Vision Statement

Perth is ready...
The time has come to bring ‘art in the environment’ to a new level of sophistication. Heirisson Island is to become a major attraction, freely available to residents and visitors to Perth - a place of delicate environmental detail, of indigenous interpretation and celebration, and of exemplary outdoor sculpture.
This Masterplan presents an idea for the development of Heirisson Island. It is a starting point for discussion. Inevitably, the plan will evolve based on consultation and environmental considerations. In particular, the contribution of the local Aboriginal groups associated with the area will be highly valued in the refinement and enrichment of the design.
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Introduction

Heirisson Island offers a unique environment with a strategic river location. It has an abundance of inherent qualities, yet its incredible potential remains unrealised.

This 25-hectare island, consisting of open grassed spaces, groves of native trees, reed beds, beaches and inlets, is used primarily by joggers and recreational fishermen. But, for the most part, people pass through this tranquil city oasis by vehicle, having little regard or awareness of its treasures.

But Heirisson Island is now set to be transformed. With its superb city and river views and enviable location adjacent to the CBD, the island is envisaged to become a revitalized, connected parkland, incorporating sculptural artistic works of the highest standard.
To create an outstanding sculpture park that is sensitive to its riverine setting.

To provide a unique venue for the display of high quality exhibits of international standing.

To create a spectacular ‘Gateway’ to the city of Perth.

To rejuvenate an under-utilized part of the city with a sustainable, long term plan.

To interpret and celebrate the historical and on-going Aboriginal connections to the area.

To create a leading tourist destination.

To connect different areas of activity around the city and the river.

To restore and protect the ecology of the area.

To raise the profile of Perth in the national and international arts community.
Recognising Heirisson Island as an untapped asset, the idea of establishing a world-class sculpture park was proposed by the Heirisson Island Sculpture Park Committee, an independent group of local artists and professionals. The City of Perth Council has supported ‘in principle’ the proposal and further exploration of its feasibility.

The City of Perth commissioned a Management Plan in 2001. Although this plan made reference to the potential for artworks on the Island, it did not fully explore the incorporation of the sculpture park. Essentially, the plan was to guide the upgrading of the facilities and the development of further low impact recreation opportunities. It also highlighted areas prone to damage and outlined measures for the protection and enhancement of environmentally fragile areas and habitats. The 2001 Management Plan serves as a foundation for the development of this new Masterplan.

Urbis was engaged to prepare this Masterplan and report in 2007/08. Throughout the process Urbis has proactively sought information to enable the design to be thoroughly developed, and to address current and future management and maintenance issues. This has involved liaising with the Heirisson Island Sculpture Park Committee, and City of Perth representatives. Urbis has also sought information from the designers for Point Fraser and East Perth Redevelopment Authority’s "Riverside" project, to create a masterplan that integrates with these proposed adjacent developments.

Heirisson Island 2001 Masterplan

**Diagram:**
- **Legend:**
  - Inundation areas
  - Interpretation points
  - Interpretation shelters
  - Picnic/bluff altitudes
  - Picnic tables
  - Boardwalks
  - Boardwalks
  - Stabilised limestone paths
  - Kangaroo enclosure fence
  - Photographs of artworks

- **Zone A:**
  - Wetland vegetation and habitat
  - Frog habitat
  - Interpretation shelters
  - Picnic tables
  - Boardwalks
  - Stabilised limestone paths

- **Zone B:**
  - Wetland vegetation and habitat
  - Frog habitat
  - Interpretation shelters
  - Picnic tables
  - Boardwalks
  - Stabilised limestone paths

- **Zone C:**
  - Wetland vegetation and habitat
  - Frog habitat
  - Interpretation shelters
  - Picnic tables
  - Boardwalks
  - Stabilised limestone paths

- **Zone D:**
  - Wetland vegetation and habitat
  - Frog habitat
  - Interpretation shelters
  - Picnic tables
  - Boardwalks
  - Stabilised limestone paths

- **Zone E:**
  - Wetland vegetation and habitat
  - Frog habitat
  - Interpretation shelters
  - Picnic tables
  - Boardwalks
  - Stabilised limestone paths

**Project Background**

**Masterplan:**

- **Recognising Heirisson Island as an untapped asset, the idea of establishing a world-class sculpture park was proposed by the Heirisson Island Sculpture Park Committee, an independent group of local artists and professionals. The City of Perth Council has supported ‘in principle’ the proposal and further exploration of its feasibility.**

- **Small boats mooring in the bay and their passengers wading ashore will reduce the effectiveness of wetland revegetation projects. A more environmentally sustainable mooring could be created with tree planting.**

- **Increased use of some locations on the island has caused erosion and reduced the amount of wetland habitat available. Wetlands can be rehabilitated through:**
  - Vegetation of low lying areas with riverine plant species,
  - Removal of weeds and rabbits,
  - Increased lake areas,
  - Urban form of the island has been altered over the years, reducing the amount of wetland habitat available. Wetlands can be rehabilitated through:**
  - Rehabilitation of low lying areas with riverine plant species,
  - Removal of weeds and rabbits,
  - Increased lake areas,
  - Replacement of a low impact recreation and wetland habitat area.

- **Zone B**
  - Wetland vegetation and habitat
  - Frog habitat
  - Interpretation shelters
  - Picnic tables
  - Boardwalks
  - Stabilised limestone paths

- **Zone C**
  - Wetland vegetation and habitat
  - Frog habitat
  - Interpretation shelters
  - Picnic tables
  - Boardwalks
  - Stabilised limestone paths

- **Zone D**
  - Wetland vegetation and habitat
  - Frog habitat
  - Interpretation shelters
  - Picnic tables
  - Boardwalks
  - Stabilised limestone paths

- **Zone E**
  - Wetland vegetation and habitat
  - Frog habitat
  - Interpretation shelters
  - Picnic tables
  - Boardwalks
  - Stabilised limestone paths

**Master Plan Illustrations:**
- **The Management Plan also recommends that the island be divided into five broad zones to enable different activities and use areas to be managed appropriately. In summary these zones can be described as:**
  - **Zone A**
    - Wetland vegetation and habitat
    - Frog habitat
    - Interpretation shelters
    - Picnic tables
    - Boardwalks
  - **Zone B**
    - Wetland vegetation and habitat
    - Frog habitat
    - Interpretation shelters
    - Picnic tables
    - Boardwalks
  - **Zone C**
    - Wetland vegetation and habitat
    - Frog habitat
    - Interpretation shelters
    - Picnic tables
    - Boardwalks
  - **Zone D**
    - Wetland vegetation and habitat
    - Frog habitat
    - Interpretation shelters
    - Picnic tables
    - Boardwalks
  - **Zone E**
    - Wetland vegetation and habitat
    - Frog habitat
    - Interpretation shelters
    - Picnic tables
    - Boardwalks

**Installation of a new pedestrian bridge from Point Fraser.**

**The City of Perth commissioned a Management Plan in 2001. Although this plan made reference to the potential for artworks on the Island, it did not fully explore the incorporation of the sculpture park. Essentially, the plan was to guide the upgrading of the facilities and the development of further low impact recreation opportunities. It also highlighted areas prone to damage and outlined measures for the protection and enhancement of environmentally fragile areas and habitats. The 2001 Management Plan serves as a foundation for the development of this new Masterplan.**

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Physical Context

Heirisson Island is strategically located at the city’s eastern edge at a narrow neck in the river between East Perth and Victoria Park.

The island is centrally located to several ‘development centres’, such as Burswood Peninsular, Claisebrook Cove, the proposed Belmont Park redevelopment and the East Perth Riverside project.

All of these projects house, or are anticipated to house, significant numbers of new residents, all within walking or cycling distance of Heirisson Island. Many of these residents will traverse the island daily when commuting to and from work in the city.

The island is also surrounded by high quality public open space, with Burswood and McCallum Park to the East and Point Fraser and Langley Park to the west.

It is accessible by bus and may in future be serviced by a light rail system linking Hay St across the island to Burswood Peninsular. There is also great potential, with the increase in riverside redevelopment, for the extension of the Swan River Taxi service to extend and take in Heirisson Island.
Historically, the area consisted of two small islands surrounded by mudflats. While restricting access through this point in the river, the mudflats assisted crossing between the east and west banks of the river. For this reason, the area was of particular significance to the local Aboriginal people.

The natural crossing point formed part of an important transport route for the establishment of the British colony. In 1842 a toll bridge was constructed over the two islands, close to the location of the existing Causeway. The mudflats were dredged over time to assist passage upriver, resulting in the fusing of the small islands with the dredged material.

By 1900 a single landmass was formed and by 1930 the island had been expanded to its current size through further dredging and the dumping of building rubble and the importing of sand and soil. The existing Causeway was constructed in 1956.

The island however remained an undeveloped site, with the unofficial dumping of waste material continuing until the 1960s. Major landscaping works followed in the late 1970s which transformed the island into a parkland supporting low impact recreational activities.

In 1975 Heirisson Island was vested in the City of Perth as an A Class Reserve. This 25 hectare island is one of only two islands in the Swan, measuring 1.3km long by 300m at its widest point.

The Causeway, whilst connecting the Albany, Great Eastern and Canning Highways to the Perth CBD, today carries great volumes of traffic and effectively divides the island in two.
Aboriginal Cultural Context

The Heirisson Island area is recognised as being of particular importance to the local Aboriginal community and is registered with the Department of Indigenous Affairs as a site of mythological significance (Site ID 3589).

The area is traditionally associated with the Beeloo Nyungah people who knew the small islands and mud flats as Matagarup, referring to the river as being ‘one leg deep’. The island located between the current causeway bridge was known as Kakaroomup. The Matagarup mud flats were the first major crossing point upriver from the river’s mouth (at Fremantle) and were an important seasonal access way over which the Beeloo Nyungah gave other groups right of passage across the river. The area was also an important food-gathering place, reflected in the traditional name for Point Fraser - Beeabbolup, meaning ‘place of many fish’ (From the City of Perth’s 2001 Management Plan).

Though no longer an important food gathering area, the significance of the area has continued for the local people, especially due to its rich mythological associations.

Heirisson Island currently houses a statue of Yagan, a important leader of the Beelair Nyungah at the time of colonisation.
The main cultural points of Perth – theatres, galleries, museums, etc are distributed over the CBD. Additionally, there are many pieces of public art throughout the city area. Festivals and performances are held at temporary venue sites further contribute to the city’s cultural life.

King’s Park is a major environmental and cultural focus at the western edge of the city. The park capitalises on its many beautiful spaces and stunning views to host events such as outdoor concerts, performances and cinema on Perth’s sublime summer evenings.

The city is ‘crying out’ for another focus of international standing to mirror King’s Park and thereby ‘book end’ the city at its eastern edge. The Sculpture Park facility at Heirisson Island is perfectly positioned to fulfill this role. It has the potential to greatly elevate Perth’s active and growing arts and culture scene, not only in terms of the standard of art on offer, but also as a stunning and easily accessed venue.

Heirisson Island has the potential to respond to the river and the city in a manner unlike any other venue in Perth. It offers a physical setting for more immediate and intimate engagement with the Swan River, with all its cultural and environmental attributes.

Cultural Venues
1. Kings Park
2. His Majesty’s Theatre
3. Cultural Centre
4. Concert Hall
5. Heirisson Island

Temporary Venues
6. Convention Centre
7. Esplanade
8. Langley Park
9. Wellington Square
8.0 The Masterplan

8.1 Creating the Vision

8.2 Features of the Masterplan
Creating the Vision

This is an extraordinary and exciting opportunity to create an environment in a prime location that is custom designed for the display of and appreciation of fine sculptural artworks.

There are many wonderful sculpture parks around the world, some dedicated to specific artists, others to historical or ethnographic works and others to contemporary works. We have a unique ‘natural’ setting that presents opportunities to create places and spaces for art works that speak to, and of, the environment. The intent is for the island to be easily and freely accessible to the public.
The Plan
1. Integrating Art and Landscape

The creative integration of art and landscape will result in an inspiring and provocative public space.

- **Landform as sculpture** – A variety of landscaped spaces will be linked by sculpted landforms that can be read as art in themselves. These sculpted landforms will also serve as vantage points, wind barriers and provide spatial definition.

- **Permanent Works** – The Masterplan provides a framework in which both intimate and open spaces can be specially designed in greater detail to display specific artworks. These artworks could respond to the environment - the river, the birdlife, the history, etc. It is proposed that pieces of art of exceptional quality are acquired or commissioned over a long period of time.

- **Feature Pieces** – There are a number of locations in the plan that are intended for the installation of defining pieces of art. These will serve as markers in the landscape, to be viewed from a distance.

- **Temporary exhibits** – A number of areas within the park have been created as temporary, flexible exhibit spaces. Delicate, ephemeral art installations could be an ongoing, changing feature throughout the park.

There are a great range of possible synergies that could be developed with the community, visiting exhibitions, and local artists. This is a particularly valuable concept for the early years in the park's development when the number of permanent artworks may be limited.

- **Performance** – The performance spaces within the park allow for another layer of art to be on offer - performance art, puppetry, light shows along with other conventional forms of theatre such as dance, music and film, that utilise the landscape as 'stage'.

2. Celebrating the Aboriginal Story

Perth is in dire need of a place where Aboriginal culture is interpreted and celebrated. This is important not only for the local Aboriginal community itself, but also for the citizens and visitors to Perth, to raise awareness and appreciation of what is an extraordinarily rich culture.

- **A facility at Heirisson Island** is positioned to play a vital role – the landscape presents a perfect setting through which interpretations of the Aboriginal story, both historical and contemporary, can be delicately interwoven.

- **It is envisaged that consultation with relevant local groups regarding their cultural associations with the site will reveal opportunities for interpretation. It is recognised that there may be particular issues of cultural sensitivity – these will be treated respectfully and sympathetically.**

- **The proposal includes formal and informal gathering places for story telling and events. There are opportunities to incorporate story telling journeys on the river. The curvilinear wall to the visitor centre may be a starting point for artworks that interpret the significance of the site.**

- **The layering of the Aboriginal Story into the very fabric of the design will bring a richness and depth of meaning to the project unprecedented in any development in Perth.**

Please refer to pages 37-39 of this report for further discussion about issues relating to cultural heritage and consultation.
3. Strengthening the Sense of ‘Island’

- Road experience – To heighten awareness of Heirisson as an island, views across water to the island will be created. These views are currently obscured by the heritage listed balustrade on the Causeway bridge. The Masterplan proposes excavation to the south and north sides of the Causeway, potentially opening up views over water beyond the balustrade.

- Elevation - The proposed raised landform will allow a vantage point from which visitors will be able to view both north and south sides of the island and the surrounding river.

- Pedestrian experience – As all visitor parking will be relocated off the island, the journey across the river, either over a pedestrian bridge or by boat will, heighten the visitor’s experience of ‘island’.

- Views onto and off the island – Currently from both the city and the Victoria Park/Burswood side, the island reads as the opposite land mass with little or no sense that it is, in fact an island. The proposal is to create view corridors through, onto and out of the island, so the island can be perceived in the context of, yet separate from the adjacent land mass.

4. Giving Recognition to the Original Landform

The site was originally a series of islands through the Matagarup mudflats. Over time, the site has been filled to create its current form. The proposal is to resurrect the semblance of the original form by opening the existing water bodies on the site to create water linkages across the island. Access across these water linkages is via bridges, heightening the visitor’s island experience, and retelling a story of history through subtle means.
5. Enhancing the Natural Environment

The project presents many opportunities to enhance the natural environment and to encourage and nurture biodiversity in creative and innovative ways. This can be done through:

- Sensitive edge treatments to the island’s perimeter, using natural and artificial options;
- Working with the existing topography of the site and enhancing features where appropriate;
- Creating new habitats that support wildlife and promote biodiversity;
- Using local plant species both in a natural setting and in ‘ornamental’ gardens;
- Artworks that draw inspiration from or assist natural systems, and utilise landforms and materials, i.e. ‘land-based’ artworks and ephemeral art installations - a true integration of art and environment.

Of particular environmental significance will be the return of the site to a semblance of the original physical form prior to the landfill works. This will enable the rehabilitation and extension of the existing wetlands in the southern section. These measures will be instrumental in improving the island’s ‘natural’ environment by replicating natural hydrological and ecological systems. Decked walkways are proposed to be located through the wetland to nurture an appreciation of the environment whilst protecting sensitive habitats.

This will be replaced with species of trees and bushes, grasses and reeds, that would have existed in the area originally. It is intended that even the more ‘formal’ spaces are planted with local indigenous species.

As the implementation of the plan is to be staged, the removal and replanting of vegetation will be gradual, ensuring that there is adequate vegetation cover on the island at each stage of construction.

6. Minimising Environmental Impact

Minimising the impact on environment is of prime concern, both during construction phases, and also during the operations of the sculpture park once it is established.

Of the highest priority during any of the proposed works will be the protection of the river. All necessary measures will be undertaken to mitigate any anticipated adverse effects on water quality. Use of materials of low environmental impact should be carefully considered in the detailed design of the island’s features and amenities.

The daily operations of the sculpture park should be based on sound environmental principles:

- Water- Collection of rainwater and the recycling of grey water can be creatively incorporated into the design of particular features of the island. By the installation of water-efficient appliances, and by restricting the areas requiring irrigated grass, water use can be minimised.
- Energy- Opportunities to incorporate renewable energy sources should be thoroughly explored. Energy use can be minimised through the use of energy efficient appliances and lighting.
- Waste- Waste and pollution generated from the operations of the island should be mitigated through good quality design, construction and ongoing management. Recycling of waste materials on the island itself should be considered wherever possible.

Please refer to page 34 of this report for more discussion of technical issues relating to environmental sustainability and minimising the impact of development.