



NSW NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE

# Dharawal National Park, Dharawal Nature Reserve and Dharawal State Conservation Area

Plan of Management



© 2022 State of NSW and Department of Planning and Environment

With the exception of photographs, the State of NSW and Department of Planning and Environment are pleased to allow this material to be reproduced in whole or in part for educational and non-commercial use, provided the meaning is unchanged and its source, publisher and authorship are acknowledged. Specific permission is required for the reproduction of photographs.

The Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) has compiled this report in good faith, exercising all due care and attention. No representation is made about the accuracy, completeness or suitability of the information in this publication for any particular purpose. The department shall not be liable for any damage which may occur to any person or organisation taking action or not on the basis of this publication. Readers should seek appropriate advice when applying the information to their specific needs.

All content in this publication is owned by the department and is protected by Crown Copyright, unless credited otherwise. It is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International \(CC BY 4.0\)](#), subject to the exemptions contained in the licence. The legal code for the licence is available at [Creative Commons](#).

The department asserts the right to be attributed as author of the original material in the following manner: © State of New South Wales and Department of Planning and Environment 2022.

Cover photo: Dharawal State Conservation Area. Lucas Boyd/DPE

**This plan of management was adopted by the Minister for Environment and Heritage on 28 July 2022.**

Published by:

Environment and Heritage Group  
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment  
Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124  
Phone: +61 2 9995 5000 (switchboard)  
Phone: 1300 361 967 (Environment and Heritage enquiries)  
TTY users: phone 133 677, then ask for 1300 361 967  
Speak and listen users: phone 1300 555 727, then ask for 1300 361 967  
Email: [info@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@environment.nsw.gov.au)  
Website: [www.environment.nsw.gov.au](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au)

Report pollution and environmental incidents  
Environment Line: 131 555 (NSW only) or [info@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@environment.nsw.gov.au)  
See also [www.environment.nsw.gov.au](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au)

ISBN 978-1-922899-74-3  
EHG 2022/0491  
September 2022

Find out more about your environment at:

**[www.environment.nsw.gov.au](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au)**

# Contents

How to use this plan	v
Acknowledgements	v
Contact us	v
Acknowledgement of Country	vi
Our vision for the parks	vii
Dharawal National Park, Dharawal Nature Reserve and Dharawal State Conservation Area	1
Why these parks are important	1
Management principles	3
1. Caring for Country	4
2. Protecting the natural environment	5
3. Protecting our shared heritage	6
4. Providing for visitor use and enjoyment	6
5. Park infrastructure and services	7
6. Non-park infrastructure and services	8
7. Scheme of operations	9
8. Park use regulations	14
8.1 Recreational activities	14
8.2 Commercial and non-commercial activities requiring approval	16
More information	17

## List of tables

Table 1	The parks and their regional setting	2
Table 2	Scheme of operations	10
Table 3	Park use regulations – Recreational activities	14
Table 4	Park use regulations – Activities requiring prior approval	17

## List of figures

Figure 1	Location of the parks	viii
Figure 2	Dharawal National Park, Dharawal Nature Reserve and Dharawal State Conservation Area	ix
Figure 3	Wedderburn Day Use Area	x
Figure 4	Darkes Forest Day Use Area	xi

# How to use this plan

This plan of management directs the management of Dharawal National Park, Dharawal Nature Reserve and Dharawal State Conservation Area. 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 Dharawal National Park, Dharawal Nature Reserve and Dharawal State Conservation Area.

Sections 1 to 6 of the plan summarise the parks' key values, management principles and management considerations. These matters are outlined thoroughly in the Dharawal National Park, Dharawal Nature Reserve and Dharawal State Conservation Area Planning Considerations report.

It is recommended that readers of the plan of management refer to the planning considerations report 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 that National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) proposes 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.

## Acknowledgements

Dharawal National Park, Dharawal Nature Reserve and Dharawal State Conservation Area are in the traditional Country of the Dharawal People.

This plan of management was prepared by staff of NPWS.

## Contact us

For more information about this plan of management or the Dharawal National Park, Dharawal Nature Reserve and Dharawal State Conservation Area, contact the NPWS Illawarra Area Office at 84 Crown Street (PO Box 5436), Wollongong NSW 2500 or by telephone on (02) 4223 3000.

# Acknowledgement of Country

The parks covered in this plan are part of an ancient landscape that includes the Aboriginal people. The areas now known as Dharawal National Park, Dharawal Nature Reserve and Dharawal State Conservation Area (and their surrounding lands and watercourses) have traditionally been under the care of the Dharawal language group peoples, and other families, groups and people. Aboriginal people have a deep spiritual and cultural connection to this Country. Their ancestors have lived here for thousands of years, and in doing so, form part of this living landscape.

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.



**Photo 1** Artwork by attendees of a Dharawal cultural understanding workshop, and Lorraine Brown, Narelle Thomas and Allison Day of Coomaditchie United Aboriginal Corporation

## Our vision for the parks

The special significance of this place to the Dharawal People is acknowledged. Aboriginal cultural knowledge and enduring connections to Country are respected, and Aboriginal people are supported and encouraged in caring for Country.

The parks continue to maintain their unique Dharawal cultural heritage, geomorphic landscapes and ecological diversity and processes as part of a larger protected area. Special protection is given to the cultural values and unique landscapes, including waterfalls, deep waterholes, extensive upland swamps, steep-sided sandstone gorges, sheltered pockets of endangered shale forest and rock shelters. Opportunities for visitors to appreciate these special features continue to be provided, but development of visitor facilities is constrained and directed to the fringes of the parks.



Photo 2 Dharawal National Park. Lucas Boyd/DPE

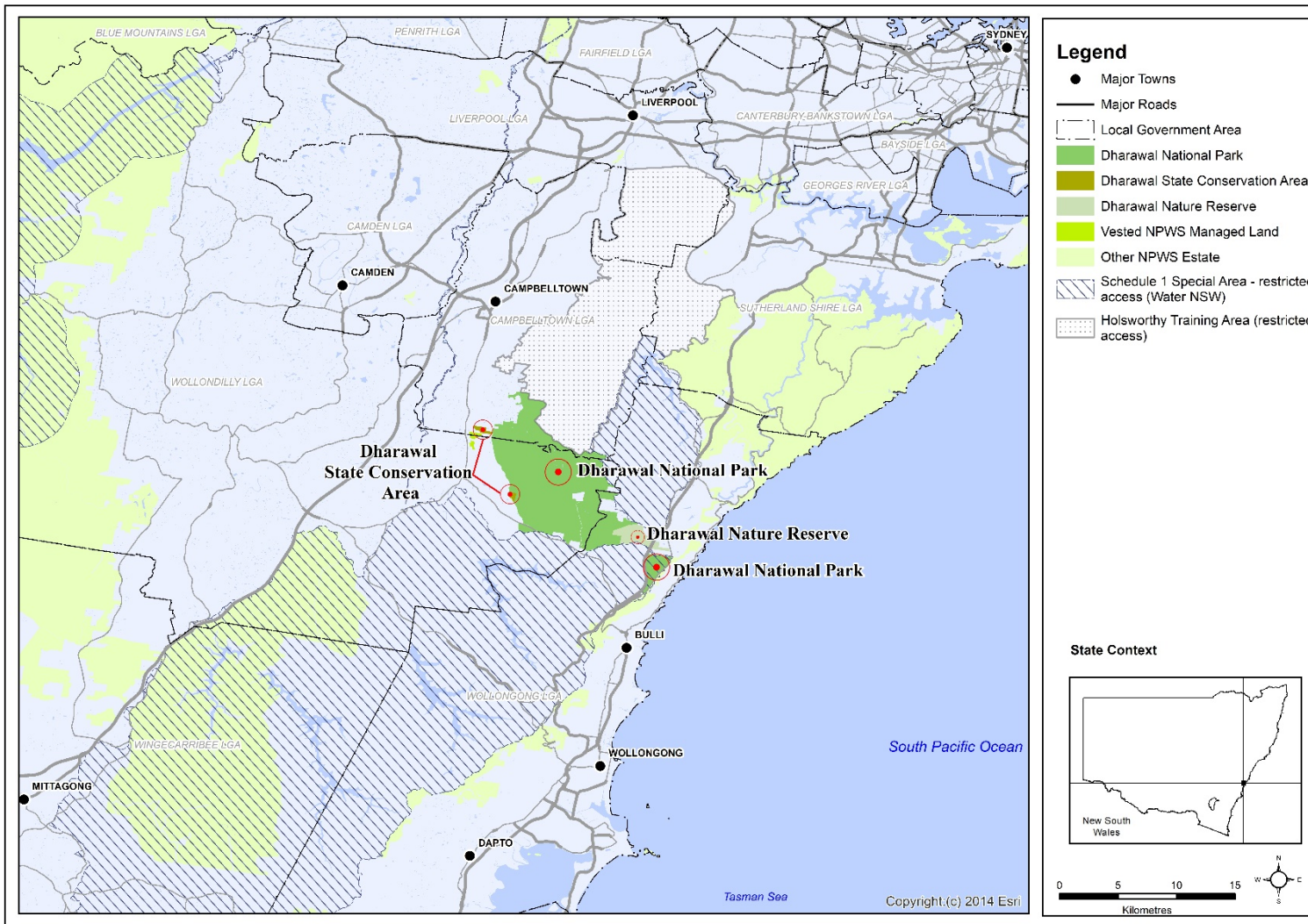
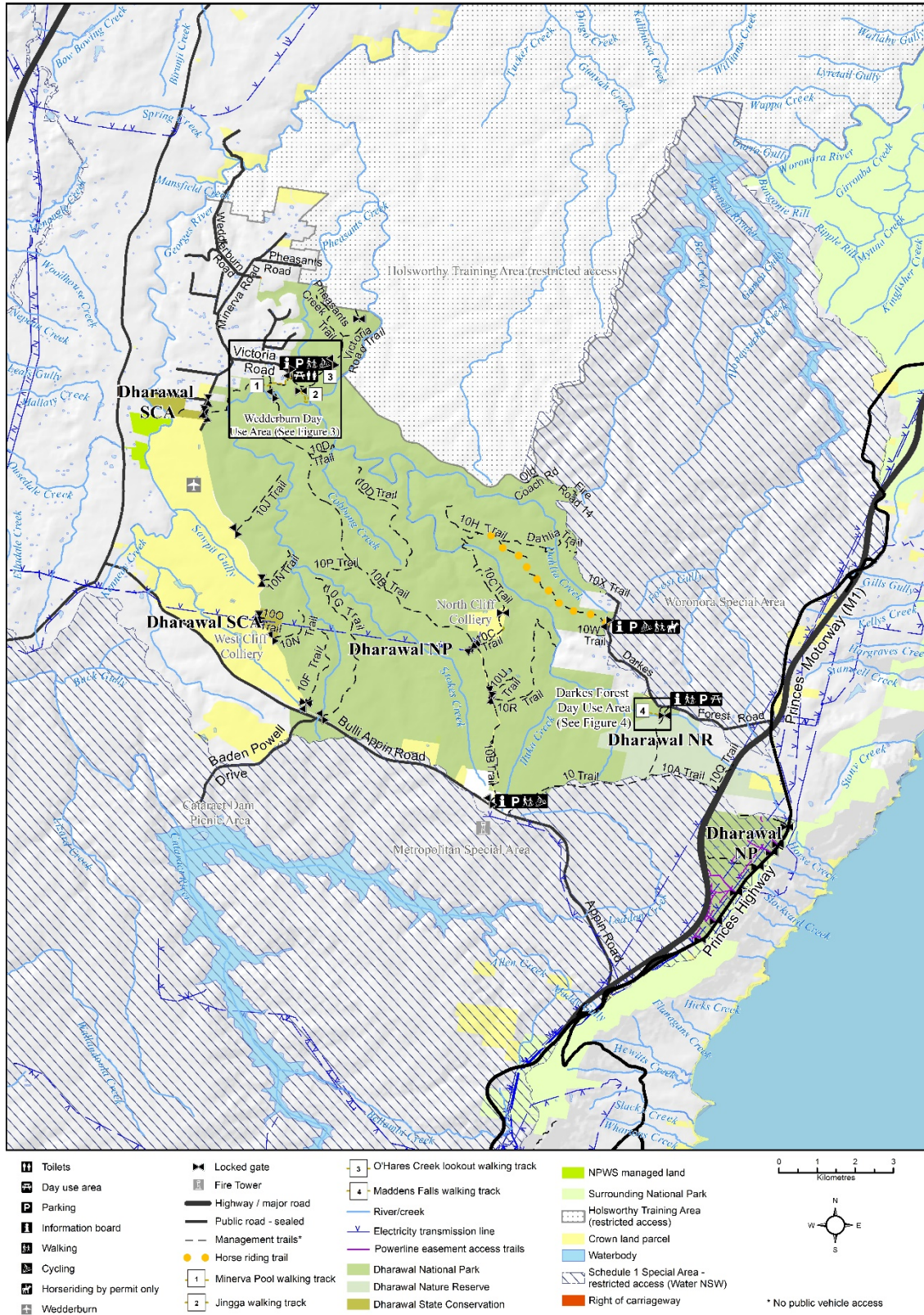


Figure 1 Location of the parks





**Figure 2 Dharawal National Park, Dharawal Nature Reserve and Dharawal State Conservation Area**

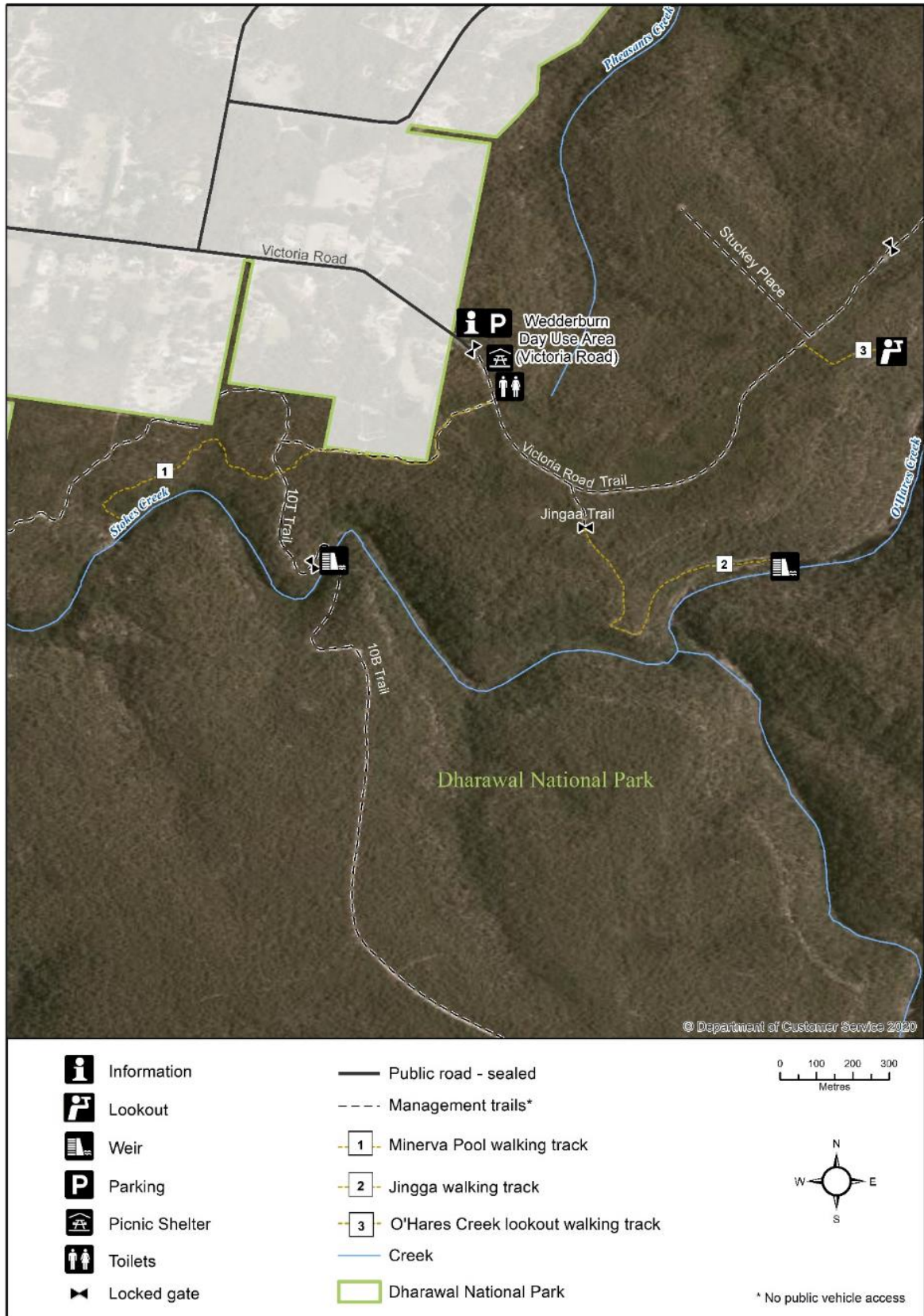


Figure 3 Wedderburn Day Use Area

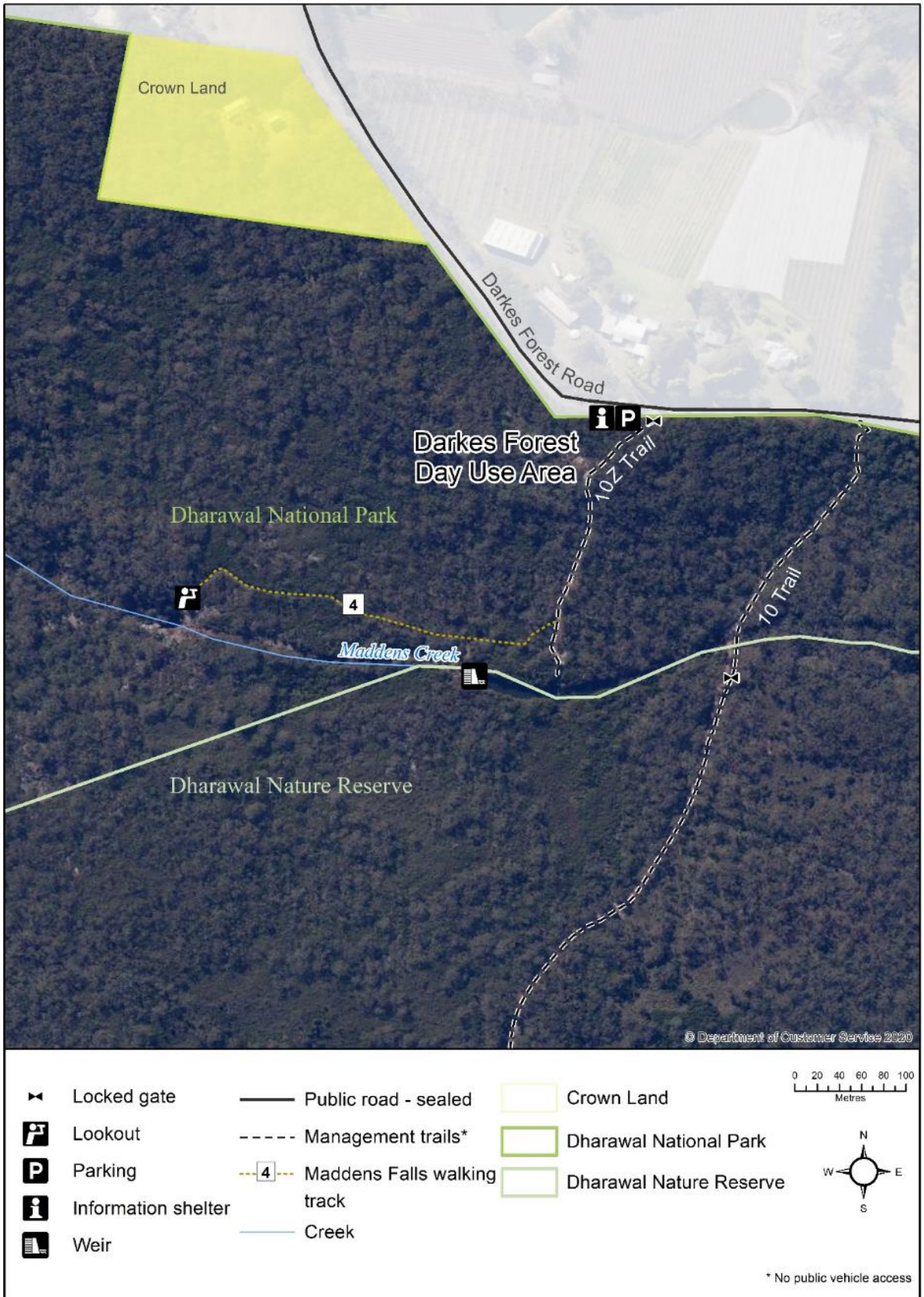


Figure 4 Darkes Forest Day Use Area

# **Dharawal National Park, Dharawal Nature Reserve and Dharawal State Conservation Area**

The Dharawal parks are located approximately 45 kilometres south-west of Sydney between the Georges River and Illawarra Escarpment (Figure 1). The parks lie on the Woronora Plateau, which forms part of the southern rim of the Sydney Basin. Situated in the upper reaches of O'Hares and Stokes creeks, the parks encompass almost the entire catchment of these creeks (Figure 2).

## **Why these parks are important**

### **Important Aboriginal cultural landscapes**

The parks are in the traditional Country of the Dharawal People. Aboriginal people have cultural associations and connections to Country that stretch back thousands of years, including caring for the land, the use of foods and medicines, passing on cultural knowledge, kinship systems and strengthening social bonds. The naming of the parks reflects the significant Aboriginal history and the connection that Aboriginal people have with this place.

### **Drinking water catchment**

There are over 200 kilometres of watercourses in the parks, including O'Hares and Stokes creeks and their main tributaries, and water quality is very high. Part of the national park is a declared Special Area under the *Water NSW Act*. These areas are critical for the protection of water quality and quantity and play an important role in the conservation of many threatened plant and animal species as well as other significant natural and cultural values.

### **Protected values and undisturbed condition**

The area is relatively undisturbed, in part due to its history as a protected water catchment area since 1927, which has restricted public access. As a result, the biodiversity, ecosystems, Aboriginal heritage and aesthetic values have been exceptionally well conserved and water quality is very high.

### **Diverse and significant plants and animals**

The diverse topography, soil fertility and moisture status across the parks have resulted in a range of forest, woodland, heath and wetland communities. The parks support a large number of native animal and plant species, including more than 30 threatened animal species and 10 threatened plant species. The parks and the neighbouring Illawarra Escarpment State Conservation Area contain an area critical for the conservation of the endangered shrub, the Sublime Point pomaderris. This area has been declared as an asset of intergenerational significance under the National Parks and Wildlife Act. The parks are also significant for the diversity and richness of frog and reptile populations, including three nationally threatened species: giant burrowing frog, Littlejohn's tree frog and broad-headed snake.

The parks contain numerous and excellent examples of upland swamp communities, including over 900 hectares in the south-east part of the parks. The swamps are recognised as an endangered ecological community and provide habitat for at least 10 threatened animal species and a further 6 regionally significant species.

### Connected wildlife corridor

The parks are an important part of a large protected area system that extends from Royal National Park in the north, to Budderoo and Morton national parks in the south, and Nattai and Blue Mountains parks in the west. Together with adjacent Crown land and other protected lands, these lands form one of the largest contiguous protected area systems in the State, providing for the movement of wildlife over an exceptionally large area.

### Opportunities for appreciating nature in an increasingly urbanised area

The parks provide opportunities for low-impact, self-reliant activities such as bushwalking, swimming, cycling and birdwatching. Visitors are attracted by the semi-remote character and spectacular scenery, gorges, waterholes and waterfalls in the parks.

**Table 1 The parks and their regional setting**

Features	Description
Area	The parks include Dharawal National Park (6829 hectares), Dharawal Nature Reserve (347 hectares) and Dharawal State Conservation Area (72 hectares), covering a total area of 7248 hectares.
Reservation date	1996 – reservation of Dharawal Nature Reserve and Dharawal State Recreation Area 2001 – as a result of amendments to the <i>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974</i> all state recreation areas become state conservation areas 2012 – most of the former state conservation area was reserved as Dharawal National Park.
Previous tenure	Prior to reservation in 1996, the majority of the parks were part of the former O'Hares Creek Special Area, a Schedule 2 special area declared in 1927 and proposed for public water supply. The special area was in place until 2008.
Biogeographic region	The parks are in the Cataract subregion of the Sydney Basin Bioregion.
Other authorities	Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council Illawarra Local Aboriginal Land Council Greater Sydney Local Land Services South East Local Land Services Campbelltown City Council Wollondilly Shire Council Wollongong City Council WaterNSW

## 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 **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.

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

The section of the national park that is part of the **Sydney Drinking Water Catchment** and **Metropolitan Special Area** is subject to the *Water NSW Act 2014*, *Water NSW Regulation 2020* and *State Environmental Planning Policy (Sydney Drinking Water Catchment) 2011*. Within this area any activity or access requires WaterNSW consent, and any activity in this area must consider a Neutral or Beneficial Effect (NorBE) assessment under the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Sydney Drinking Water Catchment) 2011*.

# 1. Caring for Country

Aboriginal people of the Dharawal language group have continued to have a close relationship with the area of the parks for thousands of years. Aboriginal people have continuing **cultural associations and connections to Country**, including the use and enjoyment of foods and medicines, caring for the land, passing on cultural knowledge and kinship systems and strengthening social bonds. The naming of the parks reflects the significant Aboriginal history and the connection that Aboriginal people have with this place.

The long occupation of this area is evidenced by the **large number and range of Aboriginal sites**, including exceptionally well-preserved drawings, stencils and paintings, with some styles and techniques being unique to the area. The significance of the sites is enhanced by their location in an undisturbed setting, with many areas displaying little change since European arrival. **Minerva Pool has special significance** as an Aboriginal women's place and is an important part of Aboriginal culture.

Parts of the parks were **protected as water supply catchments** with restricted access for over 80 years and are relatively undisturbed. This has resulted in rich and well-preserved examples of cultural heritage. However, **Aboriginal sites in the parks are threatened by** physical weathering (art sites), fire, goats, deer and the impacts of park visitors. Sites will be monitored and threats to significant sites will be managed to ensure their ongoing protection.

There are **opportunities** for the Aboriginal community to connect to Country and have increased involvement in park management. There is also potential to enhance the identity of the parks as an Aboriginal cultural landscape, including activating cultural tourism and incorporating Aboriginal language in the naming of places, signage and interpretation.



Photo 3 *The Women's Pool*. Artwork by Loraine Brown and Narelle Thomas of Coomaditchie United Aboriginal Corporation

## 2. Protecting the natural environment

The parks have **diverse and unusual vegetation communities** reflecting the influence of sandstone geology, moderate rainfall and mostly low-nutrient soils. They have very high biodiversity, conserving 15 native vegetation communities and over 500 native plant and 240 native animal species. The parks lie on a transition from coastal to tableland communities and are a significant component of the wildlife corridor between the Illawarra Escarpment and Blue Mountains.

Three **endangered ecological communities** occur in the parks, including Coastal Upland Swamp and O'Hares Creek Shale Forest. The parks protect an **endangered population** of black cypress pine and 10 threatened plant species, including the Sublime Point pomaderris.

The more than 900 hectares of **upland swamps** have exceptional biodiversity, with some of the highest species-richness in the world. The swamps are of considerable scientific importance, containing swamp sediment that dates back at least 17,000 years and provides an excellent record of climatic, geomorphic and biological events over that time.

Over 30 **threatened animal species** have been recorded in the parks, including the koala. The parks are particularly significant for the diversity and richness of frog and reptile populations, including three nationally threatened species: giant burrowing frog, Littlejohn's tree frog and broad-headed snake.

The history of the parks as a protected water catchment since 1927 means the biodiversity and ecosystems have been **exceptionally well conserved**. However, there are **several threats** to vegetation communities including high frequency fires, weeds, phytophthora (a soil-borne pathogen) and feral animals (including goats and rusa deer). Climate change could significantly impact the upland swamps and other vegetation communities through reduced rainfall, higher evaporation, and increased fire frequency. The upland swamps are also particularly vulnerable to disturbance from activities within and adjacent to the parks. Foxes are a threat to the endangered broad-headed snake, and threatened frog and mammal species. Feral cats threaten ground-dwelling birds, mammals, reptiles and frogs.

Fire management to protect biodiversity, threatened species and their habitats, and managing tracks and trails to minimise impacts are among the **highest management priorities** for protecting the natural environment in the parks. Restoration and revegetation will occur at priority sites.



Photo 4 Gynea lilies in Dharawal National Park. Lucas Boyd/DPE



### 3. Protecting our shared heritage

Coalmining began in the district in 1849 at Mount Keira on the Illawarra Escarpment, and by the 1870s it was a major industry, progressively extending further westwards. Mining has occurred beneath parts of the parks, and the former North Cliff Colliery remains an inholding in the centre of the national park. Physical evidence of coalmining, and sand and shale extraction, remains in the parks in the form of vehicle trails, cleared or excavated areas, seismic survey lines and utility infrastructure. The O'Hares Creek catchment was declared a special area in 1927 with the intention of damming the creek to supplement water supplies. Infrastructure such as weirs and gauging stations, related to past water supply investigations, exist on O'Hares and Stokes creeks. The Australian Army used part of the O'Hares Creek catchment from the 1930s until the early 1990s for training, as a supplement to the adjacent Holsworthy Field Firing Range. The remains of past mining, catchment and military uses in the parks are considered to be of interest at the local level as a record of past activities in the parks. The shared heritage values of the parks should be assessed and protected accordingly.

The parks have a strong link to conservation history. Protests by local conservation groups during the 1980s, to protect O'Hares Creek gorge from development, eventually resulted in the area being acquired for reservation. Strong community support for protection of the area continued and led to creation of the national park in 2012.

### 4. Providing for visitor use and enjoyment

The character of the parks today is largely **wild and undisturbed** due to a history of limited development in the catchment and protection of the landscapes. In 1927 the O'Hares Creek catchment was declared a Schedule 2 special area and proposed to be used for public water supply. This declaration restricted public access to the area until 1996 when the Dharawal State Conservation Area and Dharawal Nature Reserve were gazetted, and it continued to limit recreational use of the parks until 2008, when the special area was dissolved.

The parks provide opportunities for self-reliant recreation based on the natural landscape, particularly opportunities for **bushwalking and cycling**. Fascinating landscape features that contribute to the recreational attraction include dramatic sandstone gorges, waterholes, extensive upland swamps, sheltered shale forests and wildflower displays. The parks provide great opportunities for **education, research and nature photography**; and are particularly valuable in providing **a sense of remoteness** while still being close to the major population centres of Southern Sydney and the Illawarra.

Management priorities include providing a network of tracks and trails that support sustainable visitor access for walking, mountain biking and horse riding. To ensure the sense of remoteness is retained and values are protected, **visitor facilities will continue to be low-key and located on the edges of the parks**, and visitor activities will be managed to minimise impacts on the environment. Working with the Aboriginal community to develop and deliver programs to share information about Aboriginal culture and heritage in the parks is a high priority.

The park use regulations tables in Section 7 set out the recreational and commercial activities that are permitted in the parks and any requirements to undertake these activities.

## 5. Park infrastructure and services

Park infrastructure includes a network of management trails and walking tracks, boundary fencing and visitor facilities, including lookouts, signage and toilets.

The management trails in the park (many of which are identified by a number rather than a name) are an important fire management asset, and most of the management trails are identified as strategic or tactical fire trails. The fire trails are detailed in fire access and fire trail (FAFT) plans prepared by the relevant Rural Fire Service bush fire management committee under the *Rural Fires Act 1997*. These fire trails must be established and maintained consistent with prescribed fire trail standards to enable access for fire suppression and management. Appropriate trail construction and maintenance standards are implemented to minimise impacts on the environmental and cultural heritage values of the parks.

Gates have been installed in several locations to assist with managing security and access to the parks and to minimise vandalism and rubbish dumping. Unauthorised access to the parks and damage to fences and gates are ongoing challenges.

All park assets are regularly reviewed to determine whether they are still required for future use. Assets that are no longer necessary for park management or visitor use may be decommissioned or removed after relevant environmental assessments and approvals. Management trails that are not required for vehicle access or fire management purposes may be reduced to walking track width and designated for walking, or closed and rehabilitated.

An access strategy is being prepared for the parks to establish the legal status of all existing accesses (e.g. roads and trails) and identify options for securing access for public and park management purposes where necessary.



**Photo 5** O'Hares Creek Lookout, Jingga Walking Track, Dharawal National Park. Rowena Morris/DPE

## 6. Non-park infrastructure and services

The parks contain infrastructure and other assets owned and operated by other organisations that are not essential for park management. This includes electricity transmission lines, underground telecommunication cables, rain and river gauges, weirs and water pumps. A telecommunications tower located outside the national park is accessed via a park management trail. Access is required by third parties for the use, operation, maintenance and repair of this infrastructure.

Agreements, 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.

Water extraction licences and associated infrastructure, including weirs, exist on Maddens Creek in the parks. Impacts on the creek environment may occur if the rate of water extraction exceeds natural inflows, while other potential impacts include noise for park visitors, oil spills and altered movement of aquatic species. The role, impact and heritage value of disused weirs should be investigated with a view to potential removal if appropriate.

Exploration for minerals and petroleum (including gas), as well as mining and petroleum production, are permissible uses in state conservation areas. An exploration licence exists over the northern section of the state conservation area, and a coalmining lease exists over the southern section of the state conservation area. The former North Cliff Colliery (no longer in operation) is located on a Crown reserve inholding in the national park. See Figure 2.

NPWS works closely with the state government authorities responsible for mining and petroleum activities within and adjacent to the parks. Mining, mineral exploration and mine site rehabilitation are required to comply with all statutory requirements, including any necessary monitoring, performance measures and environmental impact assessments and approvals. This ensures that risks to park values are minimised and properly managed.



Photo 6 Weir on Stokes Creek. John Yurasek/DPE

## 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 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 actions are only listed once against the most significant outcome.

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's 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 feral animals, 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 parks.

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 on the proposed actions may be undertaken as part of these processes.

Information on popular recreational or commercial activities that are permitted in the parks is provided in the park use regulations tables in Section 7. More detailed information on other activities is available on the NPWS website.

**Table 2 Scheme of operations**

Outcome	Actions	Priority
<b>Looking after culture and heritage</b>		
1. There are increased opportunities for Aboriginal people to build connections to Country	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; culture workshops; and opportunities for the non-commercial cultural use of resources such as medicinal plants, bush tucker and fish.	High
	b. Encourage research where it contributes to understanding and protection of cultural values, provides opportunities for Aboriginal community members to develop skills and is conducted in partnership with communities.	Medium
2. There is increased involvement of Aboriginal people in caring for Country and in park management	a. Consult and involve Tharawal and Illawarra local Aboriginal land councils, traditional custodial families and other relevant Aboriginal community organisations regarding management of Country, particularly the management of sites and cultural values.	Very high
	b. Establish an ongoing and regular forum or partnership arrangement for Aboriginal involvement in park management in consultation with the Aboriginal community.	High
	c. Investigate opportunities for cooperative management of Country with Tharawal and Illawarra local Aboriginal land councils and traditional custodial families and other relevant Aboriginal representatives.	High
3. The condition of Aboriginal heritage sites, places and cultural values is maintained	a. Do not publicise the location of Aboriginal sites, except with agreement of the local Aboriginal land council and other relevant Aboriginal community organisations. Prior to promotion of sites, a conservation assessment and site protection works may also be required.	Very high
	b. Manage access to Minerva Pool to protect its significance as an Aboriginal women's site.	Very high
	c. Monitor the condition of significant and vulnerable sites (together with Aboriginal community representatives) and undertake protective work where appropriate.	High
4. The identity of the parks as an Aboriginal cultural landscape is enhanced	a. Undertake activities to enhance identity of the parks as an Aboriginal cultural landscape including incorporating Aboriginal language in the naming of places, signage and interpretation.	High
5. The condition of historic and shared heritage sites, places and cultural values is maintained	a. Assess the heritage value and significance of historic and shared heritage sites, objects and places in the parks. Record and protect these items in accordance with their assessed significance.	Low

Outcome	Actions	Priority
<b>Protecting the natural environment</b>		
6. The geological values and landform features of the parks are protected	a. Maintain and upgrade existing trails and tracks to minimise impacts on park values. Close and rehabilitate trails that are no longer required for management purposes. No new tracks will be constructed, except realignments and short connecting tracks (including a potential extension to the Maddens Falls track to protect park values).	Very high
	7. The health of aquatic ecosystems in the parks is maintained or improved	a. Encourage monitoring and reporting of creek and river ecosystem health through partnerships with scientific research facilities, local councils and volunteer organisations. Incorporate findings of monitoring programs into restoration and revegetation programs where appropriate.
8. The extent, diversity and condition of priority habitats, plant and animal species and communities are maintained or improved	b. Investigate the role, impact and heritage value of the disused weirs in the parks and remove (if appropriate and possible) to improve river ecosystem health.	Low
	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. Ensure fire management programs protect biodiversity, habitat connectivity and plant communities with limited ability to recover (e.g. upland swamps).	Very high
	c. Plan and undertake park management activities and works in accordance with best practice hygiene protocols for phytophthora. Restrict recreational access in phytophthora-affected areas as required.	High
	d. Maintain and protect vegetation extent and continuity and pursue strategic acquisition of lands that will improve connectivity.	Medium
	e. Conduct periodic audits of feral animals and pest species, including foxes and deer, to monitor their populations over time and evaluate the effectiveness and further requirements of feral animal and pest management strategies.	Medium
	f. Manage feral animals and pest species in accordance with relevant feral animal and pest management strategies, targeting priority threats and adapting to new information and emerging threats.	Medium
g. Implement restoration and revegetation programs where required in priority habitats, including upland swamps and the field archers' club site.	Medium	

Outcome	Actions	Priority
	h. Encourage and support survey, research and monitoring of threatened species. Incorporate findings into feral animal and pest programs and <i>Biodiversity Conservation Program</i> actions where appropriate.	Medium
<b>Providing for visitor use and enjoyment</b>		
9. The parks offer a range of visitor opportunities that are appropriate and ecologically sustainable	a. Provide a range of recreational opportunities at appropriate locations in the parks, as identified in Table 3 and Figures 2, 3 and 4.	High
	b. Provide a network of tracks and trails that provide for sustainable visitor access for walking, cycling and horse riding (see Figures 2, 3 and 4). Undertake maintenance, upgrades, realignments and closures to support public access and protect environmental values. Consider formalising informal walking tracks to protect the environment or improve visitor experience, subject to impact assessment, resources and links to a broader network of regional walking tracks.	High
10. Improved visitor facilities at key nodes support visitor enjoyment of the parks	a. Maintain, and upgrade as necessary, low-key visitor facilities on the perimeter of the parks, including day use facilities at Wedderburn (Victoria Road) and Darkes Forest (Maddens Falls), and visitor information at the 10B and 10H Trail entrances.	High
	b. Investigate and support opportunities (subject to the constraints of land tenure) to improve visitor facilities and safe access to the park via the 10B entrance, including parking.	Medium
	c. Work with relevant agencies to consider replacing or adding suitable descriptive names to the existing numeric fire trail names.	Medium
11. There is increased awareness and understanding among visitors about the parks' values	a. Develop and deliver information about Aboriginal culture and heritage in the parks in partnership with the Aboriginal community.	Very high
	b. Promote public understanding and appreciation of the natural, cultural and recreational values and the conservation history of the parks through signage, interpretation and educational programs and other means.	High
	c. Undertake or encourage guided visits to selected Aboriginal sites (subject to 3a and 3b) to increase awareness and understanding of Aboriginal culture. Monitor impacts and restrict access if necessary.	Medium
<b>Park infrastructure and services</b>		
12. Management of park infrastructure and services supports safe	a. Install and maintain gates and fencing as required to manage unauthorised access to the parks and protect park values.	Very high

Outcome	Actions	Priority
and sustainable management operations and visitor use	b. Establish and maintain the fire trail network consistent with approved fire access and fire trail (FAFT) plans and prescribed standards under the Rural Fires Act. Where required, establish new trails after environmental and heritage impact assessment and consistent with the approved FAFT plans.	High
	c. Prepare and implement a park access strategy to secure park access for public and management purposes.	High
	d. Maintain or upgrade park infrastructure to meet park management and visitor needs and remove redundant infrastructure.	High
	e. Identify and rectify park boundary errors, boundary encroachments and proposed boundary adjustments (under section 188C of the National Parks and Wildlife Act).	Medium
	13. 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 parks' fire management strategy.
	b. Revise and adjust the fire management strategy as required to take account of emerging threats and new information such as fire ecology recommendations and traditional burning practices.	Very high
	c. Participate in strategic fire planning through the relevant bush fire management committee and maintain cooperative arrangements with local Rural Fire Services brigades, other fire authorities and surrounding landowners.	Very high
<b>Non-park infrastructure and services</b>		
14. Non-park infrastructure and services have minimal impact on park values	a. Work with other agencies and land managers to manage access requirements and facilitate authorised use of the management trail network.	Medium
	b. Seek removal and site rehabilitation by the relevant owner and operator of obsolete or disused infrastructure.	Medium
	c. Negotiate or update licence agreements for all non-NPWS uses in accordance with the National Parks and Wildlife Act.	Medium
	d. Work with other agencies, land managers and park neighbours to minimise impacts on park and catchment values.	Medium
	e. Assess public roads located within the parks for possible revocation and transfer to the appropriate authority.	Medium



## 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.

The eastern section of the national park (between the Princes Motorway and the Princes Highway) is part of the Metropolitan Special Area and classified as Schedule 1 lands under the WaterNSW Regulation 2020. Public entry to Schedule 1 lands is generally not permitted. Access to the special area is controlled by both NPWS and WaterNSW and may only be authorised through the issue of a consent under the WaterNSW Regulation and the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation.





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 at the front of this plan).

**Table 3 Park use regulations – Recreational activities**

	Type of activity	Allowed	Note/Exceptions
	Recreational activities in the Metropolitan Special Area (Schedule 1 lands)	No	No access to Special Area except with consent of WaterNSW.
	Abseiling, rock climbing and canyoning	No	Not permitted due to the lack of suitable safe locations and risks to conservation values.
	Barbecues – portable	No	Not permitted due to potential environmental impacts.
	Camping	No	Not permitted due to potential environmental impacts.
	Cycling (including mountain bike riding)	Yes	Permitted on management trails in the national park. Not permitted in the nature reserve, except if signposted. No cycling on walking tracks or off-trail. All organised group (e.g. club) events require consent, irrespective of the size of groups (see Table 4).

Type of activity	Allowed	Note/Exceptions
	No	Dogs that are not assistance animals are not permitted in national parks, nature reserves 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.
 	Yes	<p>Drones may be used for park management, operational or emergency services purposes.</p> <p>Approval is required to launch, land or operate a drone from within a park for recreational purposes.</p> <p>Recreational use of drones is not permitted in designated drone exclusion areas. Drone exclusion areas in the parks include all lookouts, the Wedderburn precinct (O'Hares, Minerva, Jingga and the picnic area) and any other exclusion areas identified for the parks (see NPWS website).</p> <p>The parks are within the restricted airspace of a military area and a local airport.</p> <p>The use of drones is subject to relevant civil aviation regulations.</p>
	No	Not permitted due to potential environmental impacts.
 	Yes	Consent is required for groups of more than 40 people, as per the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation. Group use is limited to management trails and walking tracks unless otherwise authorised.
	No	Not permitted due to lack of suitable safe locations and potential risks to other park users.
	Yes	Consent required. Permitted on 10H Trail to its junction with 10C Trail only. Maximum 4 horses in a group. Competitive horse riding and camping with horses are not permitted. Social and environmental impacts of horse riding will be monitored and horse riding routes may be closed for rehabilitation where impacts are identified.
 	No	Vehicle access to visitor sites on the edges of the parks is provided via public roads. Vehicle access within the parks is not permitted due to potential environmental impacts.

	Type of activity	Allowed	Note/Exceptions
	Walking	Yes	Management trails and walking tracks are shown on Figure 2.
 	Water-based recreation (e.g. swimming)	Yes	Minerva Pool is an Aboriginal women's cultural site and it is requested that men respect this cultural value and do not enter the water. Swimming in wild rivers has inherent dangers and visitors to the parks need to be aware of the dangers.
	Wood fires	No	Not permitted due to the risk of bushfires and potential unauthorised removal of trees and timber from the parks. May be permitted by consent for cultural purposes (except during total fire bans and park fire bans).

## 8.2 Commercial and non-commercial activities requiring 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 events and commercial activities that may be 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 department's website.

Commercial activities such as tours are licensed under the Parks Eco Pass program, which is the NPWS program for licensing operators who conduct commercial tours, recreational and educational activities in national parks and reserves. Information is available on the department's website.

Commercial filming and photography in parks and reserves requires approval. Information is available on the department 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.

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 4 Park use regulations – Activities requiring prior approval**

Type of activity	Group size	Type of approval required
Commercial and charity events, including walking, running and cycling events open for public participation	All groups irrespective of size	Consent or licence
Sporting activity that is part of an organised competition or tournament	All groups irrespective of size	Consent
Commercial tours, recreational and educational activities, mobile food vendors, transport services and any other commercial services	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, educational, or related to conservation or park management)	All groups irrespective of size	Consent or licence

## More information

- [Dharawal National Park, Dharawal Nature Reserve and Dharawal State Conservation Area Planning Considerations](#)
- [Environment and Heritage website](#)
- [National Parks and Wildlife Service website](#)
- [Privacy and security](#)