

HFNC submission to Southern Grampians Shire Council re. Volcanic Trail Masterplan 2020

Rod Bird

On reading the overview published on the Shire's website, it seems that information from the Hamilton Field Naturalists Club's *Hamilton Region Nature Guide* (second edition published in early 2020) was not used. The Shire has a copy of this publication.

Some specific comments:

Wannon Falls – no mention of the importance of the native flora here and that is relevant to many tourists. It is also important to protect it from off-road vehicles with rubbish-dumping, camping and hoon-activity with 4WDs. No mention of that in the document. Also, could have mentioned the presence of the adjacent Wannon Flora Reserve and the need for better signage to protect it from rubbish-dumping and illegal wood removal.

Nigretta Falls - signage needed to indicate that the falls are not basaltic in origin – see the Nature Guide. Also, the maps indicates a track from the toilet block east down the slope to the river – that is not supposed to exist (it was made by hoons). Off-rd driving here is blatant and frequent and destroys the remaining native flora - which is still significant. Better barriers are needed.

Byaduk Caves – a stairway could be constructed at Harmans No. 1, with a platform in the fringe area to protect the ferns from trampling. Those who want to walk further into the cave would not do any damage. The ferns in these 'sink holes' are most significant, with at least 20 species there – that was not mentioned in the report. Goats have recently found a way into at least one and a barrier has to be made to prevent that. One could envisage a walk made to the Great Barrier, about 1 km towards the Mount, for those wanting more.

Mount Napier – a path to the Devils Hole should be made along the boundary – and the current fence at the site relocated to its correct position (it presently is situated on the western side of the feature, whereas its correct position is 30 m to the east).

The Menzels' Pit area should be sign-posted as the main parking area (and improved). The Menzels Track to this point should be upgraded to bus standard. A sign warning (4WD) should be put on the continuing track Sth around the mount.

The problem with a camp at Menzels Pit may be fire hazard – the lack of easy exit in case of fire. However, a camping area there would be attractive. The fire trail around the Nth side of the Mount could be upgraded, to exit at the old Mt Napier Access track. That would give a safe exit.

Mt Baimbridge – for those doing the scenic route Hamilton-Wannon Falls-Nigretta Falls, a stop on that route could be Mt Baimbridge, a representative of the mid-aged (around 2 mya) volcanoes on the western plains. Geological information could be placed there. There is parking area and a lookout over the volcanic plain. Access to this site is easy on return to Hamilton from Nigretta Rd.

Wallacedale Tumuli off Old Crusher Rd – there are remnants of Aboriginal stone huts in the area. The people exploited the game and plant resources in the adjacent wetland (part of the now drained but once extensive swamp that extended towards Branhholme).