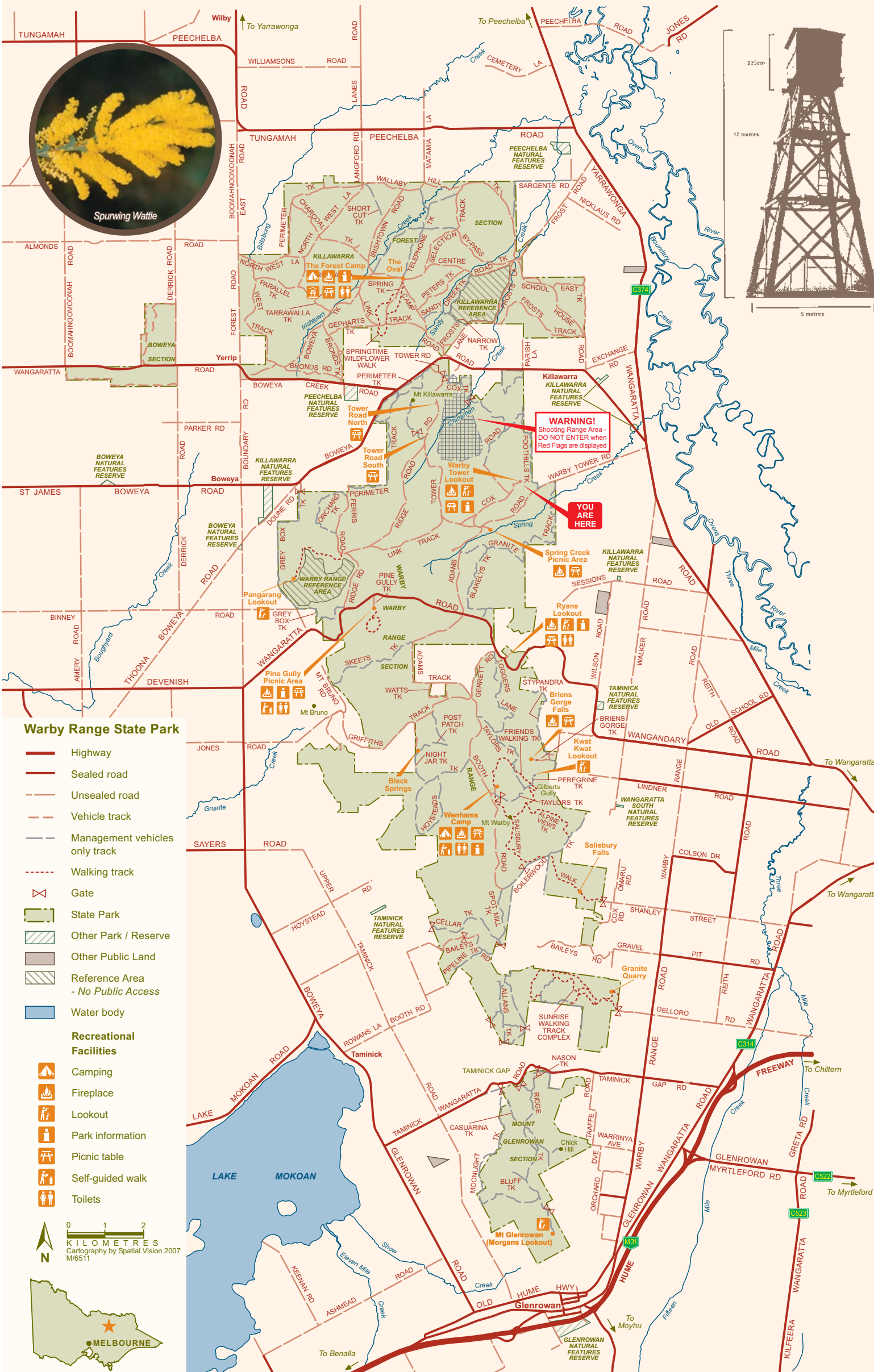


Welcome to Warby Tower Lookout Warby Range State Park



Warby Tower

The detection of bushfires in the remote Warby Ranges was of ongoing concern to H.H. Beer, a senior forester at Yarrowonga. Many fires were often well established and difficult to fight by the time they were identified, so in October 1953 he wrote to C.W. Watson the Forests Inspector at Wangaratta and requested the development of a fire spotting tower as part of an early fire detection system.

The tower was to be staffed during the fire season depending on the fire danger, the likelihood of lightning storms and the presence of going fires.

The McMillan brothers of Oxley won the tender to build the tower with a hand written quote for £450, and began construction in 1955. The tower was first built on the ground and then dismantled in two halves and erected using a crane. Local Mugga Ironbark from the Killawarra Forest, now part of the Warby Range State Park, was used and construction included dressing the timber using a broad axe, blasting the footings into the granite and concreting the legs of the tower into the blast holes. It took four men two full weeks to complete.

The lookout cabin on top of the tower was two square metres and made of timber and iron. The cabin was reached through a trapdoor after climbing timber ladders set in three stages with two intermediate open landings (as shown in the photo). The top of the cabin was 12 metres above ground level and the site is 370 metres above sea level.

Jim McMillan of the McMillan brothers climbed the tower for the first and only time on its completion. He remembers looking east over the Ovens River floodplain through binoculars and reading the signs on the Boorhaman Hotel (10km distant), then turning south east towards Wangaratta and observing children kicking a football at Marist Brothers College oval (15km distant).

The Warby Tower was decommissioned in 1991. The tower became unsafe and was dismantled in 2002; however the lower half of the legs were left standing to show where the tower once stood. The fire spotting role is now carried out by Mt Stanley and Mt Pilot Towers in the hills to the east of the Ovens Valley.

Survey Cairn

50 metres north east of the tower is a three metre high stone cairn survey marker. The cairn was erected in November 1941 by the 3rd Field Survey Corp, Royal Australian Engineers to provide more accurate maps in the event of an invasion.

Built using local stone it is an unusual example of a mortared stone cairn and is an interesting example of the construction work undertaken by the Army Survey Corps.

