



Enjoy a fresh look at country life

FERGUSON VALLEY MARKETING & PROMOTIONS INC

2 January 2017

Proposal for Tourism Development for Collie-Preston Election Candidates.

The Tourism and Hospitality industry in the South West of Western Australia has the potential to revitalize the local economy, providing employment opportunities for many young people and initiating wealth creation and international spending. The Geographe wine region is a vision of the Margaret River wine region 30 years ago, with the increased accessibility and amenities of Bunbury city, and the appealingly short travel time from Perth of 1.5 to 2 hours. The Ferguson Valley is one of the most saleable, burgeoning elements of the Geographe, with its location, facilities and enthusiastic business owners.

Until recently, the Ferguson Valley was best known to the locals who live there as the hidden gem of the Southwest. The sprawling, rolling hills, with trans-seasonal appeal, the golden glow of the valley as the summer sun sets and vibrant, lush greens of winter define a collective local understanding that what we have is magical. To our visitors, it has been likened to the curves and bends of Tuscany, the serenity of the untouched countryside, with the added gustatory delights of the local terroir. Those who live, and breathe the Ferguson are quietly proud of our local artists, producers and fresh, sun-kissed produce. The Valley is magical for those who know and love it, but has the potential to be so much more. With the right emphasis, proper signage, communication infrastructure and promotion, the Ferguson Valley has all the ingredients to be to Perth, what the Yarra Valley is to Melbourne.

Quite apart from the natural splendour, Gnomesville is one of the twenty most visited and well-known sites in Australia, and is a major draw card for local, interstate and international visitors alike. Brimming with potential, the business owners of the Geographe are keen to see the region reach its full value, and provides one of the elements that WA needs after a period of stagnation post mining-boom. The Ferguson has been featured on the Urban list recently, which demonstrated the appeal in high gloss, popular format. The accessible and complete description of the Valley as a polished, complete package is marketable, fresh and visually appealing, it just isn't true, yet. There are a number of aspects lacking from the reality of the Ferguson Valley that, if rectified, will allow it to shine like the gem it can be.

These include:

- The completion of the circular drive, by bitumising 5 km of gravel road on Wellington Forest Rd.

Paving this road would provide a clear and accessible circle route that would easily be followed by out-of-towners. A complete circuit provides the visitor easy access to food, wine, art galleries, natural forest and other attractions, plus the unique spectacle of Gnomesville situated within nature of the Wellington Mills, and it will allow FV to be rebranded as a complete Tourist Route.

- Adequate signage to allow visitors to access the entire valley. Suggestions are two-fold.

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- The tourist trail, starting at Forrest Hwy complete with a clear, branded icons with arrows to direct drivers to the heart of the Ferguson Valley. Rebranding as a Tourist Route would facilitate directional signs from Forrest Highway, crossing South West Highway.
- Clear and complete signs within the tourism precinct to direct people to specific attractions and the businesses they seek.

The winding roads in to the Valley are numerous and can provide confusion. New directional signage will eliminate confusion and streamline the experience, and the icon will unify the valley under a recognizable brand making it a more appealing package. The many attractions of the Valley are currently hidden or are not promoted adequately to enhance tourist experience, and it becomes more of a chance happening upon some of the lesser-known or smaller attractions, than a complete wining, dining and viewing experience.

- Gnomesville is an established, but dynamic attraction that is constantly growing and changing, as much a part of the visitors, and they, a part of it than a static attraction. This has become both a blessing and a curse for the Valley, as neighbours have found their property has become home to more than just their farm, as enthusiastic gnome-goers move further beyond the boundaries of Gnomesville.

Over time visitors have destroyed most of the fence line separating Gnomesville from 66, 72 and 74 Japonica View and have increasingly trespassed onto and degraded both properties to the point where visitors arriving at Gnomesville today would find it difficult to discern where public land ends and private properties begin. These property owners have spent many hours repairing fencing and relocating gnomes back to public land but the sheer weight of numbers during 2015 and 2016 have overcome any efforts they make. The fence itself has now been damaged beyond repair and needs replacing. It is conservatively estimated that over 3,000 gnomes now reside on private property.

To alleviate this frustration, and to utilize the fame and popularity of this interactive space, funding could be sought to put to tender for an "Art Installation Wall". This wall would ensure privacy for residents and increase the value of the tourism product of the area.

A further improvement to the area would be a "Pop up" visitor centre. It is envisaged that a purpose built mobile van with coffee making facilities, visitor information, and brochures, possibly gnomes for sale, and staffed by knowledgeable locals would provide a way to harness the resource.

This advancement on the current management would also serve as maintenance of respect for the attraction, including cleanliness, surveillance and assistance of proper placement of gnomes. In addition to an independent source of income, this pop-up store would provide employment opportunities and a potential self-sustaining future for local tourism in the area.

In summary, the proposed innovations and changes to the existing structure of the Ferguson Valley are as follows:

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1. Completion of 5Km of Bitumen road. Approximate cost 5 million.
2. Directional signage leading in to the Ferguson Valley Tourist Route, and within the tourism precinct. Approximate cost for 35 small, and 25 large signs \$180,000.
3. Art installation wall in Gnomesville. Approximate cost \$70,000.
4. Mobile pop up visitor Centre to be managed by FVMP, and mostly located at Gnomesville. Approximate cost \$50,000.

Ferguson Valley Marketing and Promotion Inc. is well situated to document and manage items 2, 3 and 4 above over a 3-year time frame, if funding were to be allocated.

The final issue of Mobile communication Towers may not fall under state Government jurisdiction, however any announcement that the planned infrastructure improvements will be expedited will certainly be a vote winner with locals who live with inadequate mobile phone coverage, and internet access.

This document was developed by the Board of the FVMP inc.

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