



NSW NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE

Bents Basin State Conservation Area and Gulguer Nature Reserve

Plan of Management



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How to use this plan

This plan of management directs the management of Bents Basin State Conservation Area and Gulguer Nature Reserve. This plan includes a scheme of operations consistent with section 72AA of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. Once the plan is adopted, no management operations can be undertaken that are not consistent with the plan and its scheme of operations. This plan will also apply to any future additions to Bents Basin State Conservation Area and Gulguer Nature Reserve.

Sections 1 to 6 of the plan summarise the parks' key values, management principles and management considerations. These matters are outlined thoroughly in the *Bents Basin State Conservation Area and Gulguer Nature Reserve Planning Considerations* document. **It is recommended that readers of the plan refer to the planning considerations document for detailed explanations of the parks' values and management considerations.**

The scheme of operations is the core part of this plan. It describes the desired outcomes for the parks' values and actions the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) intends to undertake to achieve these outcomes.

The park use regulations tables set out the recreational and commercial activities that are permitted in the parks and any requirements to undertake these activities, including whether consent must be sought from NPWS to undertake them.

Acknowledgments

Bents Basin State Conservation Area and Gulguer Nature Reserve are in the traditional Country of the Dharug, Dharawal and Gundungurra language groups.

This plan of management was prepared by staff of NPWS.

Contact us

For more information about this plan of management or Bents Basin State Conservation Area and Gulguer Nature Reserve, contact the NPWS Cumberland Area Office at npws.cumberland@environment.nsw.gov.au, Scheyville Road, Scheyville NSW 2756 or by telephone on (02) 4580 2700.

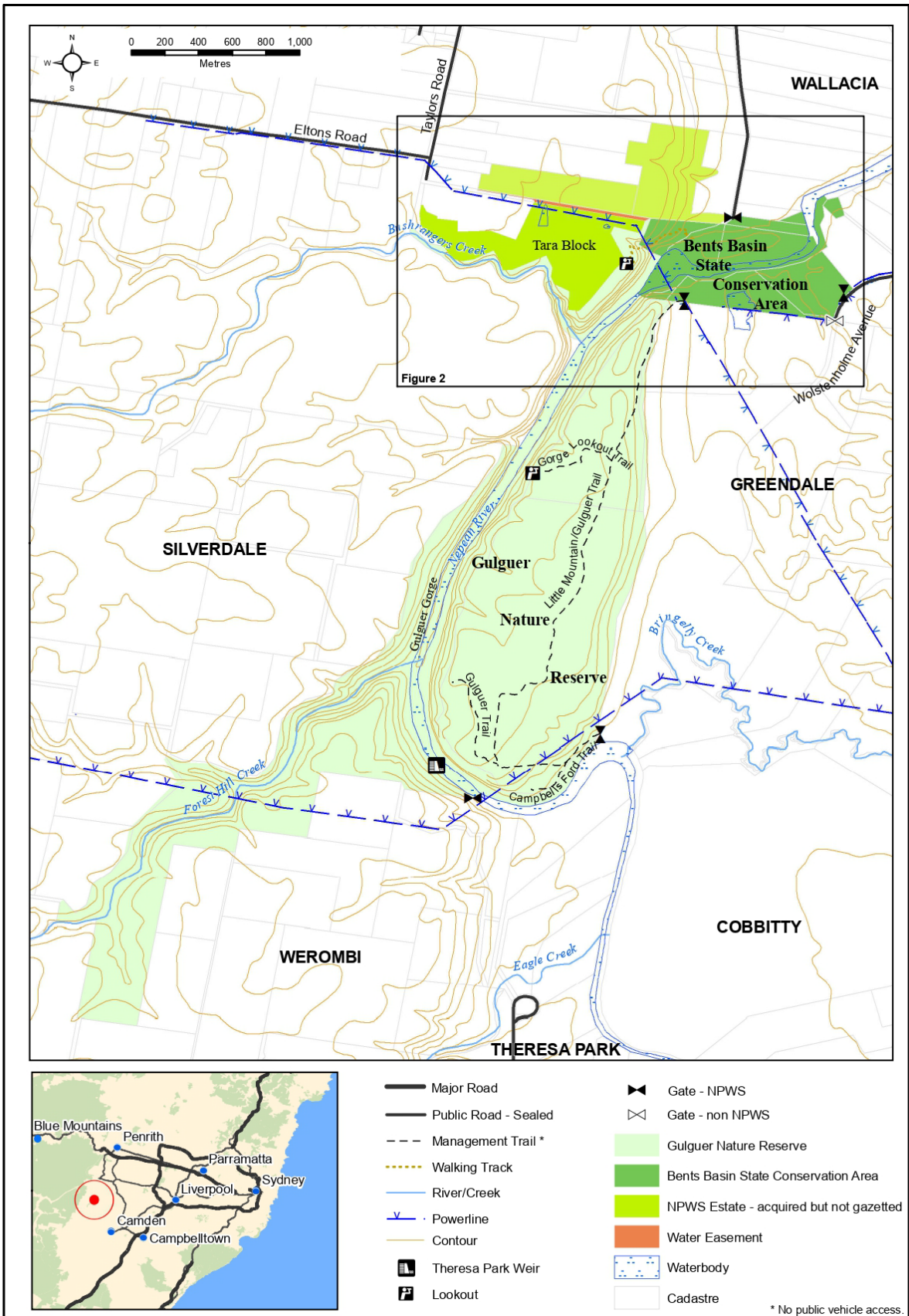


Figure 1 Map of Gulguer Nature Reserve, Bents Basin State Conservation Area and Tara block addition

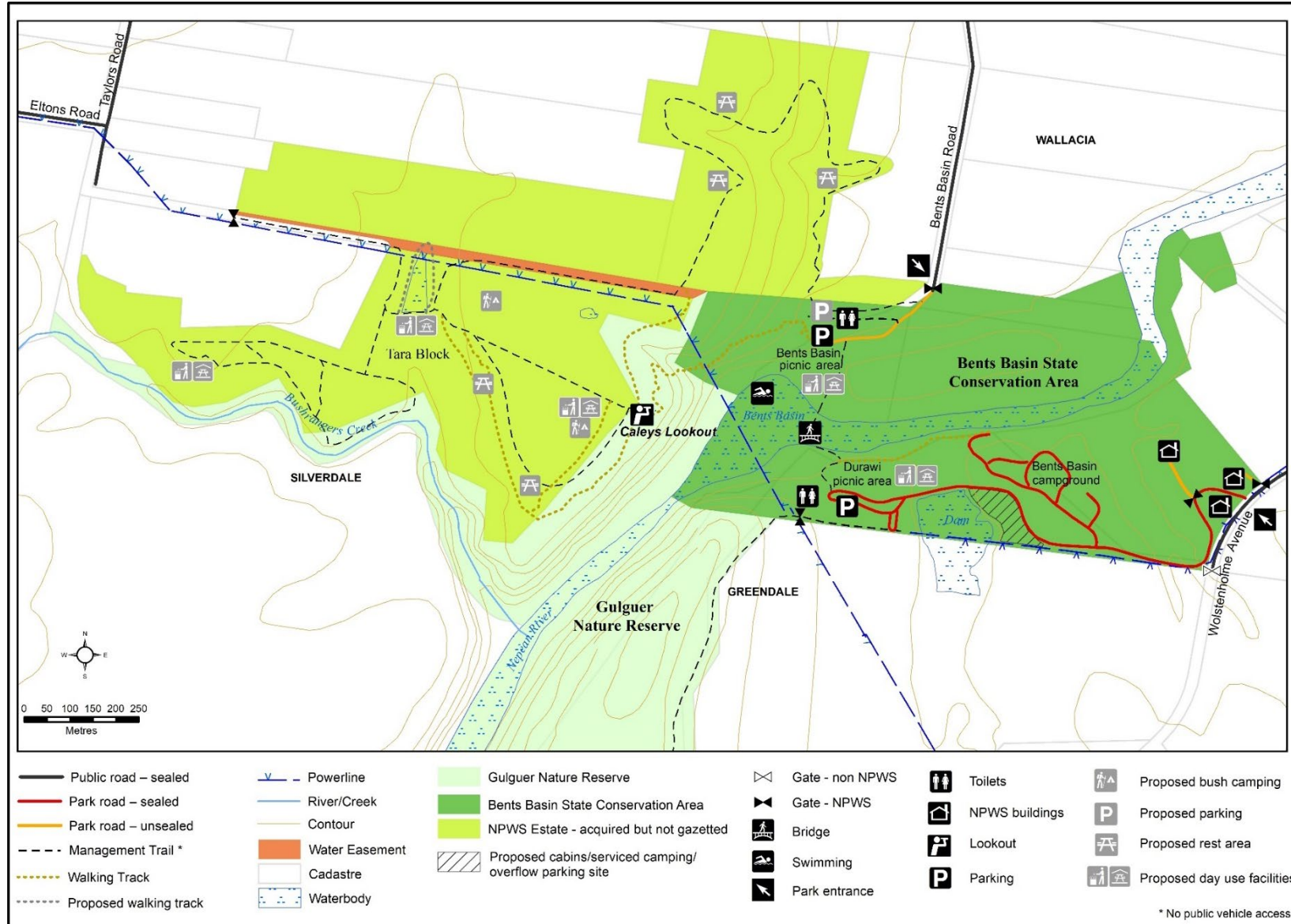


Figure 2 Map of Bents Basin State Conservation Area and Tara block addition

1. Bents Basin State Conservation Area and Gulguer Nature Reserve

Bents Basin State Conservation Area and Gulguer Nature Reserve are located on the Nepean River near Wallacia in western Sydney, approximately 34 kilometres west of Liverpool, 33 kilometres south of Penrith and 28 kilometres north-west of Camden. The Tara block addition that was acquired for formal reservation as a park or reserve adjoins the nature reserve and state conservation area to the north-west. These 3 areas are referred to as 'the parks' in this plan (see Figures 1 and 2).

Why these parks are important

The parks are valued by the community for their beautiful and varied scenery, important conservation and heritage values, nature-based visitor experiences, and for the spiritual and cultural connections the Aboriginal community has with the parks' landscape. The parks have the following natural, cultural and visitor experience values:

- The geomorphological processes and actions of the Nepean River have resulted in a diverse range of landforms including plateaus, deeply incised gorges, scour pools and riverine floodplains.
- The native vegetation in the parks exhibits high floristic and structural diversity, characteristic of the Blue Mountains and the Cumberland Plain. The parks protect some of the rarest native vegetation in the Sydney Basin, 6 threatened or rare plant species and 25 threatened animal species including the Cumberland Plain land snail.
- The parks are situated within the traditional Country of the Dharug, Dharawal and Gundungurra language groups. The lands in the parks have been a traditional meeting and trading place between these Aboriginal peoples who continue to have spiritual and cultural connection to the parks and surrounding lands. Aboriginal cultural heritage in the parks includes grinding grooves, artefact scatters, campsites, rock art and an enduring connection to Country.
- The shared history of the parks dates from the early years of the Colony of New South Wales. Historic heritage includes a former inn site and an early coach route used for communications between what are now the Camden and Penrith areas. The role of local identities in the establishment of the parks is of local historical significance. Tara Girl Guide Camp and Silverdale Hill Climb car race circuit are examples of more recent land uses that are an important part of local history.
- The parks provide a popular and important public access point to the Nepean River for recreation and attracts visitors from the large and growing suburban areas of western Sydney. The combination of open space and a natural body of water surrounded by native bushland is rare in western Sydney.

Table 1 The parks and their regional setting

Features	Description
Area	<p>Gulguer Nature Reserve covers 359 hectares and Bents Basin State Conservation Area covers 48 hectares including the bed of the Nepean River.</p> <p>In addition to these formally reserved areas, the parks covered by this plan includes the 'Tara block addition', which is 62 hectares of unreserved lands vested in the Minister under Part 11 of the <i>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974</i>.</p>
Reservation date	<p>1980: Bents Basin State Recreation Area reserved under the <i>Crown Lands Consolidated Act 1913</i></p> <p>1984: responsibility for Bents Basin State Recreation Area comes under the provisions of the National Parks and Wildlife Act</p> <p>1985, 1986, 1988 and 1989: additions made to the state recreation area</p> <p>1994: part of the state recreation area revoked and reserved as Gulguer Nature Reserve</p> <p>2002: the state recreation area reclassified as a state conservation area</p> <p>2017: the Tara block addition transferred to NPWS management under Part 11 of the National Parks and Wildlife Act (shown as 'NPWS Estate – acquired but not gazetted' on Figures 1 and 2)</p>
Previous tenure	<p>The land now reserved as Bents Basin State Conservation Area was part of early colonial land grants before being set aside and used for public recreation.</p> <p>The land now within Gulguer Nature Reserve was excluded from agriculture due to its rugged terrain. It was reserved from settlement in 1908 and declared a Fauna Protection District under the <i>Fauna Protection Act 1948</i> in 1954.</p> <p>In 1980 the whole area was gazetted under the Crown Lands Consolidated Act as Bents Basin State Recreation Area and managed by a Trust. In 1983 responsibility for the management of the state recreation area was transferred to NPWS.</p> <p>Before acquisition the Tara block section was freehold land.</p>
Biogeographic region	<p>The parks are within the Cumberland subregion of the Sydney Basin Bioregion.</p>

Management principles

Development of the objectives, actions and regulations in this plan has been directed by the management principles outlined in the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.

The National Parks and Wildlife Act requires that a **state conservation area** be managed to:

- conserve biodiversity, maintain ecosystem function, protect natural phenomena and maintain natural landscapes
- conserve places, objects and features of cultural value
- having regard to the conservation of the state conservation area's natural and cultural values:
 - provide for the undertaking of uses permitted under other provisions of the Act in such areas (including uses permitted under section 47J)
 - provide for the sustainable use (including adaptive re-use) of any buildings or structures or modified natural areas
- provide for sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment that is compatible with the conservation of the state conservation area's natural and cultural values and with uses permitted under other provisions of this Act in such areas
- provide for appropriate research and monitoring.

The National Parks and Wildlife Act requires that a **nature reserve** be managed to:

- conserve biodiversity, maintain ecosystem function, protect geological and geomorphological features and natural phenomena
- conserve places, objects, features and landscapes of cultural value
- promote public appreciation, enjoyment and understanding of the national park's natural and cultural values
- provide for appropriate research and monitoring.

This plan includes directions for the management of the **Tara block addition** acquired by the Minister under Part 11 of the National Parks and Wildlife Act for future reservation. This Part 11 land has not been formally reserved but its management is subject to this plan and the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2019. Part 11 lands are managed in accordance with the objectives of the National Parks and Wildlife Act, including to:

- conserve nature, including habitats, ecosystems, biodiversity, landforms, landscapes, wilderness and wild rivers
- conserve objects, places or features of cultural value
- foster public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of natural and cultural heritage and conservation
- apply the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

In future, and subject to the agreement of the Minister administering the *Mining Act 1992*, Bents Basin State Conservation Area may be categorised as a national park. The provisions of this plan of management will still apply even if the state conservation area is reclassified. The management of the state conservation area will be guided by the management principles for national parks as far as possible. These requirements have been considered in this plan of management and are set out below.

The National Parks and Wildlife Act requires that a **national park** be managed to:

- conserve biodiversity, maintain ecosystem function, protect geological and geomorphological features and natural phenomena and maintain natural landscapes
- conserve places, objects, features and landscapes of cultural value
- protect the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations
- promote public appreciation and understanding of the national park's natural and cultural values
- provide for sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment that is compatible with the conservation of the national park's natural and cultural values
- having regard to the conservation of the national park's natural and cultural values, provide for the sustainable use (including adaptive re-use) of any buildings or structures or modified natural areas
- provide for appropriate research and monitoring.



Photo 1 The Nepean River enters Bents Basin from Gulguer Gorge. Brian Everingham

2. Protecting the natural environment

The geological, landform and hydrological values of the parks are regionally significant. The location of the parks at the geological junction of the Blue Mountains uplift and the Cumberland Plain has produced a distinctive mix of landforms that have been further shaped by the hydrological forces of the Nepean River and its tributaries. The parks contain significant evidence of the geomorphic landscape evolution of the region.

The distinctive mix of plateaus, steep gorges and riverine floodplains is the basis of the scenic attraction of the park. The scour pool of Bents Basin and surrounding open areas form the main attraction in the parks, particularly for picnicking and water-based recreational activities.

The underlying geology of the Cumberland Plain shales and the Blue Mountains sandstones has produced a wide range of soil types. The wide variety of landforms, combined with the range of soils, provides a variety of habitat for plants and animals and supports a diverse range of species.

The Nepean River and its tributaries, Forest Hill Creek and Bushrangers Creek, are the main natural features of the parks. Their erosive forces have produced the distinctive landscape features of Bents Basin, Forest Hill Gorge, Gulguer Gorge and the riverine floodplains at Campbells Ford and downstream of Bents Basin.

The introduction of nutrients and other pollutants from surrounding lands poses the most immediate threat to the parks' hydrological values. Other threats to the geological, landform and hydrological values include erosion from poorly designed and maintained vehicle trails and walking tracks, and unmanaged visitor use along the banks of the Nepean River and Bents Basin. Long-term risks to these values include increased frequency and severity of floods due to climate change and consequent increase in damage to natural values.

The native vegetation in the parks has high floristic and structural diversity and is characteristic of both the Blue Mountains and the Cumberland Plain vegetation. Approximately 280 species of native plants have been recorded in the parks.

The parks protect some of the rarest native vegetation in the Sydney Basin, which now occupies only 13% of its pre-European extent. This vegetation includes Shale Sandstone Transition Forest and River-flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains endangered ecological communities and a small area of Cumberland Plain Woodland critically endangered ecological community. These vegetation communities form part of the priority conservation lands identified in the *Cumberland Plain Recovery Plan* and Cumberland Plain biodiversity conservation planning processes.

The vulnerable Camden white gum occurs in Bents Basin State Conservation Area and is one of only two known naturally occurring populations. One other threatened plant species and four rare plant species have been identified in the parks.

At least 134 birds, 35 mammals, 26 reptiles, 9 frogs and one snail have been recorded in the parks. These include 25 threatened animal species, including the Cumberland Plain land snail.

The parks also support the only reserved populations of the threatened greater glider and the common wombat on the Cumberland Plain.

Weeds and pest animals such as feral deer present the most immediate threat to the parks' biodiversity values. Other risks include unmanaged fire and the animal disease sarcoptic mange. These risks are managed by implementing:

- park-based fire management strategies
- regional pest and weed management priorities
- statewide key threatening process strategies
- recovery strategies under the *Biodiversity Conservation Program*.

In the longer term, the biodiversity values of the parks are at risk from loss of habitat connectivity with surrounding natural vegetation and other protected landscapes. Increasing development of the areas immediately surrounding the parks could increase this risk. Complementary management of adjacent natural areas to improve habitat connectivity and protect poorly reserved threatened ecosystems and species could reduce this risk.

Climate change also presents a risk to the biodiversity values of the parks through increased frequency and severity of floods, wildfires and weed impacts. Landscape-scale actions are considered the most effective way to reduce the impacts of climate change. Park-based weed, fire and pest management activities will contribute to these landscape-scale actions.

3. Looking after our culture and heritage

The parks are part of the Country of Aboriginal people of the Dharug, Dharawal and Gundungurra language groups who maintain a spiritual and cultural connection to the parks and surrounding area. Aboriginal groups were displaced from the area after European occupation. Despite this displacement, Aboriginal people's knowledge and connection to Country remains. Aboriginal connection to the land within the parks is acknowledged in the name Gulguer. The word *gulguer* comes from the Gundungurra language and describes the whirlpool action of the water in Bents Basin that forms during high flows.

Aboriginal occupation and use of the area are evidenced in the grinding grooves, artefact scatters, campsites and art sites. Archaeological surveys have identified 12 Aboriginal cultural sites within the parks, including a traditional meeting and trading place between Aboriginal groups. Not all areas of the parks have been surveyed and there are likely to be unrecorded sites in the parks.

The parks are also a place where Aboriginal people can continue cultural practices and pass on cultural knowledge to future generations. Culture camps have been held at Bents Basin and provide an opportunity for traditional custodians and other Aboriginal people to connect with each other, Country and culture.

Opportunities exist to develop a stronger relationship with Aboriginal groups that have connections to the parks. These opportunities could be realised by supporting Aboriginal people to exercise traditional responsibilities to care for Country and pass on cultural traditions and kinship to maintain their connection to the parks including:

- recording and managing sites in cooperation with the Aboriginal community
- involving the Aboriginal community in park management programs
- supporting the Aboriginal community to maintain cultural connection through exercising cultural practices on Country
- supporting the Aboriginal community to take advantage of business opportunities.

The main risks to Aboriginal cultural values include natural physical weathering of art sites and damage of sites by visitor and management activities. Implementing cultural heritage assessment processes will reduce the risk of damage to recorded and unrecorded sites.

The shared heritage values of the parks are of local significance as an important record of the first Europeans in Australia, their expansion and post-contact history of the Colony of New South Wales. In December 1802 the explorer and botanist George Caley visited the area and the area was used to support the NSW Government's cattle herds. The first land grants in the area were made to colonial officials in 1811, including lands that are now part of the parks.

Shared heritage includes a former inn site and an early coach route used for transport and communications between the Camden and Penrith areas. The inn site, marked by a large peppercorn tree, is listed as an item of local significance under the Liverpool Local Environment Plan. The coach route crossed Campbells Ford on the south-east boundary of what is now Gulguer Nature Reserve and headed north along the east side of Little Mountain to Bents Basin.

Unconfirmed records of bushranger Jack Donohue using caves in the local area, including Donohoe's Cave in Gulguer Gorge, is of local historical importance.

The more recent history of the parks is also of local importance. The natural values of the area were recognised by James Wade who leased the land in 1947 and sought to preserve the area in its natural state. Richard Venables campaigned over a long period of time to have the values recognised and protected through formal reservation. Moveable heritage

items associated with this historical period are held by NPWS. The ruins of James Wade's house, hut and a bridge constructed by Wade can still be found in the parks.

The remains of the Silverdale Hill Climb car race circuit are in the Tara block addition. The racing track operated from 1957–87 and is an important feature of local history and more recent use of the area. A Girl Guides camp operated in parts of the Tara block addition and some of the facilities established for the camp remain.

The European history of the parks has been well documented, and sites identified and assessed. Opportunities exist to better interpret the shared heritage values of the parks, preserve records and acknowledge past use of the parks.



Photo 2 The parks and surrounding land are traditional Country for Aboriginal people. Judy Birrell/DPE

4. Providing for visitor use and enjoyment

The parks provide public access to the Nepean River for picnicking, camping and water-based activities in a largely natural bushland setting. These nature-based recreational opportunities and visitor experiences cater for the large and growing population of western Sydney. Most visitors come from within one hour's drive of the parks. In the longer term, continued growth of the population in these suburbs is likely to increase visitation to the parks. Managing the increasing visitor use will continue to be a major focus of park management.

Visitors are attracted to the parks' scenic river, steep gorges, Bents Basin and the bushland setting, which contrast with the surrounding rural landscape and suburban development further afield. Socialising with family and friends and appreciating nature are the focus of the visitor experience.

The main visitor areas in the parks include Durawi and Bents Basin Road picnic areas and Bents Basin Camping Area. A range of facilities are provided including: toilets and picnic tables in the Durawi and Bents Basin picnic areas; and showers, toilets, a camp kitchen, group shelter, barbecues and fire pits in the camping area. Consideration is also being given to commercial management under a lease or licence arrangement of campground facilities, as well as any cabins or serviced camping facilities (glamping) once developed.

The Caleys Lookout Walking Track is currently the only designated walking track in the parks. The management trails in Gulguer Nature Reserve also function as walking tracks and provide visitor access to the Gulguer Gorge section of the park.

Cycling, including mountain biking, is permitted on the sealed park roads in the state conservation area and along signposted management trails in the Tara block addition. Cycling is not permitted in Gulguer Nature Reserve due to the steep slopes and erosion prone soils and the focus on protection of the significant natural and cultural values consistent with the management objectives for nature reserves.

NPWS will develop new visitor facilities in the parks subject to the outcomes of heritage and environmental impact and sustainability assessments including:

- picnic tables and shelters, rest areas, viewing points and tracks and trails for walking and cycling in the Tara block
- formalised water entry zones at Bents Basin and the dam including pathways, decking and kayak launch facilities
- parking areas
- sealed pathways, and additional barbecues, picnic tables and picnic shelters in the Darawi and Bents Basin day use areas
- powered and marked camp sites in the Bents Basin campground
- serviced camping (glamping) in existing campground
- cabins and/or serviced camping sites near the dam as per Figure 2.

These new facilities will be developed in stages as funds become available.

Some facilities from the former Girl Guides camp in the Tara block addition may be retained including the outdoor education facilities.

Opportunities exist to improve the way that visitors use, enjoy and learn about the parks. These opportunities include upgrading the visitor facilities and recreation opportunities to better meet the needs of visitors and developing programs to promote and interpret park values.

Options for upgrading visitor facilities include encouraging events and small and mobile businesses, broadening the range of camping styles available, providing opportunities for bushwalking, cycling and bush camping in the Tara block addition, and improving the day use facilities to better support existing activities and manage increasing use.

Visitor use surveys also help NPWS to understand and respond to changing visitor expectations and characteristics, and to continue to provide safe and rewarding visitor experiences and promote and protect park values.

There are also opportunities to encourage and support volunteer programs to assist with research projects and park management programs such as bush regeneration.

The park use regulations tables in Section 8 sets out the recreational and commercial activities that are permitted in the parks and any requirements to undertake these activities.

5. Park infrastructure and services

NPWS provides a range of visitor and management facilities in the parks including:

- day use (picnic areas, lookouts and carparks) and camping facilities
- sealed and unsealed roads, management trails and walking tracks
- water supply and sewerage treatment infrastructure
- gates and fences
- NPWS office, staff house/residence and depot buildings
- erosion control and bushfire response infrastructure.

Public entrance to the parks is via Wolstenholme Road and Bents Basin Road. These entrances are gated to allow vehicle access to be regulated. Internal gates regulate vehicle access inside the parks and prevent public vehicular access to the management trail network. The gate on the western boundary of the Tara block addition prevents access from adjoining properties and road reserve.

Figures 1 and 2 show park roads open to the public, management trails used for management purposes and the location of gates. The roads through the north-east section of the parks and the camping area are sealed. The unsealed management trails in Gulguer Nature Reserve are also used for walking by visitors and are signposted for bushfire management purposes.

The management trail and bridge over the Nepean River immediately east of Bents Basin connects the southern and northern section of the state conservation area. The bridge is a significant asset that provides access for park management vehicles and supports sewerage, water and power infrastructure.



Photo 3 Park facilities support safe and sustainable use. Brian Everingham.

The suitability and safety of existing management trails in the Tara block addition is being assessed. Some of these trails will be formalised and upgraded to include drainage and surface works on steep slopes while others may need to be closed and rehabilitated.

The management trails in the Gulguer Nature Reserve are primarily maintained for fire management purposes. These trails are in good condition, but regular maintenance is required, especially in the Campbells Ford area where management trails are prone to erosion, rockfalls and flooding.

The management trails in the parks are an important fire management asset, and trails in the state conservation area and nature reserve have been identified as strategic or tactical fire trails. The management trails in the Tara block will also be used for fire management purposes. Under the *Rural Fires Act 1997* the relevant Bush Fire Management Committee must prepare a fire access and fire trail plan that identifies access for fire suppression and management purposes. Once a plan is approved the designated fire trails must be established and maintained consistent with prescribed fire trail standards. Appropriate trail construction and maintenance standards to minimise impacts on the parks' environmental and cultural heritage values. The plan may identify the need for new fire trails in the parks. New fire trails will require an appropriate level of heritage and environmental assessment.

The NPWS office building located near the Wolstenholme Drive entrance to Bents Basin State Conservation Area was constructed in the 1980s, and internally refurbished and extended in 2012. The extended office building provides options to include an information display. A staff residence constructed in the same period is located near the Wolstenholme Road entry. In future, the staff residence may be suitable for adaptive re-use for administrative purposes such as training, education or accommodation for researchers or leasing as accommodation for visitors or a campground manager.

The works depot is located to the north of the office building and supports management operations in these and other parks in south-west Sydney.

The parks are provided with a reticulated water supply via a pipeline from Taylors Road through the Tara block. The water supply network includes this pipeline and a 10,000-litre water tank near the toilet block in the Bents Basin Road Picnic Area, a 3,000-litre water tank in the Tara block and a 22,000-litre holding tank in Gulguer Nature Reserve. A second 22,000-litre water tank is not connected to the park water supply network but could be used as a reserve source of water for firefighting purposes.

There are toilets next to the Bents Basin Road carpark and in the Durawi Picnic Area, and the camping area has a toilet and shower block. The on-site sewerage treatment system was installed to service the picnic areas and camping area in June 2016.

6. Non-park infrastructure and services

NSW national parks may contain infrastructure and other assets owned and operated by other organisations or individuals. This includes public utility infrastructure such as pipelines and transmission lines. NPWS maintains a public register of leases, easements and rights of way.

There are 2 powerline corridors in the parks as shown in Figure 1 and 2:

- a 330-kilovolt TransGrid overhead powerline crossing Gulguer Nature Reserve that includes 4 large towers
- a 33-kilovolt overhead powerline owned and operated by Endeavour Energy that crosses over Bents Basin and includes 3 power poles in the Tara block addition.

Access, maintenance and other administrative arrangements for these powerline easements are managed under separate agreements with each electricity provider.

A right of carriageway easement crosses Bushrangers Creek and was established to provide access between two sections of a neighbouring property.

WaterNSW owns and maintains the Theresa Park Weir. The operation of the weir and use of water is managed in accordance with the provisions of the *Water Management Act 2000* and the Water Sharing Plan for the Greater Metropolitan Region Unregulated Water Sources.

WaterNSW has applied to install groundwater bores in the state conservation area to investigate the groundwater resources of Leonay-Emu Plains and Wallacia areas. NPWS will work closely with WaterNSW to ensure that these investigation activities do not impact negatively on park values.

Exploration for minerals and petroleum (including gas) and mining and petroleum production, are permissible uses in state conservation areas. NPWS works closely with NSW Government authorities responsible for mining and petroleum activities, including mineral exploration and mine site rehabilitation, to ensure that exploration and production proposals in state conservation areas comply with all statutory requirements, including any necessary environmental impact assessments and approvals. Exploration is not permitted in nature reserves and national parks.

NPWS also works to maintain cooperative arrangements with local communities, local councils, regional fire services and the Local Land Services to improve the effectiveness of weed, pest and fire management programs, maintain intact boundaries and manage encroachments. Most of the parks' boundary is fenced with only small sections requiring survey and fencing.

7. Scheme of operations

The scheme of operations in Table 2 is consistent with section 72AA of the National Parks and Wildlife Act. It details the desired outcomes for the parks' values and actions that NPWS will undertake to achieve these outcomes.

A management priority has been assigned to each action to guide the allocation of resources.

- **Very high** – Loss or significant decline in the condition of the park value is likely if action is not taken or significant improvement in the condition of the value is likely if action is taken.
- **High** – Decline in the condition of the park value is likely if action is not taken or improvement in the condition of the value is likely if action is taken.
- **Medium** – Some decline in the condition of the park value is possible if action is not taken or some improvement in the condition of the value is possible if action is taken.
- **Low** – While decline in the condition of the park value is not likely in the short term, the action would help build the long-term resilience of the park value.

NPWS performance in meeting the **outcomes** in the scheme of operations will be measured through periodic assessments. Performance in delivering the **actions** in the scheme of operations will be measured through regular audits of plans of management.

The scheme of operations sets strategic goals and priorities. Subsidiary plans consistent with this plan of management may also be developed to guide actions at an operational level. Subsidiary plans enable adaptive responses to new information or changed circumstances, such as for pests, weeds, fire and recreational activities, as required by NPWS policy. Assessments of performance and review will be used to inform adaptive management in these subsidiary plans as well as any required adjustments and improvements to future plans of management for the park.

Conservation action plans will be prepared and implemented to manage and monitor assets of intergenerational significance declared under the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

The implementation of actions set out below may be subject to statutory responsibilities under the National Parks and Wildlife Act and other relevant State and Commonwealth legislation, including environmental impact assessments and approvals. Further community consultation about these actions may be undertaken.

Information on popular recreational or commercial activities that are permitted in the parks is provided in the park use regulations tables in Section 8. More detailed information on other activities is available on the NPWS website.

Table 2 Scheme of operations

Outcome	Action	Priority
Protecting the natural environment		
1. Tara block addition is reserved under the National Parks and Wildlife Act.	a. Seek to reserve the Tara block addition in accordance with relevant legislation and NPWS policy.	High
2. Isolation of wildlife habitat in the parks is minimised through maintenance of native vegetation corridors on surrounding land.	a. Support processes for the conservation of biodiversity values on surrounding lands through local and state government environmental planning and biodiversity conservation initiatives.	Medium
	b. Continue to provide input into local environmental planning and development processes where relevant and consistent with legislation and NPWS policy.	High
3. Landforms and water quality in Bents Basin and the parks' waterways are maintained consistent with natural processes.	a. Establish a program to identify and monitor active and potential erosion sites, including walking tracks and management trails, and develop priorities for treatment.	Medium
	b. Prepare a park-based flood risk plan to identify risk to natural values from flooding and options for site protection and landscape rehabilitation.	High
	c. Investigate and trial options for protecting the foreshore area of Bents Basin including revegetation, site hardening, weed management and changes to public access.	High
	d. Support protection of the basin's foreshore area through a visitor education program.	Medium
	e. Work with other stakeholders including water management authorities, local councils and park neighbours to address water quality issues and ensure that water use does not negatively impact park values, consistent with legislated water sharing arrangements.	Medium
4. The structural and habitat diversity of vegetation communities is maintained. Populations of threatened and significant species are stable, and condition of threatened ecological communities is stable or improving.	a. Prepare and implement an annual pest and fire management program to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ identify and implement annual actions from regional pest management priorities ○ identify and implement an annual asset protection and ecological burning program based on the park fire management strategy and associated NPWS policies and procedures ○ maintain cooperative arrangements with neighbours, local Rural Fire Service brigades, local councils and Local Land Services in implementing the fire and pest management programs for the parks ○ monitor the effectiveness of pest and fire management programs 	Very high

Outcome	Action	Priority
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o consider potential climate change induced threats. 	
	b. Identify and implement priority actions for protection of threatened communities and species including priority actions from the <i>Biodiversity Conservation Program</i> , recovery strategies and conservation action plans.	High
	c. Identify, monitor and protect habitat values needed by regionally significant animal species including the common wombat.	High
	d. Identify priority actions for protection of non-threatened plant and animal communities in the parks.	Medium
	e. Identify research, survey and monitoring priorities and actions for park biodiversity values to improve knowledge and assess management effectiveness.	Medium
	f. Encourage and support research and monitoring of the distribution, ecology and impact of threatening processes on native species and communities, with priority given to threatened and regionally significant animal species such as the greater glider.	Low
	g. Support the wombat mangle management program and contribute to ongoing research and protection of wombat communities.	Medium
	h. Manage and support volunteer bush regeneration groups working in the parks through supervision, coordination, training, promotion and provision of equipment.	Medium
	i. Monitor visitor use and impacts of recreational activities on park values and apply appropriate management responses, such as temporary closures or realignment of tracks, if impacts on park values become unacceptable.	High
	j. Educate park visitors on how to minimise their impacts on natural values, including the impacts of firewood collection.	High
	k. Monitor and review management arrangements for the use of portable barbecues in the park. Use of portable barbecues may be restricted if impacts on park values become unacceptable.	High
5. Understanding of the impacts of climate change on park values is improved and informs management of the parks.	a. Encourage research into the effects of climate change in the parks.	Low

Outcome	Action	Priority
Looking after our culture and heritage		
6. Aboriginal people are involved in management of the Aboriginal cultural values of the parks, caring for Country and in building connections to Country.	a. Consult and involve the Aboriginal community in the management of cultural heritage and other park values.	Very high
	b. Involve the Aboriginal community in research and development of material and programs for interpretation of Aboriginal cultural heritage values in the parks.	High
	c. Support culture camps and other activities that promote Aboriginal connection with Country.	Low
7. Aboriginal values and sites are identified, and knowledge of sites and values is improved.	a. Support further Aboriginal cultural heritage survey, including areas previously identified with high archaeological potential, in partnership with the Aboriginal community.	Low
	b. Update and record information on known Aboriginal cultural landscapes, sites and objects, including new sites, in collaboration with representatives of the Aboriginal community.	Medium
8. Impacts on Aboriginal heritage values are stable or diminishing.	a. Review the identified Aboriginal cultural heritage sites and develop options for protection where necessary in partnership with the Aboriginal community.	Medium
	b. Undertake the cultural assessments required by law and policy prior to allowing activities in the parks with the potential to impact Aboriginal sites and places.	Very high
9. Heritage sites are managed in accordance with established heritage management programs and policies.	a. Establish a program for the management of shared heritage including the former inn site, Campbells Ford precinct, James Wade's bridge, hut, house and rock garden sites, the coach road and Donohue's Cave.	Medium
	b. Investigate appropriate storage and presentation of the moveable heritage items in consultation with NPWS heritage officers. This may include placement of items with local historic societies.	Medium
	c. Maintain the alignment and associated buildings of the Silverdale Hill Climb car race circuit consistent with the advice of heritage officers.	Medium
	d. Maintain records of historic heritage sites, items and documents consistent with NPWS policies and procedures.	Low
	e. Consider the appropriate means of recognising the contribution by Richard Venables to preservation of the park.	Low

Outcome	Action	Priority
Providing for visitor use and enjoyment		
10. The visitor experience values are maintained or improved.	a. Prepare a visitor facilities concept plan after community consultation for the parks that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ options for powered sites and a range of unmarked and marked camp sites in the Bents Basin Campground ○ options for cabins or serviced camping (glamping) ○ additional picnic shelters, landscaping, upgraded parking and barbecues in the picnic areas and camping area ○ options for the development of low-key visitor facilities in the Tara block addition, including tracks and trails for walking and cycling, shade and picnic shelters, and minimal facility camping where appropriate. 	Very high
	b. Design and develop new visitor facilities, subject to heritage and environmental impact and sustainability assessments.	Very high
	c. Prepare and implement a landscape management program for day use areas (i.e. picnic areas and lookouts) that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ identifying unstable and aging trees for removal ○ landscaping to provide shade and visual amenity, including planting of vegetation ○ providing pathways and tracks to manage visitor flows ○ maintenance of the view corridor at Caley's Lookout. 	High
	d. Monitor visitor use to improve understanding of visitor characteristics, expectations, and patterns of use and to inform delivery of appropriate visitor experiences.	Medium
	e. Regularly review waste management practices and implement cost-effective waste management for the parks, including recycling where feasible, in the picnic and camping areas.	High
11. Visitors have opportunity to understand and appreciate park values including geological values, native plants and animals and cultural heritage values.	a. Prepare and implement a visitor communications program to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ identify options for interpretation of park values through a range of media including on-site displays, guided activities, printed material, signs and web-based and app-based technology ○ ensure directional and regulatory signs for the parks meet management and visitor needs including those of non-English speaking visitors. 	High

Outcome	Action	Priority
	b. Support volunteer activities that encourage community engagement and stewardship in protecting park values.	Low
12.Risks to visitor safety are identified and treated.	<p>a. Prepare a park risk management program to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o identify and monitor visitor safety risks related to water-based recreational activities, rockfalls, treefalls, flooding and water quality management o maintain and regularly update park risk register and risk treatment actions. 	Very high
	b. Work with local councils and the relevant government agency responsible for roads and road safety to identify options to improve visitor safety on access roads.	High
13.Businesses providing infrastructure and services in the park enhance the visitor experience and support management of the park.	a. Issue licences for commercial operations under the National Parks and Wildlife Act after required environmental, cultural heritage and sustainability assessment. Commercial activities may include small-scale businesses such as mobile food or beverage vendors, bike hire and management of camping facilities including cabins and serviced camping (glamping) facilities.	High
	b. Investigate options for campground management services to be provided in Bents Basin State Conservation Area by an external provider.	Low
14.Group activities and events are sustainable and enhance the visitor experience.	a. Liaise with local councils, relevant government agencies, corporate and community bodies to promote appropriate community events in the parks.	Low
Park infrastructure and services		
15.Management of NPWS infrastructure and services is sustainable and adverse impacts on the park values are stable or diminishing.	a. Assess the environmental and cultural heritage impacts of new infrastructure and services in the parks to ensure that park values are protected, and infrastructure and services meet appropriate sustainability standards.	High
	b. Investigate options to adaptively re-use the staff residence as a training and education facility or as accommodation for researchers, visitors or a campground manager.	Low
	c. Close and rehabilitate trails not required for management or visitor use purposes.	High
	d. Identify and formalise management trails in the Tara block addition.	Very high
	e. Maintain and upgrade management trails identified in park fire management strategies consistent with Rural Fire Service fire trail standards and relevant legislation.	Very high

Outcome	Action	Priority
	f. Manage NPWS facilities in accordance with the asset management system to ensure that facilities meet appropriate standards and promote safe and sustainable visitor use and park management operations.	High
Non-park infrastructure and services		
16. Negative impacts from surrounding land use are diminishing.	a. Negotiate resolution of any potential encroachments with adjoining landowners and enter into easements, licences or agreements where appropriate.	High
	b. Monitor boundary fencing and negotiate and maintain cooperative fencing agreements with relevant neighbours in accordance with NPWS policy.	Very high
17. Access to the parks for public and management purposes is secured.	a. Prepare a prioritised reserve access strategy for the parks to secure park access for public use and management purposes.	High
18. Negative impacts of easements on park values and visitor experiences are stable or diminishing.	a. Liaise with utilities and service providers in relation to easements, maintenance needs and access to ensure compliance with legislation and established agreements and policies.	High
	b. Manage easements, including right of carriageway easements, in accordance with the National Parks and Wildlife Act, NPWS policy and other relevant legislation.	High

8. Park use regulations

8.1 Recreational activities

There are many recreational activities that can be undertaken in the parks without consent from park managers. Other activities can occur if consent is provided by NPWS. All activities that occur in the parks are subject to relevant policies and legislation.






Conditions may be applied to ensure an activity is undertaken safely and to minimise environmental risks and risks to other users. Consent may be refused after consideration of the proposed activity and its likely environmental, visitor safety and park management impacts.





Activities may be subject to operating conditions or limits from time to time. For example, access to parts of the parks may be closed during periods of bushfire risk, bad weather or maintenance or improvement works.

Activities not shown in Table 3 may also be regulated by signage within the parks or by consent.

Information regarding activities that require consent and obtaining consent is available on the NSW national parks visitor website or by contacting the relevant NPWS office (contact details at the front of this plan).

Table 3 Park use regulations – Recreational activities

	Type of activity	Allowed	Notes/Exceptions
	Barbecues – portable	Yes	Portable gas, solid fuel and liquid stoves are allowed. Solid fuel fires are prohibited during total fire bans and park solid fuel fire bans. Residues from solid fuel fires must be deposited in the coal bins provided.
	Camping	Yes	In Bents Basin Camping Area and, if developed, designated sites in Tara block. Bush camping is not allowed.
	Cycling (including mountain biking)	Yes	On park roads in the state conservation area and along signposted management trails in the Tara Block additions. Cycling is not permitted in the Gulguer Nature Reserve. No cycling off-trail or on walking tracks. All organised group (e.g. club) events require consent (see Table 4).
	Abseiling, rock climbing and canyoning	No	Not permitted due to the lack of suitable safe locations and risks to conservation values.
	Dog walking	No	Dogs that are not assistance animals are not permitted in state conservation areas in New South Wales. Assistance animals are allowed in all sections of the park provided they are kept under effective control at all times with a leash or harness.

	Type of activity	Allowed	Notes/Exceptions
	Off-road four wheel driving	No	Permitted on public and park roads. Not permitted on management trails or off-road due to risks to conservation values and potential risks to other park users.
	Fossicking	No	Not permitted due to potential environmental impacts, particularly given the presence of high-gradient slopes.
 	Group gatherings – non-commercial (e.g. family or social gatherings, school groups)	Yes	Consent is required for groups of more than 40 people, as per the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation. Consent is required for larger groups to ensure limited available space can be managed.
	Hang-gliding	No	Not permitted due to lack of suitable safe locations and potential risks to other park users.
	Horse riding	No	Not permitted due to lack of suitable locations and potential disturbance to other park users.
 	Model aeroplanes and drones	Yes	Consent required. Not permitted to be launched where there are potential risks to telecommunications infrastructure and impacts to other park users. Drones may be used for park management purposes and may be authorised as part of a commercial filming consent. The use of drones is subject to relevant civil aviation regulations.
	Off-road motorcycling and trail bike riding	No	Only permitted on public roads. Not permitted on management trails or off-road due to risks to conservation values and potential risks to other park users.
	Walking	Yes	Along management trails and marked walking or shared-use (i.e. walking and cycling) tracks.
 	Water-based recreation (e.g. fishing, swimming, surfing, diving and snorkelling)	Yes	Swimming is only permitted in Bents Basin. Non-motorised watercraft are only permitted in Bents Basin or the dam south of Bents Loop Road. Fishing is subject to the provisions of the <i>Fisheries Management Act 1994</i> .
	Wood fires	Yes	Only in fireplaces provided at Bents Basin Camping Area. Wood fires are prohibited elsewhere in the park. Wood fires are prohibited during total fire bans and park fire bans. Collection of firewood in the park is not permitted.

8.2 Events, function and commercial activities

The following table lists some common event, function and commercial activities that may be permitted in the parks with consent from NPWS or under a licence or lease. It is not a definitive or exhaustive list of permitted commercial or other activities. Information on relevant policies, required approvals and fees is available on the NPWS website.

Approval to use supporting equipment, such as marquees, amplified sound or drones, will be determined on a case-by-case basis subject to an assessment of potential impacts on park values and other park users. Use of any supporting equipment will be subject to consent conditions.

Under NPWS policy, commercial operators may be required to support understanding of cultural heritage conservation and management and promote respect for Aboriginal culture and sites. This may include requirements to consult with Aboriginal communities to develop appropriate material and information for participants.

Table 4 Park use regulations – Events, function and commercial activities

Type of activity	Group size	Type of approval required
Public events (e.g. fun runs, commemorative ceremonies open to public participation)	All groups irrespective of size	Consent
Non-commercial, organised (e.g. club-based) events	All groups. Generally limited to a maximum size of 16 unless special conditions apply	Consent or licence
All other private functions involving groups of more than 40 people	All groups of 40 or more	Consent
Research (scientific and educational, and related to conservation or park management)	All groups irrespective of size	Consent. May also require licensing under other legislation
Recreation equipment hire under lease or licence arrangement	Consistent with lease and/or licence conditions	Lease and/or licence
Commercial activities including tours, ticketed events, filming and photography	All groups irrespective of size	Licence
Campground management	Consistent with lease and/or licence conditions	Lease and / or licence
Visitor accommodation including adaptive re-use of park residence, cabins and serviced camping (glamping) facilities	Consistent with lease and/or licence conditions	Lease and/or licence
Food and beverage outlets under lease or licence arrangement	Consistent with lease or licence conditions	Lease and/or licence

9. More information

- [Bents Basin State Conservation Area and Gulguer Nature Reserve Planning Considerations](#)
- [Host an event](#)
- [National Parks and Wildlife Service](#)