



NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

Arakoon and Hat Head National Parks

Macleay Coast Destination master plan



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Acknowledgment of Country

The precincts featured in this master plan are on Dunghutti Country. NPWS acknowledges the Dunghutti People, the Traditional Owners and custodians of these lands and waters, who have been part of this landscape for many thousands of years. We acknowledge their continued connection to the land, seas and waterways and pay our respects to their Elders of the past, present and future.



Summary



What is proposed?

The Macleay Coast Destination project aims to improve community wellbeing, enhance the regional visitor economy, and increase nature based tourism in New South Wales.

The project, which includes funding of \$6.7 million, will complement the existing historic and cultural significance of key visitor precincts in Arakoon and Hat Head national parks by increasing the range and quality of experiences on offer and improving park visitor facilities.

In addition, a new walking track south of Gap Beach will complete the Smoky Cape to Little Bay walking track, providing stunning views over the coastline and meeting the increasing demand for bushwalking opportunities.

The project will be implemented in 3 stages, with the initial \$6.7 million in funding focused on delivering stages 1 and 2.

Stage 1

Develop a blueprint in consultation with the community to meet long-term visitor demands of key visitor precincts in Arakoon and Hat Head national parks, and determine priorities for implementation.

Stage 2

Use project funding to improve the visitor experience by improving pedestrian, cycle and traffic circulation, separating non-compatible uses and modernising facilities in priority areas.

Stage 3

Undertake remaining works as funding becomes available over the 10-year life of the master plan.

Four different precincts have been identified:

Trial Bay – Initiatives in the Trial Bay precinct, in Arakoon National Park, aim to improve cycle, pedestrian and vehicle movement by improving overall safety and helping to separate different user groups; creating new amenities for day visitors; and improving beach access.

Cardwell Street – This precinct, in Arakoon National Park, includes the former NPWS office and compound and will become a key attraction for day visitors, with much-improved parking and facilities. It is proposed that the NPWS office be repurposed as the campground office (replacing Trial Bay Gaol) and that a scaled-down depot supports local operational needs. A new walking/cycling track will link this precinct to Trial Bay.

Little Bay – This precinct, in Arakoon National Park, will feature enhanced facilities and new family-friendly walking and bike paths, reinvigorating this cherished precinct as a favoured location for family gatherings.

Smoky Cape – Improved parking and day visitor facilities at Smoky Cape, Hat Head National Park, coupled with a small kiosk in one of the repurposed lighthouse buildings will improve services and increase the visitor appeal of this already iconic site.

Why is the project needed?

Facilities and services in the Trial Bay, Little Bay and Smoky Cape precincts have been developed in an ad hoc manner over the past 40 years. Some facilities are in an advanced state of disrepair and others have had to be demolished to address immediate safety concerns. Ad hoc development has also left a legacy of inconsistent and poor-quality design and construction of infrastructure within and between the precincts.

The ongoing decline in the quality of visitor infrastructure will diminish the appeal of the area to existing visitors and limit our capacity to encourage new visitor markets. Upgraded and improved facilities and experiences in Arakoon National Park and the Smoky Cape precinct in Hat Head National Park will secure existing visitor markets and entice new visitors. They will also increase the length of time people stay and support sustainable levels of visitation throughout the year.



Trial Bay – Inconsistent mix of

How will the project vision be achieved?

The planning process has been greatly aided by the establishment of project design principles. They encompass current thinking, issues, challenges, opportunities and trends, and help set the ‘ground rules’ to ensure the project vision (see Section 3.1) is met. The design principles for the project are:

- protect cultural and historic heritage
- minimise environmental impacts
- enhance enjoyment and understanding
- separate day and overnight uses
- provide high-quality camping
- improve vehicle access and movement
- manage vehicle parking
- improve walking and cycling.

Each of the precinct plans was developed in accordance with these principles (see Section 2 ‘Project methodology’ for more detail).



Little Bay – Shelter style to be used throughout the precincts

Community and visitor involvement in the project

The project team has ongoing engagement with Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal community groups. As part of the preparation of the Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment, numerous Aboriginal parties and individuals registered their interest and provided advice.

The main opportunity for community consultation was the public exhibition of the draft master plan from 22 November 2022 to 3 February 2023, during which time NPWS received 151 submissions. All points raised in submissions which were within the scope of the master plan were considered the plan’s finalisation.

Prior to public exhibition of the draft plan, community feedback and social data from a wide range of sources provided excellent insights into visitor motivations and provided a basis for the preliminary precinct planning. Since 2019 the project team’s webpage has invited the public to register as project stakeholders to receive direct notification of new information and updates. NPWS has also collected information on park-related travel, attitudes, needs and interests. These include onsite visitor surveys, post-visit campground surveys, statewide population-based surveys, tourism industry surveys and other market research.



Consulting with stakeholders on-site

A scenic view of a rocky coastline. The foreground is dominated by large, brown, jagged rocks and patches of green, succulent-like vegetation. The ocean is a vibrant turquoise color, with white foam from waves crashing against the rocks. The sky is a clear, deep blue. Pine branches with long, thin needles frame the top and right sides of the image. In the distance, a low mountain range is visible on the horizon.

01

Introduction

1.1 Background

Arakoon and Hat Head national parks are located 450 km north of Sydney and a similar distance south of the Gold Coast. The closest town of South West Rocks, less than 5 km from Trial Bay Gaol, has a permanent population of approximately 4,600 but this increases dramatically during peak holiday periods. Kempsey (population 30,000) is the nearest city, less than 40 km away.

The state heritage-listed Trial Bay Gaol (Arakoon National Park) and Smoky Cape Lighthouse (Hat Head National Park) are 2 of the most iconic tourist attractions on the NSW Mid North Coast. The national parks in which they are located collectively attract over a million visitors annually and are major contributors to the local economy of the Kempsey Shire. Those visiting from outside the local area are predominantly from other parts of New South Wales and have typically been families and older Australians drawn to the area by the coastal environs, natural environment and outstanding heritage.

There is now little doubt that existing visitor infrastructure does not complement, and in fact detracts from, the natural and cultural heritage values of the area. Infrastructure in Trial Bay Gaol campground has evolved over time in an ad hoc manner, largely without the benefit of a consistent vision or detailed economic or environmental planning. This has created inconsistencies in design and materials used in park infrastructure, impacting aesthetics, road layout and traffic flow and creating conflicting visitor uses. A study commissioned by NPWS in 2016 found that infrastructure in Trial Bay campground and the parks generally were undermining the visitor

experience by lagging way behind market trends and visitor expectations. At that time, it was predicted that growth would be negative without significant upgrading. Given the key role this precinct plays as a major visitor attraction, any downturn in visitation would have major impacts on the regional visitor economy and the many local people and businesses who rely on this to support livelihoods and the ongoing provision of community services.

The Macleay Coast Destination project aims to address these concerns and at the same time provide a much-needed boost to the regional visitor economy and community wellbeing.

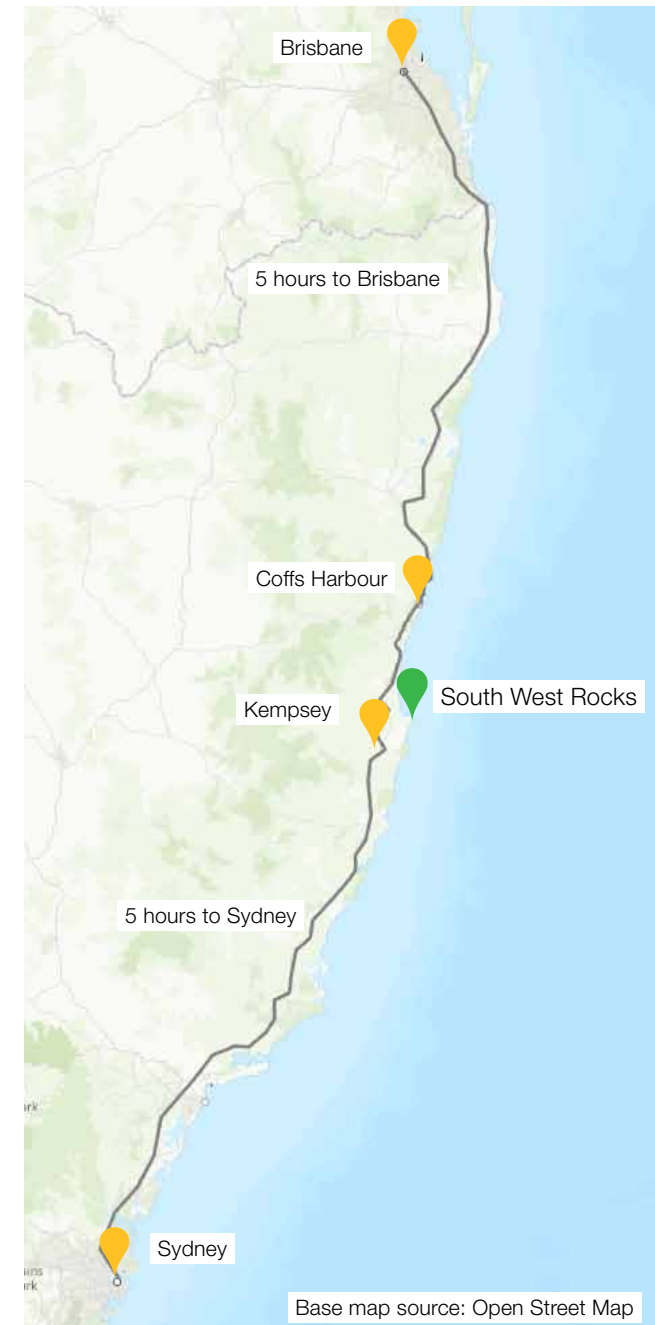


Figure 1.1 Regional locality

1.2 The precincts

The study area is located within the Kempsey Shire on the NSW Mid North Coast and includes key visitor precincts in Arakoon and Hat Head national parks.

Legend

Existing track/path



Arakoon National Park



1. Trial Bay Gaol
2. Cardwell Street
3. Little Bay

Hat Head National Park



4. Smoky Cape



Figure 1.2 Study area

1.3 The precincts

The Macleay Coast Destination project encompasses the 4 accommodation and day use precincts described here. The project also includes improvements to the walking track system (see Section 10).

01 – Trial Bay

Trial Bay, in Arakoon National Park, is a key site and landscape feature within NPWS’s coastal reserve system.

Often described as the jewel in the crown of the Macleay Valley Coast, it is widely acknowledged as one of NSW’s premier coastal visitor destinations. It is equally important to the local community who use Trial Bay’s beach, foreshore and surrounding natural environment for a range of recreational activities.



Figure 1.3 Trial Bay

02 – Cardwell Street

A popular location used by locals and visitors accessing the Front Beach for walking and general beach usage. The location has been used as a storage area, nursery and depot, however these uses are in transition.



Figure 1.4 Cardwell Street

03 – Little Bay

This location offers scenic coastal views, with opportunities for whale watching, fishing and walking. Monument Hill walking track and the Bridle trail access this location, creating opportunities for a variety of walks and experiences.

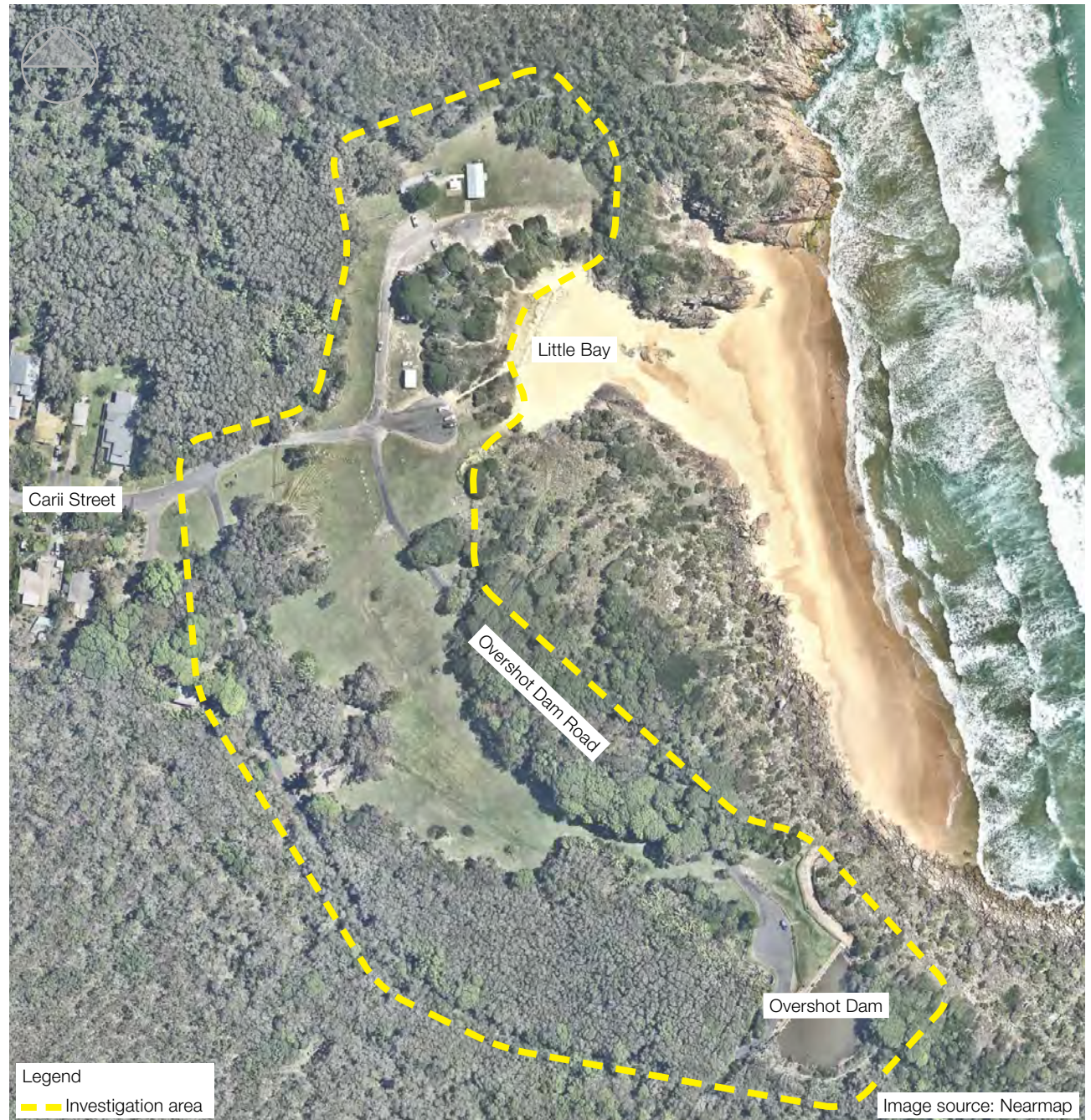


Figure 1.5 Little Bay

04 – Smoky Cape

Standing high on a narrow headland, Smoky Cape Lighthouse is surrounded by the stunning coastal scenery of Hat Head National Park. The location provides access to the 2 km return walk along Jack Perkins walking track and the longer walk along the Smoky Cape Range walking track.

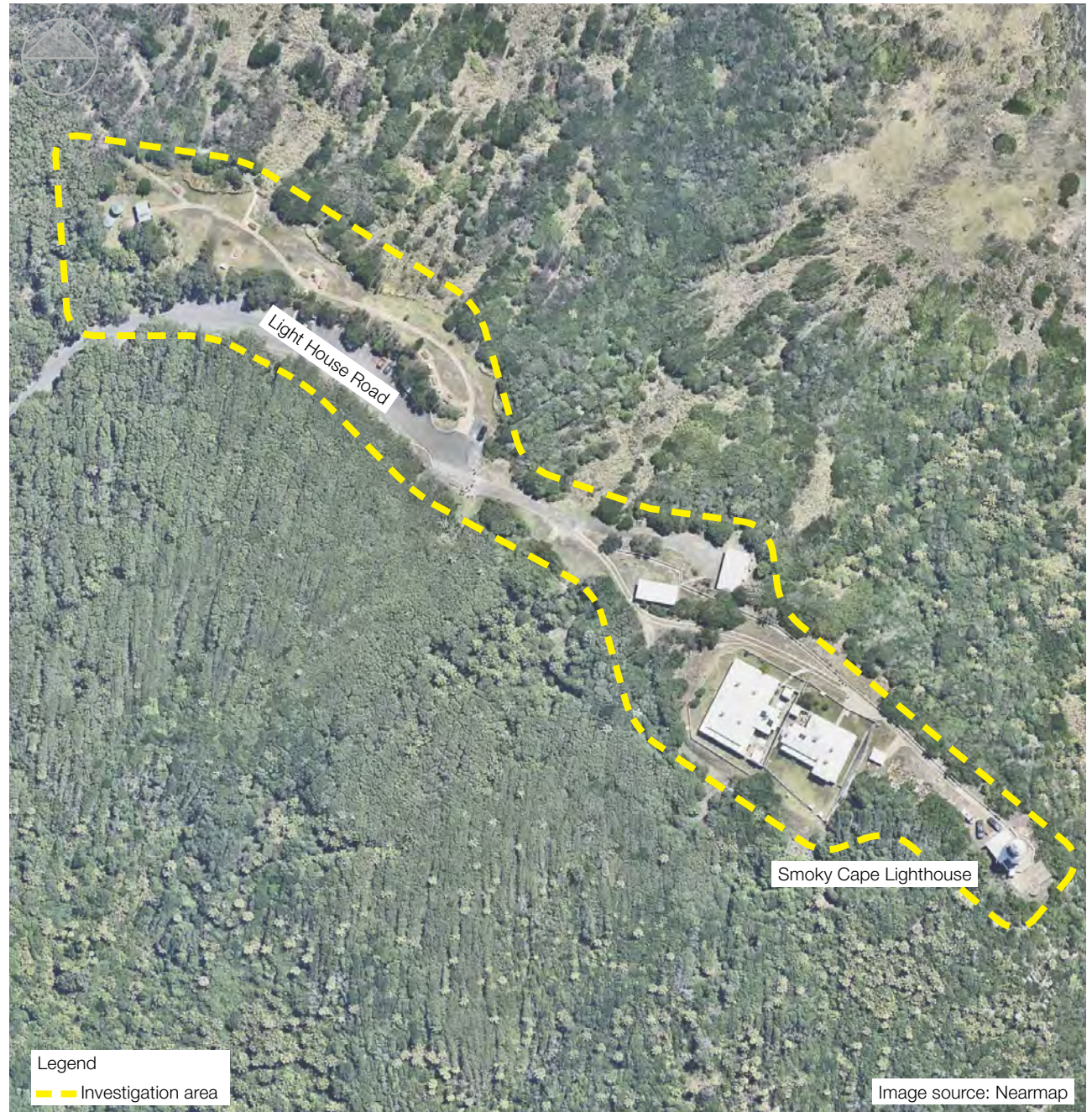


Figure 1.6 Smoky Cape

1.4 Aboriginal culture

Arakoon and Hat Head national parks are part of the lands of the Dunghutti People, who maintain a strong connection to Country. These connections may be maintained in spiritual or cultural practice, storytelling, activities, teaching and remembering, or as physical evidence (for example middens).

NPWS is committed to working with the Dunghutti community to ensure their cultural heritage is acknowledged, protected and respected as a part of living culture.

Aboriginal custodians have worked with NPWS to inform the master plan and Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment report, a key reference for the reviews of environmental factors for each precinct.

1.5 European heritage

The precincts have significant European or shared heritage values as reflected by the State Heritage Register listing of Trial Bay Gaol and Smoky Cape Lighthouse. Conservation management plans guide their restoration, visitor use and management to ensure that shared heritage conservation and visitor engagement can occur at the same time.

Works within the State Heritage Register-listed curtilage area require approval under section 60 of the *Heritage Act 1977* if they have the potential to impact heritage-listed items.

A statement of heritage impact of proposed works has been prepared for each precinct to ensure heritage values are not impacted, by mitigating against potential impacts through the design process. The design of the Trial Bay precinct car park proposed in the draft master plan has been modified for this reason.



Trial Bay Gaol

Dating from 1886, Trial Bay Gaol is a unique example of a public works prison. It was also one of only 5 internment camps for Germans in New South Wales during the First World War. Today, the picturesque historic ruin stands as a testament to those who lived and died there, with a museum and memorial for visitors to gain a better idea of life in those days.

Photo: David Finnegan/DCCEEW



Smoky Cape Lighthouse

Standing high on a narrow headland, Smoky Cape Lighthouse is surrounded by the stunning coastal scenery of Hat Head National Park. Built in 1891, this heritage lighthouse is one of the last designed by the Colonial Architect James Barnet, and now provides superior visitor accommodation in its lighthouse keepers' cottages.

Photo: John Spencer/DCCEEW

1.6 Natural values

Arakoon and Hat Head national parks are places of outstanding natural beauty and protect native plants, animals and ecosystems of exceptional scientific importance. The varied and spectacular landscape, from granite cliffs to ocean beaches, and the diversity of vegetation draw many visitors to these parks.

The vegetation across the study area is varied. Low heathland and grassland dominate Monument Hill, allowing views along the coast, across to South West Rocks and inland. Tall melaleuca dominates the swamp sclerophyll forests between Trial Bay campground and Cardwell Street, and at Little Bay. Between Little Bay and Smoky Cape on the sheltered slopes behind Gap Beach, the vegetation includes a large patch of littoral rainforest, a threatened ecological community. On more-exposed sites this rainforest is fringed by wet sclerophyll forest and shrubby dry sclerophyll forest.

The Smoky Cape syenogranite, which forms Little Smoky and the Arakoon peninsula, provides a spectacular backdrop to the study area and is one of few significant coastal outcroppings of granite between Bundaberg in Queensland and Moruya Heads in southern New South Wales. The granite was used to construct the prison – the quarry is still evident below the gaol – and is of both scientific and educational value.

An ecological assessment report was prepared for each precinct and the walking track, as part of the review of environmental factors.

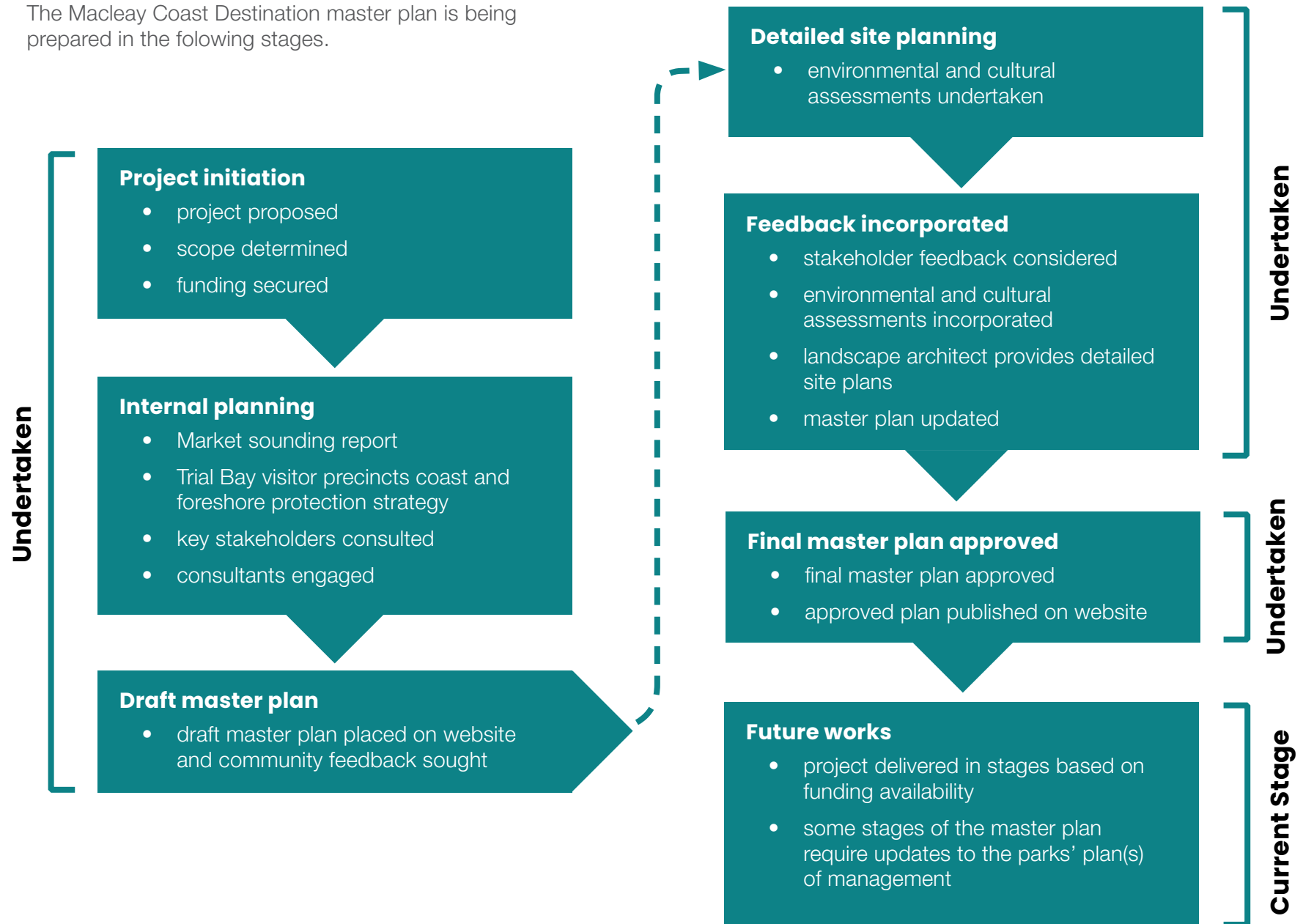
02

Project methodology



2.1 Project methodology

The Macleay Coast Destination master plan is being prepared in the following stages.



03

Vision and design principles



3.1 Vision

The Macleay Coast Destination project will provide new and upgraded infrastructure within Arakoon and Hat Head national parks to strengthen the region's appeal as a quality destination. It will provide the kinds of facilities and services that:

- increase the number of day visitors to regional areas, with dispersal to adjacent areas
- increase the average length of stay and spend in the region
- increase participation in national park-based activities and experiences
- contribute to ongoing maintenance costs and financial sustainability
- enable a positive contribution to job creation in the tourism and hospitality sectors
- foster the future stewardship of natural and cultural assets.

3.2 Project design principles

The project design principles establish high-level guidance for planning and design, providing a foundation for the development of precinct strategies. The design principles streamline the decision process and assist in rationalisation of improvements for current and future funding. The principles also help identify short-, medium- and long-term priorities.

The design principles encompass current thinking, issues, challenges, opportunities and trends, and existing documentation.

There are 8 design principles for the project, grouped under 5 themes, each of which are expanded on in the following pages:

- recreation and activation
 - improve walking and cycling
- environment
 - protect cultural and historic heritage
 - minimise environmental impacts
- visitor experience
 - enhance enjoyment and understanding
 - separate day and overnight uses
- camping
 - provide high-quality camping
- circulation
 - improve vehicle access and movement
 - manage vehicle parking.



Photo: D Finnegan/DCCEEW

Recreation and activation

Improve walking and cycling

- Increase number of people walking and cycling to and within the precincts.
- Provide safe, enjoyable pathways that connect to the South West Rocks township.
- Facilitate experiences that enable visitor contact with and experience of the natural environment.
- Improve experiences by reducing impacts of car access and providing links to open space.
- Explore targeted new track links to create significant day walk experiences by connecting existing tracks and precincts and developing loops.
- Develop flexible potential for events able to be hosted within the Trial Bay day use precinct and that complement site character.

Environment

Protect cultural and historic heritage

- Conserve and protect identified Aboriginal sites.
- Interpret and promote cultural and historic heritage assets.
- Provide visitor experiences and facilities that interpret, foster education and awareness and respect for the Aboriginal occupation in the region.
- Enhance access to the gaol from within the precinct.
- Improve car parking at entrance to the gaol by creating a formalised entry court/buffer.
- Locate any new infrastructure to minimise impacts on cultural and heritage assets.

Environment

Minimise environmental impacts

- Interpret and promote natural heritage and geological site features.
- Conserve existing vegetation and habitat assets.
- Improve habitat links and connectivity.
- Improve, where possible, the hydraulic function of the creek.
- Mitigate impact of flood events.
- Improve creek bank and base stability.
- Reduce impacts of sea level rises and inundation.
- Investigate water management such as storm water harvesting, grey water reuse, or treatment.



Photo: D Finnegan/DCCEEW



Photo: D Finnegan/DCCEEW



Photo: D McGerty

Visitor experience

Enhance enjoyment and understanding

- Provide design uniformity and cohesion.
- Provide visitor hubs to serve accommodation and day use areas.
- Develop flexible potential for events to be hosted within the Trial Bay precinct that complement site character.
- Improve interpretation and information for visitors.
- Deliver local economic benefits by supporting visitation, 'dwell time' and overnight stays in the region.
- Disperse visitors across the precincts, particularly in peak times, and encourage visitation in the quieter off-peak seasons.

Visitor experience

Separate day and overnight uses

- Create a publicly accessible waterfront.
- Resolve existing conflicts of use between those seeking to enjoy the Trial Bay precinct for day use – picnickers, beachgoers, visitors to the gaol – and those seeking an overnight experience.
- Provide targeted information to enable clear navigation on arrival.
- Allocate functions and uses to logical and clear zones/areas across Trial Bay precinct.
- Avoid day use links through camping areas within the Trial Bay precinct.

Camping

Provide high-quality camping

- Aim for no net loss of camping across the Trial Bay precinct.
- Avoid day use links through camping areas within the Trial Bay precinct.
- Maximise capacity of camping at Trial Bay as the primary site accommodation offering.
- Provide a fixed proportion of camp sites with power provision.
- Formalise camping sites and zones where possible.
- Provide amenities at sufficient capacity to serve camping and RV/van accommodation.
- Disperse visitors, particularly in peak times, and encourage visitation in the quieter off-peak seasons.



Photo: H Lambert/DCCEEW



Photo: R Mulally/DCCEEW



Photo: R Mulally/DCCEEW

Circulation

Improve vehicle access and movement

- Improve gateway experiences when accessing the parks.
- Reduce vehicular congestion across the precincts.
- Provide functional and clear circulation routes to key destinations within the parks.
- Establish pedestrian priority through managed traffic speeds.
- Provide targeted information on approach to arrival.
- Reduce extent of day use vehicular circulation and parking in camping and accommodation areas.

Circulation

Manage vehicle parking

- Remove conflicts between parking and other uses.
- Remove car parks from prime recreational green spaces.
- Formalise and define parking in unstructured parking areas.
- Ensure no net loss of parking across the precincts.
- Provide defined and functional parking areas to service day use visitation.
- Provide parking hubs with recreation links to key features.



Photo: B Webster/NSW Government



Photo: B Webster/NSW Government

04

Tourism planning context



4.1 Tourism on the North Coast

Tourism is a significant industry in the NSW North Coast region, including the Mid North Coast.

Prior to COVID-19, the region hosted 12 million visits per year, the third most popular tourism destination in Australia based on domestic visitor nights, contributing \$3.7 billion to the economy. COVID-19 restrictions reduced numbers by almost 40%, however, by mid-2023 visitor numbers exceeded those prior to the pandemic, reaching 12.6 million visits per year.

At the same time, the population of the North Coast is growing rapidly and transport links to the urban growth areas of south-east Queensland and Greater Sydney are improving.

The North Coast NSW destination management plan 2022–2030 goal of generating \$25 billion by 2030 is supported by the development of these ‘iconic natural visitor attractions’ on the Macleay Valley Coast.

4.2 Tourism on the Macleay Valley Coast

The Macleay Valley Coast encompasses the main town of Kempsey, the popular tourist destinations of South West Rocks and Crescent Head, and numerous smaller villages in the coastal hinterland. The region is defined by its stunning coastline, with the mountainous hinterland providing a spectacular backdrop. The Macleay River also features prominently in the landscape as it flows from the hinterland through the valley to the coast. The Macleay Valley’s tourism sector has been identified as an important pillar of the region’s future prosperity.

Arakoon and Hat Head national parks are a vital component of the local tourism economy, which

generated \$83 million in gross revenue and supported over 400 local jobs in 2021. NPWS’s most recent economic modelling found that direct operational investment, the visitors we hosted and combined flow-on effects, generated over \$600 million in expenditure and directly/indirectly supported over 700 jobs in many different sectors of the Macleay Coast economy.

Kempsey Shire Council’s *Macleay Valley Coast destination management plan 2019–2029* was prepared to complement council’s economic development efforts. By addressing the challenges and capitalising on the opportunities to grow the Macleay Valley Coast visitor economy, the destination management plan provides the framework for action to guide Kempsey Shire Council and its partner organisations in delivering actions to help fulfil the vision for the region’s visitor economy.

To realise Kempsey Shire Council’s vision, the new strategic approach embodied in their destination management plan focuses on higher-yield tourism. This will require higher standards of accommodation and hospitality services to match or better what is offered by overseas packages and other regions in Australia. The proposed improvements at Arakoon and Hat Head national parks will help provide these services.

*Our vision for a vibrant visitor economy will see the **Macleay Valley Coast** establish itself as a premier regional visitor destination through the development of iconic natural visitor attractions, driving growth in high-yield and environmentally sustainable tourism.*

Extract from Macleay Valley Coast destination management plan 2019–2029 (page 48).

Economic value of national parks on the North Coast*

The positive impacts of visitation to national parks on the North Coast include:

- \$5.8 billion of direct and flow-on expenditure as a result of park-related visitation
- direct and flow-on expenditure that supported over 11,000 full-time jobs in the North Coast
- \$1.42 billion of recreation value provided by North Coast parks
- annual visitation to North Coast parks of 7.3 million visits.

*This information relates to the NPWS North Coast Branch region, which encompasses the coast and escarpment from Laurieton to the Queensland border. The statistics are based on 2018 information.



Music during Sculptures at the Gaol, Arakoon National Park. (Kampai Pty Ltd/DCCEEW)

4.3 Current visitation

Both Arakoon and Hat Head national parks and their visitor precincts are popular search terms in the 10 million-plus NPWS visitor website page views each year. In the 150,000 search terms NPWS regularly monitors, Trial Bay campground was the 24th most popular search term in the last 12 months, Trial Bay Gaol 53rd, and Hat Head National Park 196th. Trial Bay or Hat Head camping was also highly ranked.

The estimated annual visits to Arakoon National Park are more than one million, with Trial Bay campground the most visited location. Both parks are popular locations for overnight visitors. In 2021–22, Arakoon National Park hosted 20,000 visitors staying 57,000 nights, and Hat Head National Park hosted 10,000 visitors staying 20,000 nights.

Occupancy rates for Trial Bay campground vary across the seasons and site types. The overall occupancy rate over the last 5 years is around 40%. The Bayview caravan sites are the most popular with 75% occupancy (2021), followed by the powered sites with around 60%. Tent-only sites achieve around 30% occupancy.

Visitation to the parks is highly seasonal, in line with trends for North Coast domestic travel data. Typical bookings at Arakoon and Hat Head national park campgrounds follow the pattern below:

- high in summer peak and autumn school holidays (November through to February, and in April)
- moderate in summer shoulder months and early winter (October, March, and May to July)
- low in late winter and early spring (August and September).

Visitors to the parks come mostly from New South Wales (around 90%), 7% from Queensland and 2% from Victoria. NSW visitors come from Sydney (35%), followed by North Coast (29%), Hunter (12%) and Central Coast (5%).

The data indicates that most visitors travel distances greater than 300 km to stay at the park, meaning this visitation generates significant additional revenue for the local economy. Locals, those who live less than 20 km from the park, typically constitute 10 to 15% of park visitors. People visit the parks in a variety of travel groups. In Trial Bay over summer for example, the largest travel party type is friends/family groups (67%), followed by immediate family (17%). Couples represent around 7% of the overall market, and singles, while a relatively small travel party type at around 7%, are growing in significance globally.

Motivations to visit the parks also vary with the most popular revolving around socialising with friends and families, enjoying the natural surrounds, rest and relaxation, introducing children to nature, exploration and exercise. Other reasons for visiting include learning about the parks' natural values and the area's Aboriginal and European heritage.

Not surprisingly many of the most popular summer activities relate to the coastal environs including swimming, fishing, kayaking/paddle boarding, surfing and boating. Other popular activities include picnicking/BBQs, sightseeing, exploring local heritage sites/culture, bike riding and bushwalking. More widely, 24% of North Coast overnight travellers engage in bushwalking or rainforest walks.

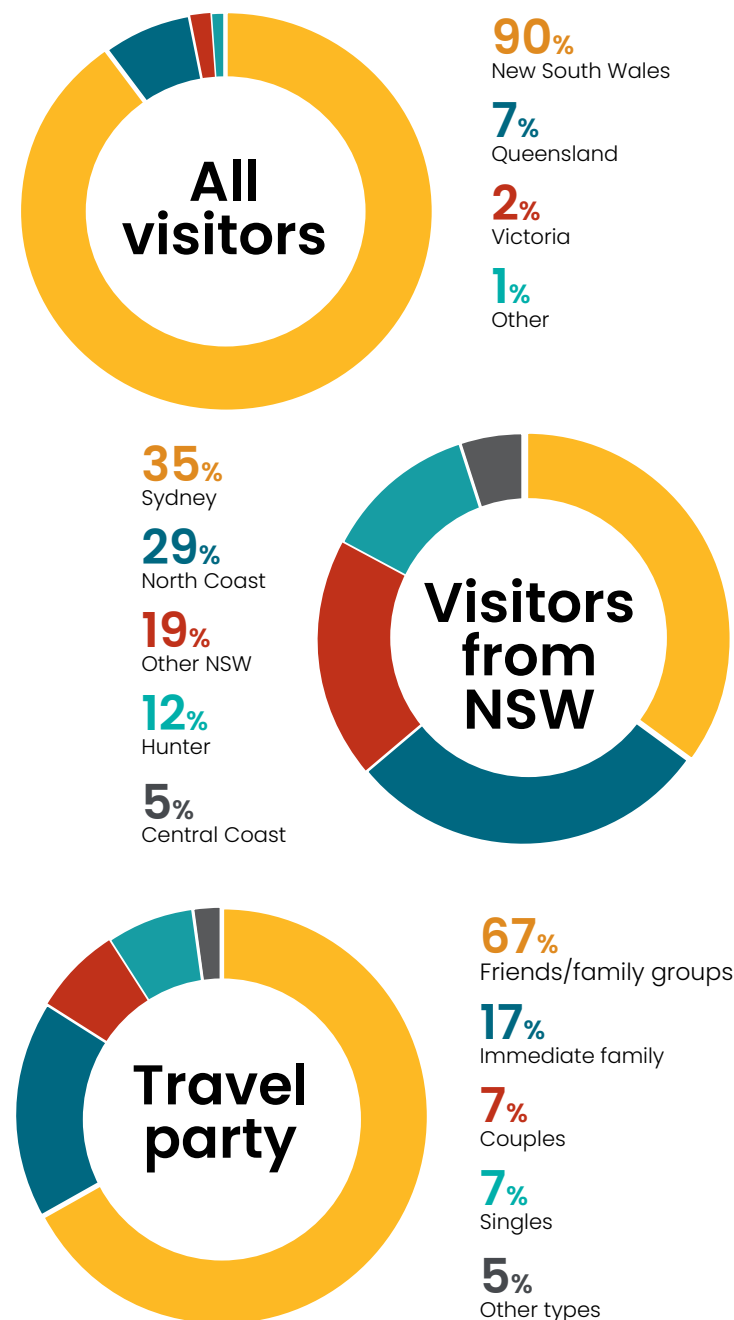


Figure 4.1 Summary of visitor statistics



100 – Leading Lifestyles

High income, highly educated, progressive and success and career focused, people in the Leading Lifestyles Community enjoy cultured city living to the max.



200 – Metrotechs

Highly educated, socially aware, hardworking, ambitious and culturally diverse young singles typically renting apartments in the inner city and inner suburbs.



300 – Aspirational

Ambitious, up-and-coming, culturally diverse young families, young singles and couples committed to creating a successful culture.



400 – Hearth and Home

Closest to the average Australian, life revolves around the home for these contented families and empty nesters, who see their homes as an expression of status and achievements.



500 – Doing Fine

A mix of household types and ages including many young migrants and some older Australians, happily making their way through life on modest incomes across Australia.



600 – Fair Go

A mix of ages and household types, including those living alone and single parents, Fair Go are low income Australians looking for a better deal in life.

4.4 Market segments

Domestic visitors to NSW national parks are profiled using the Roy Morgan Helix personas classification system. In total there are 54 different personas grouped into 6 broad communities.

The Hearth and Home community – reflecting the average Australian family and conventional family life – and the Fair Go community currently form the core groups of long-term visitors to Trial Bay campground.

Across the state, national park visitation skews strongly towards the Leading Lifestyles community – high income, highly educated, progressive and career focused people – with 35% of visitors to NSW parks falling into this category. Representation of this community is lower at Trial Bay, at 27%.

Local tourism stakeholders have also raised the opportunity to retain customers who visited for the first time during the COVID-19 pandemic. Interestingly, many of these were Leading Lifestyles, who experimented with the area due to their inability to travel overseas or interstate because of border closures. These travellers were more affluent (and therefore potentially higher yielding) and eager for a deeper, richer engagement with nature and culture.

Along with the under-represented Metrotechs – highly educated, socially aware, hardworking, ambitious and culturally diverse young singles – these 2 communities offer strong potential for aspirational and off-peak visitation growth.

4.5 Accessible tourism

National parks are places for connecting with nature, culture and heritage. Everyone should have the opportunity to enjoy the experience and the benefits that come from visiting a park.

The benefits of access to national parks are well known. These include increased wellbeing, better physical and mental health, independence, dignity, social integration and improved quality of life for individuals, friends and family.

Barriers that can limit people’s ability to access parks and enjoy these benefits can include a combination of physical obstacles, a lack of information, or inadequate services or assistance.

Barriers to accessing parks are often most acutely experienced by people with a disability. However, everyone may experience access barriers at different times in their lives, including when elderly, caring for young children, or experiencing illness or medical conditions.

The historic landscapes, cultural sites and natural environments of Arakoon and Hat Head national parks present particular challenges for reducing or removing barriers to access.

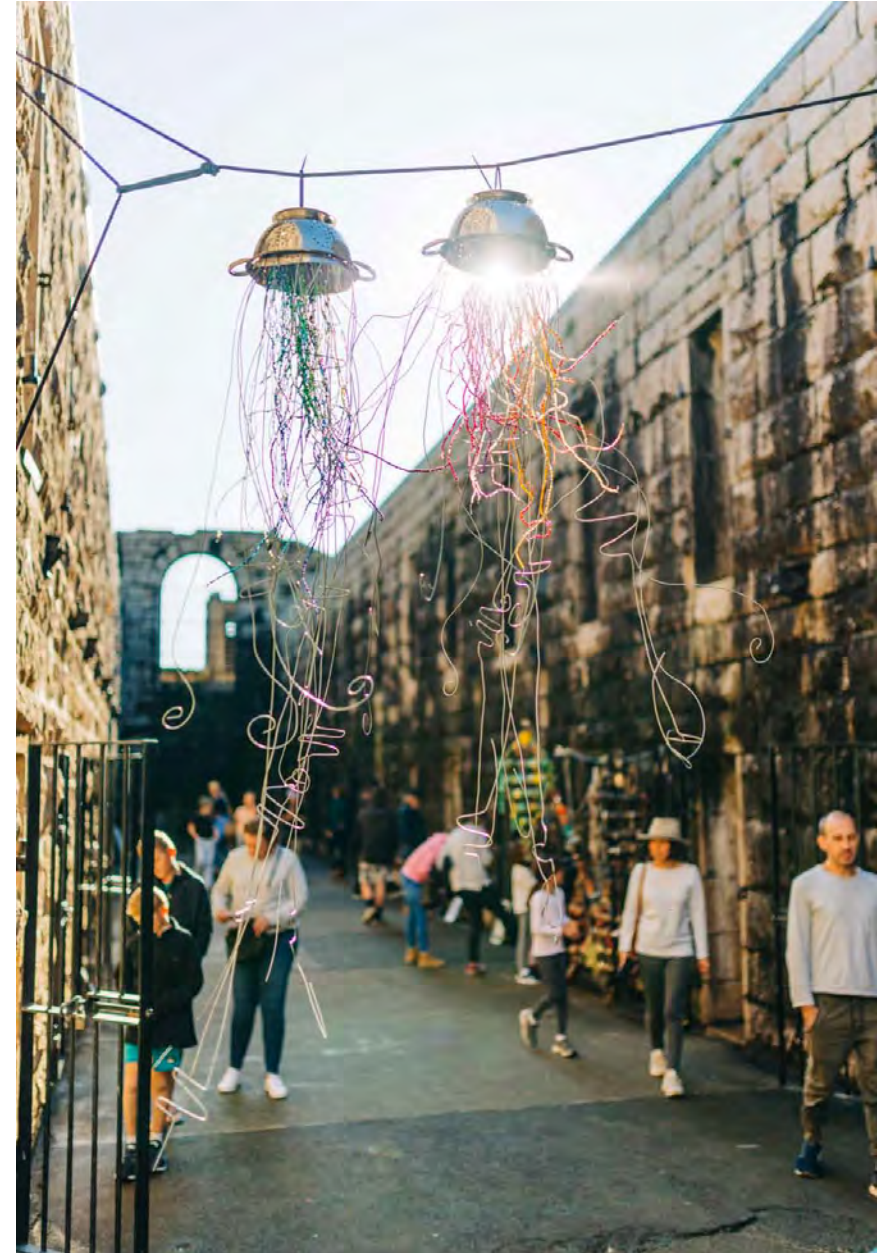
NPWS is committed to improving access where possible by integrating accessibility considerations into precinct planning. Some examples considered include accessible campsites, improved beach access and formal pedestrian pathways.

Figure 4.2 Helix Personas extract (raymorgan.com)

4.6 Events

The parks host a range of events, from Aboriginal cultural events and Sculptures in the Gaol, to triathlons and running festivals. These events are integral to the region's events calendars and can help to attract visitors in shoulder and off-peak seasons. Weddings and small-scale functions and events provide another opportunity to draw visitors to precincts such as Smoky Cape Lighthouse, Little Bay and Trial Bay Gaol and encourage overnight stays.

The project team has considered the opportunities and constraints for planning event spaces in consultation with event organisers including Aboriginal groups.



Sculptures in the Gaol event- 2022 (Photo: Kampai Pty Ltd/DCCEEW)

A group of four people, including two adults and two children, are hiking on a grassy hill. They are looking out over a coastal town and a large body of water under a blue sky with scattered clouds. The town features several buildings, including a prominent stone structure. The ocean is a vibrant blue, and mountains are visible in the distance. The hikers are dressed in casual outdoor attire, including hats and backpacks. One child is pointing towards the horizon.

05
Community engagement

5.1 Inform

The project team has informed the community during the development of the Macleay Coast Destination project using a variety of techniques.

Project webpages

The Macleay Coast Destination webpage was created in 2019 for interested parties to register interest in receiving project updates. The Arakoon National Park and Hat Head National Park plan of management: public consultation webpage was created in 2020.

Register of interest and EDMs

Over 200 people have registered their interest in the project. Electronic direct mail (EDM) updates have been sent to stakeholder organisations and other registered stakeholders.

Park neighbour letters

Nearly 1,000 properties next to or near the parks were sent an invitation to register interest on the project webpage.

Stakeholder briefings

Key stakeholders including the statutory NPWS North Coast Regional Advisory Committee have received ongoing briefings

5.2 Consult

NPWS consulted widely and considered a range of community feedback during the development of the master plan.

Stakeholder meetings

Engagement with Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal community groups, including South West Rocks Figtree Descendants and South West Rocks Aboriginal corporations, is ongoing. NPWS has consulted with key stakeholders, such as Kempsey Shire Council, Destination North Coast, Dunecare, Voices of South West Rocks and others, in over 15 meetings.

Market sounding

Mayvin Global conducted research and a series of 18 interviews with tourism sector experts to understand visitor market trends and opportunities.

Visitor surveys

Over the 2020 summer school holidays 58 visitor groups were surveyed, 25% were day visitors and 75% stayed overnight. Participants were asked about their visit motivations, activities, satisfaction and suggested enhancements.

Post-visit campground surveys

All Trial Bay campground visitors are offered the opportunity to complete a short survey about their stay. NPWS analysed 941 post-visit survey responses from July 2019 to June 2020, including ratings, comments and suggested improvements. Local staff monitor all ongoing survey responses.

Public consultation

Public consultation on the draft master plan was conducted during a formal exhibition period (see following).

5.3 Public exhibition

NPWS recognises the role of the community informing the work we do. We encourage everyone to ‘Have your say’ during public exhibition events.

Macleay Coast Destination draft master plan

The draft version of this master plan was on public exhibition from 24 November 2022 to 3 February 2023. NPWS received 151 submissions, which were considered in the preparation of this final master plan.

5.4 Related projects

Arakoon and Hat Head national parks plans of management

Works completed under this master plan must be consistent with each park’s plan of management. A replacement, combined plan for the 2 parks is being developed for public exhibition.

Trial Bay visitor precincts coast and foreshore protection strategy

This strategy provides a framework to address the impacts of major storm events and climate change on beach and foreshore areas within Trial Bay’s key visitor precincts. The strategy provides a framework for NPWS to make optimal investment and management decisions. Protection works commenced in early 2024.

Five Headlands Trail

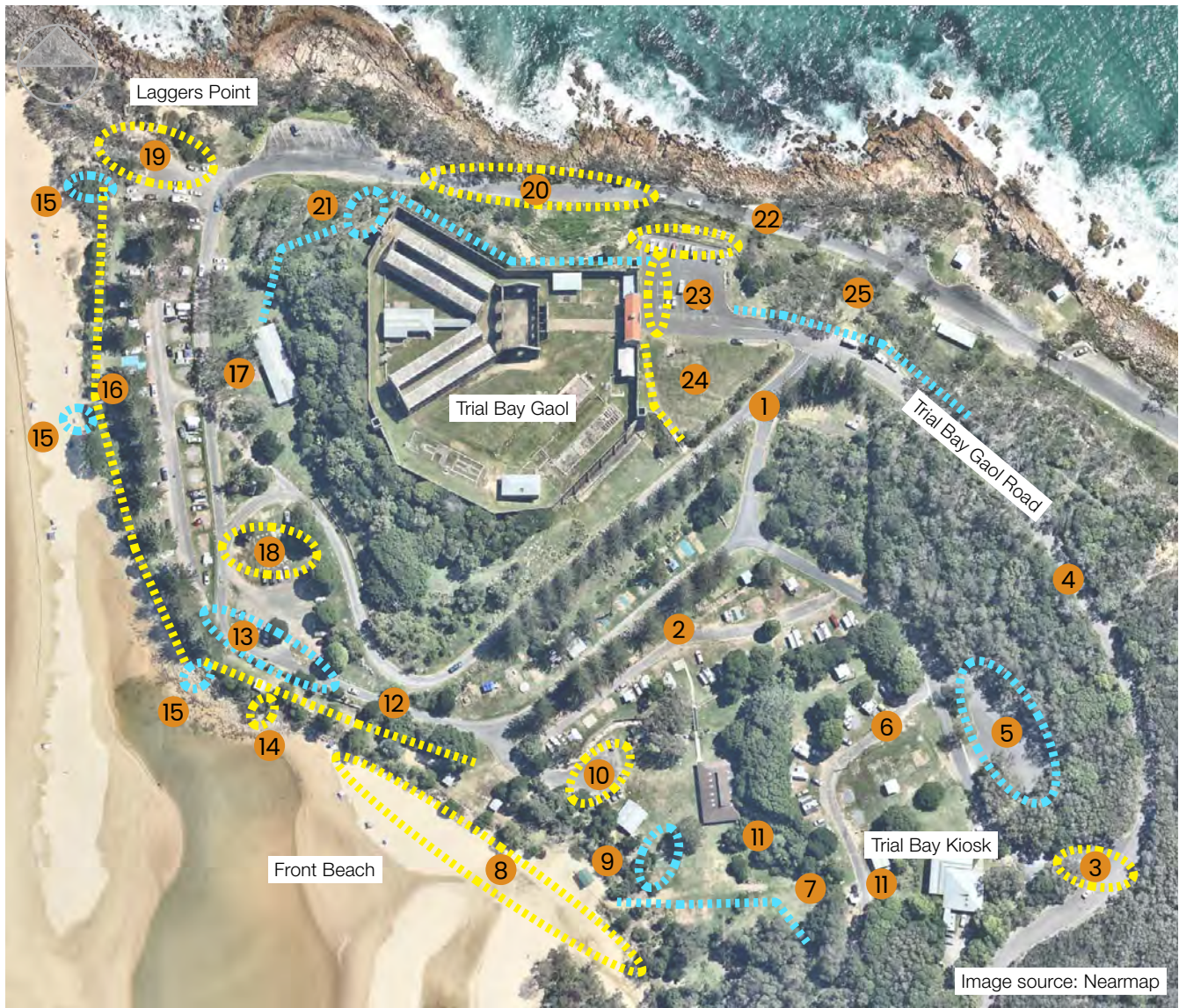
Kempsey Shire Council has proposed a multi-day walking and canoe experience along the Macleay Valley Coast stretching from Grassy Head to Point Plomer. The proposal links 5 coastal headlands, creating an extraordinary coastal walking experience across multiple tenures but mainly national parks. The walk would include the Little Bay to Smoky Cape walking track and proposed addition, and remote pristine beaches. The proposed experience leverages a diverse range of existing accommodation in the parks and towns.

06

Draft precinct improvement plan

Trial Bay





- Legend
- Opportunity
 - Constraint

Figure 6.1 Trial Bay - opportunities and constraints

6.1 Opportunities and constraints

1. Road width prevents 2-way vehicular traffic circulation resulting in a one-way system that directs all traffic through a section of the campground. The resulting traffic movement detracts from the camping experience, reduces privacy and increases pedestrian vehicle conflict.
2. General vehicle access is currently allowed throughout the camping areas, creating conflict issues during peak periods with congestion due to varying road widths and a reduction in the general amenity for campers.
3. Vehicle turning area at the intersection has a steep gradient with a small turning radius, which results in drivers taking a wider turn when entering from the south and there is evidence of loss of traction when exiting.
4. Trial Bay access road is used by cyclists and pedestrians accessing the precinct from South West Rocks. Tight corners, no road shoulder and steep grades create an unsafe environment for these user groups.
5. Car parking area is approximately 1,300 m² which can be configured and formalised to maximise vehicle parking spaces.
6. Road widths create congestion during peak periods and may require locations for vehicles to pass.

7. Existing informal path alignment provides pedestrian/cycle access to and from South West Rocks. Formalising the path will enable a broader user group to utilise the path. Current flow directs users through the walk-in camp area, which should be avoided to improve camping amenity.
8. Foreshore affected by coastal processes requires remediation to reduce further erosion.
9. Existing camp kitchen provides ample facilities.
10. Car parking during peak periods is used by day use visitors creating issues with available parking for campers.
11. Amenities require upgrades to suit current expectations for camping within NPWS facilities.
12. Road system constrains public open space.
13. Ocean frontage within close proximity to vehicle parking creates a desirable location for day use visitation.
14. Beach access point is dilapidated and unnecessary due to proximity of alternate access point.
15. Access points close to the day use and camping areas require upgrades to provide safe access.
16. Lack of clear pedestrian right of way access and defined beachfront camping areas create a conflict between day use visitors and campers with regard to personal space and public access.

17. Amenities require upgrades to suit current expectations for camping within NPWS facilities.
18. Heritage items reduce the usable space for vehicle parking.
19. Boat ramp access requires separation from user groups during peak periods to reduce conflicts. Vehicles parking at dawn to access the ramp create noise issues for campers within the proximity.
20. Northern section of road has no pedestrian separation due to coastal geology, creating a vehicle dominated location.
21. Area opposite the gaol wall offers views over Trial Bay with possible access along the exterior of the gaol walls.
22. Vehicles dominate and encroach into a location that provides expansive views over the ocean.
23. Pedestrian entry to the gaol is exposed to vehicle movements creating a hazardous environment for visitors accessing the gaol.
24. Lack of defined paths reduces navigation experience around the gaol and surrounding precinct.
25. Opportunity to provide footpath adjacent to access connecting Monument Hill walking track to the gaol entry area.





Legend

- Camping area
- Camping vehicle access only
- All vehicle access
- Vehicle parking
- Vehicle direction

Figure 6.2 Trial Bay - existing vehicle circulation

6.2 Existing vehicle circulation

The lack of clear navigation through the precinct creates a confusing experience for vehicle users due to multiple access points and destination opportunities including:

- Trial Bay Gaol and campground office
- Trial Bay Kiosk
- camping areas
- beach access
- boat ramp access
- parking to access walks.

General vehicle access is directed through camping areas, which detracts from the camping experience, reduces privacy and increases pedestrian vehicle conflict.

Key parking destinations

1. Boat ramp and parking
2. Car and trailer parking intended for boat ramp users
3. Primary car park for visitors to Trial Bay Gaol and campground office
4. Sanitation dump point
5. Car parking predominantly used by patrons attending the Trial Bay Kiosk
6. Walk-in camp area parking
7. Day use parking



Legend

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| ⋯ Camping area | █ Camping vehicle access only | ← Vehicle direction |
| █ All vehicle access | ⋯ Vehicle parking | ⋯ Road closed |

Figure 6.3 Trial Bay - proposed vehicle circulation

6.3 Proposed vehicle circulation

The reconfiguration of the existing access road will enable 2-way traffic to access the day use areas and boat ramp without needing to pass through the campground.

To prevent vehicles accessing the camp sites from the south, the road will be closed, enabling access to the car park area only.

By creating a 2-way road, a section of road along the ocean frontage will no longer be required and can be reclaimed as public space.

Key parking destinations

1. Boat ramp and parking
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6. Walk-in camp area parking
7. Day use parking



Legend

- Formalised path
- Pedestrian movement off road with no formal path
- Pedestrian movement on road

Figure 6.4 Trial Bay - existing pedestrian circulation

6.4 Existing pedestrian circulation

The Trial Bay precinct is dominated by vehicle movement with minimal allowance for separated pedestrian and cycle access. The result is an unsafe pedestrian environment which detracts from the casual camping experience and day use due to the lack of formal pathways.

A 5-minute walk, also known as the 'pedestrian shed' is considered to be the distance people are willing to walk before opting to drive. Based on the average walking speed, a 5-minute walk is represented by a radius of 400 m.

Key destinations

1. Trial Bay Gaol and campground office
2. Amenities
3. Trial Bay Kiosk
4. Beach access
5. Camp kitchen
6. Break water



6.5 Proposed pedestrian circulation

Removal of day use access to the camping areas provides a safer pedestrian zone within the roadways as is typically experienced in a camping environment.

The provision of sealed footpaths enables sustainable access to locations for all user groups creating an inclusive experience.

Key destinations

1. Trial Bay Gaol and campground office
2. Amenities
3. Trial Bay Kiosk
4. Beach access
5. Camp kitchen
6. Break water

Legend

- Formalised path
- Pedestrian movement off road with no formal path
- Pedestrian movement on road
- Shared path/cycleway

Figure 6.5 Trial Bay - proposed pedestrian circulation



6.6 Precinct improvement plan

The overall plan endeavours to improve and simplify vehicular access, and create zones for camping and day use visitation to enable maximum utilisation of the Trial Bay precinct.

The following plans identify possible options to facilitate these outcomes.

Figure 6.6 Trial Bay - precinct improvement plan



6.7 Precinct improvement plan - south

1. Camping access and exit only; defined by entry feature.
2. Road alignment is based on existing road to minimise earthworks. Additional road design is required to identify cut and fill constraints.
3. Formalise pedestrian path to direct pedestrians away from camp sites.
4. Relocation of electrical lines to underground to be investigated to improve general visual amenity of the location and increase usable space for camping. If relocation is not feasible retain as campsites.
5. Service vehicle and camping access only with screened bin storage area and turning area for refuse truck.
6. Day use vehicle parking configured with 33 spaces, with pedestrian connections to the gaol, bay and kiosk.
7. Day use and kiosk vehicle entry to have road profile improved.
8. Existing amenities to be replaced with new facility reflective of visitor and camper capacity.
9. Amenities for camp patrons only to be refurbished, rainwater capture tanks installed for reuse.

Figure 6.7 Trial Bay - precinct improvement plan - south

10. Existing steps and handrails to be replaced with new.
11. Remove existing access bridge and re-grade drainage channel to improve drainage. Install new bridge as per drainage plan to comply with AustRoads shared path guidelines and enable NPWS ride-on mower.
12. Shared pedestrian/cycleway linking Trial Bay to South West Rocks.
13. Proposed beach access and seating area designed as part of the erosion remediation project.
14. Vehicle parking for walk-in camp sites only.





6.8 Precinct improvement plan - west

1. Remove existing infrastructure and replace with new access ramp and viewing area.
2. Vehicle entry and exit point to be relocated and reconfigured for pedestrian access.
3. Pedestrian path along waterfront to provide safe and scenic walking access to Lagers Point. Physical separation to be identified between campers and public space to provide delineation for campers and pedestrians. Certain sections may require boardwalks due to existing grades.
4. Waterfront camp sites to have one-way vehicle access with all sites having greywater points installed.
5. Realigning the road will enable the extension of several of the sites to suit larger vans.
6. Day use car parking to be formalised to maximise space.
7. Amenities located to maximise public open space.
8. New showers to be consistent with new furniture palette.
9. Gathering space with views over the bay to have a mix of seating opportunities and cultural/heritage information (layout to be refined) with ramp retained.

Figure 6.8 Trial Bay - precinct improvement plan - west

10. Option to extend retaining wall to provide additional level space with view over the bay.
11. Dated infrastructure to be removed and replaced with new.
12. Coastal erosion to be remediated with additional rock revetment being placed over existing surface.





6.9 Precinct improvement plan - north

1. New steps constructed to avoid pedestrian vehicle conflicts at beach access point. Steps at beach will require consideration of coastal processes to ensure erosion and inundation are accounted for.
2. Vehicle access to be prohibited to create safe pedestrian access to break wall.
3. 12 day use car parking spaces located opposite beach access point. Vegetation removal will be mitigated with additional plantings to create visual screen from the camping area.
4. Reconfigured car park will require road widening to enable boat launching and waiting area. No standing zone will be identified to prevent boat ramp traffic queuing alongside camp sites. Spaces within the northern vehicle and trailer parking area will be utilised during peak boat ramp periods.
5. Public amenities retained.
6. Old track to be upgraded and realigned to offer additional walking opportunities which will take in the native vegetation and gaol walls and provide the opportunity for a small viewing area overlooking the breakwater.
7. Connection path between the breakwater view platform and gaol entrance to be constructed.
8. Pedestrian access path along northern edge subject to future investigation.

Figure 6.9 Trial Bay - precinct improvement plan - north

9. Parking area to be reconfigured to create viewing/gathering space. Line marking to be reconfigured with wheel stops located to prevent vehicle encroachment into pedestrian area.
10. Coach drop off area and short stay car and trailer parking with group gathering space, seats and information to be constructed.
11. Pedestrian access to be defined and where necessary steps to be installed. Existing infrastructure maintained in accordance with heritage guidelines.
12. Link to Monument Hill walking track to be constructed.
13. Left turn will require detailed assessment and design.



A wide-angle photograph of a sandy beach. The foreground is filled with numerous footprints in the light-colored sand. The ocean waves are breaking gently onto the shore, creating white foam. In the distance, a line of trees and buildings is visible along the coast. The sky is a clear, deep blue, and the sun is shining brightly in the upper right corner, creating a prominent lens flare effect across the sky.

**07 Draft precinct improvement plan
Cardwell Street**



Legend

●●●● Opportunity

●●●● Constraint

Figure 7.1 Cardwell Street – opportunities and constraints

7.1 Opportunities and constraints

1. Location provides views of Trial Bay.
2. Vehicle parking at beach entry reduces the natural visual aesthetic.
3. Vehicle and pedestrian access is constrained creating conflict between user groups and pedestrian safety concerns.
4. Area being utilised as laydown storage area detracts from the natural aesthetic of the beach-side setting.
5. Central area provides opportunities for public open space, additional parking and amenities.
6. Loop road has drainage issues due to low lying nature of the location with vegetation constraining the road width.
7. Single entry/exit point for all users creates conflict issues with user groups due to lack of separated access for pedestrians and vehicles.
8. Opportunity to utilise existing buildings for commercial usage and repurpose as NPWS campground office to remove the need for campers to park at the gaol on arrival.
9. Pedestrian/cycle crossing point has poor sight lines.
10. Opportunity to provide entry feature to the Trial Bay precinct.

11. Bridle trail users park on the side of the road and access the trail by walking along Trial Bay Access Road. Sight lines and road widths are not suitable for widening. Alternate access and car parking should be investigated.
12. Existing informal path alignment provides pedestrian/cycle access to and from South West Rocks. Formalising the path will enable a broader user group to utilise the path.





7.2 Precinct improvement plan

1. Vehicular beach access to be restricted to emergency and other authorised vehicles only, with area used for 4WD parking to be regenerated.
2. Shower to be relocated, with new shower facilities located at proposed amenities item 5.
3. Nursery to be relocated and space to be converted to maximise area for public use and events with authorised vehicle access for event set up.
4. Road to be gated for NPWS and other authorised vehicles only.
5. Amenities with showers and accessible toilets.
6. Vehicle access to car parking areas will be via a one-way system to create a safe pedestrian zone. Option to close parking area during events for use such as transition zone etc.
7. Car and trailer parking provided for camp ground users to enable early arrivals/ checkouts to park vehicles and utilise precinct facilities.
8. Installation of new road will require widening and culvert upgrades to enable 2-way traffic flow.
9. Pedestrian access improved by road widening and line marking to provide safe separation from vehicles.

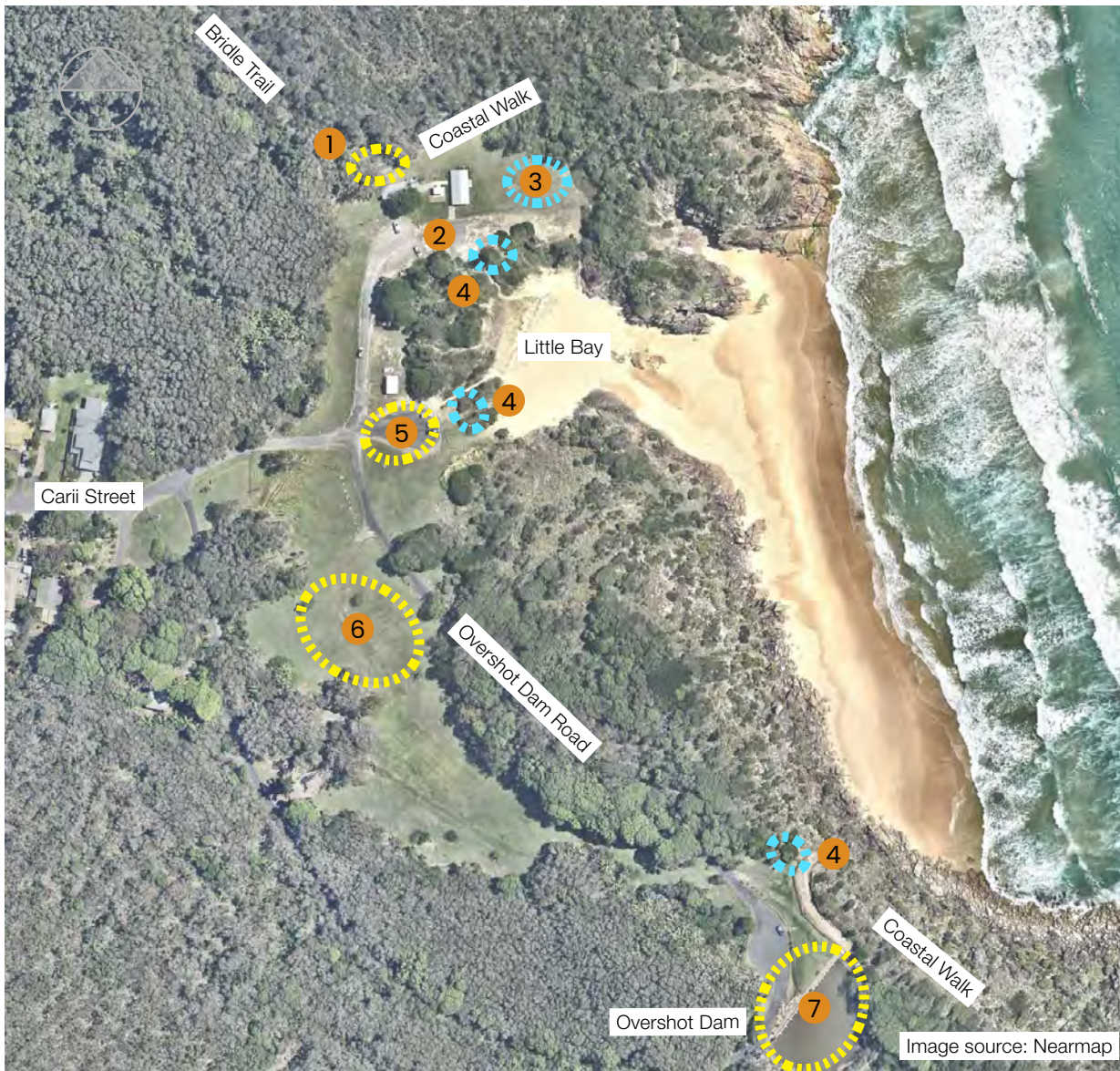
Figure 7.2 Cardwell Street – precinct improvement plan

10. Building space to be converted to NPWS Trial Bay campground office with short-stay parking for visitors accessing the office and information. Vehicle access to depot will need to be addressed to prevent vehicle/pedestrian conflict.
11. Track intersection node with directional signage.
12. Parking for the Bridle Trail will be promoted at the Cardwell Street precinct with a new access path linking to the existing trail to provide a safe crossing point maximising sight lines along the Trial Bay Access Road.
13. Shared pedestrian/cycleway linking Trial Bay to South West Rocks. Section along Cardwell Street subject to Kempsey Shire Council's construction program.
14. Path/boardwalk to be of a suitable surface for equitable access to enable wheelchairs, prams, walkers etc. to have access to a low-level deck with seat located to gain maximum views of the bay. Bike racks positioned to provide secure location to leave bikes.



**08 Draft precinct improvement plan
Little Bay**





Legend

●●●● Opportunity

●●●● Constraint

Figure 8.1 Little Bay – opportunities and constraints

8.1 Opportunities and constraints

1. Lack of clear signage or information on arrival and exit from Little Bay results in uncertain navigation of the location.
2. Dilapidated road surface detracts from the natural aesthetic and reduces the functional space.
3. Topography and landscape elements provide an opportunity to create a performance/gathering space with views over the bay.
4. Raised topography of the coastal edge provides natural views over the bay.
5. Vehicle parking encroaches onto pedestrian beach access and impinges on the pedestrian movement through the location. Views of the ocean are still captured from the midpoint of the car parking area.
6. Anti-social behaviour with vehicles accessing the open space reduces the visual aesthetic and creates maintenance issues.
7. Visual amenity of existing infrastructure at Overshot Dam should be investigated to provide a consistent palette of materials within the precincts.





8.2 Precinct improvement plan - north

1. Coastal walk sign located to enable clear navigation through Little Bay precinct.
2. Provide covered BBQ and construct paths to provide equitable access to amenities.
3. Realign path to direct pedestrian flow to track intersection node with directional signage and information creating an entry point to Little Bay.
4. Parking area upgraded and formalised to allow for short-term minibus parking with turning area. Bollards located to prevent unauthorised vehicle access to public open space.
5. Turf area to be created to form informal gathering space.
6. Amphitheatre located to utilise natural landform.
7. Path constructed to enable clear navigation to and from beach access steps.
8. Path constructed to connect coastal walk through Little Bay.
9. Existing shower to be upgraded to improve drainage with additional towel rails and seat.
10. Beach access and exit point to be prioritised to reduce erosion and vegetation damage in other locations along foreshore.

Figure 8.2 Little Bay - precinct improvement plan - north

11. Viewing platform to enable surfers, anglers and visitors to observe the ocean conditions. NPWS information to be presented at this location.
12. Car parking to be formalised to prevent vehicles encroaching on public space and to improve general amenity.
13. At grade viewing area to be constructed with seating located to capture views over the bay utilising existing shade from Norfolk Island pine tree.
14. Road widening to improve 2-way access.





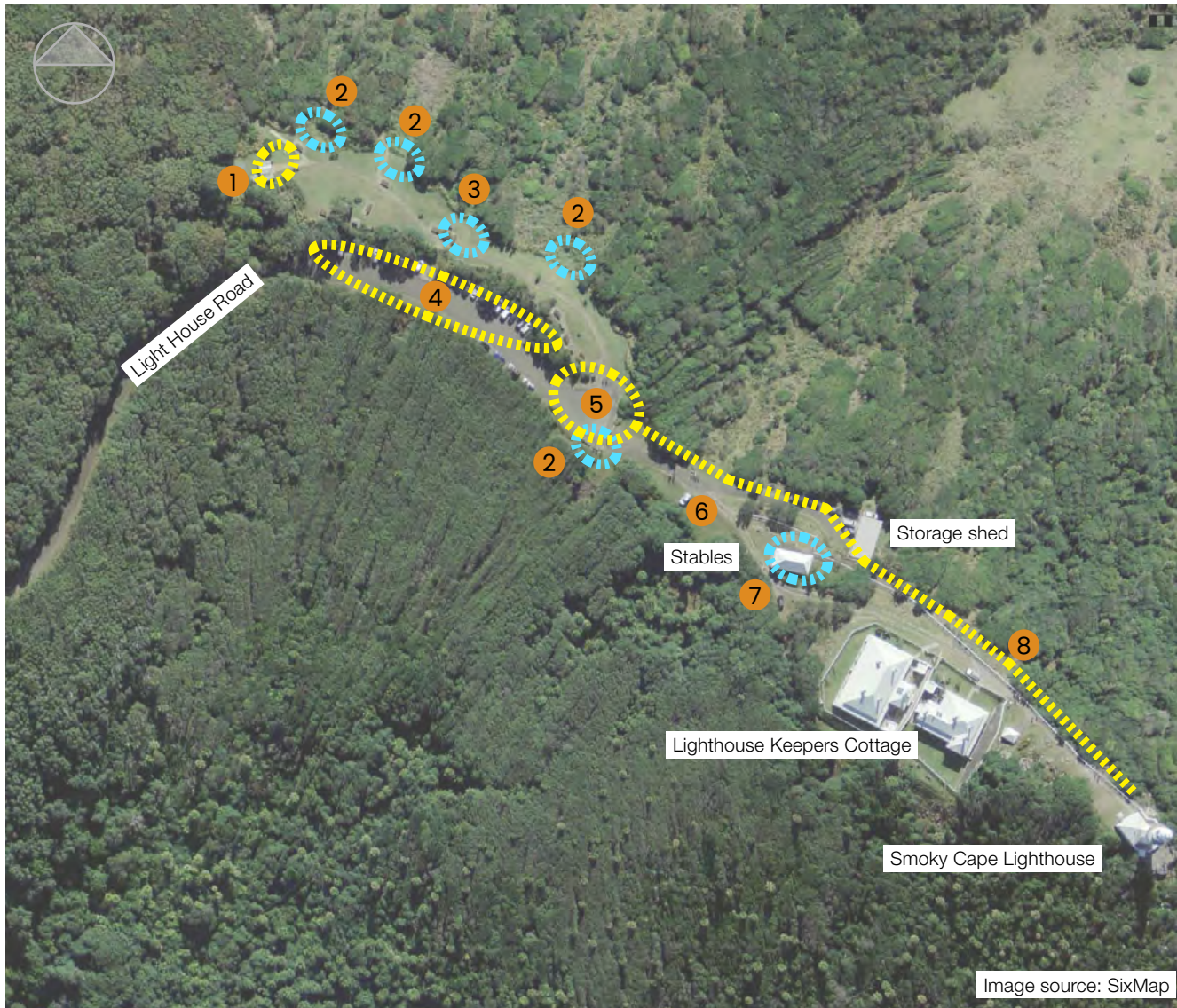
8.3 Precinct improvement plan - south

1. Path to be retained as natural surface and defined by low-key signage.
2. Line marking installed to maximise vehicle parking.
3. Coastal walk access defined by gravel path to provide clear navigation.

Figure 8.3 Little Bay – precinct improvement plan – south



**09 Draft precinct improvement plan
Smoky Cape**



9.1 Opportunities and constraints

1. Amenities require upgrading to provide equitable access.
2. Topography of the coastal edge provides opportunities for natural views over the bay.
3. Opportunity to provide a group gathering space in a location close to amenities.
4. Vehicle access and car parking dominate the entry to the precinct with no safe pedestrian access provided.
5. Turning area is not suitable for large vehicles such as coaches.
6. Combined vehicle and pedestrian access create conflicts.
7. Building previously used as stables provides opportunities for alternate usage.
8. Access path to and from the lighthouse is steep, with no passing or identified rest points, creating a challenging walk for less mobile visitors.

Legend

■■■■ Opportunity

■■■■ Constraint

Figure 9.1 Smoky Cape – opportunities and constraints



9.2 Precinct improvement plan - west

1. Amenities to be refurbished and extended to allow for disabled access toilet to be installed.
2. Seat orientated to capture views.
3. Location for relocated shelter.
4. New covered shelters with accessible picnic settings and separate shelter with 2 BBQs. Roof heights and colour scheme to be assessed to ensure that views from surrounding areas are not affected by new infrastructure.
5. Vegetation to be managed to maintain views whilst taking into consideration views and visual amenity from opposite headlands and beaches to ensure they are not affected by infrastructure upgrades at Smoky Cape.
6. Central location provides a larger viewing area and gathering space for groups or tours.
7. Accessible viewing area orientated to capture views located within close proximity to the accessible parking.
8. Space reconfigured to provide safe gathering/refuge point within car parking area to define entry point to visitor amenities.

Figure 9.2 Smoky Cape – precinct improvement plan – west

9. Traffic calming located to control vehicle speeds and reduce vehicle/pedestrian conflict.
10. Car parking to be formalised to maximise spaces with car wheel stops installed to prevent encroachment onto footpath to provide safe pedestrian access.
11. Damaged surface to be repaired to maximise car parking spaces.
12. Coach drop off/pick up point only. Coaches and group transport will be requested to leave for the duration of the visit and return to pick up passengers to reduce congestion within the car park area during peak visitation periods.
13. Coach turning area only.
14. New footpath provides safe pedestrian access during busy periods.
15. Interpretive/educational sign providing local information, map and flora and fauna values specific to the area.





9.3 Precinct improvement plan - east

1. Caretaker vehicle access to the cottages to be upgraded.
2. Adaptive reuse of stables including viewing platform, small kiosk, and interpretation space.
3. Access to be upgraded to improve pedestrian amenity, whilst considering vehicle access requirements to the lighthouse.
4. Consideration should be given to improving visitor experience through upgrades to access and general amenity with improvements to viewing area, signage and pedestrian access.

Figure 9.3 Smoky Cape – precinct improvement plan – east



10

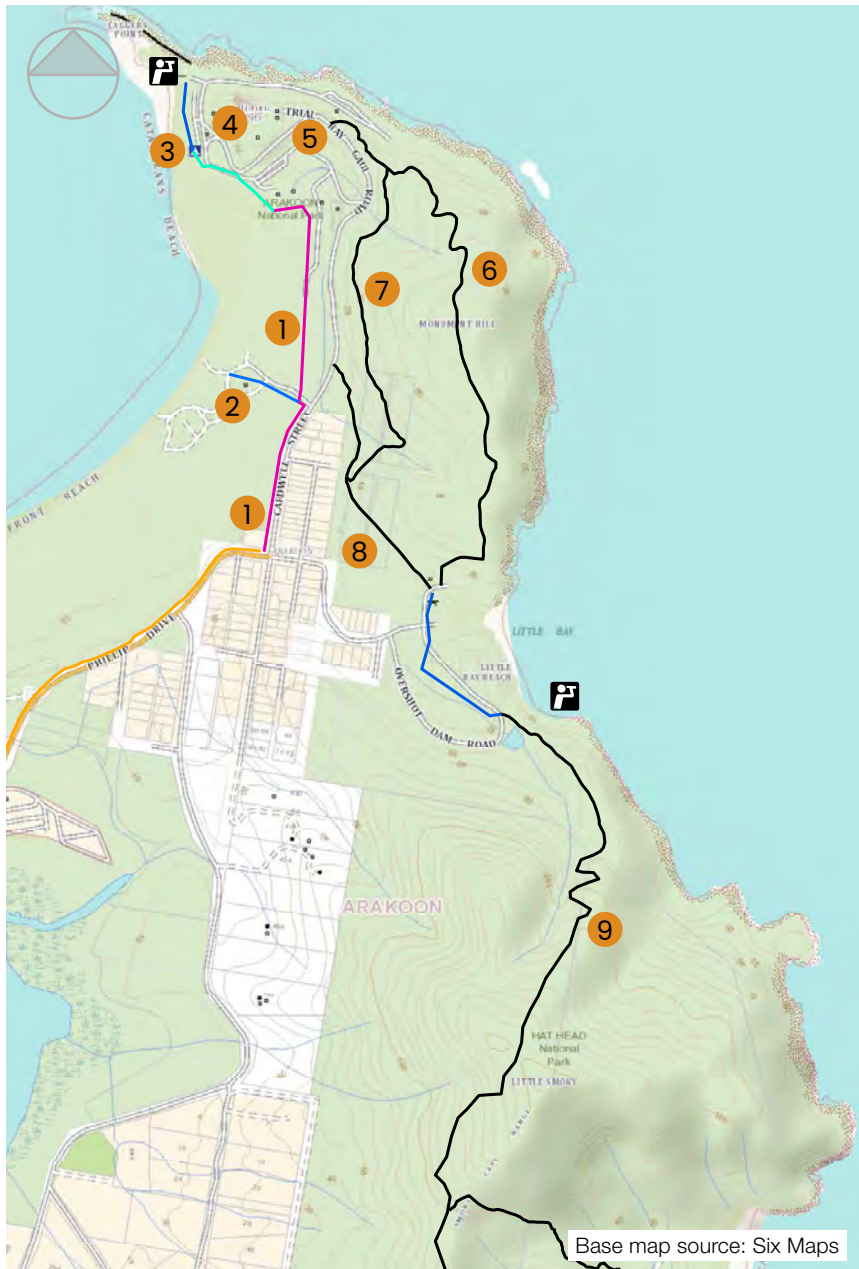
Walking tracks and shared paths

Trial Bay Gaol
Arakoon National Park

- Sealed Road
- Walking track
- Cycle Trail
- National Park
- Information
- Parking
- Bus Parking
- Toilets
- Historic Site
- Lookout
- Swimming
- Interpretive walk
- Boat ramp
- Cycle track

Scale
0 100 200 300 400 M





10.1 Overview

The proposed walking track from Little Bay to Smoky Cape encompasses some existing walking tracks and showcases spectacular scenery and a variety of vegetation types, including coastal rainforest, heath, grassland and dry eucalypt forest. From Overshot Dam the track rises almost to the summit of Little Smoky at 200 m before descending to stunning Gap Beach at the halfway point of the walk. A new section of track leading south from Gap Beach hugs the coastline before joining the existing track network and ascending from North Smoky Beach to the Smoky Cape Lighthouse car park.

An existing shared path from South West Rocks terminates at the corner of Wilson and Cardwell Street. To access the Cardwell Street and Trial Bay precincts, pedestrians and cyclists currently use the road verge and existing gravel track as well as the Trial Bay Gaol Road.

- Legend
- Existing shared path
 - Proposed shared path
 - Proposed path
 - Existing track
 - Proposed track
 - Proposed lookout

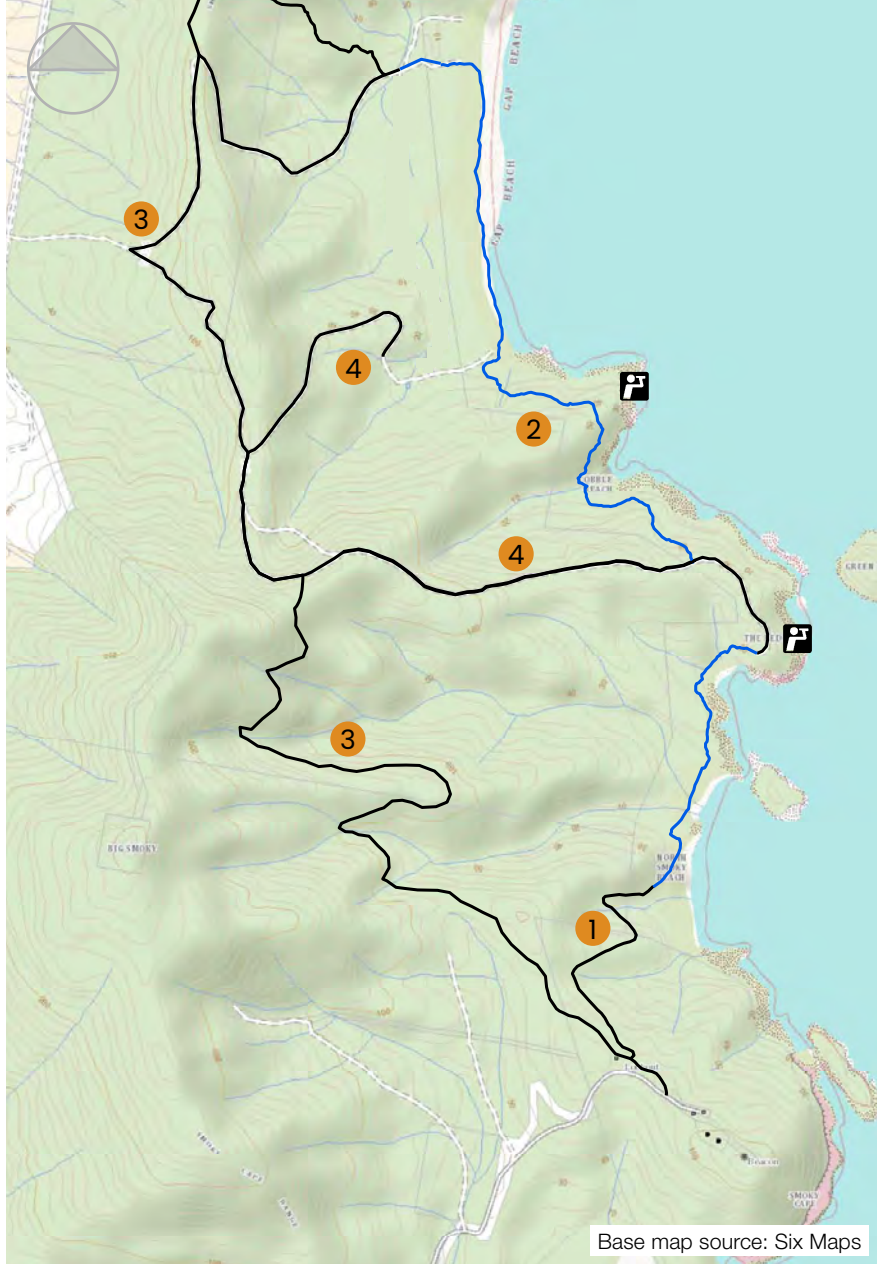
10.2 Walking tracks and shared path – north

1. To enable safe access, a shared path is proposed following the existing gravel track. Raised boardwalks will be required in flood-prone areas to enable all-weather access. The shared zone will terminate at the Front Beach.
2. Proposed pedestrian access through the Cardwell Street precinct to enable beach access.
3. Proposed pedestrian path along waterfront to provide safe and scenic walking access to Laggars Point.
4. Proposed track to offer additional walking opportunities which will take in the native vegetation and gaol walls and provide the opportunity for a small viewing area overlooking the breakwater.
5. Proposed pedestrian connection from Trial Bay Gaol to the Monument Hill walking track.
6. Monument Hill walking track.
7. Powder Magazine walking track.

Figure 10.1 Walking tracks and shared paths – north

10.3 Walking tracks and shared paths - south

- 1. Jack Perkins walking track.
- 2. Proposed Smoky Cape track.
- 3. Existing Smoky Cape track.
- 4. Green Island walking track.



Legend

- Existing track
- Proposed track
- Proposed lookout

Figure 10.2 Walking tracks and shared paths – south

11

Design intent

BREAKING a SHAPELESS MASS and ENDLESS BICKERING

There is not the slightest doubt that when it is finished, or even half so, the little town of Arakoon will be a flourishing city.
The Australian Town and Country Journal 23 November 1878

In the 19th Century, shipping was the major form of transport along Australia's east coast, but treacherous seas claimed many ships and lives. Trial Bay, half way between Sydney and Brisbane, was potentially a 'harbour of refuge', but needed protection from nor-easterlies. In 1874 State Parliament agreed to a visionary plan to build a breakwater with labour from a Public Works Prison planned for Trial Bay.

Disputes arose and continued around budget, planning and engineering for 15 years. Once construction began on the 5000 foot (1500 metres) breakwater, progress was slow, a series of storms causing major wash aways. Meanwhile, the breakwater itself caused rapid silting of the Bay.

In 1903, a change of engineering methods by Prisons officials saw gaps between larger rocks filled with rubble, leaving nothing to "break up the force of the waves". This was contentious, even amongst prison labourers, who rallied in support of the Engineer. Later that year, storms reduced the breakwater to a shapeless mass of less than 1000 feet (300 metres). Within 3 months, the project folded and the Gaol was closed.



11.1 Materials

NPWS uses a standardised system that creates a recognisable identity and image for facilities in national parks and reserves. This has been achieved through a system of consistent designs that allow for materials, as well as a supporting 'kit of parts' including screening and walling, to be tailored to reflect the local site conditions and character.

Trial Bay, Cardwell Street, Little Bay and Smoky Cape have a range of furniture and finishes that span decades of use. Future works and upgrades would see the removal of dated items being replaced with a consistent palette.



Directional signage



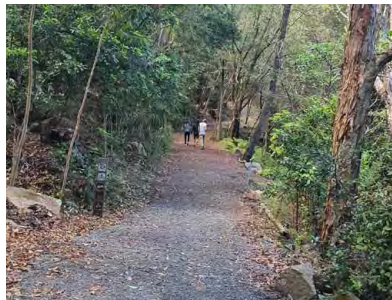
Information sign



Shelter



Seating



Permeable surfaces



11.2 Natural aesthetic

The precincts are characterised by a mix of natural environments and vegetation communities which will be preserved and improved through the management of vehicle and pedestrian movement and remediation works to reduce the impacts of coastal erosion.



An assortment of coastal environments creates a dynamic experience



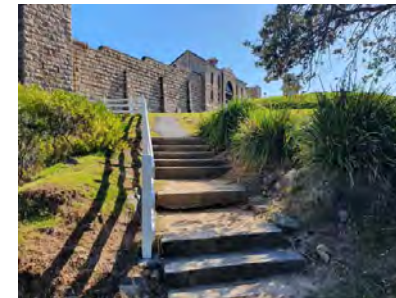
Natural shade creates pleasant locations for walking and recreation

11.3 Built heritage

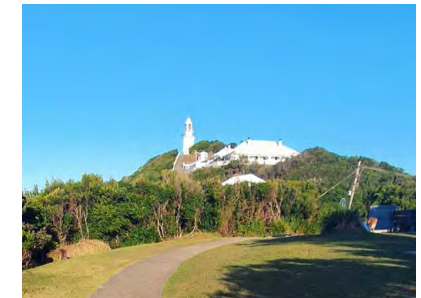
Buildings and structures reflect the post-contact history of the Trial Bay and Smoky Cape precincts in particular and impose their characters on the natural environment. From the granite walls of Trial Bay Gaol to the pristine white of the Smoky Cape Lighthouse, these structural elements will be maintained to ensure that the visual character and heritage values are retained.



Trial Bay Gaol



Trial Bay Gaol



Smoky Cape Lighthouse

11.4 Designing with Country

Greater recognition of Aboriginal heritage should be incorporated into the fabric of proposed works through engaging with and involvement of the Aboriginal community. This can take on many forms, from information on signage, creative interpretation through artwork and incorporation of elements into the built form.



Photo: J Black

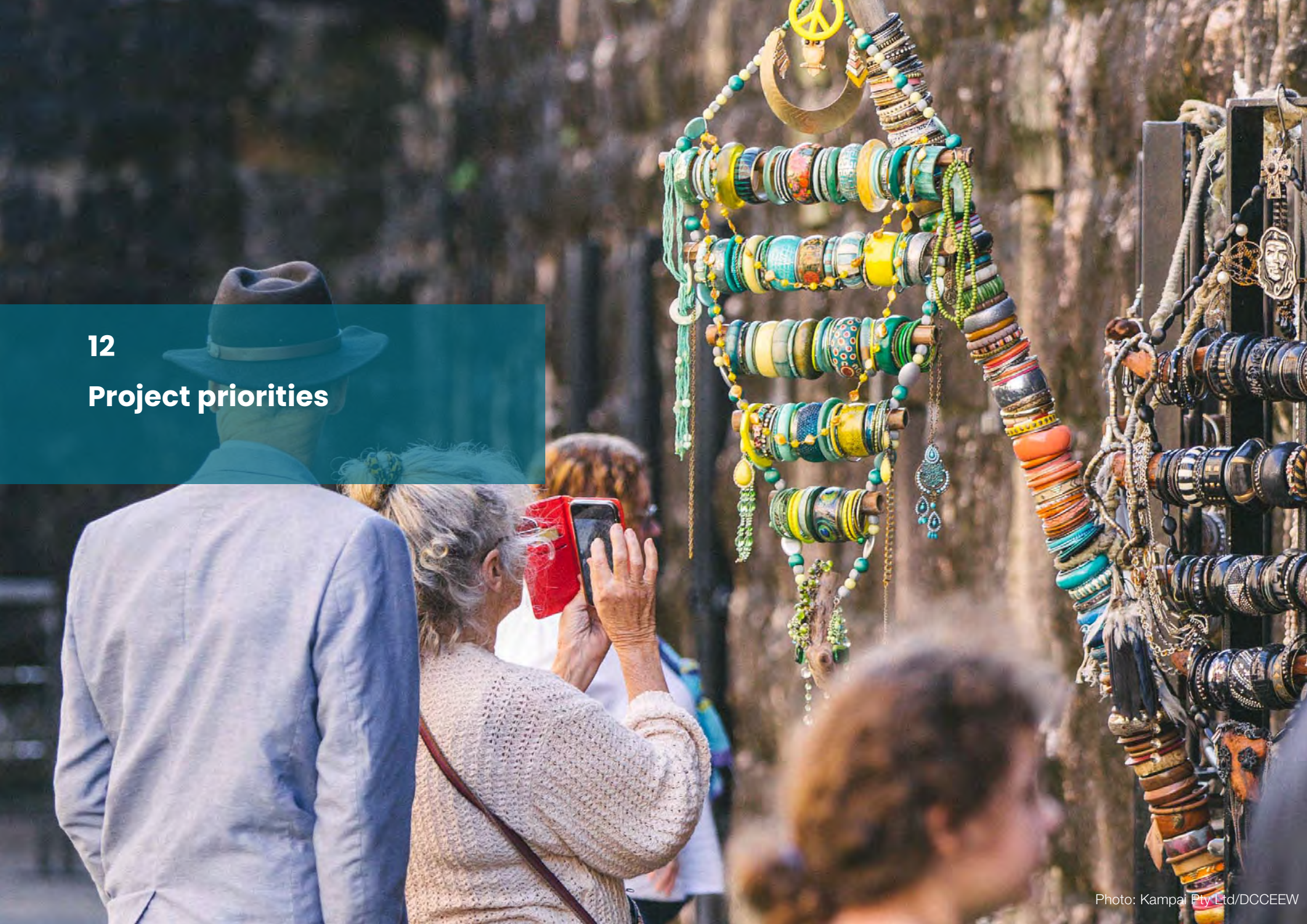
Dorrigo National Park
Wonga Walk



Mutton Bird Island

12

Project priorities



12.1 Project priorities

The strong links between the visitor precincts in Arakoon National Park and Smoky Cape in Hat Head National Park have meant that an integrated planning process was needed to ensure complementarity outcomes are achieved. Each precinct has been planned to offer its own unique experience based on site-specific features while adhering to the project design principles.

Initial cost estimates to complete each precinct and the walking tracks indicate that approximately \$20 million is required, so the Macleay Coast Destination project budget will focus on improving pedestrian, cycle and traffic circulation; separating non-compatible uses; relieving pressure on the Trial Bay precinct; and modernising facilities in priority areas. For the most part, this means that initial works will focus on the Trial Bay and Cardwell Street precincts. NPWS will seek alternative funding sources to complete improvements at Little Bay, Smoky Cape, and the walking tracks over the life of the master plan.

12.2 Staging

The project will be implemented in 3 stages, with the initial \$6.7 million in funding focused on delivering stages 1 and 2. The 3 stages are:

Stage 1

Develop a blueprint in consultation with the community to meet long-term visitor demands of key visitor precincts in Arakoon and Hat Head national parks and determine priorities for implementation.

Stage 2

Use project funding to improve the visitor experience by improving pedestrian, cycle and traffic circulation, separating non-compatible uses and modernising facilities in priority areas.

Stage 3

Undertake remaining works as funding becomes available over the 10-year life of the master plan.

More information

[Arakoon State Recreation Area plan of management \(NPWS 1987\)](#)

[Hat Head National Park plan of management \(NPWS 1998\)](#)

[Macleay Valley Coast destination management plan 2019–2029](#)

[North Coast NSW destination management plan 2022–2030](#)

[NSW Environment Macleay Coast Destination webpage](#)

[NSW Environment Arakoon National Park and Hat Head National Park plan of management: public consultation webpage](#)

[Roy Morgan Helix personas classification system](#)

