

## An oasis in the suburbs

HARRISDALE SWAMP (Bush Forever site 253) is a 98.4 hectare nature reserve in Perth's south-eastern suburb of Harrisdale, within the City of Armadale.

Named after a pioneer family of the area, the reserve is part of the Jandakot Regional Park and originally consisted of a number of private titles with two additional uncleared blocks later added to the northern end. The WA Planning Commission has progressively been buying the blocks over the years, the last acquired in 2019.

The reserve supports a variety of habitats, including banksia woodland and jarrah, a seasonal wetland—occupying the central area of the reserve—and swamp paperbark thickets with dense understoreys of bracken, jointed rush and pithy sword-sedge.



## A chequered history

The block of land now known as Harrisdale Swamp was originally part of a 130ha parcel of land first purchased in 1898 by a Mr Joseph Harris.

Trees were felled for fencing and milling and the land was used for cattle which had free range of the property. At that time, horses and sheep were also brought in. A well was installed on the edge of the swamp to water the stock when the swamp dried in summer.

During WWII, the government ordered the swamp to be drained and potatoes grown to feed the soldiers. The drain was dug and potatoes planted, but the scheme proved unsuccessful as the potatoes didn't flourish.

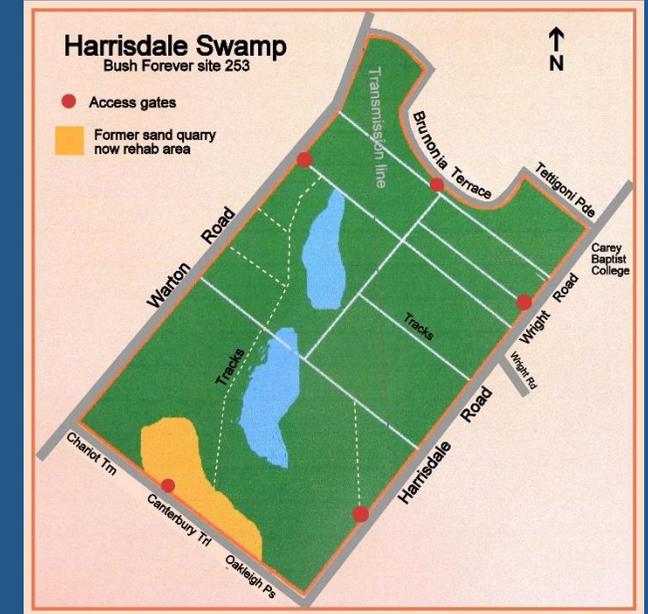
In 1953 a 40m-wide track was bulldozed through the land to allow for the Cannington-Bunbury transmission line and in 1957 a second transmission line went through the property; one of the lines has since been removed. Western Power retains a 32m easement corridor along the length of the one remaining.

Over ensuing years, with changes in ownership, the original parcel of land was progressively subdivided, resulting in Harrisdale Swamp having seven titles. Sections of the land were used for various endeavours, such as vegetable growing and sand minding. An emu farm was also planned, with a 1.8m-high emu fence being constructed, but the plan never went ahead. And for three years from 1969 Harrisdale Swamp was used for military training.

In 1991, as a result of flora and fauna surveys conducted in Harrisdale Swamp, it was recognised that the reserve had high conservation values. This was brought to the attention of the government. At about this time the formation of the Jandakot Regional Park was underway and Harrisdale Swamp was chosen for inclusion.

## Visiting the reserve

By metropolitan standards, Harrisdale Swamp is a relatively large reserve and contains many walking tracks that traverse a range of diverse habitats.



With its beauty and rich biodiversity, Harrisdale Swamp is an ideal place to visit with children where they can be taught the values of the natural environment and the importance of its preservation.



## Weeds

Despite its chequered history, over 60% of the vegetation condition of the reserve is considered 'Pristine to Very Good'. However, some areas are infested with introduced weeds, including *Acacia longifolia*, *Dipogon lignosus* and various introduced grasses.

*Acacia longifolia* is well established, particularly around the margins of the swamp and along the transmission line easements. Many of the mature trees have been removed, but eradication is ongoing and because of the long-established seed bank, numerous seedlings continue to emerge.

The same applies to *Dipogon lignosus* which was first detected some years ago as a mass of vines enveloping a patch of *Melaleuca preissiana* trees. These mature vines have been treated, but seedlings continue to spring up.

To ensure these and other weeds don't continue to spread, they need to be removed before they set seed, ideally until the seed bank is finally exhausted.



*Acacia longifolia*

*Dipogon lignosus*

*Many state, federal and local organisations have contributed towards the eradication of these invasive weeds, including DBCA, DPLH, Conservation Volunteers of Australia, SERCUL, Friends of Forrestdale and Friends of Jandakot Regional Park*

## Rehabilitation, Protection, Recreation

Prior to government acquisition of the private blocks, Harrisdale Swamp for many years suffered abuse from rubbish dumping. The land (and the dry swamp in summer) was used extensively for joy riding and the swamp was also used to dump car bodies.

Once the government acquired the land in its entirety, rubbish, car bodies, three houses and sheds were removed and new fencing and signage installed.

Revegetating degraded areas such as the former sand quarry on the southern end and other areas of the reserve is ongoing.

Protecting the floristic integrity of the reserve is a priority. To that end eradication of invasive weeds such as *Acacia longifolia* is of paramount importance. It should also be noted that the dumping of garden waste in nature reserves runs the risk of introducing further harmful weeds.

Harrisdale Swamp is home to many wildlife species, including kangaroos and quenda. Care should therefore be taken when walking dogs in the reserve to keep them on a leash at all times.

Surrounded by urban development, Harrisdale Swamp is an ecological haven in the suburbs. Boasting a wealth of natural beauty, it lends itself well to passive recreation, such as bushwalking, birdwatching and nature photography.

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**Friends of Forrestdale (Inc.)**

*Text & photos by Bryony Fremlin 2022*

*Printing of brochure funded by City of Armadale under the BEWG grants budget*

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