



NSW NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE

Royal National Park, Heathcote National Park and Garawarra State Conservation Area

Plan of Management



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Summary

The Royal National Park, Heathcote National Park and Garawarra State Conservation Area are reserved under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* and are managed to achieve the objects of this Act. These objects are centred on conserving the natural and cultural values of the parks, as well as fostering public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of these values. The parks must also be managed in accordance with the relevant management principles defined in the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* for national parks and state conservation areas (see pages 7-8).

This plan is consistent with the objects of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* and the relevant management principles and has been prepared after consideration of the matters listed under section 72AA of that Act. The final plan has been informed by all submissions received on the draft plan, and the advice provided by the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council and the Greater Sydney Regional Advisory Committee.

No management operations in the parks can be undertaken that are not consistent with this plan and its scheme of operations. This plan will also apply to any future additions to Royal National Park, Heathcote National Park and Garawarra State Conservation Area.

Sections 1 to 5 of the plan summarise the parks' key values, management principles and management considerations. It is recommended that readers of the plan refer to the Royal National Park, Heathcote National Park and Garawarra State Conservation Area Planning Considerations report for more detailed explanations of the parks' values and management considerations.

The scheme of operations (section 6) is the core part of this plan. It describes the desired outcomes for the parks' values and actions that the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) proposes to undertake to achieve these outcomes.

Tables 7 and 8 (park use regulations) 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.

Acknowledgements

Royal National Park, Heathcote National Park and Garawarra State Conservation Area are in the traditional Country of the Dharawal People.

NPWS gratefully acknowledges the efforts of the many volunteers who continue to make significant contributions to the conservation of park values.

This plan of management was prepared by staff of NPWS.

Contact us

For more information about this plan of management or Royal National Park, Heathcote National Park and Garawarra State Conservation Area, contact NPWS by email at npws.royal@environment.nsw.gov.au; by mail to PO Box 144, Sutherland NSW; or by telephone (02) 9542 0632.

Acknowledgement of Country

The parks covered in this plan are part of an ancient landscape that includes evidence of Aboriginal use and occupation over thousands of years. During this time the areas now known as Royal National Park, Heathcote National Park and Garawarra State Conservation Area and their surrounding lands and watercourses have been under the care of the Dharawal language group peoples and other families and people. Aboriginal people have a deep spiritual and cultural connection to this Country.

Connections to Country and the significance of these parks to Aboriginal peoples, past, present and future, are acknowledged and respected in this plan. The role of Aboriginal people in identifying traditional connections and custodians for this place is acknowledged and supported.

What is 'Country'

Country refers to all parts of the natural environment and these parts cannot be separated. This means that the land, water, animals and plants are viewed as one, and form Aboriginal peoples' cultural and spiritual identity.

Aboriginal people develop intimate knowledge and connections with places, animals, plants and landscapes that creates an interdependence with nature which is based on respect. Aboriginal people care for Country through ceremony, cultural activities, sharing stories of songlines and maintaining connections with the world around them.



Photo 1 Rock engraving, Jibbon Point, Royal National Park. Kathryn Korbel/DPE

Our vision for the parks

Our vision for Royal National Park, Heathcote National Park and Garawarra State Conservation Area is:

- the landscapes, ecological integrity and biodiversity are protected, ensuring that important environmental values and services are maintained for the future
- the parks' rich Aboriginal heritage is protected and celebrated and there is support for management and use by Aboriginal communities
- historic cultural heritage is protected and recognised and we celebrate contemporary use and cultural expression in the parks
- the parks' critical role in the state and national protected areas network is supported and enhanced, particularly with consideration to likely climate change impacts
- the parks provide opportunities for public appreciation and inspiration through sustainable recreational activities, while respecting the natural and cultural heritage
- scientific research and education, together with informal interpretation and discovery, continues to be supported
- services and facilities encourage and support people of all ages, cultures and abilities to access and enjoy the parks.



Photo 2 Lake Toolooma Trail, Heathcote National Park. John Yurasek/DPE

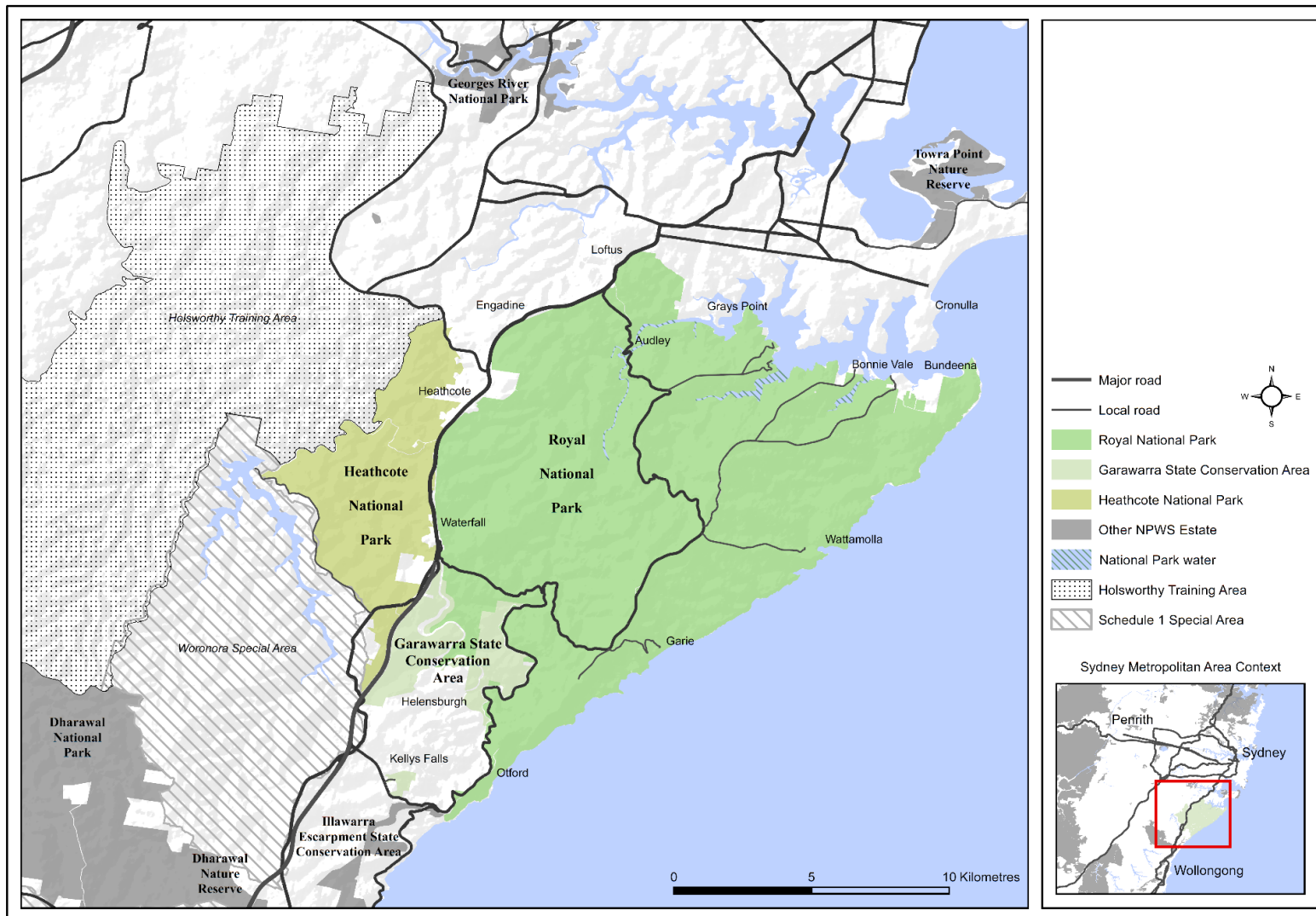


Figure 1 Location of the parks

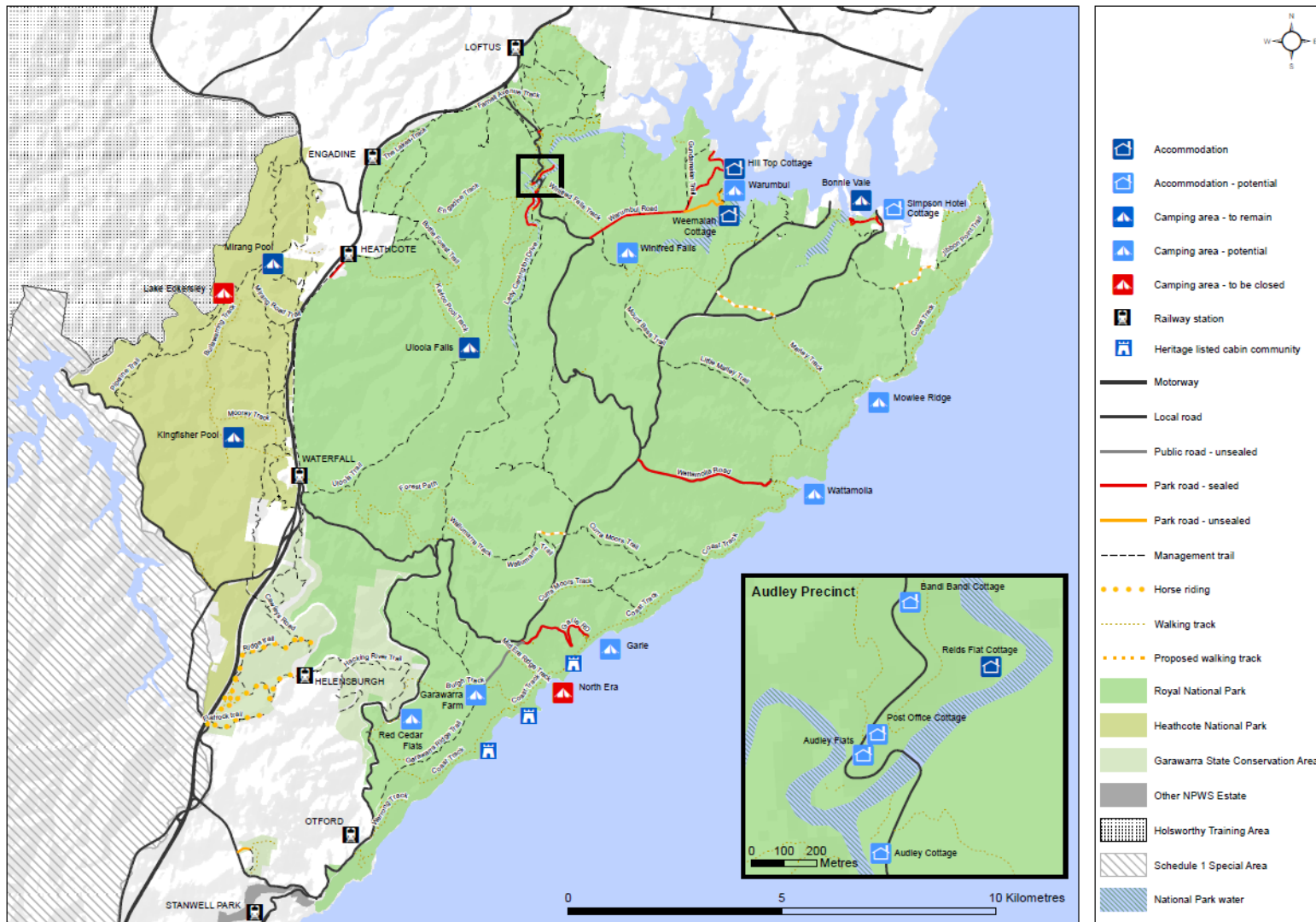


Figure 2 Map of Royal National Park, Heathcote National Park and Garawarra State Conservation Area

Royal National Park, Heathcote National Park and Garawarra State Conservation Area

Royal National Park, Heathcote National Park and Garawarra State Conservation Area stretch from Sydney to the Illawarra (see Figure 1). With more than 6 million visits annually, the parks are an oasis between these major centres, providing an area for the urban population to reconnect with nature and enjoy the outdoors.

Why these parks are important

The parks are valued as places of natural beauty and ecological richness and for relaxation, enjoyment and recreational activity. The parks also have significant Aboriginal cultural values, are a living record of post-settlement and social history and provide opportunities for research, education and experiential learning.

- The parks contain diverse natural landscapes and places of natural beauty and wonder. They protect an important part of Australia's ecology and provide links between the coastal habitats of Sydney and the Illawarra, as well as crucial habitat links with inland ecosystems. These diverse natural systems are habitat for a wide range of plants and animals, forming one of the most species-rich group of parks in Australia.
- The people of the Dharawal language group and other Aboriginal families and people hold the parks as a place of spiritual significance. Aboriginal people maintain a strong connection to the land, sharing local stories, cultural observances and performing caring for Country practices. Connections to this cultural landscape are physically evident and maintained in spiritual and cultural practice.
- Royal National Park, dedicated in 1879, holds a place in conservation history as Australia's first national park. Generations of visitors have enjoyed the experience of connecting with nature and seeking refuge from the pressures of modern life. In addition, the parks were home to many people, including the working community that grew around Audley to manage the park, the cabin communities emerging from coalmining and the Great Depression era, and the growing settlements of Maianbar and Bundeena on the border of Royal National Park.
- The parks offer recreational and outdoor leisure experiences for people living in the Sydney and Illawarra regions, as well as local, regional, interstate and international visitors. The combination of family-friendly picnic areas, ocean and freshwater access and an extensive network of tracks and trails appeals to a wide range of visitors.
- The proximity of these ecologically diverse parks to Sydney and Wollongong's educational and science institutions makes them a major destination for education and research activities. The scientific value of Royal National Park has been widely recognised throughout its history and was one of the motivations for its dedication in 1879.

Table 1 The parks and their regional setting

Features	Description
Area	The parks cover approximately 18,912 hectares. Royal National Park is 15,087 hectares; Heathcote National Park is 2826 hectares; Garawarra State Conservation Area is 999 hectares. See Figure 2. The riverbeds of Hacking River, Cabbage Tree Basin and South West Arm Creek are included in Royal National Park. Approximately 11 hectares of Heathcote National Park is also within the Woronora Special Area declared under the provisions of the <i>Water Management Act 2000</i> .
Reservation dates	<p>Parts of Royal National Park have been reserved for public recreation since 1879 when 7284 hectares was dedicated as national park. Garawarra and Heathcote were first reserved as 'primitive areas' in 1934 and 1943.</p> <p>1967 – Royal National Park and Heathcote State Park (renamed Heathcote National Park in 1974) reserved under the <i>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1967</i></p> <p>1987 – Garawarra State Recreation Area (renamed Garawarra State Conservation Area in 2002) reserved under the <i>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974</i></p> <p>1967 to 2021 – Various additions to the parks under Part 11 of the <i>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974</i></p>
Previous tenure	Prior to its first reservation in 1879, parts of what is now Royal National Park were farms and early land grants.
Biogeographic region	The parks are within the Sydney Cataract subregion of the Sydney Basin Bioregion. The plant communities in the parks are some of the most valuable intact examples of significant vegetation complexes remaining in the bioregion.

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 1974* 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 reuse) of any buildings or structures or modified natural areas
- provide for appropriate research and monitoring.

The *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* 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 reuse) 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.



Photo 3 Koala in Garawarra State Conservation Area. Jessica Herder/DPE

1. Protecting the natural environment

The parks are set in striking natural landscapes that have high conservation value. The landscapes include a range of distinct geological formations, from sandstone clifftops to sheltered gullies, freshwater rivers and swamps through to estuaries, dune systems and beaches.

On the southern edge of the Sydney Basin the parks' geology is mostly Hawkesbury sandstone, Wianamatta Group shales and Narrabeen Group rocks that extend to the south. The spectacular cliffs along the northern section of the coast form part of the hugely popular Coast Track (see Figure 2). The southern coastal region is characterised by rich, shale-derived soils in sheltered coastal valleys, with beaches forming at creek mouths. These support pockets of closed moist forest and rainforest.

The numerous rivers and streams in the parks, which are regularly interrupted by waterfalls and pools, contain and support diverse animal and plant communities, including macroinvertebrates, macrophytes and fish. Significant features include Kellys Falls, upland swamps and the relic clifftop dunes between Jibbon and Marley Beach. Royal National Park also contains estuaries, seagrass beds and intertidal habitats. The riverbeds of (most of) the Hacking River and its tributaries, as well as South West Arm Creek and Cabbage Tree Basin fall within Royal National Park (see Figure 2). These areas provide essential habitat for juvenile fish, waterbirds and invertebrates. Urbanisation along rivers and increased visitor usage of the riparian zones, including those along the Hacking River, pose an increasing threat to the waterways within and downstream of the parks. Maintaining water quality and aquatic ecosystem health in these waterways is a priority, and degraded riparian areas will be a priority for bush regeneration.



Photo 4 Aerial view of the coastline near Wattamolla, Royal National Park. David Finnegan/DPE

The most common vegetation formation is dry sclerophyll forest covering more than 56% of the parks, while the heath in the coastal areas is the largest area of heathland remaining in the Sydney region. The parks form a significant part of a connected network of protected vegetated lands stretching from the Blue Mountains to the Illawarra region. This network allows for the movement of native species across the landscape, and protects biodiversity, ecosystem functioning, integrity and health. Fragmentation of habitat is one of the key threats to biodiversity in the region. Retaining intact vegetation and maintaining or improving connectivity is a management priority in these parks.

The parks are one of the most biodiverse areas in temperate Australia, supporting more than 1,000 plant and 347 animal species. The parks protect 12 threatened ecological communities, 16 threatened plants and 45 threatened animal species. The significance of this rich biodiversity has been recognised by the inclusion of Royal National Park and Garawarra State Conservation Area on Australia's National Heritage List, which identifies places of outstanding significance to the nation.

The parks support a rich animal diversity, including important populations of eastern pygmy possums, koalas, micro-bats and broad-headed snakes. However, at least 25 animal species are known to be locally extinct from the parks and at least 15 species are now extremely rare visitors or have ceased to visit altogether. These species extinctions and declines are mostly associated with habitat loss from freshwater rivers and wetlands, heathlands, rainforest, coastal shorelines and grassy woodlands. As such, these habitats are the highest priority for protection and restoration in the parks. Given the exceptional biodiversity values and the significant threats to values, biodiversity survey, monitoring of ecosystem health and undertaking research to improve the understanding and management of park values are high priority management actions. Consideration will be given to the potential for reintroduction of species known to have been lost from the parks.

The parks' geodiversity is impacted by natural processes, proximity to urban areas and visitor use. The cliff coastline is unstable due to natural erosion from wind and water, posing risks to visitor safety. Soil erosion in areas of heavy visitor use is common. Geology and landform features in the parks will be protected by managing recreational activities, including mountain biking which will be restricted to environmentally suitable areas away from the coast and highly erodible soils. To protect fragile soils and important habitats, no additional walking tracks will be created other than necessary realignment of existing tracks to protect natural or cultural heritage values or improve visitor safety, or short connecting tracks (e.g. to provide loop tracks or connections to public transport).

Habitat fragmentation, cats, foxes, deer and high frequency fire present the greatest threats to biodiversity. Other significant threats include the impacts of climate change, weeds, pathogens, human disturbances, including illegal track construction, altered hydrological regimes and urban encroachment. Fire management programs will prioritise the protection of fire sensitive species and communities and habitat connectivity. Pest plant and feral animal management programs will target the highest priority threats, including deer and foxes, and species whose removal will provide the greatest ecological benefit and the protection of cultural heritage values. Continuing partnerships with volunteer and community groups and other land and waterway management agencies is vital to the ongoing success of management programs in the parks.



Photo 5 Swamp wallaby in Royal National Park. Peter Taseski/DPE

2. Looking after our culture and heritage

There is a long and continuing connection between Aboriginal people and these parks. People of the Dharawal language group and other Aboriginal families, groups and people have cared for the landscape for thousands of years. These people continue to care for Country today and practice cultural traditions in the parks.

The parks have a deep spiritual significance to Aboriginal people and they are a place where current generations of Aboriginal people feel a connection to their ancestors. Continuation of access for Aboriginal people to care for Country and to maintain, renew or develop cultural connections and practices is extremely important. Aboriginal people have a strong interest in being part of park planning and decision-making. NPWS will continue to work with the Aboriginal community to develop mechanisms for ongoing involvement in park management.

The parks provide opportunities for the Aboriginal community to share and celebrate the Aboriginal identity of this important cultural landscape and build community understanding and awareness. They also provide opportunities for the delivery of cultural programs and tours.

The parks contain extensive physical evidence of Aboriginal culture with over 1,700 recorded Aboriginal sites and places of significance, including middens, artefact scatters, art sites, grinding grooves and rock engravings, such as those at Jibbon Point. There are 3 declared Aboriginal Places along the coast of Royal National Park. These places are culturally sensitive sites of special significance to people of the Dharawal language group. Threats to Aboriginal heritage sites and places in the parks include fire, vandalism and natural physical weathering.

There have been a number of Aboriginal heritage surveys in the parks that provide evidence of Aboriginal history, but there are gaps in our knowledge and understanding of how Aboriginal people used the area, particularly inland areas.



Photo 6 Aboriginal smoking ceremony. Georgina Eldershaw/DPE

Royal National Park is the oldest national park in Australia and the second oldest in the world. It holds a special significance for the conservation movement in this country. Royal National Park contains artefacts associated with early land grants and management, the Depression era, war and postwar history. A significant historical feature is the State Heritage listed 'Royal National Park Coastal Cabin Communities' of Little Garie, Era and Burning Palms. These cabin communities are of state significance for their historic, aesthetic, associative, social and rarity value.

Heathcote National Park was originally reserved as a 'primitive area' in 1943, and the park is significant as an early example of the development of the wilderness concept in Australia.

The area that is now Garawarra State Conservation Area was the site of a number of early farms and land grants. It was first reserved as Garawarra Primitive Area in 1934. The Kellys Falls area, including historic walking tracks, was added to the park in 2008.

The significance and condition of many heritage items in the parks have not been formally assessed. Conservation management plans or heritage impact statements will be prepared and implemented (as required) for heritage features based on future assessments. A new conservation management plan will be prepared for the State Heritage listed coastal cabin communities. Management of hazardous materials, wastewater, sewerage, erosion, weeds and feral animals around these communities is required to minimise the impact of cabins and their use on surrounding areas. To support this, consideration should be given to seeking financial contributions from licensees.

Historic buildings and landscapes are at risk from threats including fire, vandalism, erosion and weeds. There are also significant maintenance requirements for heritage buildings and major infrastructure such as seawalls. The adaptive reuse of historic buildings provides an opportunity for heritage values to be protected. Existing examples include visitor facilities in the old Audley Dance Hall and holiday accommodation at Hilltop Cottage. Other opportunities for adaptive reuse will continue to be investigated.



Photo 7 Audley Dance Hall. Simone Cottrell/DPE

3. Providing for visitor use and enjoyment

The parks have a history of recreational use dating back to 1879. Visitors come to the parks to picnic, bushwalk, bike ride, camp and participate in water-based activities such as swimming, surfing, fishing, kayaking and canoeing.

Royal National Park is one of the most visited parks in Australia, with more than 6 million visits each year. Most visitors are attracted to the coastal areas. Organised group and educational activities regularly occur in Royal National Park. Visitor numbers in Heathcote National Park are lower, and it primarily attracts bushwalkers seeking a natural and remote visitor experience. Garawarra State Conservation Area is mainly visited by walkers, horse riders and mountain bike riders.

3.1 Visitor management zones

This plan aims to provide for a range of visitor experiences without compromising the parks' natural and cultural values. Visitor management zones have been defined for the parks to guide the provision of visitor facilities and experiences. Three zones have been identified based on physical features, environmental and cultural conservation priorities, and desired levels of visitor use (see Figure 3). The zones identify appropriate locations for passive and active recreational activities and the level of visitor facilities that are compatible with the management principles for each zone as outlined in Table 2. The zones assist park managers with strategic prioritisation of resources and management effort, and provide a clear picture of how the parks will be managed to balance visitor use and conservation. New visitor facilities and other works in any zone are subject to environmental assessment and approval.



Pool Flat Picnic Area, Royal National Park. Nick Cubbin/DPE

Table 2 Visitor management zones

Feature	Zone 1 Nature-recreation	Zone 2 Recreation	Zone 3 Visitor precinct
Guiding management principles	Conservation of cultural and natural values is the priority; with the provision of low-intensity, passive visitor experiences where appropriate.	Conservation of cultural and natural values and provision of moderate–high intensity passive and active visitor experience and facilities.	Provision of sustainable visitor services and facilities in a natural setting with high levels of recreation and social interaction.
Location (see Figure 4)	Most of Heathcote and Royal national parks and part of Garawarra State Conservation Area. Includes State Heritage Register listed coastal cabin communities.	Three components: 1. A network of Moderate–high use walking tracks and management trails 2. A mountain biking track network 3. Visitor nodes at Kellys Falls; Red Cedar Flats.	Four key visitor precincts at Audley, Wattamolla, Bonnie Vale and Garie. Potential for development of visitor precincts at Garawarra Farm, Coast Track head at Bundeena, Warumbul and the Temptation Creek area.
Visitor opportunities			
Bushwalking	Network of walking tracks and management trails.	Network of well-formed walking tracks and management trails.	Well-formed tracks including paved surfaces.
Cycling	Management trails only.	Management trails and designated tracks	Management trails only.
Horse riding	No horse riding.	Designated management trails and tracks in Garawarra SCA (see Figure 2).	No horse riding.
Camping (see Table 3)	Walk-in camping at designated camping areas.	Walk-in and vehicle-based camping at designated camping areas.	Walk-in and vehicle-based camping at designated camping areas.
Visitor facilities	Generally, no formalised parking provided. Walking tracks are generally grade 3 or 4. Basic visitor facilities only. Additional basic facilities, including parking at track-heads, may be provided where they are compatible with the cultural and natural values of the zone. Limited potential for intensification of visitor use.	Parking at track-heads, day use areas and other visitor nodes. Walking tracks are generally grade 2 or 3. Basic camping facilities. Visitor nodes have basic facilities, including toilets and picnic tables. Potential for additional visitor facilities to support the visitor opportunities identified for these areas.	Car parks provided. Walking tracks are generally grade 1 or 2. Well-developed picnic and camping areas with toilets. Potential for intensification of use and additional visitor facilities (within precinct described in the relevant master plan).
Visitor experience	Opportunities for passive recreation in a natural setting, with limited visitor facilities. Visitors can expect low–moderate levels of social interaction.	Opportunities for passive and active recreation in a natural setting, with some visitor facilities. Visitors can expect moderate–high levels of social interaction.	Modified natural environment with areas of intensive recreational use and significant visitor facilities. Visitors can expect high levels of social interaction.

*Special Area Zone: Approximately 11 hectares of Heathcote National Park, adjacent to Woronora Dam Road, is excluded from the above zones as it is part of the Woronora Special Area and subject to the Water NSW Act 2014 and Water NSW Regulation 2020. Any activity or access to this area requires WaterNSW consent.

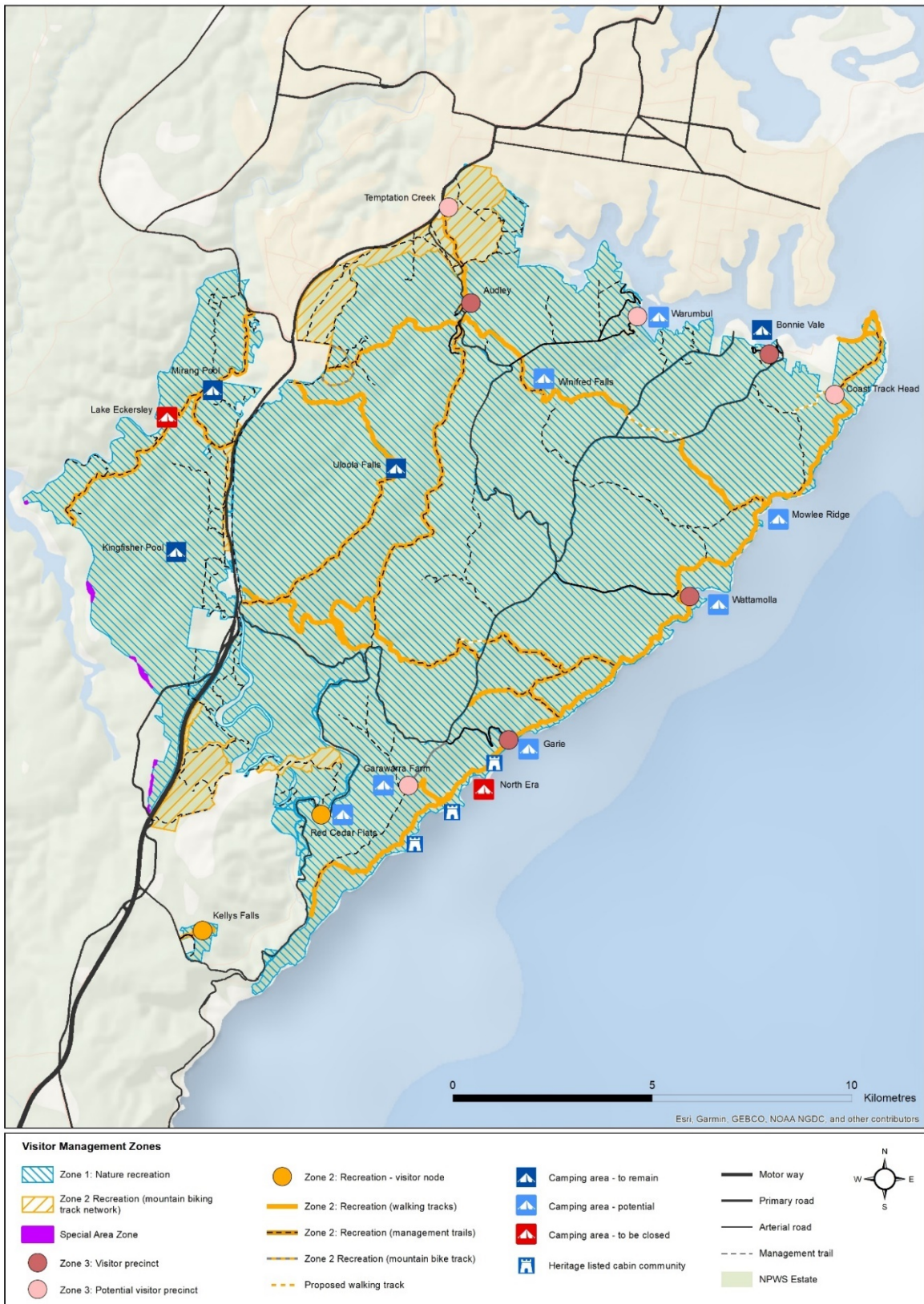


Figure 3 Visitor management zones

Zone 3 Visitor precincts includes 4 major precincts (Audley, Wattamolla, Bonnie Vale and Garie) and 4 'potential' major precincts (Temptation Creek, Bundeena Track Head, Garawarra Farm and Warumbul).

The 4 major visitor precincts in Royal National Park at Audley, Wattamolla, Bonnie Vale and Garie provide opportunities for picnicking, bushwalking, boating, swimming, surfing and cycling. Opportunities for camping are provided at Bonnie Vale, and there is potential for camping in the future at Wattamolla and Garie. Improvements, and upgrades to visitor facilities at the Zone 3 precincts will be guided by this plan and a master plan or precinct plan for each of the locations.

- Further works identified for Audley in the landscape master plan include improvement to pedestrian access and connections.
- For Wattamolla the master plan identifies improvements to car parking and access, upgrades to picnic areas, provision of new amenities such as kiosks and toilets, and provision of camping opportunities.
- At Bonnie Vale, a new precinct plan will identify suitable locations for new or realigned access roads and trails. Precinct planning will review facilities provided for camping and day use, because the current facilities are threatened by regular tidal inundation and future sea level rise. NPWS will investigate mechanisms and opportunities for managing Bonnie Vale Camping Area's operation.
- At Garie, a new precinct plan will guide access improvements, any necessary visitor and surf safety infrastructure and the provision of visitor accommodation including camping opportunities.
- Hut or cabin and camping accommodation for walkers will be investigated and may be implemented at Bonnie Vale, Wattamolla and Garie to support the Great Southern Walk (see 3.2).

A further 4 areas are identified as having the potential to be developed as future Zone 3 visitor precincts, if required. The Temptation Creek area has potential to become a park entry point with associated visitor facilities, including car parking, toilets and pedestrian/cycle links to the road and track network in the park. At the primary access point for the Coast Track at Bundeena, improvements may include parking and an associated sealed access road and other visitor facilities, such as toilets. Garawarra Farm has potential for adaptive reuse for sustainable visitor services, including facilities to enable educational or cultural activities or facilities and amenities for park visitors. Garawarra Farm may also provide opportunities for camping. At Warumbul, improvements may include upgraded facilities to support day use and car-based camping. Any future development of these precincts would be based on demand, subject to environmental impact assessment and be guided by precinct plans.

Zone 2 Recreation has 3 components (see Figure 3):

- a network of moderate to high use walking tracks and management trails
- a designated mountain biking track network (see Mountain Biking Plan for details)
- 2 visitor nodes (Red Cedar Flats and Kellys Falls).

Precinct plans will guide improvements to Red Cedar Flats to provide for car-based camping and improvements to day use facilities at Kellys Falls.

Planning and development of visitor facilities and experiences in the parks will seek to improve accessibility and inclusion for park visitors.

Zone 1 Nature-recreation covers the majority of Heathcote and Royal national parks and part of Garawarra State Conservation Area, encompassing walking tracks, walk-in camping areas and basic visitor facilities.

Special Area Zone. Approximately 11 hectares of Heathcote National Park, adjacent to Woronora Dam Road, is excluded from the above zones as it is part of the Woronora Special Area and subject to the *Water NSW Act 2014* and *Water NSW Regulation 2020*. Any activity or access to this area requires WaterNSW consent. Any activity in this area or in the Sydney Drinking Water Catchment must consider a Neutral or Beneficial Effect (NorBE) assessment under the State Environmental Planning Policy (Sydney Drinking Water Catchment) 2011.

3.2 Camping and other accommodation

Cottages and camping areas in the parks are popular for overnight stays. There are currently 2 walk-in camping areas in Royal National Park (Uloola Falls and North Era) and 3 in Heathcote National Park (Mirang Pool, Kingfisher Pool and Lake Eckersley). There is also a car-based camping area at Bonnie Vale, and several cottages provide visitor accommodation in Royal National Park.

Additional camp sites are required to meet increasing visitor demand, to support overnight walks, including the Great Southern Walk, and provide opportunities for car-based camping. A number of potential new camping areas have been identified to meet this demand (see Table 3 and Figure 2). Not all of the identified potential camping areas will necessarily be established. The development of new camping areas will be subject to environmental and cultural assessments and analysis of visitor needs, and may occur in stages.

The Great Southern Walk will be supported by the provision of up to 5 small-scale walkers huts or cabins in 3 existing visitor precincts (Bonnie Vale, Wattamolla and Garie) (Table 4). The development of these huts or cabins, and any necessary ancillary infrastructure, will be focussed on the existing visitor precincts, appropriate to the setting and will be subject to further planning and environmental impact assessment processes. NPWS may engage services to support visitors at these locations. This could include guiding, food and supply drops, facilities maintenance of walker accommodation and hiker pick-up and drop off services. Camping sites will continue to be available for independent walkers on the Coast Track.

Camping platforms and toilet facilities will be progressively installed at some camping areas to minimise environmental impacts. A booking system will manage visitor numbers in all camping areas in the parks.

Two camping areas (North Era and Lake Eckersley), which are not in suitable locations and costly to maintain, will be closed and rehabilitated when alternative camping areas are available.



Photo 8 Coast Track between Bundeena and Marley Beach, Royal National Park. David Croft/DPE

Table 3 Camping areas: existing and potential

Site	Existing/ potential	Type (current or indicative camp site numbers ^A)	Visitor access	Zone
Royal National Park: Servicing Coast Track and overnight walks				
Mowlee Ridge	Potential	Camping area (10)	Walk-in	1
Wattamolla	Potential	Camping area (40)	Walk-in	3
North Era	To be closed	Camping area (12)	Walk-in	1
Garie, including Garie Headland	Potential	Camping area (40)	Walk-in	3
Garawarra	Potential	Camping area (40)	Walk-in	3
Uloola Falls	Existing	Camping area (6)	Walk-in	1
Winifred Falls	Potential	Camping area (4)	Walk-in	1
Royal National Park: Car-based and camper accommodation				
Bonnie Vale	Existing	Camping area and car-based camping area (incl. campervan) (90)	Vehicle	3
Red Cedar Flat	Potential	Camping area and car-based camping area (incl. campervan) (10)	Vehicle	2
Warumbul	Potential	Camping area and car-based camping area (incl. campervan) (10)	Vehicle	3
Heathcote National Park				
Mirang Pool	Existing	Camping area (4)	Walk-in	1
Kingfisher Pool	Existing	Camping area (6)	Walk-in	1
Lake Eckersley	To be closed	Camping area (2)	Walk-in	1

^A site numbers are indicative only and subject to local adjustment and further investigation including environmental impact assessment

Currently, there are 3 cottages in Royal National Park offering hard-roofed visitor accommodation. Other cottages in the park will be assessed for visitor accommodation opportunities and additional cottages may be adapted for this purpose. Construction of a new building on the Simpson's Hotel cottage site at Bonnie Vale may be required to support any new facilities (see Table 4).

Table 4 Hard-roofed visitor accommodation in Royal National Park: existing and potential

Site	Location	Existing/potential purpose
Hilltop Cottage	Warumbul	Existing visitor accommodation
Reids Flat Cottage	Audley	Existing visitor accommodation
Weemalah Cottage	Warumbul	Existing visitor accommodation
Post Office Cottage	Audley	Potential visitor accommodation
Audley Flats	Audley	Potential visitor accommodation
Audley Cottage	Audley	Potential visitor accommodation
Cottage on Simpson's Hotel site	Bonnie Vale	Potential visitor accommodation; cafe or kiosk; education or cultural centre

Site	Location	Existing/potential purpose
Walkers huts/cabins	Bonnie Vale	Potential visitor accommodation to support walkers doing the Great Southern Walk
Walkers huts/cabins	Wattamolla	Potential visitor accommodation to support walkers doing the Great Southern Walk
Walkers huts/cabins	Garie	Potential visitor accommodation to support walkers doing the Great Southern Walk

3.3 Bushwalking

The parks provide a range of bushwalking opportunities with varying degrees of social interaction, physical challenge and self-reliance. Many visitors to the parks are attracted by the diversity of landscapes and extensive network of more than 100 kilometres of walking tracks. More than 250,000 local, regional and international visitors walk the Coast Track each year. Large numbers of people using walking tracks can accelerate erosion. This will be managed through closure of informal tracks and installation of boardwalks where appropriate. A small number of new connections may be constructed to provide alternative walking experiences and expand opportunities for multi-day walks (see proposed walking tracks on Figure 3). Some existing tracks may be realigned to protect park values or improve visitor safety, including a section of the Coast Track which may be realigned to traverse Garie Headland.

3.4 Cycling and mountain biking

Cycling and mountain biking are growing in popularity in the parks. Cycling is permitted on public roads and management trails throughout the parks, and on designated and signposted tracks.

Sustainable mountain biking opportunities in NPWS parks are guided by the NPWS Cycling Strategy, Policy and Guidelines for Implementation.

To support mountain biking in the Royal parks, a Mountain Biking Plan has been developed which proposes a number of designated mountain biking tracks (track network) on which mountain biking may be authorised (see Figure 3). The Mountain Biking Plan provides management strategies and details all considerations when selecting and assessing the suitability of tracks within the network, as well as the closure and rehabilitation of tracks that are inappropriate and/or unauthorised. The alignment of tracks in the network may be adjusted in response to local design issues and environmental assessment outcomes.

Any future additions to the track network will be limited to appropriate locations within the Zone 2 mountain biking areas (see Figure 3) and subject to environmental impact assessment and application of the mountain bike network design and assessment criteria described in the Mountain Biking Plan.

Subject to environmental and suitability assessment, a small number of existing walking tracks may be designated for multi-use to provide cycling connections. Tracks under current consideration include Bundeena to Maianbar, and Temptation Creek to Audley.

3.5 Other recreational activities

Swimming and surfing are popular activities at the beaches along the coastline of Royal National Park. Surf Life Saving Sydney and its volunteers at the Garie, Burning Palms and Era surf clubs, assist with the assessment and management of risks at these coastal

locations. Fishing is also a popular activity along the waterways of Port Hacking, as well as the ocean beaches and rocks.

There are 6 publicly accessible boat moorings located in South West Arm Creek within Royal National Park. NPWS will provide access to mooring opportunities and ensure protection of environmental values. Any additional moorings at this location will be subject to assessment by the relevant waterway management agency, including consideration of use, demand, context within Port Hacking and environmental impact assessment.

Tables 7 and 8 in section 7 set out the recreational and commercial activities that are permitted in the parks.



Photo 9 Weemalah Cottage, Royal National Park. John Spencer/DPE

3.6 Educational activities and scientific research

The diversity of species and habitats in the parks together with the availability of data collected over many years and accessibility of the parks to many research institutions means these parks are highly valued by scientists and teachers. Use of the parks for scientific research has been a feature of its history and is an ongoing and expanding use today. Support of educational programs will continue to be a priority for the parks.

There are opportunities to improve the interpretation of the parks' natural and cultural values and make this information more accessible to park visitors. Opportunities include park signage, tours and programs, and the use of digital technologies.

3.7 Group and commercial visitor activities

Organised group activities can provide opportunities for people who would otherwise not be able to experience the parks and can promote environmental understanding and support for conservation. There are a number of commercial tourism operators licensed to operate in

the parks, who provide a range of tours, recreational and educational activities, and visitor services such as a shuttle bus between transport links and major precincts in the parks.

There are opportunities for additional commercial tourism operations in the parks, in particular, opportunities for cultural tourism to be developed and operated by the Aboriginal community.

Several buildings in Royal National Park are leased, or have potential to be leased, to provide a range of commercial visitor facilities and services such as cafes and conference centres (see section 4). The Park Use Regulations Tables in section 7 lists some common event, function and commercial activities permitted in the park.

3.8 Volunteer activities

The NPWS values, encourages and actively promotes opportunities for people to volunteer in the parks. A range of volunteers continue to make significant contributions to wildlife conservation and the management of other park values, and there is potential for these programs to expand through enhanced volunteer recruitment and training. Volunteers associated with the surf clubs in the parks provide a significant service to park visitors.

4. Park infrastructure and services

Management of the parks and the provision of visitor facilities requires a range of park infrastructure including roads, management trails, gates, car parks, walking tracks, toilets, work depots and storage. There are also a number of buildings in the parks that serve different purposes.

NPWS management operations are based in the Royal Area Office and Workshop located off Farnell Avenue in Royal National Park, a smaller workshop at Bonnie Vale and a small number of storage compounds. A number of buildings provide accommodation for staff working in the park (see Table 5). There are a number of building assets in Royal National Park, including houses and cottages, that provide or could potentially provide visitor accommodation or other visitor facilities and services (see Table 5 and section 3).

Purposes that may be considered include all purposes identified in section 151A of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, with preferred purposes being those listed in Table 5. Consideration may be given to continuation of existing leases/licences or the granting of new leases/licences.

Table 5 Building infrastructure assets in Royal National Park, including potential leasing and licensing opportunities for visitor facilities and services

Building	Current purpose	Proposed/potential purpose
Audley Boatshed	Boat and bicycle hire facility	Facility to enable recreational activities
Audley Dance Hall and Commonwealth Pavilion	Restaurant, cafe or kiosk and function centre	Restaurant, cafe or kiosk and function centre; educational activities
Bonnie Vale cabins		To be progressively removed
Burning Palms Rangers Hut	NPWS management use	NPWS management use
Burning Palms Surf Club	Surf life saving club	Surf life saving club
Carlotta Residence	Staff accommodation	Staff accommodation
Coastal cabins of Little Garie, Era and Burning Palms	Recreational use	Recreational use; facility to enable activities for cultural heritage management; hikers huts
Cottages (see Table 4)	Visitor accommodation	Visitor accommodation
Garawarra Farm	Not currently leased	Aboriginal cultural activities; educational activities
Garie Surf Safety Centre (Buildings 1 and 2)	Surf life saving club	Surf life saving facilities; accommodation for park visitors; restaurant, cafe or kiosk; conference and training facility; caretaker accommodation
Gogerleys Cottage	No current use	
RFS Sutherland Fire Control Centre (East Heathcote)	Fire control centre	Fire control centre
Cottage on Simpson's Hotel site	No current use	Potential visitor accommodation; cafe or kiosk; education or cultural centre facility

Building	Current purpose	Proposed/potential purpose
South Era Surf Club	Surf life saving club	Surf life saving club
Telford Recreation Centre	Recreational and educational activities; conference centre	Recreational and educational activities; conference centre
Wattamolla Kiosk	Cafe or kiosk	Cafe or kiosk

Public roads provide access to the edges of the parks, key locations in Royal National Park and access to the suburbs of Bundeena and Maianbar. The parks contain a network of management trails (Figure 2) that are only accessible to vehicles for NPWS authorised purposes, but can be used by visitors for walking and cycling, and some are designated for horse riding. Entry to the management trail network is mostly via public roads or secure access via Crown or water catchment lands. Boundary management trails are critical in managing fire and providing strategic access points to and from neighbouring properties. Vandalism of gates and boundary fences and unauthorised access negatively impact park values and neighbouring assets.

Many of the management trails in the parks are identified as strategic or tactical fire trails. Under the *Rural Fires Act 1997* the relevant Bush Fire Management Committees' fire access and fire trail plans identify access requirements for fire suppression and management purposes, including on lands managed by NPWS. In implementing works to establish and maintain trails at the prescribed fire trail standards, NPWS will ensure these works are carried out in a manner that minimises impacts on the parks' environment, including their natural and cultural heritage values. The construction of any new trails identified in these plans will require an appropriate level of heritage and environmental assessment and will be subject to the requirements of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.

Mains electricity and town water service several areas in Royal National Park including the NPWS office and workshop, and visitor destinations at Audley, Bonnie Vale and Warumbul. Water supply in other areas, including Garie and Wattamolla, is provided by tank water and the potability of these local supplies cannot be guaranteed. On-site power generation provides electricity at Garie Surf Life Saving Centre and the Wattamolla precinct.

Park assets are recorded, managed and maintained through the NPWS asset management system and the Historic Heritage Information Management System (HHIMS). Assets no longer necessary for park management or visitor use, may be decommissioned or removed after relevant environmental assessments and approvals.

The Royal National Park contains significant infrastructure in coastal locations, including the Coast Track and the visitor precincts of Bonnie Vale, Wattamolla and Garie. Park values and assets in these locations are at risk from coastal erosion and sea level rise associated with climate change. An assessment of the coastal hazards and their potential impact on park values, infrastructure and services will be undertaken and appropriate action or adaptations implemented. Precinct plans for the coastal visitor precincts will consider coastal protection works. They will apply risk management principles in the design and location of any new and upgraded facilities and amenities.



Photo 10 Boardwalk installed on the Coast Track, Royal National Park. David Croft/DPE

5. Non-park infrastructure and services

The parks contain infrastructure and other assets owned and operated by other organisations or individuals. This includes public utility infrastructure (e.g. water and sewer pipelines, electricity transmission lines), weather stations, navigational facilities and the Rural Fire Service's Sutherland Fire Control Centre in Royal National Park near Heathcote. Access is required for the use, operation, maintenance and repair of this infrastructure.

A range of non-NPWS uses also occurs in the parks, including an environmental education centre and a tram service. A small number of properties are completely or partially surrounded by the parks or have no other feasible access to their properties other than through NPWS land. The NPWS will facilitate access across NPWS lands in accordance with Part 12 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.

Easements, leases and licences ensure that the operation and maintenance of non-NPWS infrastructure and use of the parks by third parties minimises impacts on the environment and on NPWS operations. NPWS will seek to formalise agreements for all non-NPWS infrastructure and uses in the parks. A public register of leases, easements and rights of way is available.

The public roads traversing the parks require regular maintenance. NPWS will enable temporary storage of necessary road maintenance materials and equipment in suitable areas in the parks. Continued liaison with WaterNSW is required to manage access to the park within the Woronora Special Area

Exploration and mining of minerals and petroleum (including gas), are permissible uses within state conservation areas. A coalmining lease currently exists over part of Garawarra State Conservation Area. NPWS and the relevant mining authority work together to ensure that exploration and production proposals in state conservation areas comply with all statutory requirements, including any necessary environmental impact assessments and approvals.

Any proposal for new non-NPWS infrastructure will only be authorised if it meets the relevant statutory criteria for a lease, licence or easement/right of way under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, and subject to environmental impact assessment under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. NPWS will seek removal of all redundant infrastructure and rehabilitation of disturbed sites and access roads that are no longer required, except where other relevant considerations, such as environmental impact, justify leaving it in situ.

6. Scheme of operations

The scheme of operations in Table 6 is consistent with section 72AA of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. It details the desired outcomes for the parks' values and actions that NPWS proposes to undertake to achieve these outcomes. Actions in the scheme of operations may contribute to more than one desired outcome (such as threat mitigation), but to avoid repetition they are only listed once against the most significant outcome.

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

- 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 weeds and feral animals, 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. A subsidiary plan has been prepared to guide the provision of mountain biking opportunities in the parks. Conservation action plans may be prepared and implemented to manage and monitor assets of intergenerational significance declared under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.

The implementation of actions set out below may be subject to statutory responsibilities under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* and other relevant state and Commonwealth legislation, including environmental impact assessments and approvals. Further community consultation on the proposed actions may be undertaken as part of these processes.

Information on popular recreational or commercial activities permitted in the park is provided in the park use regulations tables (Table 7 and Table 8). More detailed information on other activities is available on the NPWS website (www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au).

Table 6 Scheme of operations

Outcome	Actions	Priority
Protecting the natural environment		
1. There is increased protection of the range of park values	a. Manage the parks in line with visitor management zoning (Figure 3).	Very high
	b. Encourage and support research relevant to the understanding and conservation of park values, and other research that will assist park management.	Medium
2. The geological values and landform features of the park are protected	a. Maintain and upgrade tracks and trails, including realigning, hardening and installing boardwalks where necessary to reduce erosion and minimise impacts on park values.	Very high
	b. No new tracks will be constructed in Zone 1, except realignments for visitor safety and environmental protection, and short connecting tracks (including those identified in Figure 2 and Action 11c).	Very high
3. The health of aquatic ecosystems in the parks is maintained or improved	a. Prepare and implement management strategies for aquatic ecosystems at risk including Cabbage Tree Basin. .	High
	b. Partner with stakeholders including local councils, and environment protection and water management authorities to manage impacts on existing hydrological regimes.	Medium
4. The extent and condition of priority habitats, native plant and animal species and vegetation communities are maintained or improved	a. Manage weeds and feral animals in accordance with relevant pest management strategies.	Very high
	b. Ensure fire management programs protect biodiversity, cultural heritage, habitat connectivity and plant communities with limited ability to recover (e.g. swamps, saltmarsh and rainforest).	Very high
	c. Maintain and protect vegetation extent and continuity and pursue strategic acquisition of lands that will improve connectivity.	Very high
	d. Monitor habitat condition and ecosystem health and identify existing and emerging threats to support adaptive management.	Very High
	e. Undertake biodiversity surveys and compile baseline ecological data to support monitoring and management of environmental values.	High
	f. Work with the relevant agencies and other stakeholders to improve connectivity in and between the parks for the safe movement of animals (e.g. road underpasses and fencing, fishways).	High

Outcome	Actions	Priority
	g. Promote and encourage volunteer programs in the parks, aligning activities to the restoration of priority habitats and other park management priorities.	High
	h. Develop and implement a strategic compliance program, with other law enforcement agencies where required, targeting key threats to park values including vandalism, arson, encroachment and habitat disturbance.	High
	i. Monitor the impact of visitor access and use on natural and cultural values and implement closures or controls as required to protect values. This may include temporary or permanent closure of tracks and camp sites, erosion control, fencing and signage.	High
5. Populations of threatened and significant species and the condition of threatened ecological communities is stable or improving	a. Implement relevant actions in the <i>Biodiversity Conservation Program</i> and any conservation action plans, including actions at key management sites, for threatened species, populations and ecological communities in the parks.	Very high
	b. Protect priority animal habitats, including heathlands, freshwater rivers and wetlands, rainforests, coastal shoreline habitats and wet sclerophyll forests, and implement restoration programs where necessary.	High
	c. Consider the potential for reintroduction of species known to have been lost from the parks and implement reintroduction if appropriate.	High
	d. Encourage and support research into protection and management of threatened and other significant plant and animal species.	Medium
Looking after our culture and heritage		
6. The identity of the parks as an Aboriginal cultural landscape is enhanced	a. Work with the Aboriginal community to develop and implement a strategy to communicate Aboriginal culture and heritage to park visitors.	High
	b. Support Aboriginal communities in developing cultural tourism and education initiatives in the parks.	High
7. The local Aboriginal community has access to Country to maintain, renew or develop cultural connections and practices	a. Support the local Aboriginal community to access Country to maintain, renew or develop cultural connections and practices. This may include culture camps on Country and non-commercial cultural use of resources such as medicinal plants, bush tucker and fish.	Very high

Outcome	Actions	Priority
8. There is increased involvement of Aboriginal people in caring for Country and in management of the parks	a. Establish an ongoing and regular process for meeting with Aboriginal land councils, custodial families and other relevant Aboriginal community organisations to discuss park management priorities and directions and opportunities for caring for Country.	High
9. The condition of Aboriginal heritage sites, places and cultural values is maintained	a. Work with Aboriginal communities to ensure that Aboriginal sites are appropriately recorded, managed and maintained.	Very high
	b. Prepare and implement a management plan for the declared Aboriginal Places in the parks, in consultation with the Aboriginal community and in accordance with the <i>Aboriginal Places Policy</i> .	High
	c. Undertake further research into Aboriginal heritage values of the parks to inform management. Target site condition assessments and knowledge gaps, particularly values in inland areas in Heathcote National Park and Garawarra State Conservation Area.	Medium
10. Historic and shared heritage sites, places and cultural values are understood, maintained and protected	a. Prepare and implement a new conservation management plan for the State Heritage Register listed coastal cabin communities.	Very High
	b. Undertake an assessment of the environmental impacts of the ongoing management and use of the State Heritage Register listed coastal cabin communities.	Very High
	c. Undertake targeted significance assessment and condition reporting for historic places, moveable heritage and cultural landscapes to address knowledge gaps.	Medium
	d. Prepare and implement conservation management plans or heritage impact statements for significant historic places, precincts and landscapes, as required.	Medium
	e. Investigate and implement adaptive reuse of heritage buildings listed in Table 5 to support ongoing conservation through sustainable visitor use.	Medium
	f. Record and manage moveable heritage in accordance with relevant policies and conservation management plans and incorporate in the interpretation of the parks where possible.	Medium

Outcome	Actions	Priority
Providing for visitor use and enjoyment		
11. The parks provide a range of appropriate, ecologically sustainable visitor opportunities	a. Provide a range of visitor opportunities consistent with the park use regulations in Table 7 and the visitor management zones in Figure 3 and Table 2.	High
	b. Enable an appropriate range of events, functions and commercial activities (see Table 8) subject to bookings, approvals and conditions.	High
	c. Provide a network of tracks, subject to environmental impact assessment, for walking, mountain biking and horse riding, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. new walking track connections that support overnight walks and link to public transport (see Figure 2) ii. realignment of a section of the Coast Track to Garie Headland iii. mountain biking tracks as guided by the Mountain Biking Plan for the parks iv. short connecting track that links to existing horse riding network in Garawarra SCA v. The closure and rehabilitation of unauthorised and/or inappropriate tracks. 	High
	d. Work with mountain bike user groups to implement and maintain the mountain biking track network.	High
12. Improved visitor facilities are provided to support visitor enjoyment of the parks	a. Provide and maintain camping areas as detailed in Table 3 and Figure 2, subject to environmental assessment of existing and proposed sites. Progressively install toilets and tent platforms where necessary to minimise environmental impacts. Close identified camping areas when alternatives are implemented.	Very high
	b. Implement visitor facility improvements at key visitor precincts (i.e. Zone 3 locations shown in Figure 3) guided by master plans and subject to environmental impact assessment.	High
	c. Investigate and implement a small number of small-scale walkers huts or cabins within existing visitor precincts at Bonnie Vale, Wattamolla and Garie to provide visitor accommodation to support walkers on the Great Southern Walk.	High
	d. Provide (and upgrade as necessary) basic visitor facilities, such as toilets, parking and picnic tables, at Zone 2	High

Outcome	Actions	Priority
	visitor nodes (Figure 3) and at appropriate locations along existing tracks and trails to reduce environmental impacts.	
	e. Consider improved accessibility and visitor inclusion in the planning and development of visitor facilities and experiences.	High
13. Visitors enjoy a high quality, safe and meaningful visitor experience in the parks	a. Identify and mitigate risks to visitor safety, including undertaking geological stability surveys of high risk areas.	Very high
	b. Implement strategies for visitor capacity management in visitor precincts and high use tracks.	Very high
	c. Liaise with Surf Life Saving Sydney, and the relevant surf clubs, to assess and manage risks and to provide and maintain surf safety infrastructure on the parks ocean beaches.	High
	d. In consultation with the relevant waterway management agency, investigate and implement measures to reduce the impacts resulting from use of personal watercraft and other vessels in South West Arm Creek and Cabbage Tree Basin.	Medium
	e. To support recreational opportunities, visitor safety and protect environmental values, work with the relevant waterway management agency to manage boat moorings in South West Arm Creek.	Medium
14. There is increased awareness and understanding among visitors about the parks' values	a. Interpret the parks' values and promote minimal impact visitor use through a range of measures, including signage and use of innovative and emerging technology.	High
	b. Enable access to the parks by commercial tour operators, subject to NPWS licensing, capacity limits and NPWS policy requirements including Aboriginal engagement requirements.	High
	c. Provide a program of school and community educational opportunities in the parks and support the Royal National Park Environmental Education Centre to provide educational services to schools.	High
Park infrastructure and services		
15. Management facilities adequately service management needs and have minimal environmental impacts on park values	a. Implement a prioritised reserve access strategy and investigate and secure legal access to the parks as required.	High
	b. Subject to assessment and necessary approvals, decommission, close to public use or remove park management	Medium

Outcome	Actions	Priority
	infrastructure and facilities that are unsustainable and/or not in active use.	
16. Protect cultural and natural assets and infrastructure from the impacts of coastal hazards and sea level rise	a. Undertake an assessment to identify and determine appropriate management actions for those values and locations at risk of coastal hazards and sea level rise associated with climate change.	High
	b. Participate in the development of any relevant local coastal management plan and ensure that actions required on NPWS lands are included in the plan.	High
17. The impact of fire on life, property and the environment and the potential for spread of bushfires on, from or into the parks are minimised	a. Implement the park fire management strategy.	Very high
	b. Revise and adjust the fire management strategy as required to take account of new information and emerging threats over time.	Very high
	c. Participate in strategic fire planning through the relevant bush fire management committee and emergency management committee and maintain cooperative arrangements with local Rural Fire Service brigades, other fire authorities and surrounding landowners and land users.	Very high
	d. Establish and maintain the fire trail network consistent with approved Fire Access and Fire Trail plans (FAFT) and prescribed standards under the <i>Rural Fires Act 1997</i> . Where required establish new trails after heritage and environmental impact assessment and consistent with the approved FAFT.	High
Non-park infrastructure and services		
18. Non-NPWS uses and activities have minimal impact on park values and are appropriately authorised where required	a. Seek removal and site rehabilitation by the relevant owner and operator of obsolete or disused infrastructure or encroachments, except where environmental or other considerations justify leaving them in situ.	Medium
	b. Ensure all non-NPWS uses and occupancies of NPWS land are authorised in accordance with Part 12 of the <i>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974</i> .	Medium

7. Park use regulations

7.1 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 7 may also be regulated by signage within the park or by consent.

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

Table 7 Park use regulations: recreational activities

	Type of activity	Allowed	Notes/exceptions
	Abseiling and rock climbing	No	Not permitted due to the lack of suitable safe locations and risks to conservation values.
	Barbecues – portable (gas, liquid, solid fuel)	Yes	No wood fires or wood barbecues. Other restrictions or controls may be prescribed. No barbecues during total or park fire bans.
	Camping	Yes	Camping is only permitted at designated camping areas in Royal National Park and Heathcote National Park (Table 3). All camping requires booking.
	Cycling	Yes	On public and park roads and management trails throughout the parks; and on designated and signposted tracks. No cycling on walking tracks or off trail. Organised group (e.g. club) events of 40 or more persons require consent (see Table 8).
	Dog walking	No	Pets (except trained assistance animals) are not permitted in national parks and state conservation areas in New South Wales. Assistance animals are allowed in the parks provided they are kept under effective control at all times with a leash or harness and you have reasonable proof that it is an assistance animal. Refer to the <i>Pets in Parks Policy</i> for more information.

	Type of activity	Allowed	Notes/exceptions
	Four-wheel driving	Yes	Vehicle access is permitted on public roads. Vehicle access is not permitted on management trails or off-road.
	Fossicking	No	Not permitted due to potential environmental impacts.
	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 and paragliding	No	Launching not permitted due to lack of suitable safe locations and potential risks to other park users.
	Horse riding	Yes	On designated tracks and management trails in Garawarra State Conservation Area as shown in Figure 2. Organised group (e.g. club) events of 40 or more persons require consent (see Table 8).
 	Model aeroplanes and drones	Yes	Drones may be used for park management, operational or emergency services purposes. Approval is required to launch, land or operate a drone from within a park for recreational purposes. Recreational use of drones is not permitted in designated drone exclusion areas (see NPWS website). The use of drones is subject to relevant civil aviation regulations.
	Motorbikes	Yes	Registered motor bikes are permitted on public roads. Motorbikes are not permitted on management trails or off-road.
	Walking	Yes	A range of day and overnight walk options exist in the parks. Organised group (e.g. club) events of 40 or more persons require consent (see Table 8).
 	Water-based recreation (e.g. boating, fishing, swimming, surfing, diving and snorkelling)	Yes	Access through the park to beaches and waterbodies is permitted. This plan does not regulate or control activities below the mean high water mark, except in Cabbage Tree Basin and South West Arm Creek where NPWS is responsible for management of the riverbed. Powered watercraft are not permitted south of the bridge in Cabbage Tree Basin, or upstream of the Audley weir.

Type of activity	Allowed	Notes/exceptions
 Wood fires	No	<p>Fishing upstream of the Audley weir will be regulated in accordance with a plan to be developed in consultation with DPI Fisheries</p> <p>Other legislative requirements may apply to water-based activities, such as NSW fishing licensing, fish catch limits and use of certain types of recreational or safety equipment.</p> <p>Not permitted due to the risk of bushfires and potential for unauthorised removal of trees and timber from the parks.</p> <p>Wood fires may be authorised by consent for cultural activities and events (except during total and park fire bans).</p>

7.2 Commercial and non-commercial activities requiring prior approval

Commercial and non-commercial activities in national parks and reserves requiring prior approval are varied, ranging from guided tours and commercial events to filming and photography and mobile food vendors.

The following table lists some common event, function and commercial activities permitted in the parks with approval from NPWS under a consent, 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 (www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/venues/special-events).

Approval to use supporting equipment, such as marquees or amplified sound, 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.

NPWS is committed to ensuring that on park Aboriginal experiences are developed and delivered in a culturally sensitive way; that is, experiences respect the authenticity and integrity of local Aboriginal people and their culture, adhere to cultural protocols, and recognise that Aboriginal culture is the intellectual property of Aboriginal people. Licensing of commercial tour operators, and recreational and educational operators includes conditions on the delivery of Aboriginal cultural heritage interpretation and requirements for Aboriginal cultural awareness training.

Table 8 Park use regulations – activities requiring prior approval

Type of activity	Group size	Type of approval required
Commercial tours, recreational and educational activities, mobile food vendors, transport services and any other commercial services	All groups irrespective of size	Licence
Commercial and charity events (e.g. fun runs, cycling events, commemorative ceremonies that are open to public participation)	All groups irrespective of size	Consent or licence
All other events and gatherings involving groups of more than 40 people	All groups of 40 or more	Consent
Filming and photography	All groups irrespective of size	Consent or licence
Research (scientific and educational, and related to conservation or park management)	All groups irrespective of size	Consent or licence

8. More information

- [Aboriginal Places Policy](#)
- [Audley master plan](#)
- [Biodiversity Conservation Program](#)
- [Environment, Energy and Science website](#)
- [Mountain Biking Plan](#)
- [National Parks and Wildlife Service website](#)
- [Pets in Parks Policy](#)
- [Privacy and security](#)
- [Register of leases, easements and rights of way](#)
- [Royal National Park, Heathcote National Parks and Garawarra State Conservation Area Planning Considerations](#)
- [Wattamolla master plan](#)