Denman (51km SE), Scone (64km E) and Muswellbrook (72km SE).

# EXISTING PROVISION OF RECREATION OPEN SPACE IN MERRIWA

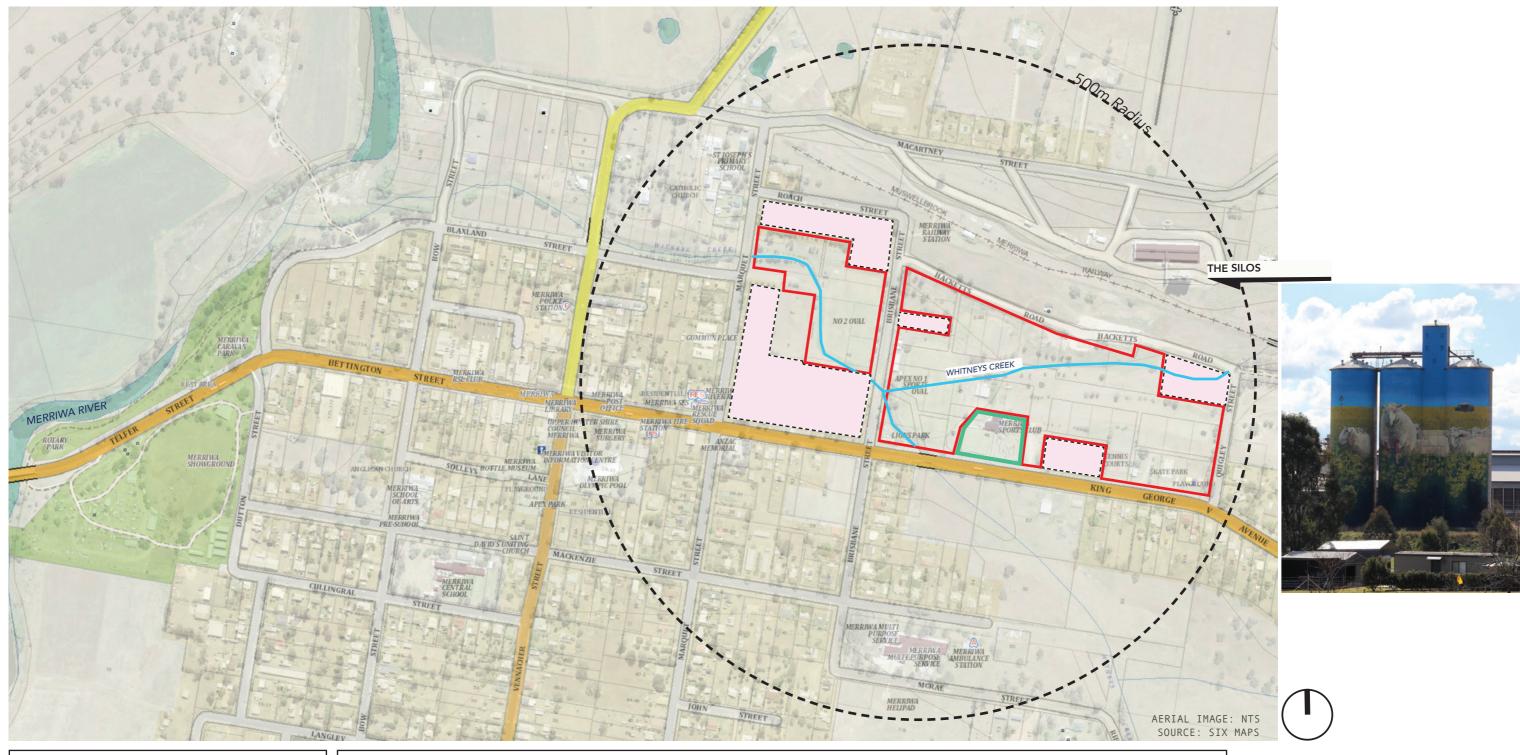
The Upper Hunter Shire Council Open Space and Recreation Plan (2014) documents that the in addition to the Merriwa Sports Precinct (including Apex No. 1 and No. 2 Ovals), Merriwa Showground provides the other biggest parcel of recreation open space (which is currently used for equine sports).

During consultation for the above strategy, residents desired the focus to be on upgrading and improving the existing recreation facilities, rather than developing new recreation parks.





# **LOCAL CONTEXT**





### **LOCAL CONTEXT**

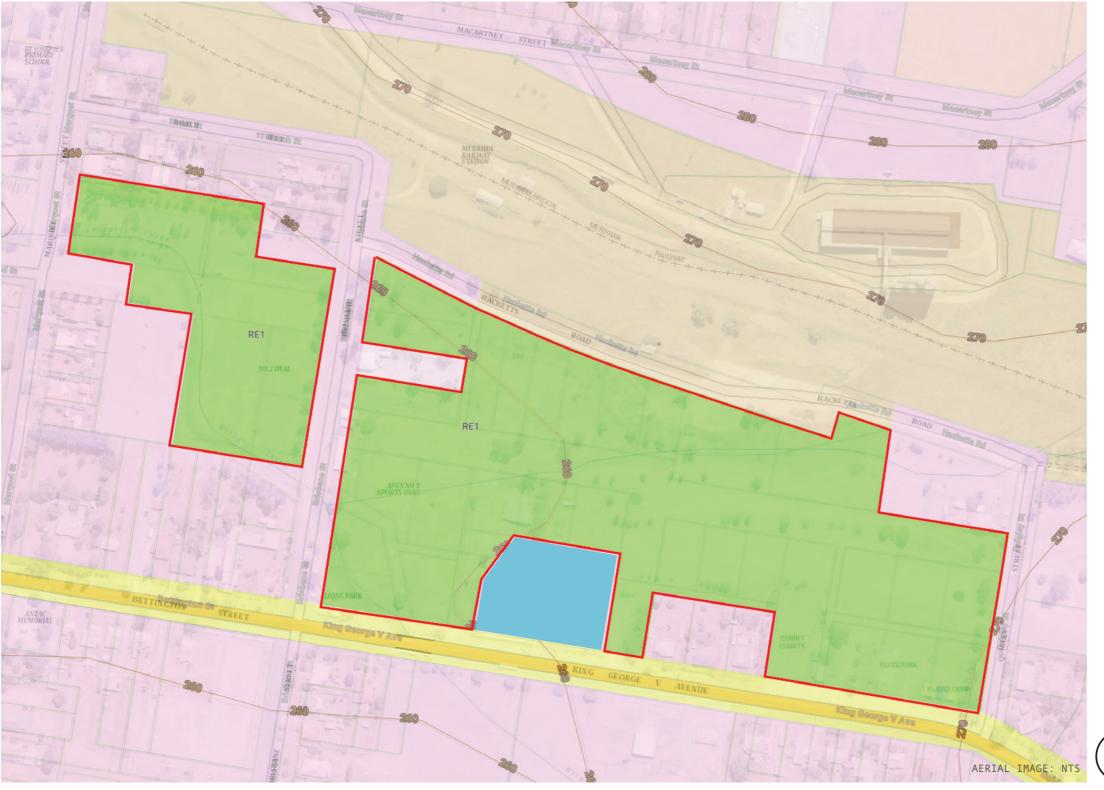
Merriwa Sportsground is located in the north-east of the town and provides the key open space for the town of Merriwa. The site can be accessed off the main arterial road, King George V Avenue, which runs through the centre of the township. The site is divided in two, separated by Brisbane Street.

A focal point of the town and one which provides a backdrop to the sports grounds is the Silo Art, located on the Graincorp Silos to the north of the site. The silos (as pictured above) were painted in 2019 by David Lee Pereira and depict a flock of sheep with the standout sheep wearing red socks.

The sportsgrounds are used by the wider community, organised sporting groups and are also an important extension for use by the local schools. The Sports Club and associated bowling greens, which connect into the site, are privately owned and run. Merriwa Golf Club also utilise the central portion of the site. Private residences directly adjoin the site.

GREEN SPACE PLANNING Co.

# **LAND USE**



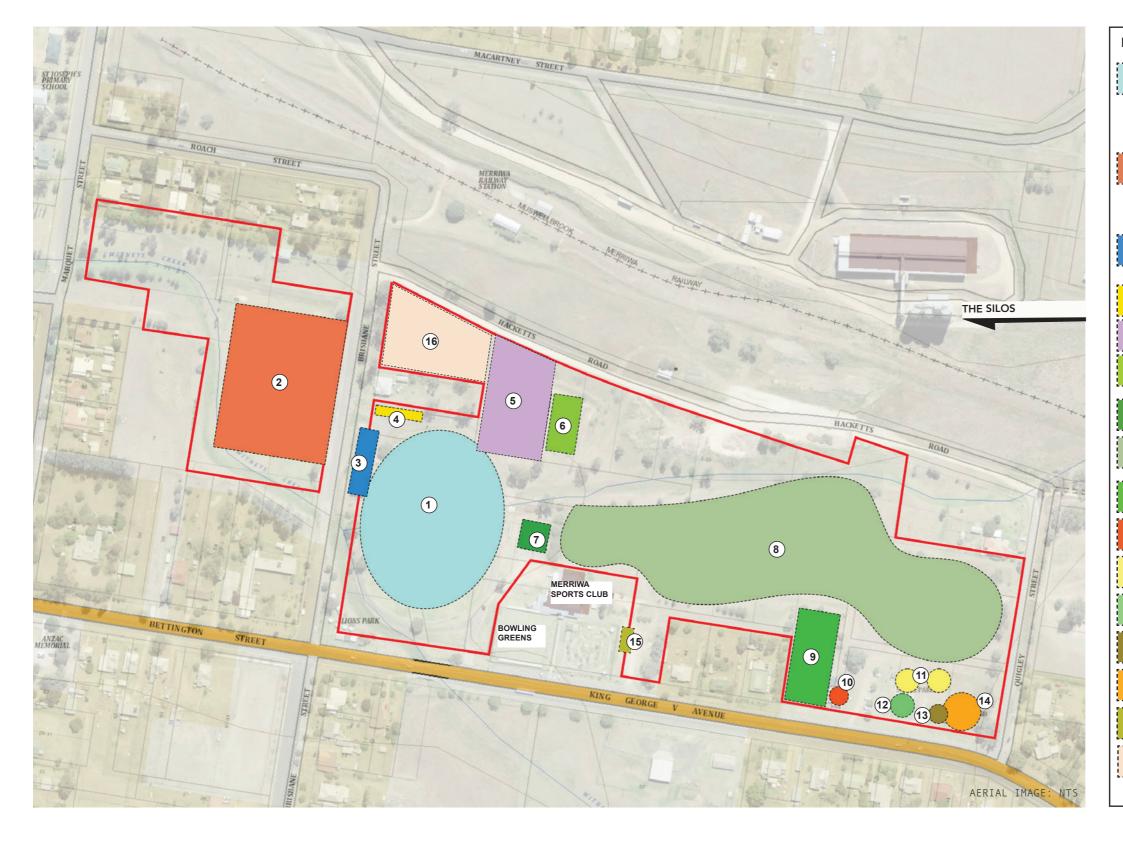


### **NOTES**

The site area is zoned RE1 - Public Recreation and owned by Upper Hunter Shire Council.

Land surrounding the site is zoned as R1 - General Residential and RU1 - Primary Production.

# **CURRENT USE**





# **EXISTING FACILITIES**



**OVAL NO. 1** (summer) and touch football (summer).



**OVAL NO. 2** (winter), and touch football (summer).



**MAGPIES CLUB HOUSE** Oval No. 1 is used for rugby league (winter), cricket Oval No. 2 is used for Little Athletics, rugby league The Club House accommodates toilet and change Two buildings accommodate toilet /change room room facilities and a canteen.



**AMENITIES AND STORAGE** facilities and storage areas for the Merriwa Magpies, Merriwa Cricket and the Little Athletics Club.



**GYM AND SQUASH COURTS** Thus building is currently in disrepair and not in use. Merriwa Golf Course occupies a large central



**GOLF COURSE** portion of the sportsground precinct.



**CRICKET NET** A practice cricket is situated at the entrance off Brisbane Street.



**RETURN AND EARN** A Return And Eran facility with associated car parking.

# **EXISTING FACILITIES**



**PLAYGROUND** 

are available to the wider community for use.



**SKATE PARK** 

ramps for wider community use.



**BASKETBALL HALF-COURT** 

A fenced playground with associated picnic tables The eastern skate park includes a skate bowl and A paved area adjacent to the skate ramps has a There is a tennis hit up wall adjacent to the basketball basketball ring. The area has not been line marked. half court.



**TENNIS HIT UP WALL** 



**TENNIS COURTS** 

be used for basketball and netball.



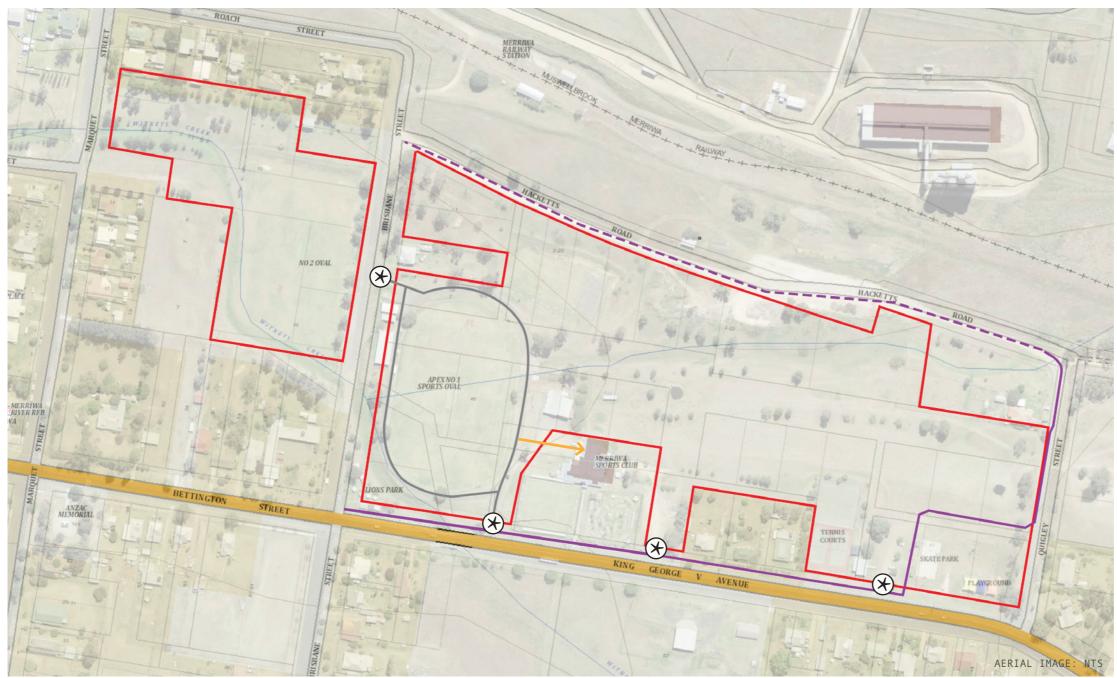
**TENNIS CLUB HOUSE** 

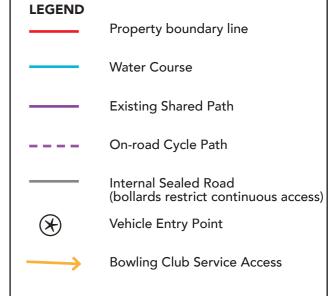


**AMENITIES BUILDING** 

There are four tennis courts which are also able to The Tennis Club House has been recently refurbished. An amenities building is situated at the eastern end of the precinct near the playground and skate park, for general community use.

# **CIRCULATION AND ENTRY POINTS**





### **NOTES**

The site can be accessed by vehicle via an entry point off Brisbane Street and also off King George V Avenue.

There is a limited footpath network within and to the boundary of the site. An on road cycle path has been delineated along Hacketts Road.





Brisbane Street dissects the two sportsground areas. Park edges are ill-defined and there are no designated pedestrian crossing points. This creates a potential safety hazard, particularly on busier days with events.



Park entry points are not well defined with signage. This is makes the sportsground precinct hard to navigate and feels unkempt.



Line marking on Hacketts Road for cyclists.



The pathway network is limited and lacks way-finding signage.

# **TOPOGRAPHY**

### **NOTES**

Topography within the site has a general slope from the north-east down to the south west. There are a number of steeper sections within the park (indicated with orange).

Witneys creek line (shown in blue) runs through the sportsground precinct and in times of heavy rain will create localised flooding. These creeklines have been largely stripped of all vegetation to be manicured lawn areas.





Witneys Creekline running across the south-western corner of Oval No. 2.

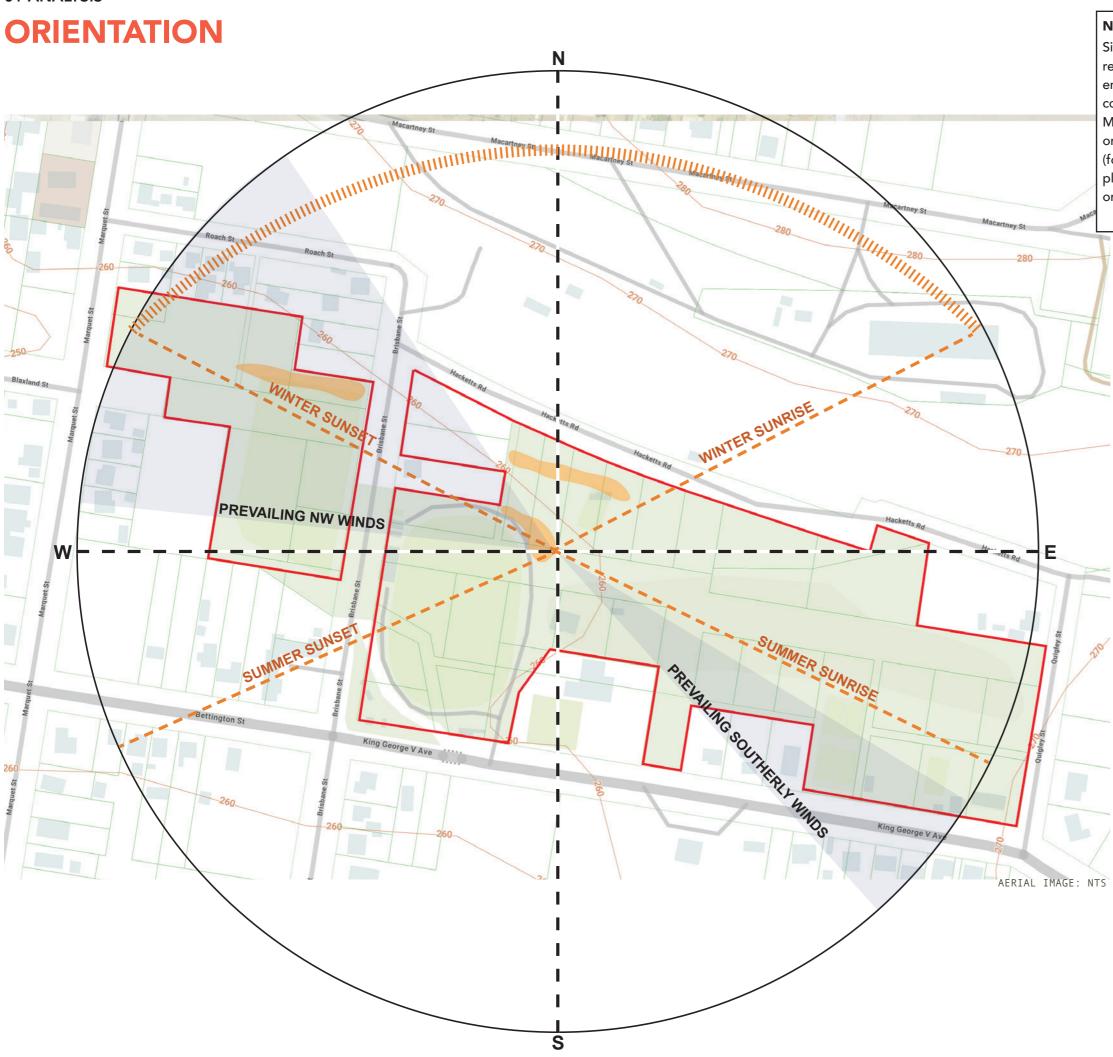


Hazard signage within the sportsground where Witneys Creek crosses through from the golf course.



Locaised flooding in Brisbane Street.

AERIAL IMAGE: NTS



### NOTES

Siting of sportsground facilities needs to have appropriate regard for climate, topography and the surrounding environment. The sun path across the site needs to be considered for any new facilities planned in the future.

Most facilities (e.g. cricket nets) should have a north-south orientation, or a maximum of 30 degrees east or west of north (for practice pitches only). This is a safety requirement for players, as training is usually conducted in the later afternoon or evening when the sun is setting.

# **ECOLOGY**



### PRE-CLEARING VEGETATION COMMUNITY

The existing site has been predominantly cleared of vegetation to support its historical use. There are opportunities to re-establish native trees, shrubs, ground-covers and grasses within the site along corridors that won't interfere with desired use of the site as an active sporting facility.

The benefits of revegetation are multi-faceted. Revegetation can be a very satisfying activity for community groups, can have great outcomes for biodiversity, reduce soil and water erosion, mitigate the effects of salinity; enhance the visual appeal, provide shelter and/or windbreaks.

The pre-clearing vegetation community consisted of PCT:599 - Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland (YB-BRG). Species below would be beneficial to include in revegtating the site:

This Woodland community is typically dominated by Yellow Box (Eucalyptus melliodora) and/or Blakely's Red Gum (Eucalyptus blakelyi); with the most common codominant trees being Apple Box (Eucalyptus bridgesiana) and Candlebark (Eucalyptus rubida). It also included a species-rich understorey of native tussock grasses, herbs and scattered shrubs.

# **KEY ISSUES**



### 1. THE SPORTS GROUND PRECINCT HAS UNDERUTILISED SPACES

There is a large amount of open space available within the precinct with areas which are currently underutilised. This sports ground precinct is the premier recreational open space for Merriwa. Demand for quality recreation space is imperative for not only the health and development of the Merriwa sporting community, but also for the wider community who also gain social and economic benefits.



### 2. LACK OF CONNECTIVITY

The sports ground precinct is a large open space, with facilities stretching across the breadth of the site. The main issues regarding connectivity include:

1. There is no connecting pathway system linking one end to the other. The eastern end of the site containing the playground, skate park, tennis courts and amenity facilities is separated by the golf course. The area of the golf course is unclear and makes it difficult to navigate whether public access is permitted through this zone.

- 2. Brisbane Street dissects the sports ground precinct between Ovals No 1 and 2. There is no allocated crossing point between the two fields, which creates a safety concern for those crossing between the two, particularly on event days where there are a lot of people and cars. There are two gates which can be used to temporarily close off the street, however these are able to be easily bypassed.
- 3. There is little relationship between the two fields, with the rear of the Magpies Clubhouse fronting Brisbane Street, contributing little to the character of the streetscape and address to Oval No. 2.



### 3. POORLY DEFINED ENTRANCES AND LACK OF SIGNAGE

The main entrances to Oval No. 1, off Brisbane Street and King George V Avenue are not well signposted and provide an underwhelming entry to the sports ground. The precinct, in general, has a lack of signage particularly for way-finding, which makes it hard to navigate. There is an opportunity to strengthen the identity of the Sportsground precinct through signage to reflect its meaning to the community, which will be increasingly important to enable larger events to take place here.

# **KEY ISSUES**



### 4. THERE ARE NO DESIGNATED CAR PARKING ZONES

There are no designated car parking areas across the site. In addition, poorly defined road edges makes the precinct feel disorganised and unkempt.



### 5. DEGRADED FACILITIES

There are a number of facilities across the precinct which are in poor condition:

- The squash/gym building is in very poor condition and no longer fit for purpose.
- The Magpies Club House does not provide equitable access for all, including a lack of change rooms to cater for the growth in women's sport.
- There are also inadequate spectator seating for the football, cricket and athletics fields. Existing seats are in poor condition and no longer useable in some instances.
- The fencing to Oval No. 1 is in disrepair, with gaps between the fencing, posing a safety concern.
- There are ill-defined edges between the different zones/uses and there
  are large pot holes have appeared in the bitumen, which all make the
  precinct feel worn and chaotic.
- Lighting across the site for field use at night time and pedestrian access is not adequate. This includes lighting to the club house buildings (tennis).



### 6. DRAINAGE AND VEGETATION

Whitleys Creek runs through the sports ground precinct. Vegetation has been largely cleared across the site and in particular through the drainage lines where there is significant weed incursion within.

The lack of vegetation and predominantly turf landscape (green desert) means localised flooding to the grounds and surrounds occurs regularly after rain events. In addition, the soil type is a clay which results in cracks appearing throughout the site in dry, hot weather.

# STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

### **MERRIWA MAGPIES**

Current issues identified by the club:

- There is a growth in women participating in the sport and the current facilities are not adequate to cater for this growth.
- There is a lack of spectator seating for larger events.
- The oval has a limited number of usage hours, coupled with drainage issues leading to damaged and uneven grounds.
- Lighting is inadequate for night time use (upgrade planned for 2025).
- Fence surrounding Oval No.1 is in poor condition (upgrade planned for 2025).
- Parking around the oval is not line marked

The key 'wish list' for the club:

- Desire to replace the existing club house with a new grand stand for spectators (approx. 200 people capacity). Including provision of new club house, storage, canteen and provision of accessible amenities and inclusion of adequate female change rooms and toilets.
- Desire to have two full size rugby fields to allow the club to have a warm up field at Oval No. 2 and games to continue at Oval No.1.
- New fence to Oval No. 1 surrounds.
- Upgraded lighting for night time training and games.
- Investigate drainage options to improve field quality

### **BRISBANE STREET**

Current issues identified by Stakeholders:

 Brisbane Street dissects the two main sports fields, which presents a conflict of use (potentially dangerous) between vehicular and pedestrian access.

The key 'wish list' for stakeholders:

 Desire to close Brisbane Street along the length of sports grounds to prioritise pedestrian use.

### **MERRIWA TENNIS**

Current issues identified by the club:

- Existing clubhouse needs a new kitchen and roof.
- There is no designated car parking for the tennis
- Lack of footpaths for accessibility.
- Existing fence is rusty and a hazard

The key 'wish list' for the club:

- Desire to have a kitchen upgrade within clubhouse and new roof to the clubhouse.
- Desire for formalised car parking
- Desire for footpath connections to improve accessibility
- Desire for improved lighting around tennis courts and parking.

### **MERRIWA CRICKET**

Current issues identified by the club:

 Only one training cricket net (which faces in the direction of the morning sun)

The key 'wish list' for the club:

Desire to have two training cricket nets

### **ADDITIONAL FACILITIES**

Additional facilities identified for incorporation into the master plan:

- Playground
- Pump track

### LITTLE ATHLETICS

Current issues identified by the club:

A general lack of facilities for the club to host larger events.

The key 'wish list' for the club:

- Desire to have some permanent facilities e.g. long jump, discus, high jump, running track (either synthetic or natural surface).
- Desire to have BBQ and picnic facilities on Oval No.2
- Desire for an adventure playground on Oval No. 2
- Desire for shade over playground and tree planting to assist with shade around the oval.
- Desire for more seating around Oval No. 2
- Desire for lighting to enable to night time use.

### **SQUASH / GYM**

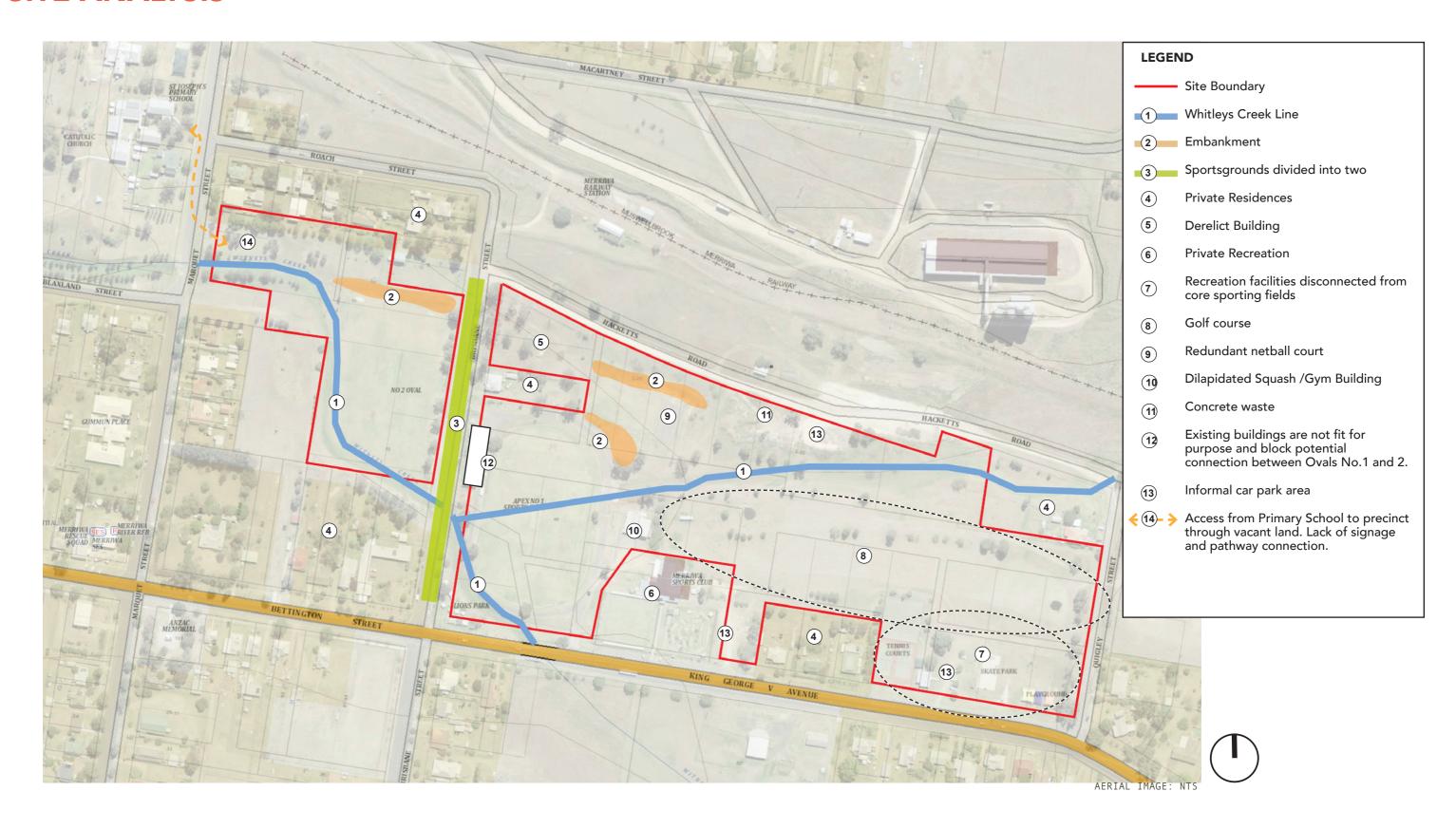
Current issues identified by the club:

— The current building is in disrepair and not fit for use.

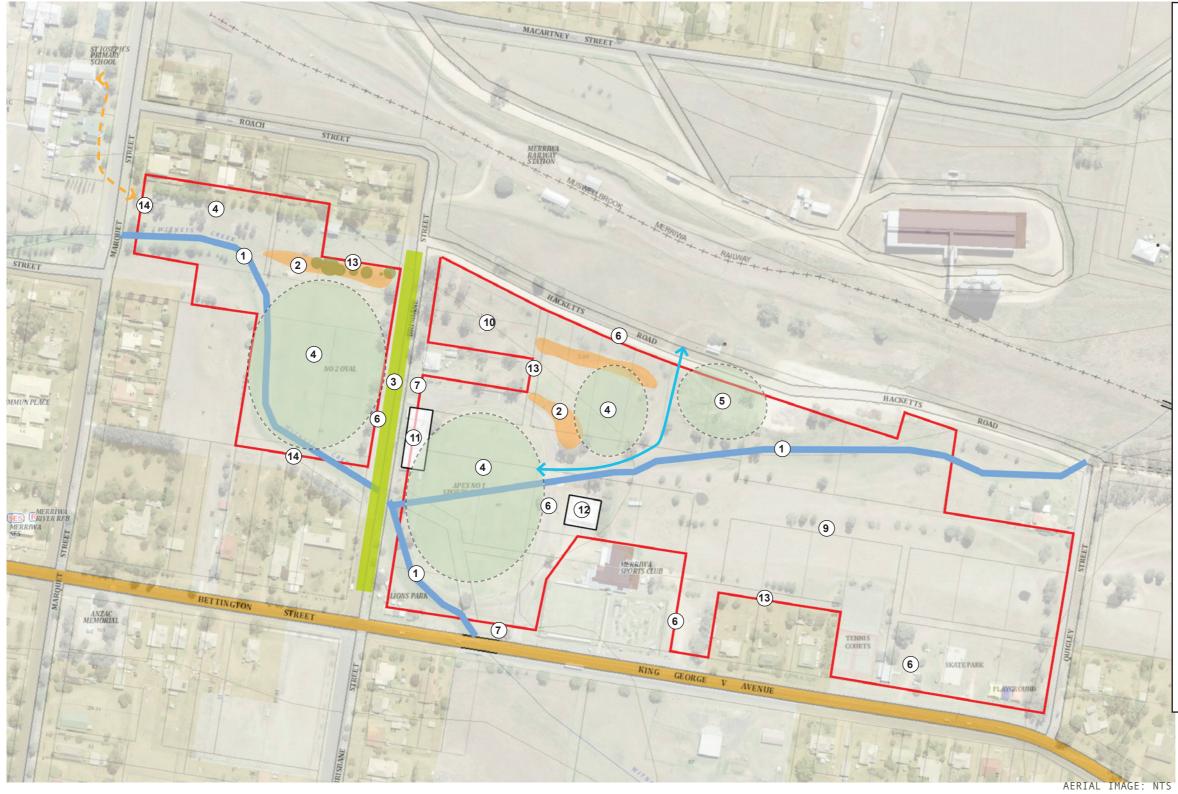
The key 'wish list' for the club:

 A new building which is fit for purpose to house two new squash courts and gym facilities.

# **SITE ANALYSIS**



# **OPPORTUNITIES**



### **LEGEND**

- Opportunity to strengthen ecology along creek line and improve drainage across the site.
- Potential spectator seating utilising embankment
- Potential to close Brisbane Street to prioritise pedestrian access. Investigate options to better connect the two sporting fields to improve access.
- (4) Investigate options for land use
- (5) Possible new RV Site and dog exercise area
- (6) Opportunity to formalise parking
- 7 Opportunity to improve entry
- 8 Possible new pathway connection off Hacketts Road to improve access
- Opportunity to better define golf course extent through tree planting and signage.
- 10 Investigate options for removal of dilapidated building and use of the land.
- Potential to remove existing three buildings and replace with new club house and grandstand to cater for spectators
- Potential to remove building and expand footprint for new gym and squash courts.
- Potential to improve boundary fencing to residential dwellings and establish additional tree canopy.
- Opportunity to improve connection (from the Primary School and to the west) through vacant land with signage and pathways.



# **PRINCIPLES**



### 01 - A PLACE FOR THE MERRIWA COMMUNITY TO ENJOY

The Merriwa Sporting Precinct aims to provide a range of recreational opportunities to cater for the diverse needs of members of the Merriwa community.

Improving the quality of the recreational facilities will provide ongoing health, well being, social and economic benefits to the people of Merriwa and visitors alike.



### 02 - AN OPEN SPACE THAT IS INVITING AND ACCESSIBLE

There is a large expanse of land within the Merriwa Sportsground Precinct with the opportunity to improve how spaces are defined, accessed and utilised. By providing upgraded facilities for sporting and recreational activities, pathway connections, spectator seating, amenities with equitable access of females, shade trees, formalised parking, improved signage it can make the space more attractive and enjoyable to use every day.



### 03 - CLIMATE POSITIVE DESIGN

Climate positive design is important for not only today but for the future generations of Merriwa residents. Designing with this in mind may involve:

- Retention of as many trees as possible,
- Restoration of the creek line to improve biodiversity,
- Utilising WSUD principles,
- Facilities for electric vehicle and
- Reducing the extent of high carbon materials.



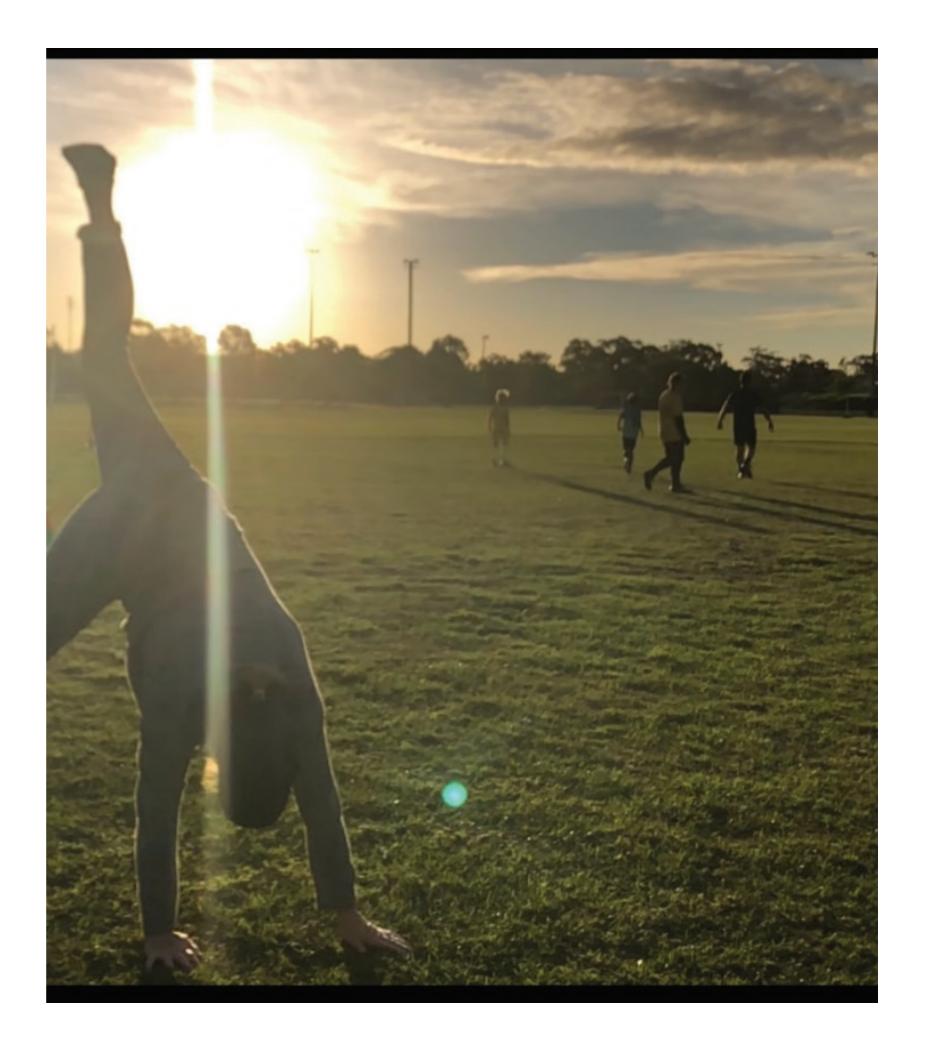
### **04 - CONNECTION TO COUNTRY**

It is our ongoing responsibility to care for our country. This can be achieved through:

- Improving our knowledge and understanding about the Traditional Custodians
- Ensuring sensitive sites are protected, valued and respected
- Reducing our impact on the land and adopting sustainable water and land practices.

# 02 MASTER PLAN

Master Plan to guide the future vision of Merriwa Sportsground.



# **MASTER PLAN**



TREES TO BE RETAINED AND PROTECTED

EXISTING FIELD LIGHT

20. NEW TREE PLANTING TO PROVIDE SHADE TO

# **MASTER PLAN**

### **COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

### **Club House and Grand Stand**

A footprint of  $90m \times 20m$  has been allowed for to consolidate the club house, grand stand, storage facilities, amenities and gym. This option proposes to locate the building to the west of Field 1.

Factors for consideration:

- Requires access from Brisbane Street (future closure may impact).
- Closer proximity to Field No. 2 for dual purpose use (including storage).

### **Squash Courts**

A separate building is proposed in for the squash courts. Proposed footprint of  $40m \times 30m$  has been allowed for to provide 3 squash courts.

### **Playground**

Master plan nominates a new playground area adjacent to Oval No. 2 and the athletics facilities. Playground has a footprint of  $20m \times 10m$ .

### **Car Parking**

Master plan proposes to formalise the existing hardstand areas, which are currently used for car parking.

### This includes:

- Brisbane Street (90 degree angle parking approx. 50 spaces)
- North of Apex Oval No. 1 (90 degree angle approx 30 spaces)
- Car park to the west of Apex Oval No. 1 (approx. 70 spaces)
- Hacketts Road (90 degree angle parking approx. 50 spaces)
- Sports Club (Return'n'Earn car park (approx. 30 spaces)
- Tennis Club (approx. 30 spaces).

The entrance road off King George V Avenue proposes larger entry feature signage, public artwork and an avenue of trees to create a formal entry.

### Amonitios

Three new buildings are proposed to include public amenities:

- Field No. 1 building to included public amenities within the Club House / Grandstand
- Squash Courts will include amenities which can be accessed by RV users and public
- Field No. 2 will include amenities building that will also serve as a storage facility and include shelter, tables and bbq.

### **SPORTING FACILITIES**

### Rugby League

Master plan proposes one full size field (68m x 100m) on Apex Oval No. 1 and one mod rugby field (48m x 80m) for use by ages 10-12 years.

A warm up area is proposed to the south of Apex Oval No. 1.

### Cricket

Master plan proposes cricket to be played on Apex Oval No. 1, with two practice nets to the west (adjacent to the Brisbane Road entry).

### Touch Football

Master plan allows for both fields to be used as touch football fields. (Full size dimensions - 70m long and 50m wide).

### **Athletics**

Master plan proposes

- 100m running track (6 lanes)
- Long jump / triple jump
- Discus / shot put / hammer throw net

### Basketball / Netball

Master plan proposes to upgrade the existing netball court into a multi court facility.

### **Pump Track**

Master plan proposes a pump track which can be accessed off the existing bike path route along Hacketts Lane.

### **VEGETATION**

### Tree Loss

Master plan aims to minimise any tree loss across the site.

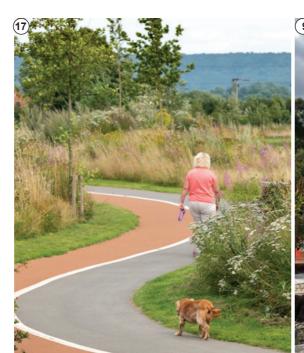
### **Tree Planting**

Master plan provides the opportunity to greatly improve and enhance tree coverage across the site. This includes both formal planting, with car park areas and along internal roads and also to strengthen the existing vegetation along the creekline.

Increasing vegetation cover will have great benefits to the local ecology and also create a more aesthetically pleasing park land.

### **02 VISION**







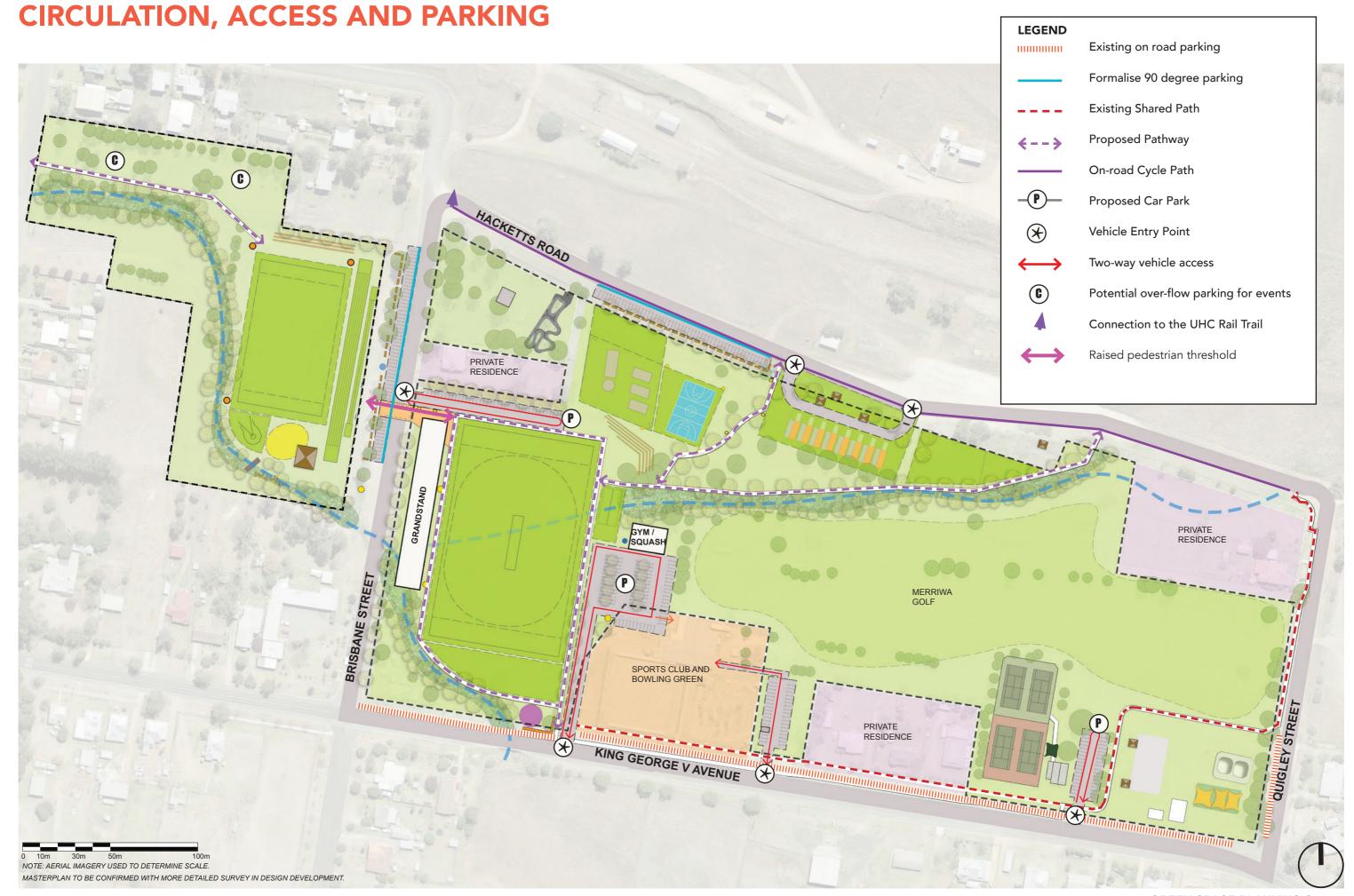




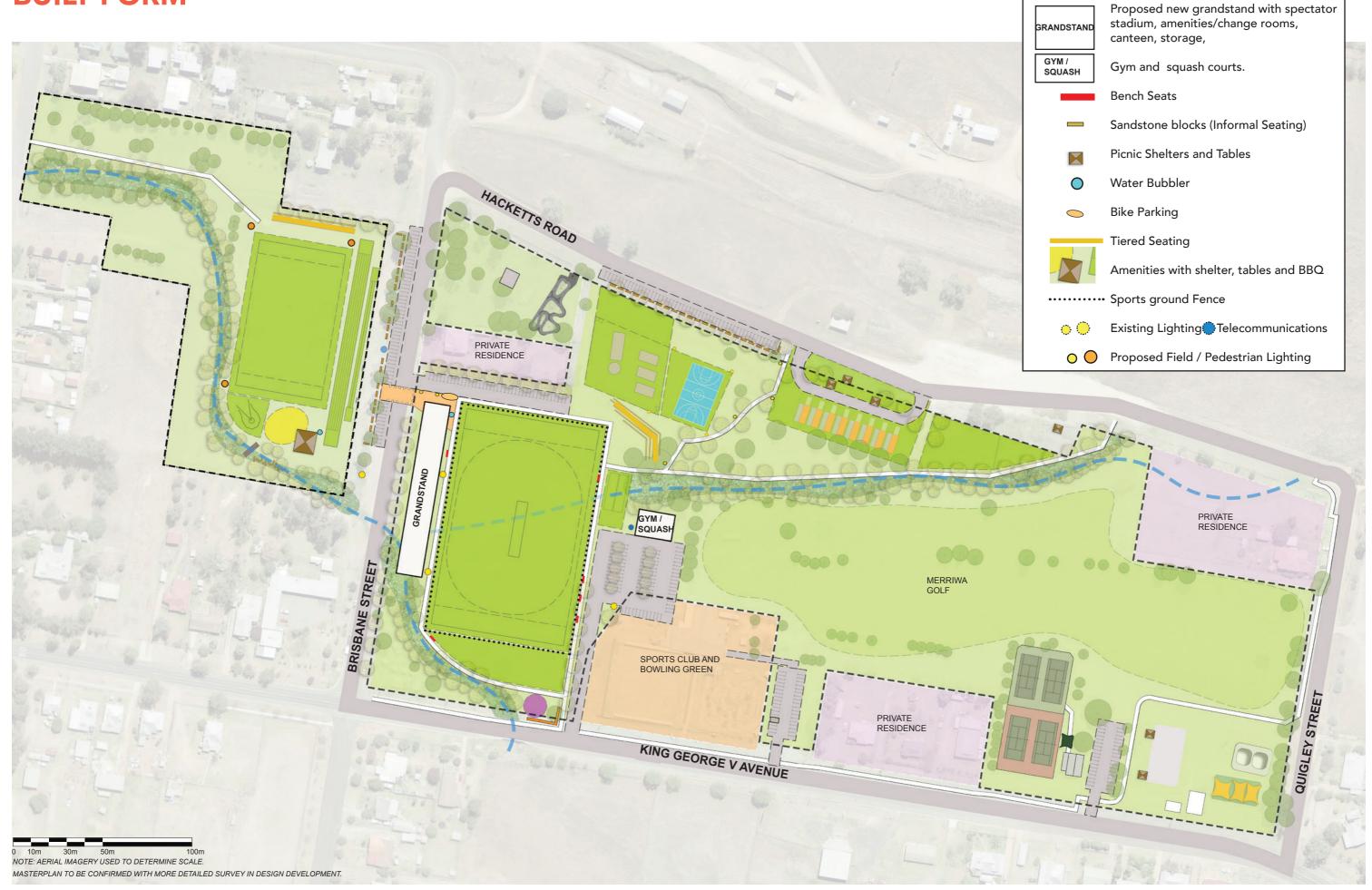








# **BUILT FORM**



**LEGEND** 

# **SPORTING FACILITIES**



# **VEGETATION AND ECOLOGY LEGEND** RIPARIAN ZONE Improvement to the Whitleys Creek riparian zone with weed removal and revegetation. Utilise rip raps and other measures to also manage the stormwater drainage within the park. Increasing vegetation cover will have great benefits to the local ecology and also create a more aesthetically pleasing park land. DRAINAGE CHANNEL Investigate potential improvements to the existing storm water channel to improve drainage to Apex Field No. 1. HACKETTS ROAD TREE PLANTING Retain all trees where possible and expand this with additional native tree planting. PRIVATE RESIDENCE GYM / SQUASH BRISBANE STREET MERRIWA GOLF SPORTS CLUB AND **BOWLING GREEN** PRIVATE RESIDENCE KING GEORGE V AVENUE MASTERPLAN TO BE CONFIRMED WITH MORE DETAILED SURVEY IN DESIGN DEVELOPMENT.