



NSW NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE

Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area

Draft Master Plan



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Gardens of Stone parks (Photo: DPE/Juicy Products)

Contents

1	Summary	06	4	Proposed precinct plans	60
1.1	Introduction	06	4.1	State Mine Gully and Lost City precinct	62
1.2	Park vision	06	4.1.1	Lost City and Marangaroo Swamp visitor area	64
1.3	Master plan	08	4.1.2	Lost City visitor node	65
1.4	Easy reference guide to the master plan	10	4.1.3	Dobbs Drift visitor node	68
2	Park values	12	4.1.4	Bunglebooro Lookouts visitor area	69
2.1	Environment	14	4.2	Carne Creek and former plantation precinct	70
2.2	Heritage	18	4.2.1	Former Plantation visitor area	72
2.3	Scenic amenity	20	4.2.2	Forest Camp visitor node	73
2.4	Recreation and tourism	22	4.3	Birds Rock precinct	76
3	Planning strategies	24	4.3.1	Birds Rock lookout visitor node	78
3.1	Planning principles	26	4.3.2	Carne Creek lookouts visitor node	79
3.2	Planning strategies:		4.4	Long Swamp precinct	80
	Environment	30	4.4.1	Long Swamp Visitor area	82
	3.2.1 Geology, topography and soils	30	4.4.2	Wolgan Gorge visitor node	83
	3.2.2 Water management	32	4.4.3	Sahara Point visitor node	84
	3.2.3 Habitat management	34	4.4.4	Baal Bone Gap visitor node	85
	3.2.4 Heritage management	36	5	Priorities	87
	3.2.5 Scenic amenity	38	5.1	Criteria for setting priorities	87
	Vistation and activation	42	6	Materials and finishes	88
	3.2.6 Arrival, orientation and wayfinding	42	6.1	Indicative landscape materials and finishes	88
	3.2.7 Vehicular access	44			
	3.2.8 Bushwalking and pedestrian access	46			
	3.2.9 Mountain biking and cycling access	48			
	3.2.10 Adventure tourism	50			
	3.2.13 Events and organised activation	51			
	3.2.14 Camping and on park accommodation	52			
	3.2.15 Services and facilities	54			
	3.2.16 Collaborative opportunities	58			
				References	90

Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area is Wiradjuri Country. It is an integral part of this rich and complex cultural landscape which is of profound significance. The aspirations of the Wiradjuri People for their Country are acknowledged and respected.

Lost City (Photo: A. Hunter)





Have your say

We value your feedback and welcome comments on this draft masterplan. To provide feedback, please send a written submission by 5 July, 2022 via:



online submission:

<https://engage.environment.nsw.gov.au/consult>



email:

gardensofstonesca@environment.nsw.gov.au



post to:

NPWS Blue Mountains Branch, PO Box 552, Katoomba NSW
2780

1 Summary

1.1 Introduction

Background

Gardens of Stone SCA the park, was reserved on 6 May 2022 after the NSW Government made a landmark commitment to strengthen protection of this iconic landscape within the Western Blue Mountains.

The park is located approximately 5 kilometres north of Lithgow and 140 kilometres west of Sydney. It is located at the junction of the Great Dividing Range and the Blue Mountains Range in the NSW Central Tablelands region. It adjoins Blue Mountains National Park to the east and Wollemi and Gardens of Stone national parks to the north.

The park is comprised of the former Newnes, Ben Bullen and Wolgan state forests which include pine plantations and areas previously used for native forest harvesting. It also contains the headwaters of the Wolgan, Coxs and Wollangambe rivers.

The park is a part of a significant Wiradjuri cultural landscape. It contains many Aboriginal heritage sites and adjoins the Maiyingu Marragu Aboriginal Place.

Access tracks, lookouts and camping areas within the park have been visited for many years, although visitor facilities are currently limited. Community representatives and conservation groups have advocated for the protection of this area and members of the community have also contributed to programs for the conservation of the area's flora and fauna.

Project aim

A key driver of this draft master plan is the establishment of the Gardens of Stone SCA as a major sustainable visitor and adventure tourism destination for New South Wales, and an example of conservation in action. The draft master plan is focused on balancing sustainable recreational and commercial use with natural and cultural values, while improving conservation outcomes across the Gardens of Stone SCA.

Delivery of the nature-based tourism destination at Gardens of Stone SCA is a feature of the National Park and Wildlife Service's (NPWS) long-term strategy to deliver iconic nature-based experiences that connect people with culture and nature.

The new park's establishment will have a range of benefits, including:

- protecting and enhancing significant cultural, natural and historic values
- immersing visitors in nature while creating accessible, memorable experiences
- enabling better management of existing and future visitation in the park
- driving growth in the visitor economy, including overnight visitor expenditure in Lithgow and surrounds.

This master plan outlines the master planning process undertaken for the Gardens of Stone SCA. Refer to section 1.4 (pages 10–11) for an easy reference guide to the plan's arrangement and how to use this document.

Wollemi Great Walk

The Wollemi Great Walk will establish a spectacular multi-day walking and cycling experience which will traverse the west of Wollemi National Park and into Gardens of Stone SCA. The Wollemi Great Walk will provide a unique opportunity for both first-time bush walkers and more experienced explorers to immerse themselves amongst an inspiring landscape and wild place. The untouched Wollemi Wilderness Area will provide the distant background to this unique Australian experience.

The first phase of the Great Walk to be established will be the walking track and associated facilities within the Gardens of Stone SCA. This will include both public bushwalking camping facilities and supported guided walker accommodation.

Setting a vision

Fundamentally this draft master plan is underpinned by a park vision which articulates a series of key themes and related objectives which will guide ongoing infrastructure planning, design and visitor management. These are:

- **Wiradjuri Country**
- **protecting and restoring conservation values**
- **immersed in nature**
- **exciting, accessible experiences**
- **iconic and memorable**

1.2 Park vision

Garden of Stone State Conservation Area



Wiradjuri Country

Protecting and restoring conservation values

Immersed in nature

Exciting, accessible experiences

Iconic and memorable

- Conserving and celebrating Wiradjuri connections to the place
- Conserving and facilitating Wiradjuri living culture
- Conserving and telling the story of post-colonisation heritage including industry and settlement

- Protecting unique geological features
- Protecting of unique habitats
- Sustaining healthy natural systems
- Rehabilitating damaged natural systems and landscapes

- Release from urban life in close proximity to city
- Diversity of landscape types and natural experiences
- Diversity of panoramas and visual connections to the natural environment
- Increased understanding and appreciation of the natural environment

- Activities and experiences that are unique in both nature and setting
- Easily accessible to metropolitan area for days trips and weekends
- Attractive to a range of demographics including different ages family units and cultures
- Attracting new visitors to national parks

- Enhancing access to, and appreciation of, a unique and important landscape
- Facilitating memorable recreational experiences
- Conserving and complementing the iconic nature and identity of the pagoda landscape

1.3 Master plan

Overview

The draft master plan provides a long-term framework to deliver an exciting new ecotourism destination for Lithgow and future visitor experience opportunities in the Gardens of Stone SCA.

The master plan also outlines several supporting initiatives and infrastructure to enhance visitor experiences, improve visitor management and meet future visitation demands.

The master plan is not intended to be a static document. Master plans require periodic review, as well as reconsideration when conditions, circumstances or settings change. Such revisions could be triggered by specialist studies for key infrastructure, significant changes in tourism supply and demand, new regional or local developments, future funding opportunities, as well as any land acquisitions or additions to the park. As such, the master plan should be viewed as a dynamic strategic planning tool that sets a long-term framework for the Gardens of Stone SCA which can be adapted to accommodate unforeseen changes as they arise.

The master plan summarises the park-wide recommendations embodied in the park planning strategies for environmental management, visitation and activation.

The master plan recommendations are also illustrated in further detail in the precinct recommendations for key visitor precincts as provided in section 4.

Some proposals listed are general and will be implemented across the park. As such these are not identified on the master plan.

Summary of proposals

Environment

1. Protect geology, soils, habitat and hydrological values.
2. All infrastructure proposals are subject to environmental planning approvals.
3. Improve environmental values through any site and rehabilitation works.

Cultural heritage

4. Ongoing involvement of Wiradjuri community stakeholders.
5. Undertake further research and document Wiradjuri values and connections.
6. Embed Wiradjuri values into ongoing precinct design.
7. Protect and interpret Aboriginal heritage sites and historical heritage fabric.

Arrival and wayfinding

8. Collaborate for potential entry and orientation node at State Mine Heritage Park.
9. Provide secondary orientation node at Bungleboori intersection.

10. Provide internal wayfinding system to roads, walking tracks and mountain bike (MTB) track network.

Roads and trails

11. Provide vehicular 'touring route' suitable for two-wheel drive (2WD) traffic via State Mine Gully Road and Glow Worm Tunnel Road
12. Maintain a select network of four-wheel drive (4WD) recreational trails.
13. Provide access for fire and management purposes.
14. Rehabilitate existing roads and trails not integrated into the overall access network.

Camping

15. Provide focal drive-in camping facilities in the former Forest Camp, including 100 plus tent sites, toilets, camp kitchen shelter, access to adjoining walking and MTB track network.

Facilities

16. Provide parking and varied range of other facilities (toilets, picnic tables) at relevant trailheads.
17. Improve facilities to lookout points generally.

Recreation and leisure

Develop integrated network of walking tracks including:

18. Short and loop walks.
19. Wollemi Great Walk.
20. Bicentennial Trail and connections to the Wollemi Great Walk
21. Develop a destination MTB trail network utilising rehabilitated existing trails where practicable.
22. Provide a MTB activities hub.
23. Provide a managed area suitable for picnics, large gatherings and events.
24. Provide a destination adventure activities facility at Lost City.
25. Maintain adventure recreation activities across park, including abseiling and canyoning.

Note the following abbreviations in the master plan key:
2WD Two-wheel drive 4WD Four-wheel drive
MTB Mountain bike

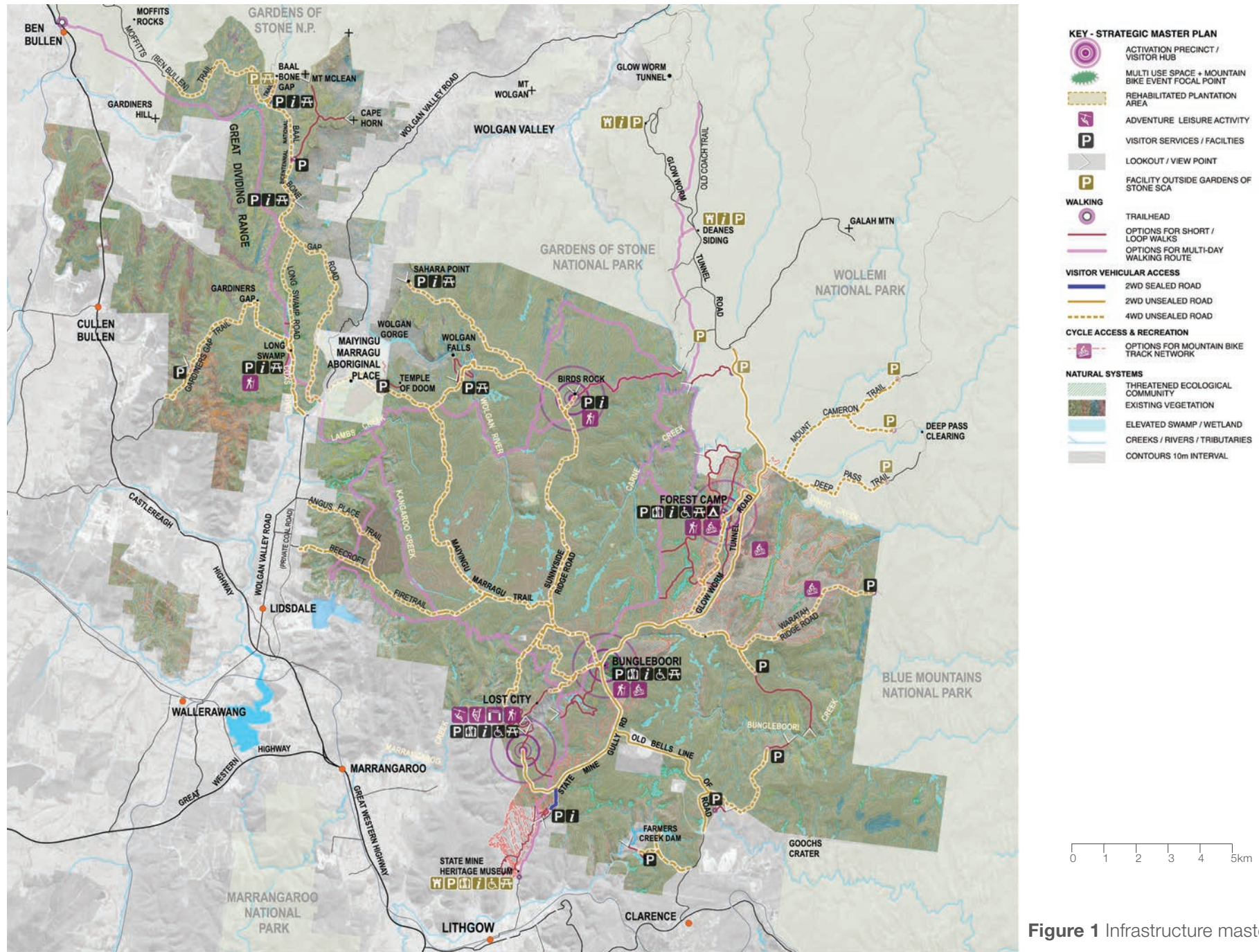


Figure 1 Infrastructure master plan

1.4 Easy reference guide to the master plan

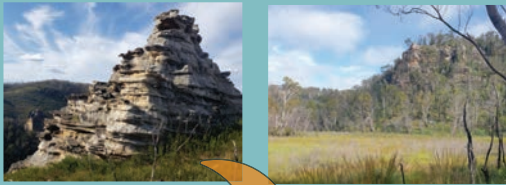
The master plan involves a series of sequential planning steps documented across sections 1–5 of this plan. Refer to the following 'road map' of the master plan format and content.

s2

Understand park values

Values are qualities that are important and which planning seeks to protect and enhance

- environment
- cultural heritage
- scenic amenity
- recreation & tourism



s1

Identify the park vision

The vision provides a series of key themes and related objectives which will guide ongoing park planning

- Wiradjuri Country
- protecting and restoring conservation values
- immersed in nature
- exciting, accessible experiences
- iconic and memorable

s3

Develop planning principles

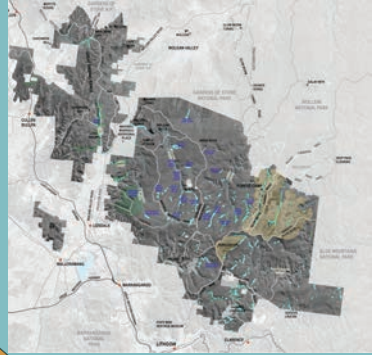
Park planning principles establish high-level guiding statements that are to be considered in developing more detailed responses to site needs and opportunities.

The principles provide the foundation for planning strategies for the Gardens of Stone SCA and include:

- environment and habitat
- heritage and scenic amenity
- visitation
- vehicular access
- 4WD access
- bushwalking experiences
- mountain biking
- adventure experiences and tourism
- camping
- services and facilities
- collaborative opportunities

s3

Develop planning strategies



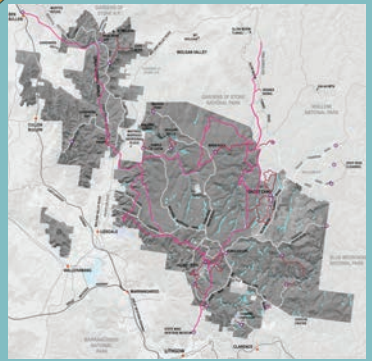
Park planning strategies provide a framework of more detailed planning, design and management guidance which implement and develop the preceding park planning principles.

The strategies describe for key planning and management factors:

- objectives
- key considerations
- park planning strategies

Strategies are developed for:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • geology, topography and soils • water management • habitat management • heritage management • scenic amenity | <p>Visitation and use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arrival, orientation and wayfinding • vehicular access • bushwalking and pedestrian access • mountain bike recreation • adventure tourism • Events and organised activation • camping and on-park accommodation • services and facilities • collaborative opportunities |
|--|--|



Example strategy mapping

s4

Develop precinct concepts

The precinct plans illustrate the potential development and implementation of the park planning strategies. All proposals are indicative and are subject to further survey, detailed investigations, and stakeholder consultation. The precinct concepts do not cover all of the Gardens of Stone SCA area and so should be read in conjunction with the strategies in section 3.2.

Precinct strategy plan



Overall plan indicating access, key user locations and major facilities as defined by the strategies.

Visitor area plan



Intermediate-level plan of specific visitor areas with detail of access and facilities.

Visitor node plan



Concept-level plan of visitor node outlining further detail of circulation and facilities.



Example precinct concept illustration - Forest Camp

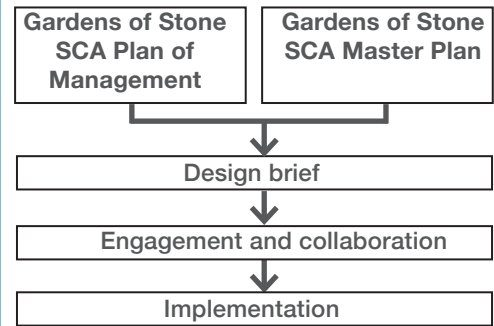
s5

Identify priorities

Priorities will guide decision-making about the timing of ongoing planning design and implementation actions. The draft priorities are:

- putting in place effective collaboration and engagement to enable design and implementation
- investigations and assessments to facilitate ongoing planning and design
- environmental management to address immediate environmental concerns
- enabling recreational activation

Ongoing design and implementation process





**The complex, rocky
landforms of the upland
plateau provide a
diversity of habitats
for plants and animals
resulting in rich
biodiversity**

2 Park values

Introduction

Values are the qualities of the Gardens of Stone SCA that are identified as important and which planning and management must seek to protect and enhance.

Fundamentally, visitation and recreation to the park should be aimed at providing sustainable access to and experience of these 4 values.

Environment

Environment comprises the natural systems which have shaped the landscape character of the place, and include its unique geology, landform and soils, hydrology, and habitats including flora and fauna.

Cultural Heritage

The natural heritage of the park is complemented by the rich cultural importance of the landscape to the Wiradjuri. Maiyingu Marragu Aboriginal Place, which adjoins the park. Since colonisation the area has been exploited for agriculture, mining and forestry. These activities have all left a legacy on the landscape and part of its rich cultural story.

Scenic amenity

The unique geology and landform provides a setting of rare and dramatic scenic amenity. This is a function of the area's natural systems and is protected as the fundamental and significant experience of the park.

Recreation and tourism

The natural environment of the park provides the setting for a range of highly valued outdoor experiences. While the degradation caused by former land uses and un-managed recreational activities will take some time to redress, the qualities of the park will be a significant draw to visitors from the Sydney metropolitan area and further afield seeking immersion in nature.



Varied landscape character



Wiradjuri cultural sites



Panoramic views (Photos: N. Eva)

2 Park values

2.1 Environment

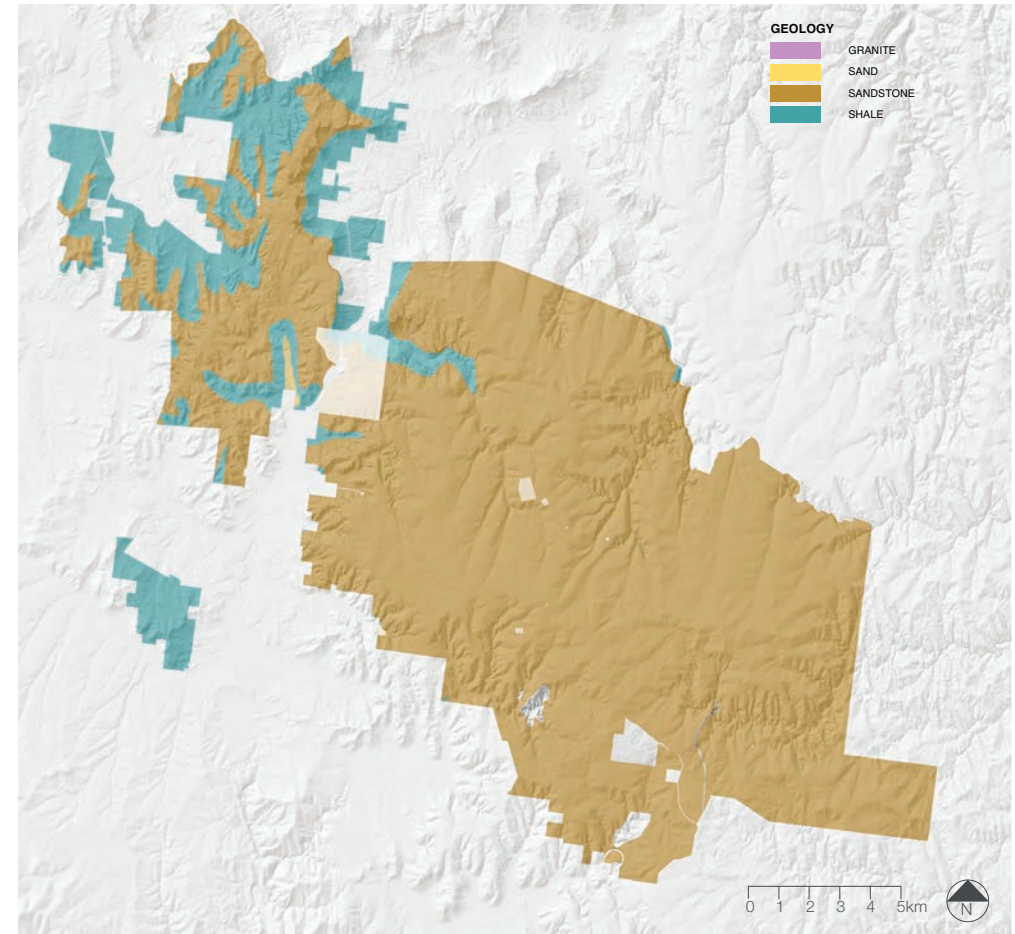
The Newnes Plateau is the highest elevation sandstone plateau in the Blue Mountains and is typified by dramatic gullies, canyons and iconic sandstone pagodas.

The 'Platy' pagodas, with their distinctive ironstone banding, have been assessed to be of global rarity and significance. As they are extremely fragile they can be damaged easily by minimal contact.

The sandstone cliffs and pagodas are also threatened by subsidence and cracking caused by subsurface mining which is ongoing in the area.

This diverse landscape of plateau and steep gullies is typified by a range of soils and hydrological conditions, including montane sand dunes and high-altitude peat swamps.

The perched swamps typify the Newnes Plateau draining to the deep gullies and their network of creeklines and varied habitats.



Geology

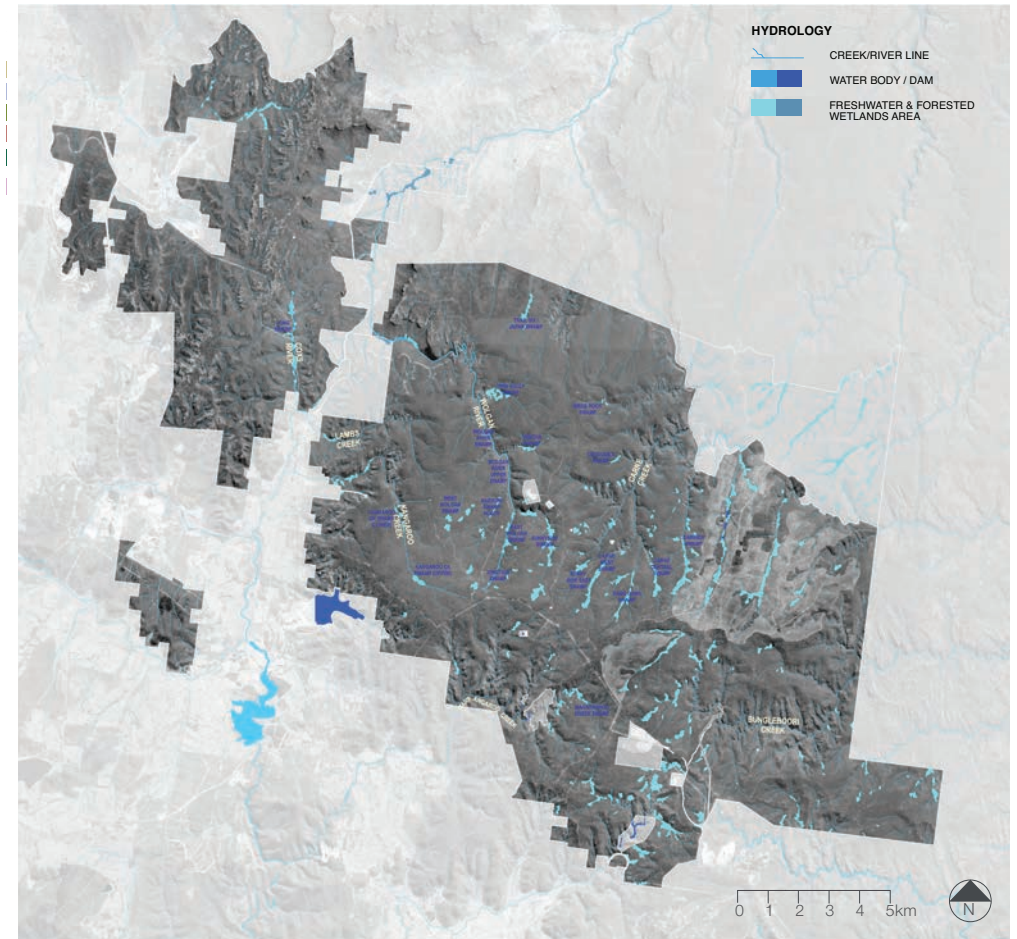
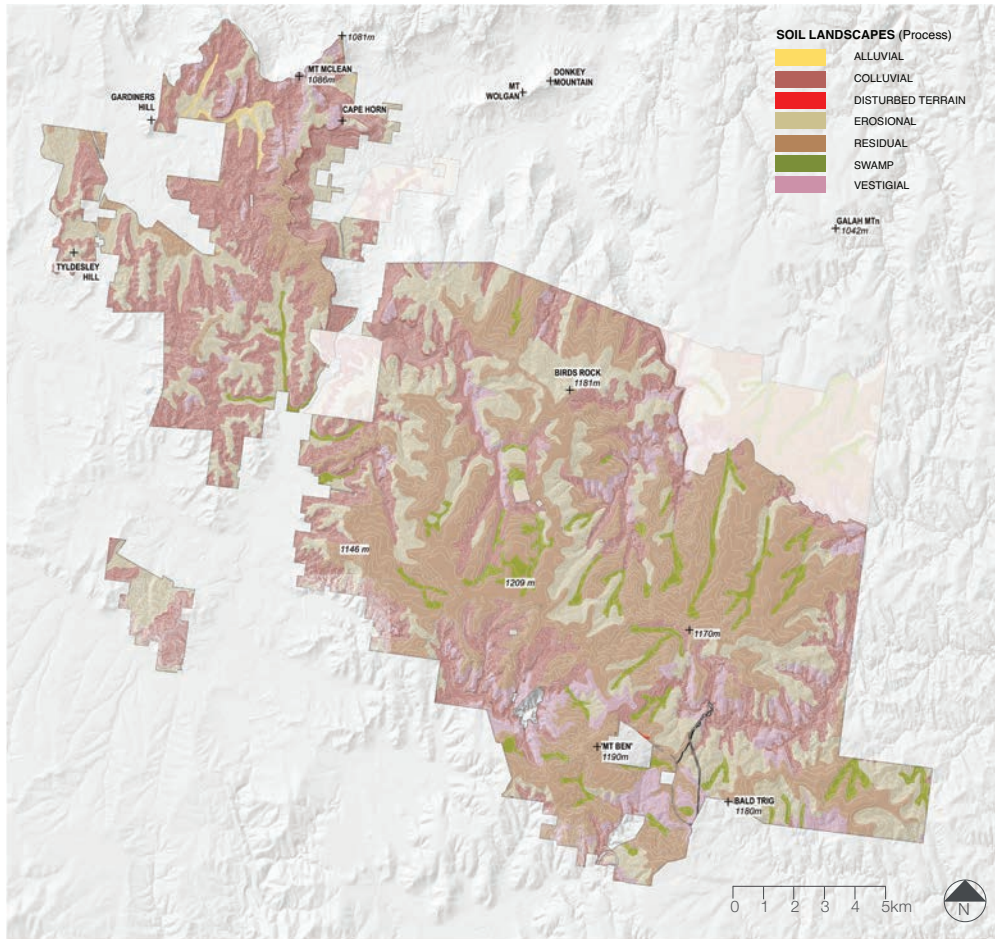
- Area of significant Geodiversity providing the best areas of iconic sandstone pagoda formations in the Greater Blue Mountains region.
- Platy pagodas have been assessed to be of global rarity and significance.
- Other internationally significant geoheritage includes: montane sand dunes, high-altitude peat swamps on sandstone and other sandstone landforms.



'Platy' pagoda (Photo: N. Eva)



Canyon (Photo: S. Elwood/DPE)



Topography and soils

- Newnes Plateau is the highest elevation sandstone plateau in the Blue Mountains.
- Diverse landforms include:
 - cliffs
 - steep gullies
 - slot canyons and
 - grassy woodlands.



Fragile skeletal soils

Hydrology

- Complex system of watercourses, convergence of the steeply incised valleys and the key creeklines of:
 - Bungleboori Creek
 - Carne Creek
 - Marangaroo Creek
 - Wolgan River
 - Kangaroo Creek
 - Lamps Creek.
- Perched swamps on the plateau.



Wolgan River - Newnes Plateau

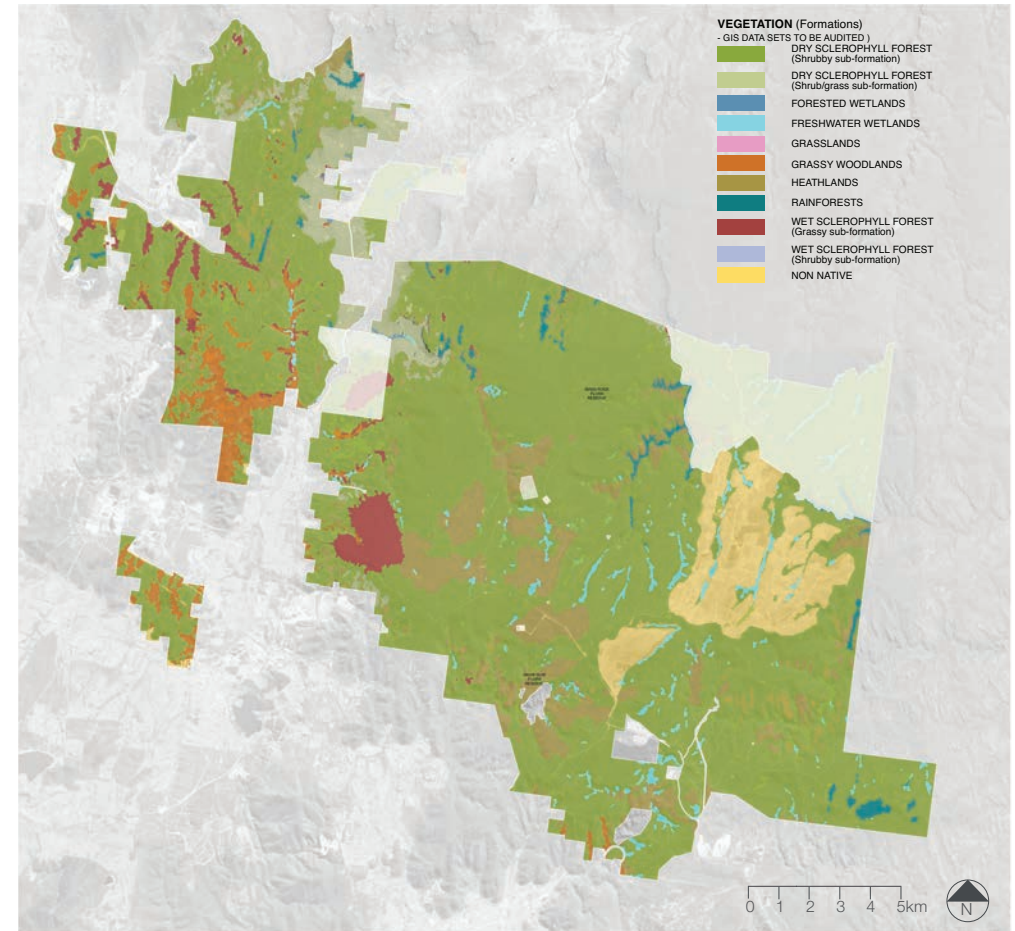
2.1 Environment

From the plateau to the deeply incised gullies a diverse range of vegetation habitats are supported, including 33 different plant communities and at least 1,000 species of plants. Of these, 16 are threatened ecological communities and 42 are rare or threatened plant species.

These habitats support at least 319 vertebrate animal species of which 42 are recognised as threatened species.



Marangaroo Creek (Photo: S.Elwood/DPE)

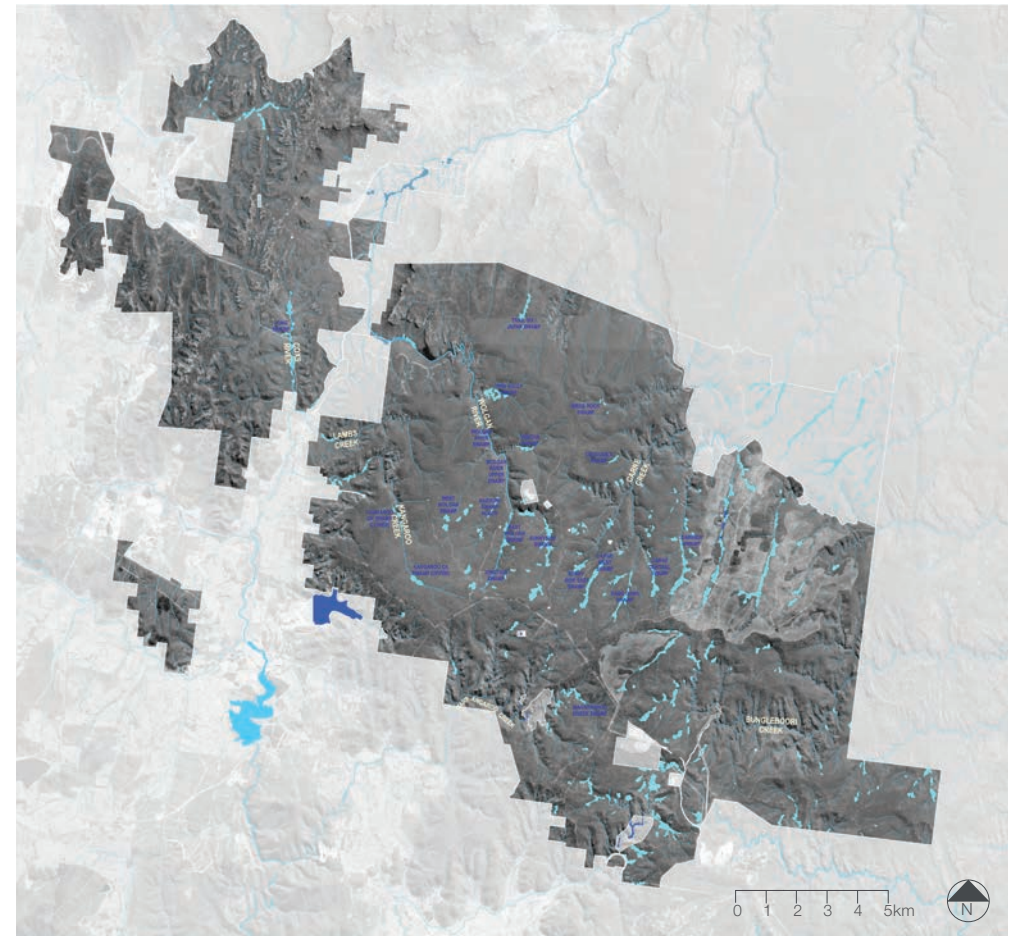
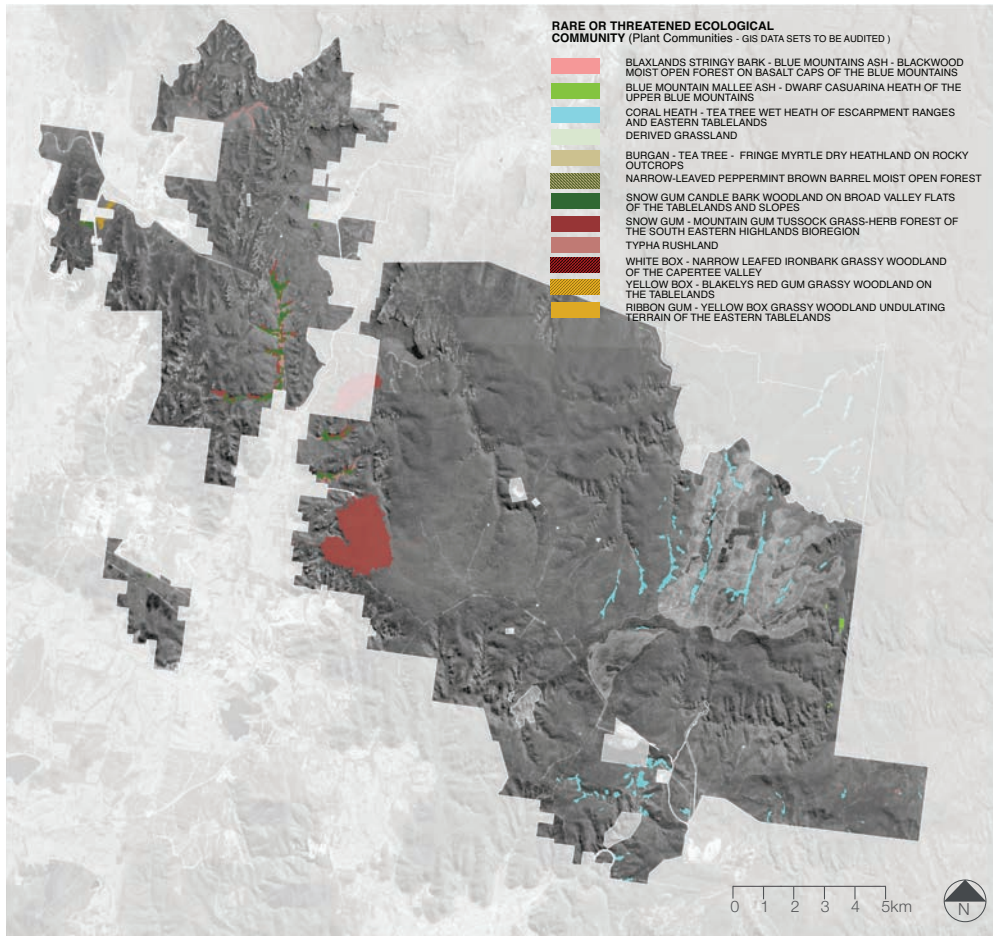


Vegetation

- The Gardens of Stone SCA has a rich biodiversity, including 33 different plant communities and at least 1,000 species of plants.
- Species include the Wolgan snow gum, *Eucalyptus gregsoniana* which is not found in the existing Blue Mountains national parks, and very rare species such as Deane's Boronia, *Boronia deanei* subsp. *deanei*.
- Diversity of textures, colours and contexts across forests, heathlands and wildflowers



Grassy woodland



Threatened species

- The Gardens of Stone SCA has a very high biodiversity value related to its vegetation, including:
 - rare/threatened plants (42 species)
 - rare or threatened ecological communities (16 communities).
- Vegetation includes significant areas of elevated swamps listed under both federal and state legislation, as well as Box Woodland and Tableland Grassy Forest that has been heavily cleared elsewhere.



Swamp near Kangaroo Creek

Fauna

- The Gardens of Stone SCA has a very high biodiversity value related to its fauna including:
 - at least 319 vertebrate animal species
 - threatened fauna (42 species).



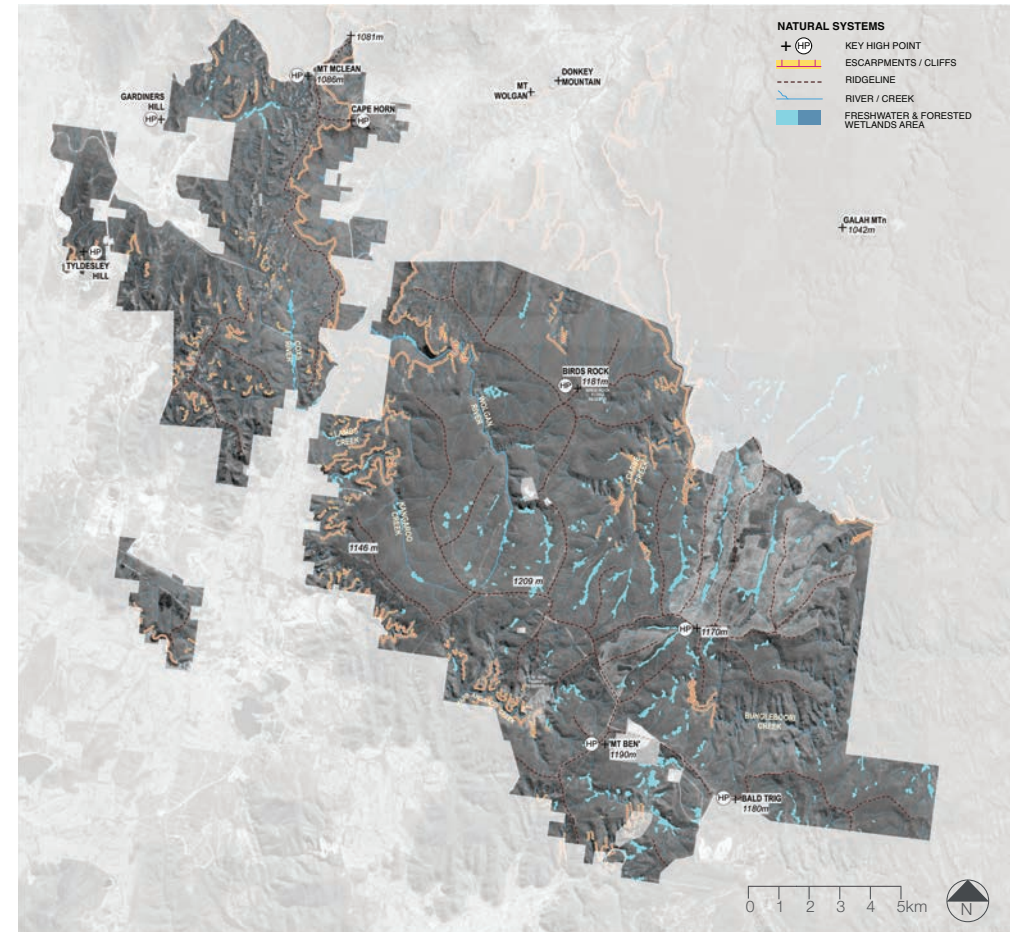
Gully landscape

2.2 Cultural heritage

The Gardens of Stone landscape features a unique assemblage of spectacular escarpments with 'lost villages' of intimate sandstone pinnacles, coloured cliff lines, canyons, forested valleys, windswept plateau heathlands, rainforest gorges, montane woodlands and rare swamps. The mix of rugged and more subdued terrain has moulded specific human responses from ancient Aboriginal times to modern industries, creating a culturally distinctive heritage (1).

The park contains numerous Wiradjuri sites of cultural significance including rock art, grinding grooves, wells, occupation deposits in rock shelters and artefact scatters. The swamps on the Newnes Plateau provided continuous food resources for Wiradjuri People. Some of the shelters bordering the swamps have a very high concentration of artefact material. The park adjoins the Maiyingu Marragu Aboriginal Place – a well-known rock art site and cultural education precinct. The park provides the Wiradjuri community with opportunities to further their aspirations for community, culture and Country.

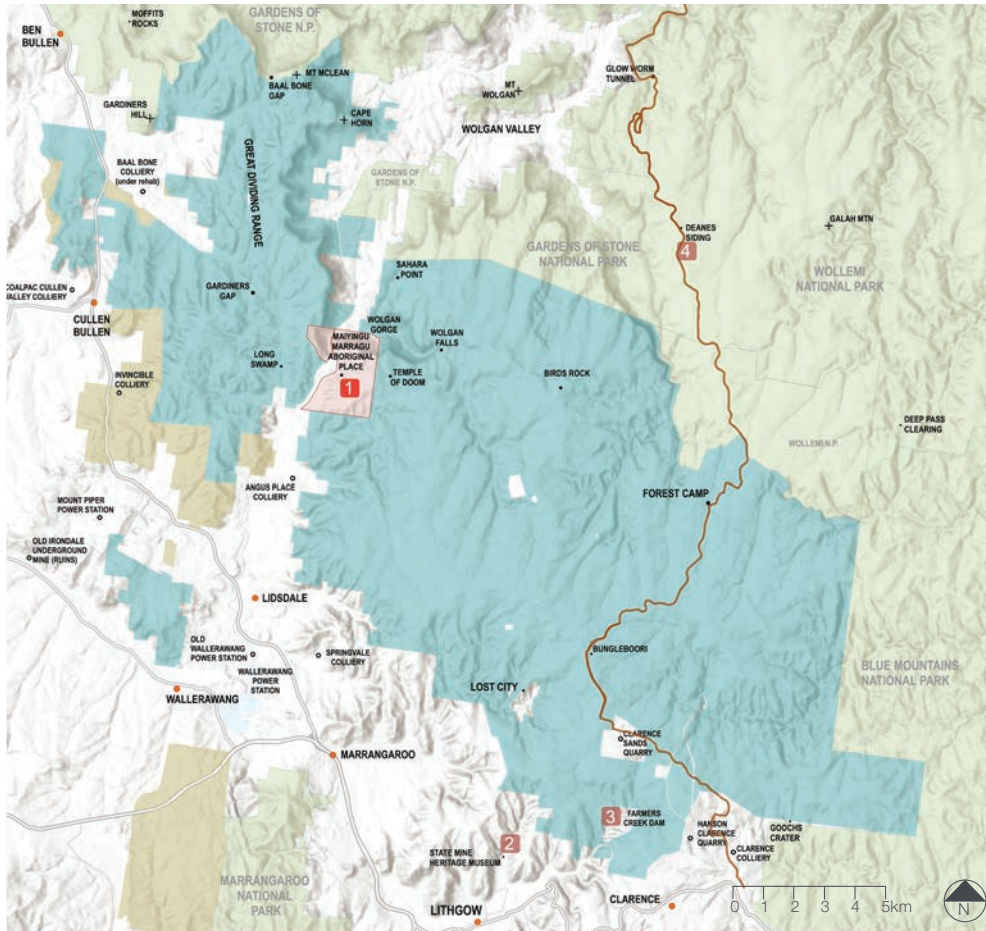
The area also has a long post-colonial history for agriculture, mining and industry. Coal mining was established around Lithgow in the mid 1800s. In 1868 the railway came to the valley and by 1874 there were 4 mines operating. The mining and associated steel industry which arrived in the early 1900s fuelled the growth of Lithgow, and are important economic and cultural influences on the area and its landscape.



Natural systems

- Representations of internationally significant geoheritage, ecological diversity and the unique landscape character.





Wiradjuri Country

- Wiradjuri cultural landscape with significant cultural value and ongoing cultural connections.
- A place of many recorded sites including:
 - artefacts
 - art engravings and pigmentations
 - carved and scarred trees
 - stone arrangements and grinding grooves.
- Adjacent to the Maiyngu Marragu Aboriginal Place, a place of special meaning to Wiradjuri People and highly valued by the wider Aboriginal community.
- Further consultation and research required to fully explore connections to Country and to embed these in planning and design.



Maiyngu Marragu hand stencils (Photo: N. Eva)



Wolgan Valley railway route



State Mine Heritage Museum (Photo: N. Eva)

Historical

- Mining and transport (rail and historic routes) heritage.
- Steel production (Lithgow).
- Bushwalking conservation movement and recreation.
- Other past uses of the landscape e.g. Forestry.
- There is a strong industrial character of the former and current mining infrastructure, dams and other facilities that in many cases is evocative and can help understanding of the place.



Birds Rock trig point (Photo: N. Eva)

2.3 Scenic amenity

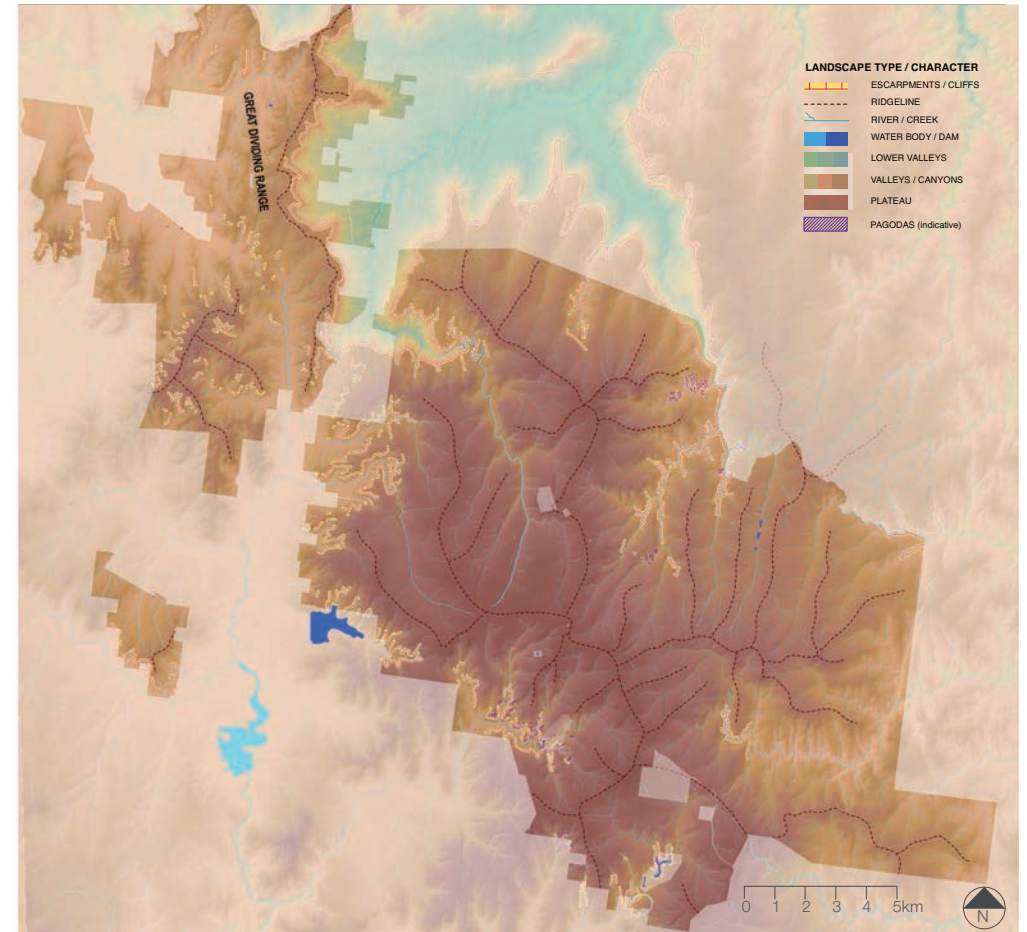
The ancient pagoda landscapes above Lithgow are found nowhere else in the world, encompassing spectacular rock pinnacles, gorges, cliffs, waterfalls, swamps, forests, Aboriginal heritage and rock art, and many rare plants and animals (1).

These features create an iconic, rewarding, must-see destination for local and Greater Sydney residents and international visitors wanting to experience a different and special part of the Blue Mountains.

While a proportion of the dramatic pagoda villages and canyon edges are difficult to access, others can be more readily accessed and can provide short-stay visitors and less-frequent visitors an opportunity to connect with this landscape and its visual drama.



Marangaroo Creek headwaters (Photo: Lithgow Tourism)

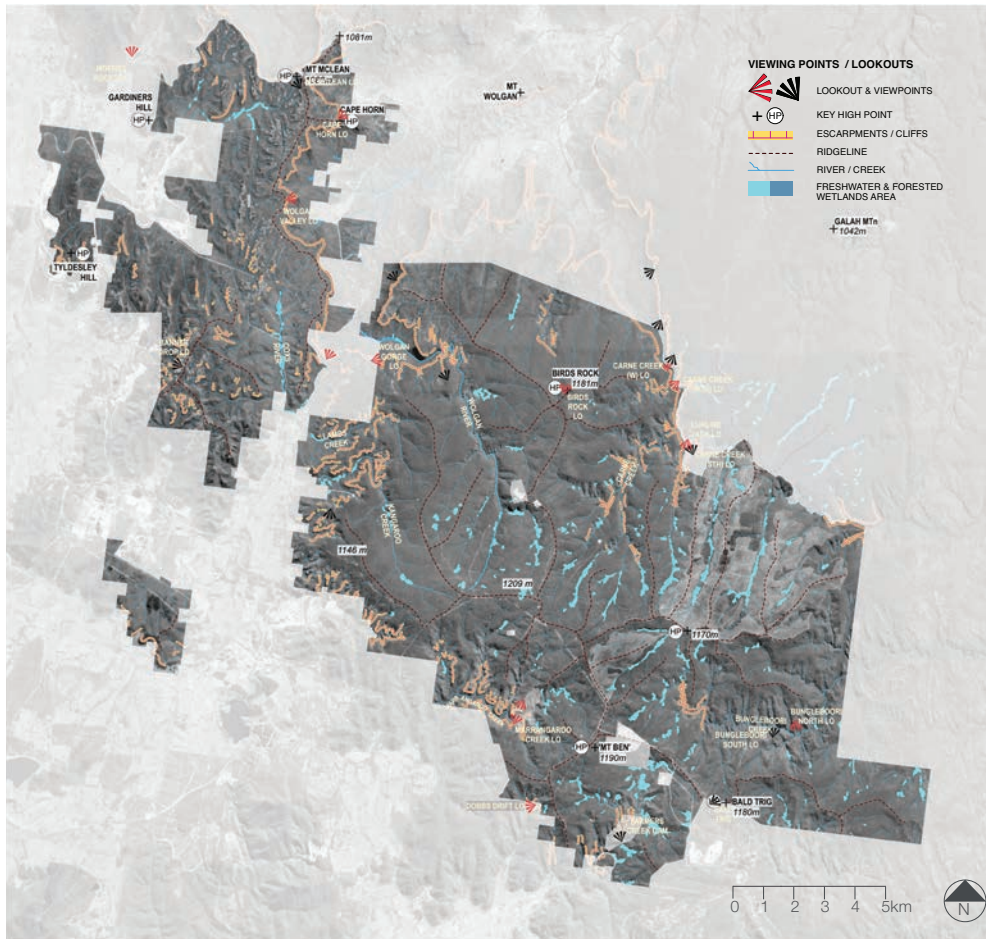


Landscape types

- The iconic sandstone pagodas (the most unique feature of the landscape).
- Diverse landforms, including:
 - cliffs
 - steep gullies
 - slot canyons
 - grassy woodlands.
- Dramatic and intricate terrain, changing rapidly especially in the pagoda and escarpment areas where vegetation can be of low stature but of remarkable variety in colour, form and texture.



Slot canyon

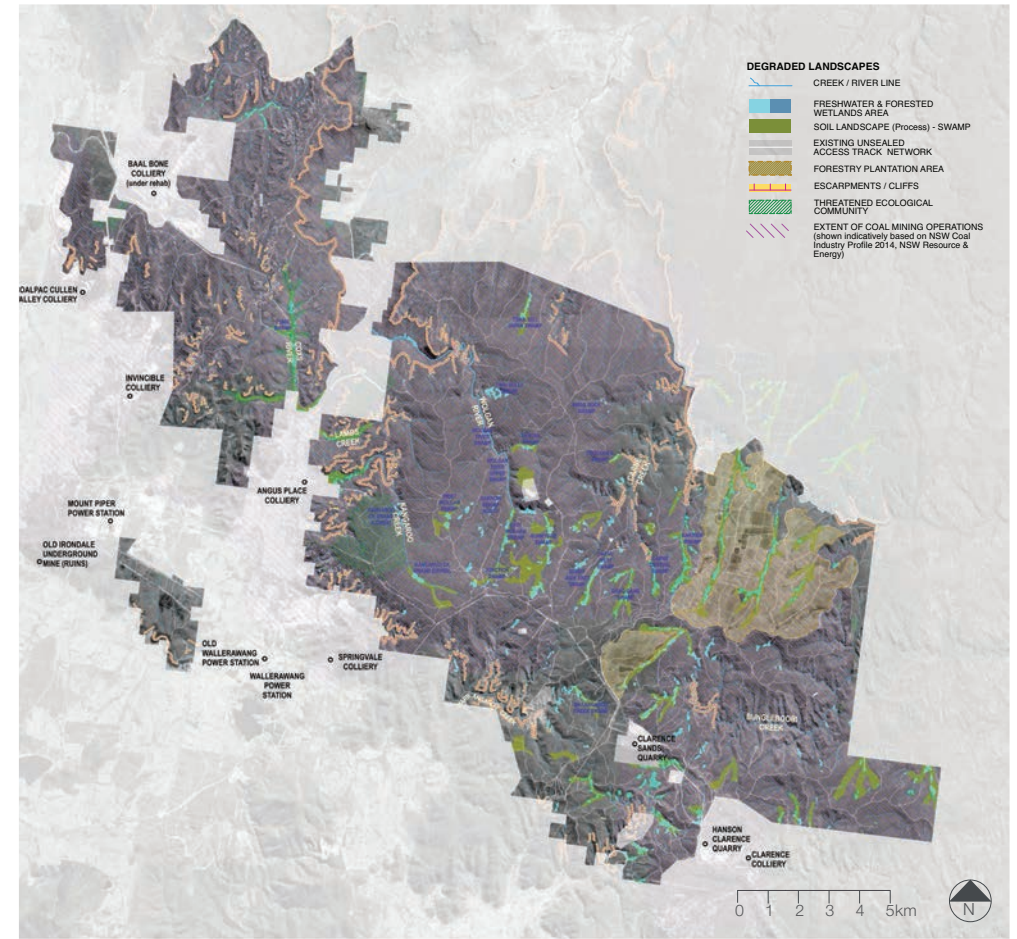


Viewing points and outlooks

- Diversity of lookouts to unique vistas and panoramas.
- Strong sense of the grandeur and primacy of the natural environment.



Marrangaroo Creek south (Photo: N. Eva)



Degraded landscapes

- Sensitive and important habitat areas that have been subject to degradation through:
 - industrial activities, forestry, mining infrastructure and utilities causing subsidence or disturbance
 - uncontrolled access (motor bike riding and 4WD driving).
- Potential and desirability to redress past impacts and rehabilitate to improve and restore ecological values.



Eroded 4WD tracks (Photo: N. Eva)

2.4 Recreation and tourism

The natural environment of the Gardens of Stone SCA provides the setting for a range of highly valued outdoor experiences.

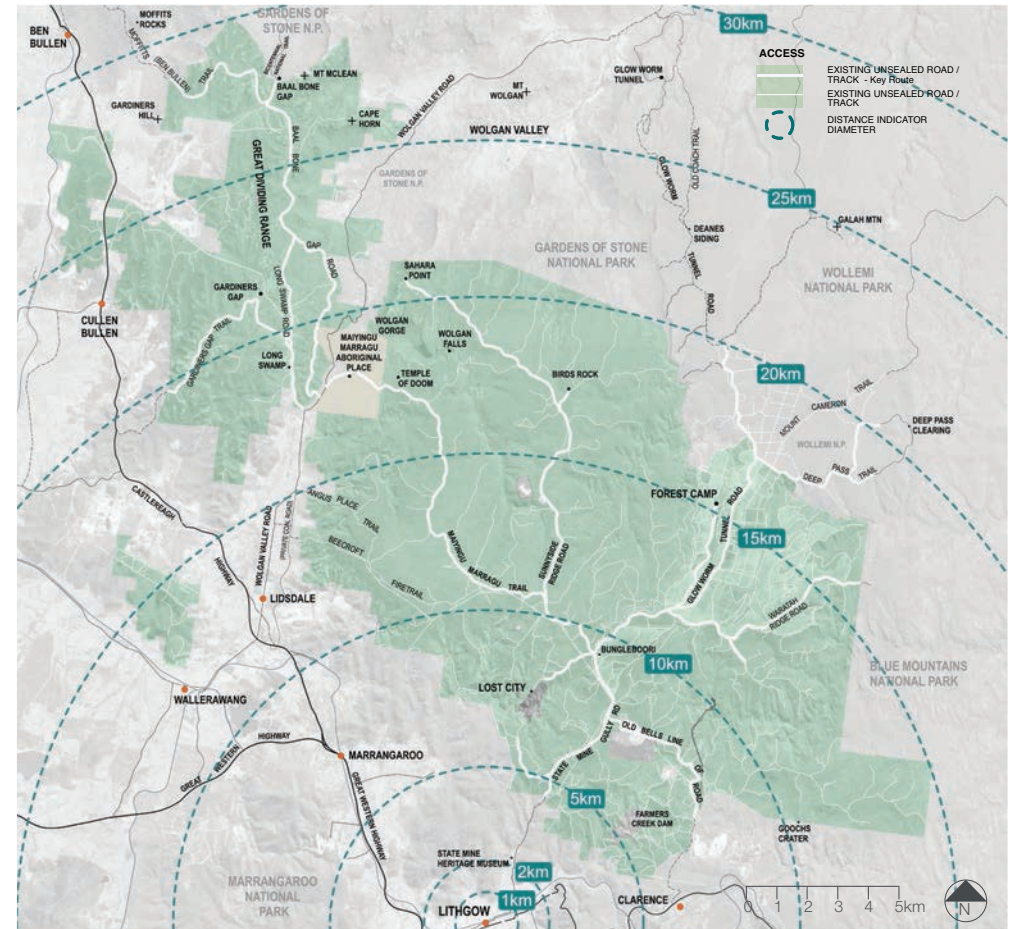
While the degradation caused by former land uses and un-managed recreational activities will take some time to rehabilitate, the qualities of the place will be a significant draw to visitors from the Greater Sydney and metropolitan area and further afield seeking immersion in nature.

There is potential for the Gardens of Stone SCA to provide a diverse suite of nature-based activities including cycling, camping and walking, from short-duration to multi-day walks.

The area can maintain and enhance its existing adventure recreation role for experienced climbers and canyoneers, while providing visitors with less outdoors experience and new visitors to national parks opportunities for curated adventure activities in a safe and sustainable environment.



Bushwalkers (Photo: Simone Cottrell/DPE)



Vehicular access

- This unique landscape is close to the Sydney metropolitan area.
- There is a trail service to Lithgow.
- Lithgow is 10 minutes drive from Lost City.



Glow Worm Tunnel Road (Photo: N. Eva)

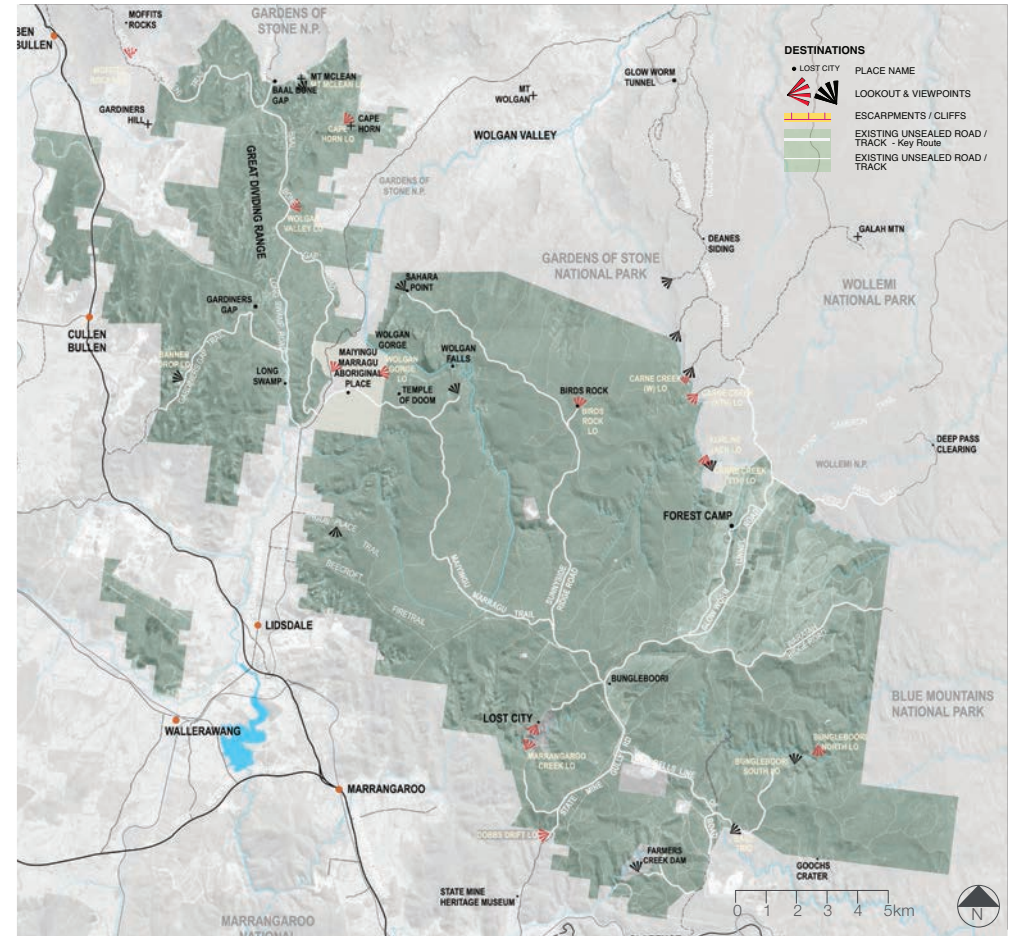


Bushwalking

- Existing reputation for unique walks amongst locals and return visitors.
- Potential for one of the world's great long-distance walks extending from the Gardens of Stone to Wollemi.
- Potential to utilise and rehabilitate existing degraded vehicle trails for walking tracks.
- Potential for extensive network of walking tracks catering for a variety of skill levels..




Potential for track rehabilitation for walking



Destinations

- A series of places and precincts within the Gardens of Stone SCA each with an identity and potential recreational role.
- Canyons and cliff faces are well known with climbers and abseilers.
- Potential for managed mountain bike recreation.
- Potential for parkland recreation in degraded plantation to complement natural experiences.
- Motorised trail bike use is of high environmental impact and is not sustainable within the park.
- Existing 4WD recreation within the area is popular and well known (although can be of significant impact).
- Potential for camping for 4WD and bushwalking tourism.



The park values have guided a park vision which in turn informs a series of high-level principles and detailed planning strategies as the basis for ongoing precinct planning

Dam and swamp near Forest Camp (Photo: N. Eva)

3 Planning strategies

The following planning principles and strategies seek to lay the foundation for ongoing planning and design for the Gardens of Stone SCA. The planning guidance reflects and develops the park values and vision outlined earlier in this report and in the Gardens of Stone SCA Draft Plan of Management.

Principles

The park planning principles in section 3.1 establish high-level guiding statements that are to be considered in developing more detailed responses to site needs and opportunities.

The principles provide the foundation for planning strategies for the Gardens of Stone SCA and include:

- environment and habitat
- heritage and scenic amenity
- visitation
- vehicular access
- 4WD access
- bushwalking experiences
- mountain biking
- adventure experiences and tourism
- camping
- services and facilities
- other opportunities.

Strategies

The park planning strategies in section 3.2 provide a framework of more detailed planning, design and management guidance, implementing and developing the preceding park planning principles.

The strategies describe the following information for a series of key planning and management factors for the Gardens of Stone SCA:

- **objectives** - intended outcomes to be achieved through planning design and management
- **key considerations** - constraints and opportunities that may influence realisation of the intended outcomes and which need to be addressed
- **strategies** - Detailed actions designed to achieve / address the intended outcomes and guide ongoing precinct design and management

The strategies are illustrated across the Gardens of Stone SCA by supporting strategy maps, and are applied and developed through the concept

precinct proposals outlined in section 4 of this plan.

The strategies commencing on page 30 are presented in 2 streams as summarised below:

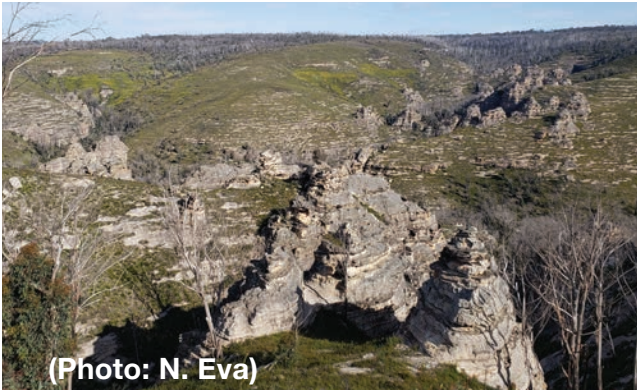
Environment

- geology, topography and soils
- water management
- habitat management
- heritage management
- cultural heritage (Wiradjuri and historical)
- scenic amenity

Visitation and use

- arrival, orientation and wayfinding
- vehicular access
- bushwalking and pedestrian access
- mountain bike recreation
- adventure tourism
- events and organised activation
- camping and on-park accommodation
- services and facilities
- collaborative opportunities

3.1 Park planning principles



Environment and habitat

- Conserve, manage and enhance the exceptional environmental values of Gardens of Stone SCA.
- Complement and support the management of the adjacent World Heritage-listed national parks.
- Sustainably balance environmental values with an ongoing recreational role for the park.
- Educate visitors of the park's environmental values through their access to and use of the park.



Wiradjuri Culture and scenic quality

- Protect, recognise and celebrate the natural and cultural heritage of the place.
- Facilitate the aspirations of Traditional Owners to care for and share Country and Wiradjuri culture.
- Protect the scenic qualities of the natural and cultural landscape.
- Recognise, conserve and enhance the scenic qualities of the place in new works and facilities.
- Provide nature and adventure recreation / tourism experiences that both leverage and protect the natural and cultural heritage values.



Visitation

- Promote sustainable, low-impact visitation that aligns with conservation values.
- Develop iconic visitor experiences that align with current markets and user groups.
- Deliver a user experience that meets the needs of diverse user groups, is seamlessly connected with strategic wayfinding, and captures heritage and cultural values.
- Encourage activation of the Gardens of Stone SCA for recreation, nature tourism and events to:
 - increase awareness and understanding of its values
 - support ongoing management.
- Recreational and tourism use drives social and economic benefits for the local community.
- Develop and retain local tourism jobs.



Vehicular access and parking

- Provide vehicular access to and within the park to facilitate a broad range of uses.
- Provide an arrival experience that embodies and reflects the character of the place.
- Maintain a sustainable level and siting of recreational vehicular access as a recognised aspect of park visitation.
- Plan, design and manage vehicular access to minimise and manage environmental impacts.
- Ensure that vehicle access and parking do not detract from the park experience for other park users.



4WD access

- Maintain a sustainable level and siting of registered 4WD and motorcycle access as a recognised aspect of park visitation.
- Plan, design and manage 4WD vehicular access to minimise and restrict environmental impacts.
- Ensure that 4WD vehicle access and parking does not detract from the park experience for other park users.



Bushwalking experiences

- Develop an integrated walking track network to access visitor nodes and features and provide recreational walking experiences.
- Cater for a wide range of abilities and walking experience.
- Cater for multi-day walks both within the Gardens of Stone SCA and integrated adjoining trail systems (such as the Bicentennial National Trail).
- Support the track network with on-site wayfinding interpretation and online information.

3.1 Park planning principles



Mountain biking

- Develop an integrated and sustainable mountain bike trail network to harness growth of nature-based cycling.
- Integrate mountain bike trail network where feasible to access visitor nodes and features.
- Cater for a wide range of abilities and riding experience.
- Cater for multi-day rides both within the Gardens of Stone SCA and integrated with adjoining trail systems.
- Support the track network with on-site wayfinding, interpretation and online information.



Adventure experiences and tourism

- Develop iconic nature-based experiences that leave a lasting visitor experience, build awareness of conservation and heritage values, and promote repeat visitation.
- Provide for adventure recreation and tourism uses that:
 - leverage the park's dramatic landscape
 - are compatible with the park's natural and cultural values
 - are located where they can be managed in an environmentally sustainable manner
 - increase awareness and understanding of the park's values and support ongoing management.



Camping

- Provide a range of camping opportunities to cater for different user groups and encourage varied experiences within the Gardens of Stone SCA.



Services and facilities

- Provide facilities to support and encourage sustainable recreational use.
- Provide facilities to improve the recreational and environmental management of the site.
- Planning of visitor and management precincts that will provide varied visitor experiences, facilities and recreational offerings and respond creatively to precinct character and identity.
- Providing for effective servicing of campsites and visitor facilities including waste management and cleaning monitoring.
- Provision of national parks management facilities for ongoing management of the park in appropriate locations for ease of operations.



Other opportunities

- Develop potential to cater for events that are able to be hosted within a flexible or multi-use day use area at previously disturbed sites.

3.2 Park planning strategies: environment

3.2.1 Geology, topography and soils

Objectives

- To protect the area's unique geodiversity.
- To sustainably manage access and activation pressures to protect the stability and condition of geology and soils.
- To encourage community understanding and appreciation of the park's unique geodiversity.

Key considerations

- Sandstone pagoda formations include platy and smooth of which platy are more unstable.
- Ongoing mining operations below the surface with supporting infrastructure and monitoring on the surface
- Potential impact of subsurface mining on geological stability.
- Past and future impact of subsidence from mining activities on elevated swamp profiles.
- Sensitive formations and landforms needing protection include swamps, pagoda formations, cliff and escarpment areas.
- Sandstone-based soils of the area are highly erodible.
- Vehicle access, including 4WDs and motor bikes can have a significant impact on soil stability and geological features.

Strategies

1. Ongoing assessment and monitoring of mining activities and impacts on the geoheritage of Gardens of Stone SCA.
2. Control access to geological formations where impacts have been identified.
3. Develop approach for access around sensitive formations that:
 - prevents vehicular access
 - considers the level of disturbance from pedestrian access that is acceptable and sustainable in each location
 - guides pedestrian access and where necessary provides defined routes that prevent damage.
4. Manage vehicular access to a sustainable network designed and managed to limit damage and detrimental impacts.
5. Provide appropriate drainage and track surfacing and management to mitigate erosion and other damage.
6. Consider impacts and mitigation of climate change in geology and soils related planning, design and management.

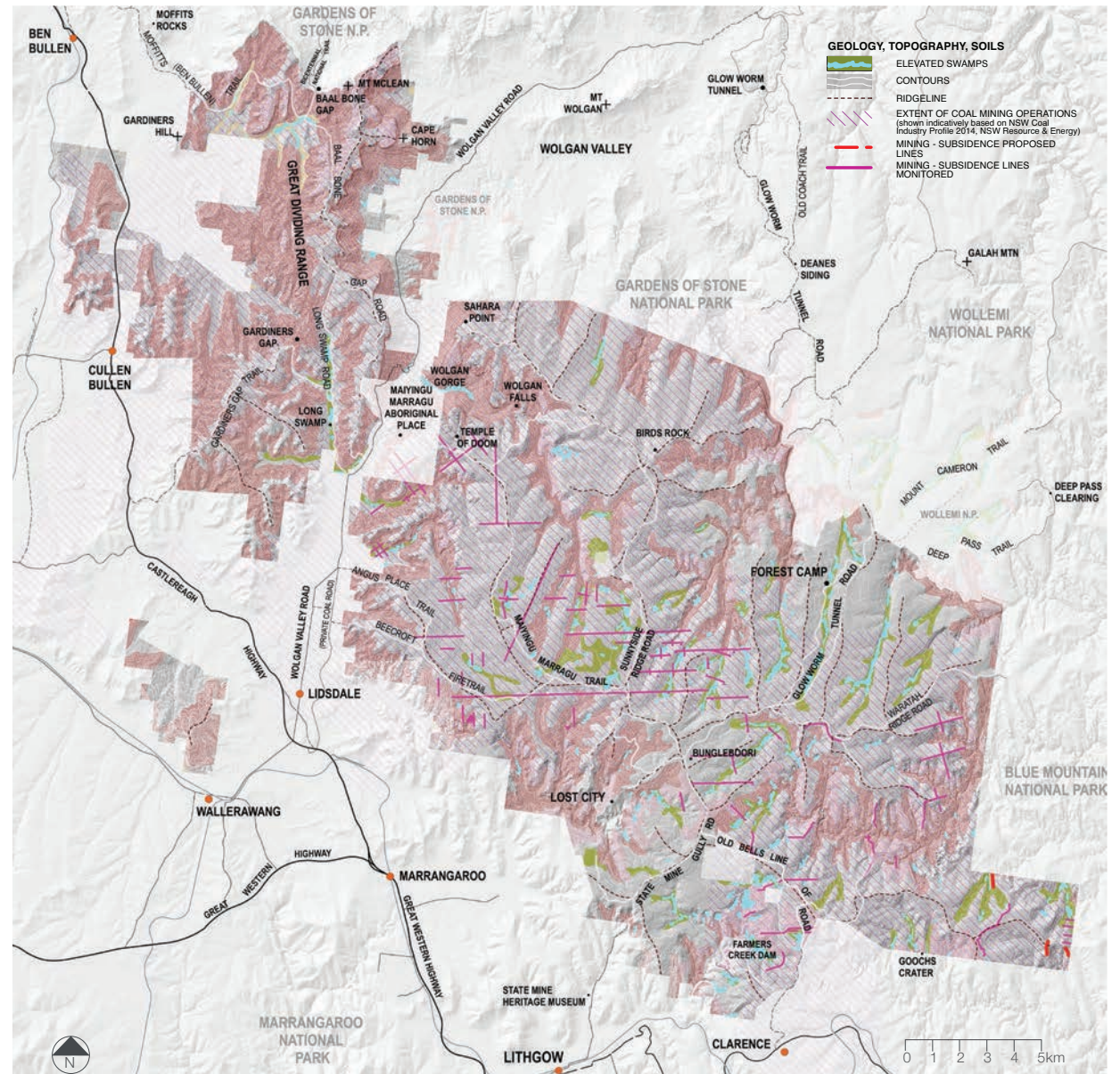


Figure 2 Geology, topography and soils strategies



Pagodas near Dobbs Drift (Photo: N. Eva)

3.2 Park planning strategies: environment

3.2.2 Water management

Objectives

- To protect remaining Newnes Plateau Shrub Swamp Endangered Ecological Communities through limiting changes to groundwater hydrology.
- To protect creek systems to maintain stable and healthy hydrological systems.
- To sustainably manage recreational use and other usage or access pressures to protect and enhance hydrological systems and features.
- To mitigate impacts of rainfall and flooding on track erosion and associated impacts on adjoining areas.
- To sustainably manage recreational use and other pressures to protect creek systems, other hydrological features and water quality.
- To encourage community understanding and appreciation of the park's unique swamp landscapes and other hydrological features.

Key considerations

- Gardens of Stone SCA has elevated swamps with permanently high water tables maintained by groundwater – changes in groundwater water, can result in impacts on hydrology.
- Past and future impact of subsidence from mining activities on elevated swamp ecology.
- Past and potential vehicular access creating erosion and water quality impacts:
 - swamp edges impacted by vehicle overrun on adjacent tracks
 - other areas as required.
- Potential impacts of rain events and flooding on erosion and water quality.
- Regulatory requirements to manage water quality within and downstream of the park.
- Future impacts of climate change on sensitive sites in relation to flood and fire events increasing in severity and number with shorter recovery periods.

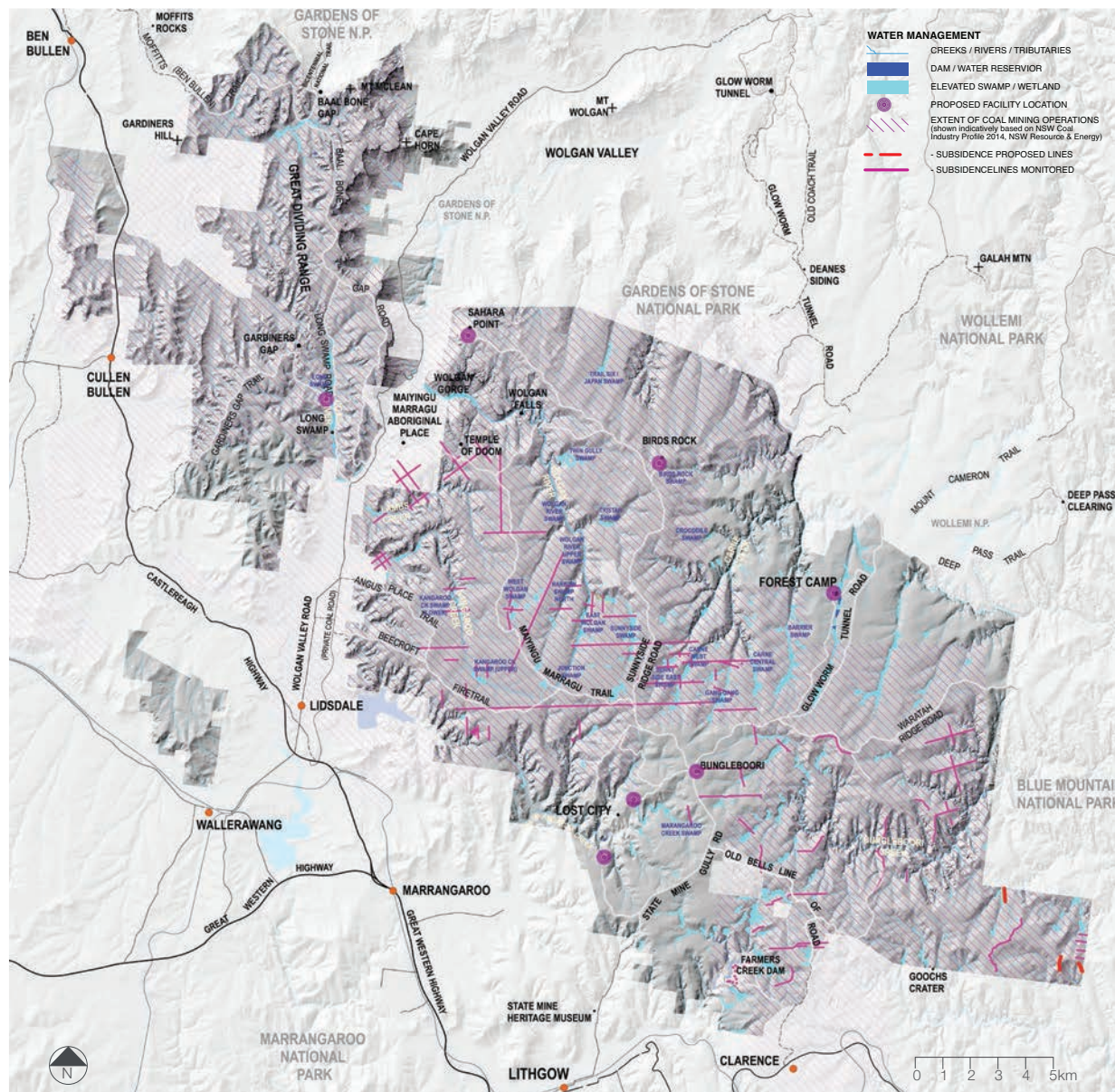


Figure 3 Water management strategies

Strategies

1. Ongoing assessment and monitoring of mining activities and impacts on the hydrology of Gardens of Stone SCA.
2. Control access to swamp areas where impacts have been identified.
3. Develop approach for access around sensitive creeklines and swamps that:
 - manages vehicular access
 - considers the level of disturbance from pedestrian access that is acceptable and sustainable in each location
 - guides pedestrian access and where necessary provides defined routes that prevent damage.
4. Develop an approach for vehicular access which controls access to an appropriate and sustainable network that is resilient to damage and is designed and managed to limit damage and detrimental impacts to creek systems and areas of hydrological sensitivity.
5. Position new visitor facilities and activities to control and manage impacts on overland flows, groundwater and water bodies including:
 - careful siting of amenities and sewerage systems
 - provide boardwalk or bridge access
 - recreational access to water bodies.
6. Provide appropriate drainage and track surfacing and management to mitigate erosion and other damage through rain events and flooding.
7. Assess existing disturbed and damaged swamps and proposed mitigation methods for hydrological remediation and ecological rehabilitation.
8. Rehabilitate swamp edges and other sensitive hydrological features which have been damaged by vehicle activity.
9. Consider impacts and mitigation of climate change in all water management-related planning and design.

Watercourses



Marrangaroo Creek



Creekline near Birds Rock

3.2 Park planning strategies: environment

3.2.3 Habitat management

Objectives

- To conserve, manage and enhance the ecological values of Gardens of Stone SCA.
- To sustainably manage recreational use and other usage and access pressures to protect and enhance biodiversity and habitats.
- To provide a buffer to adjoining high quality habitats.

Key considerations

- Areas of past forestry, including logged native forest and *Pinus radiata* / softwood plantations, have created significant landscape change.
- Remaining elevated swamp vegetation in plantation areas may have been impacted by the change in adjacent vegetation cover.
- Rehabilitation of disturbed swamps will consider the underlying impacts of changes to the geology and hydrology.
- Invasive and ecological weed encroachment.
- Potential impacts and disturbance of access and recreational use on fauna.
- Impacts of past and future bushfire events.
- Impacts of past and future flood events.
- Future impacts of climate change on sensitive sites in relation to flood and fire events increasing in severity and number with shorter recovery periods.

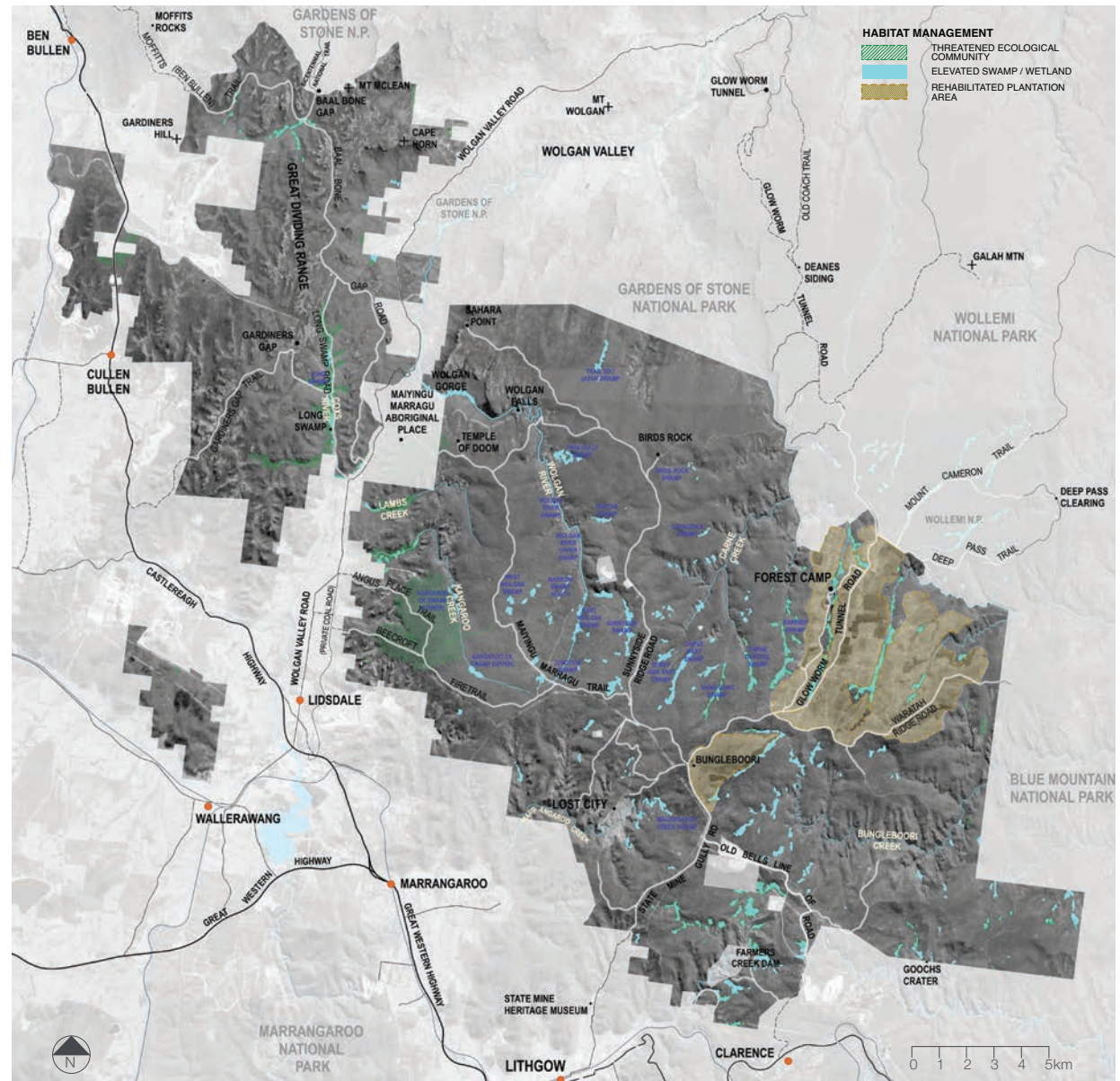


Figure 4 Habitat management strategies

Strategies

1. Ongoing assessment and monitoring of mining activities, impacts and mitigation methods.
2. Ongoing assessment of areas with threatened ecological communities.
3. Where new facilities can not be located in existing disturbed areas, planning and design to consider impacts and mitigation methods.
4. Closure and remediation of unauthorised tracks and campsites.
5. Detailed mapping and assessment of former plantation forests, clearings, tracks and trails identifying those to be remediated and areas set aside for recreational activities.
6. Plantation areas, existing clearings and track network to be utilised for establishing multi-use visitor areas, visitor carparks, event areas, other facilities and mountain bike events hub.
7. Provide a natural buffer to adjoining national parks and more-remote escarpment forests, thus ensuring protection of environmental values in these areas, while offering views of broad areas or remote bushland and the sense of freedom experienced from such remoteness.
8. Develop a staged approach to remediation of plantation areas. Prioritise rehabilitation works over a medium to longer term time period (i.e. 5–20 year plan).
9. Develop approach for management of wilding pines and regrowth areas.
10. Further investigate and develop native fauna management approaches for the Gardens of Stone SCA.
11. Consider impacts and mitigation of climate change in all planning and design related to vegetation and habitat management.

Flora



Heathland (Photo: N Eva)



Heathland bushfire regrowth (Photo: N Eva)



Pagoda daisy (Photo: N Eva)

Fauna



Blue Mountains water skink (Photo: (N. Belmer)



Koala



Spotted-tail quoll

3.2 Park planning strategies: environment

3.2.4 Cultural heritage: Wiradjuri

Objectives

- To conserve, manage and enhance cultural heritage values.
- To sustainably manage activation and access pressures to protect and enhance cultural heritage values.
- To conserve and protect identified and potential Wiradjuri sites.
- To facilitate ongoing collaboration and consultation with Wiradjuri community stakeholders.
- To integrate Wiradjuri heritage and living cultural narratives into management, design and interpretation of place.
- To increase awareness and appreciation of cultural heritage.
- To integrate natural, Wiradjuri and historical heritage stories of the place together in a cohesive and holistic approach.

Key considerations

- A significant Wiradjuri cultural landscape.
- Long Swamp is a significant site, as a major food source and traditional gathering space for multiple groups.
- Wiradjuri aspirations to pursue cultural activities such as food gathering, maintenance of sites and communal events in the park.
- Potential impacts by vehicles and walking near sensitive.
- Ongoing impacts of fire, rain and flood events on sensitive sites.

Strategies

1. Further research and documentation of Wiradjuri values and connections with the park.
2. Integrate Designing with Country approach to planning design and management of precinct improvements.
3. Maintain ongoing consultation with the Wiradjuri community through planning and management of Gardens of Stone SCA.
4. Protect identified sites in accordance with policy, legislative requirements, and to best conservation practice.
5. In areas of Aboriginal Archaeological Potential investigations are to be conducted prior to any works being undertaken.
6. Develop a sitewide interpretative strategy that integrates natural, Wiradjuri and historical stories of the place in a cohesive approach.
7. Embed stories of the place in precinct design.
8. Support for Wiradjuri 'On Country' events.
9. Support Wiradjuri organisations to develop and provide for cultural tourism opportunities.



Hand stencils (Photo: Lithgow Tourism)

Cultural heritage: historical

Objectives

- To conserve, manage and enhance the cultural heritage values of Gardens of Stone SCA.
- To sustainably manage activation and access pressures to protect and enhance cultural heritage values.
- To conserve and protect identified and potential historical heritage sites.
- To integrate historic heritage into management, design and interpretation of place.
- To integrate natural, Wiradjuri and historical heritage stories of the place together in a cohesive approach.

Key considerations

- Remnants of built structures, clearings and the social history of the Newnes forestry development.
- Existing well-established historic themes that can be represented and interpreted for example railway and industrial themes along the State Mine Gully Road/ Glow Worm Tunnel Road.

Strategies

1. Protect identified historical sites in accordance with policy, legislative requirements and to best conservation practice.
2. For areas of historical archaeological potential, investigations are to be conducted prior to any works being undertaken.
3. Develop a park-wide detailed interpretative strategy for the Gardens of Stone SCA that integrates natural, Wiradjuri and historical heritage stories of the place together in a cohesive and holistic approach.
4. Embed stories of the place in precinct design through an interpretive landscape approach where stories of place are embedded in design and materials and supported by a variety of interpretive mediums.
5. Adaptively re-use existing buildings, structures and elements compatible with conservation requirements where they can address the required functionality and enhance the understanding and experience of the place.



State Mine Heritage Park (Photo: N. Eva)

3.2 Park planning strategies: environment

3.2.5 Scenic amenity

Objectives

- To allow the spectacular and varied scenery and environments to be appreciated through a range of visitation opportunities.
- To provide memorable experiences that showcase the extraordinary natural beauty of the area while creating a unique and compelling experience.
- To capture the scenic amenity of the park with strategic visitation opportunities that improve access to scenic locations.
- To capitalise on the extraordinary natural features within the park.

Key considerations

- Protection of sensitive and fragile geological features.
- Visitor safety management around pagoda formations and cliff or escarpment areas.
- Protecting natural heritage values including wilderness and scenery.
- Mitigating impact of detracting features, including:
 - vehicle wrecks
 - utility service corridors
 - powerline easements
 - above ground mining infrastructure.
- Impacts of past major fire events ie. 2019–20 fires. Some landscapes will take many years to recover.

Strategies

1. All new facilities are to be carefully located to ensure potential impacts on views and vistas are considered (i.e. situate facilities within the tree line on escarpments or below ridgelines).
2. All infrastructure will be low impact and strategically placed to enhance visitor experiences and where appropriate aligned with interpretive signage to strengthen awareness of core values and natural significance.
3. All materials for built facilities, tracks, carparks and signage are to be carefully considered to reduce opportunity for reflection and visual impacts.

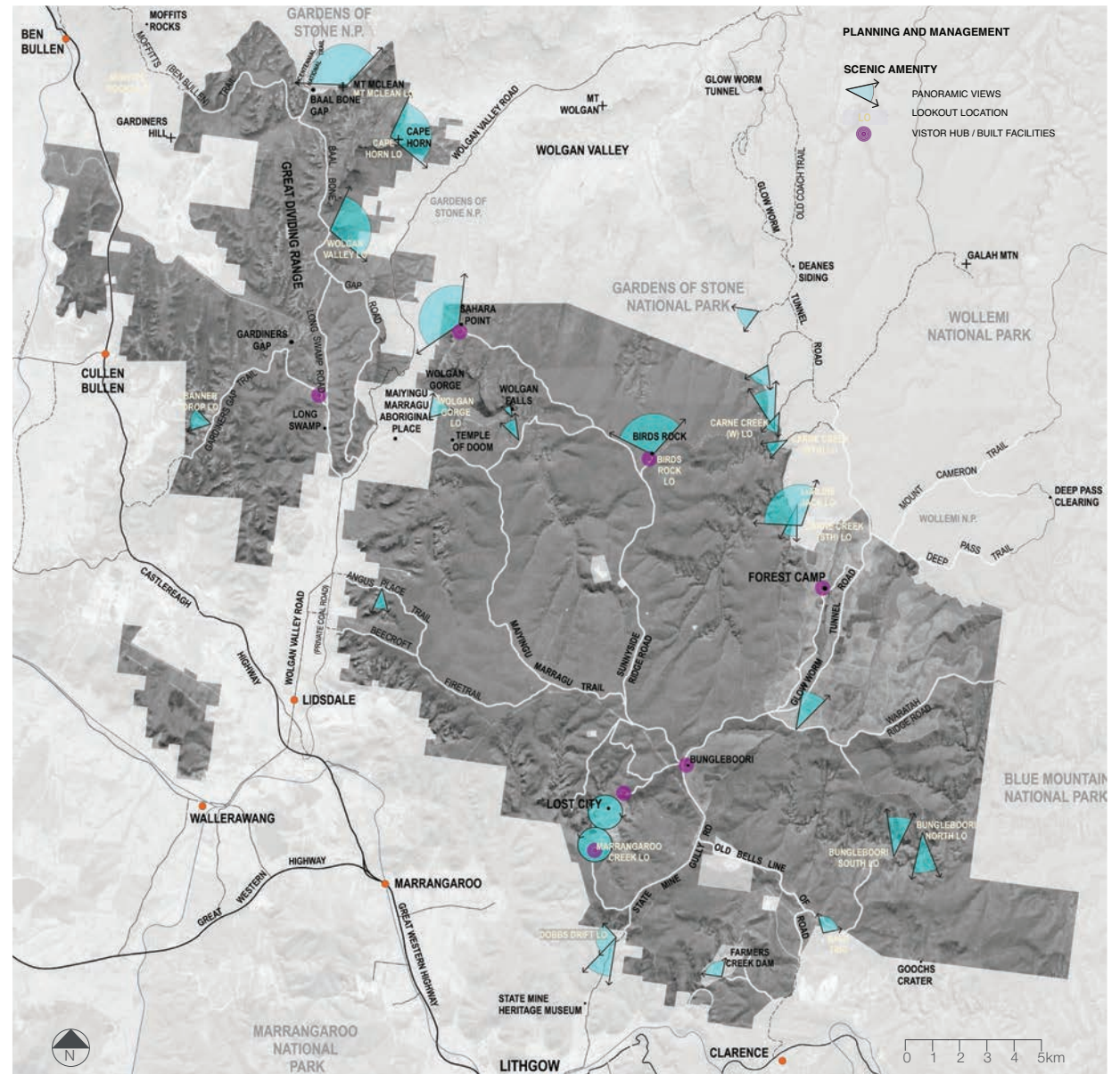


Figure 5 Scenic amenity management strategies

Panoramas



Carne Creek South lookout (Photo: N. Eva)



Long Swamp - Coxs River (Photo: N. Eva)

3.2 Park planning strategies: environment

3.2.5 Scenic amenity – lookouts

Objectives

- To provide a memorable scenia and visual experience in key locations through low-impact facilities.
- To provide accessible experiences to views and outlooks where feasible.
- To provide access and low-key facilities at more-isolated features and lookouts to add to the diversity of attractions.

Key considerations

- Escarpments, gorges and cliffs are high-risk environments.
- Suitably and sensitively located and designed lookouts can enable these areas to be viewed and enjoyed
- Track network views and vistas are generally constrained by vegetation.
- infrastructure such as barriers can detract from the visitor experience.
- The Australian Walking Track Standard provides a basis for grading access and infrastructure in a systematic approach.

Strategies

Lookouts Generally

1. Determine the level of facilities to be considered based on:
 - accessibility by car, bike or walking
 - anticipated volume of visitation
 - risk presented by cliffs and rock stability
 - role in short, loop or multi-day walks
 - visual sensitivity and visual character within the site.
2. Upgrade of existing and new specially located and designed lookouts to capture unique views at each location.
3. Provide a dramatic memorable experience to cater to peoples' sense of adventure.
4. New lookouts are to be easily accessible for visitors and located to catch the best views of day from sunrise to sunset.
5. Provision of safe access routes to more-isolated features and lookouts or view points to be provided from walking tracks – employ elevated boardwalks where appropriate to encourage use of defined routes.

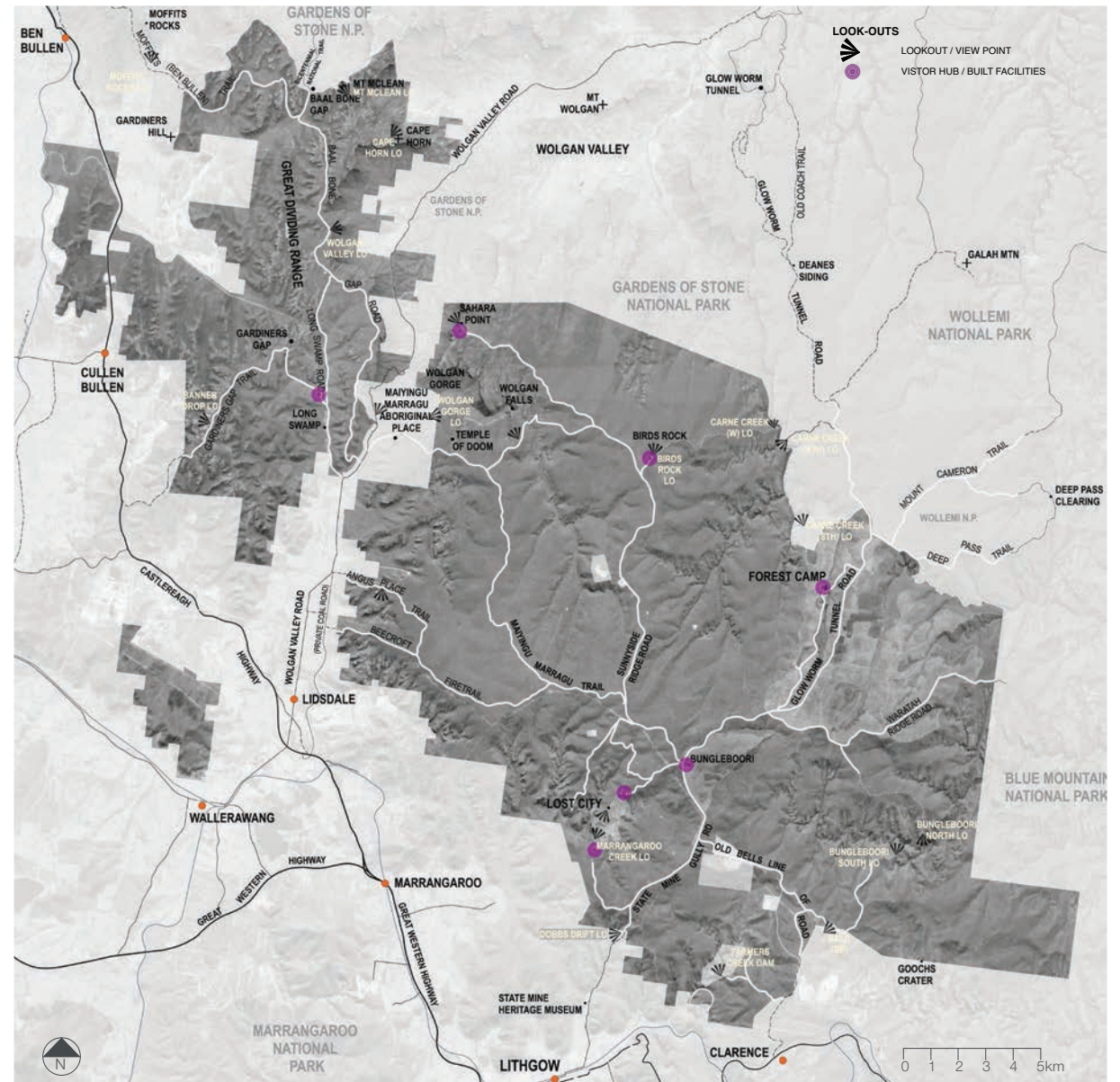


Figure 6 Scenic amenity and lookout strategies

Strategies

6. Provide facilities at lookouts with accessibility from parking:
 - shelter
 - water availability
 - toilets
 - wheelchair access
 - shady picnic areas and
 - integrated interpretation.

Specific Lookouts

State Mine Gully and Lost City precinct:

- Lookouts to provide iconic views in high-use visitor areas.
- Walking track access from carparks, lookout area/platforms will capture panoramic views.
- Provide opportunity for people with mobility challenges to access facilities and lookouts.
- Locations include:
 - a. Lost City Lookout (north).
 - b. Marrangaroo Creek Lookout (south Lost City).
 - c. Dobbs Drift Lookout:
 - views to Lithgow and Sphinx Pagoda
 - upgrade carpark
 - vehicle barrier to prevent unauthorised access to pagodas
 - rehabilitate walking track with designated viewing areas
 - consider lookout structure to facilitate safe views.

Carne Creek Precinct:

- a. Carne Creek Lookout (southern):
 - access via walking track extension from Forest Camp loop walking track.
- b. Carne Creek Lookout (north-east):
 - vehicular barrier, walking track to lookout.

Birds Rock Precinct:

- a. Birds Rock Lookout:
 - 4WD vehicular access to small carpark
 - vehicular barrier and picnic area
 - short walking path to lookout
 - consider potential toilet facilities.

Strategies

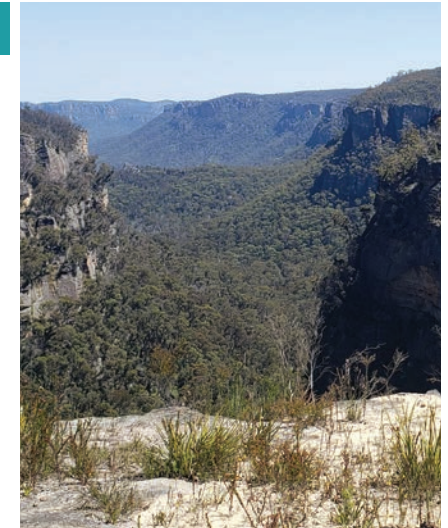
- b. Carne Creek Lookout (west)
 - accessed via rehabilitated walking track from Birds Rock.

Long Swamp Precinct:

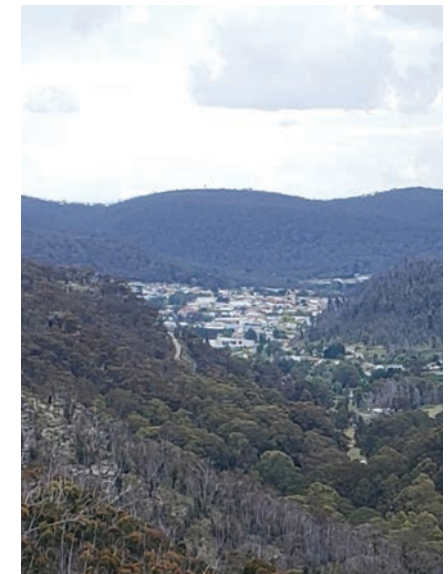
- a. Wolgan Gorge Lookout.
- b. Wolgan Falls Lookout.

Other visitor lookouts:

- a. Bungleboori north and south lookouts
 - 4WD vehicular access
 - parking area
 - vehicular barrier
 - walking track to lookout.
- b. Sahara Point:
 - 4WD vehicular access to Sunnyside Ridge Road
 - small carpark
 - vehicle barrier
 - picnic area.
- c. Wolgan Valley Lookout:
 - 4WD accessible route to parking area
 - parking area
 - picnic area.
- d. Cape Horn Lookout:
 - 4WD accessible route to parking area
 - walking track to lookout.
- e. Baal Bone Gap:
 - 4WD accessible route to parking area
 - picnic facilities.



Birds Rock Trail / Carne Creek West



Dobbs Drift looking towards Lithgow

3.2 Park planning strategies: visitation and use

3.2.6 Arrival orientation and wayfinding

Objectives

- To seamlessly deliver connections across the Gardens of Stone SCA for diverse user groups.
- To build a sense of anticipation and expectation.
- To create an arrival experience that celebrates the place by way of transitioning through an experience rather than just through a gateway or past signage.
- To enhance the arrival experience to an iconic destination by providing targeted information.
- To enhance amenity for users, improving awareness and focusing on storytelling that enhances the user experience.
- To improve local connections to the Lithgow community.
- To link the park with surrounding areas to leverage visitation through the Lithgow region and beyond.
- To improve the accessibility and amenity for Gardens of Stone SCA visitors.
- To clearly clarify orientation for visitors across Gardens of Stone SCA.
- Use landscape prompts to support wayfinding.

Key considerations

- No existing formal arrival experiences.
- Very limited existing wayfinding in Gardens of Stone SCA.
- Views and vistas are generally constrained along existing vehicle tracks where there are woodland or forests either side and few locations along the journey where long views are obtained which can limit visitors ability to orientate.
- Temporary wayfinding signage system required to support interim use while overall strategies are developed.

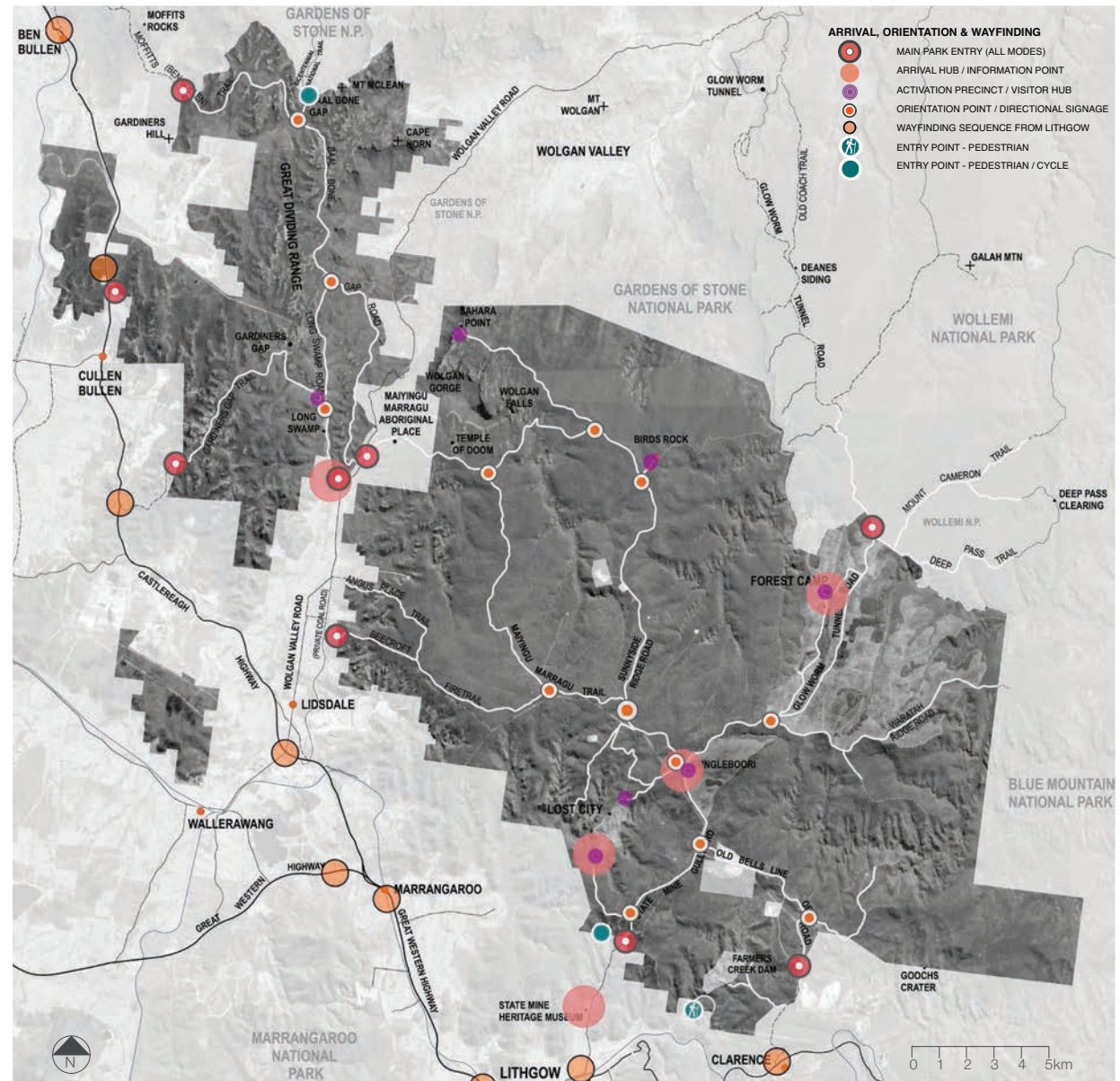


Figure 7 Arrival orientation and wayfinding strategies

Strategies

1. Develop wayfinding strategy for Gardens of Stone SCA and integrate with landscape features to support identification.
2. Enhance a sense of arrival at main entries and precincts.
3. Build a story and interest through the arrival journey.
4. Provide clear wayfinding to park entries from Lithgow (collaborate with Lithgow Council).
5. Extend wayfinding beyond Lithgow region, integrated with road network and relevant tourism bodies.
6. Provide distance information at key junctions or locations to destinations and facilities to aid orientation.
7. Integrate interpretation themes into wayfinding mediums.
8. Use robust industrial and natural materials.
9. Considered placement of arrival and orientation information to allow space for visitors to stop safely and read information at park entries:
 - consider collaboration with the State Mine Heritage Park to integrate an arrival experience to Gardens of Stone SCA
 - consider orientation point at junction to the Lost City turnoff.
10. Recognise how the landscape features (cliffs and vegetation) at State Mine Road entry contribute to and can build anticipation. Consider and retain the following in the design for upgrade to sealed road:
 - views to cliffs
 - experience of narrow valley climb.
11. Potential to a build a story within each visitor precinct based on particular features/themes relevant to the precinct integrated into wayfinding mediums.
12. Develop wayfinding strategy for track identification for walking, mountain bike, shared use and 4WD use.
13. Provide wayfinding elements that have enduring visual interest.
14. Support on-park road and track wayfinding with online platforms integrating park and interpretational information.



State Mine Gully Road - a main arrival route (Photo: N. Eva)



Bungleboori - potential orientation point (Photo: N. Eva)

3.2 Park planning strategies: visitation and use

3.2.7 Vehicular access

Objectives

- To provide a 2WD touring route that enables visitors to access visitor nodes.
- To provide designated 4WD touring routes for registered vehicles.
- To facilitate attractive driving experiences that reflect and celebrate the place.
- To provide the opportunity to drive into natural bushland to experience a different Blue Mountains environment.
- To use existing road and trails network where possible.
- To ensure all-weather access to key visitor hubs.
- To control the extent of visitor vehicular access to defined visitor routes to protect sensitive areas.
- To provide defined and functional parking areas to service visitor hubs and facilities.
- To provide effective management access.
- Provide for site trail restoration and erosion management on former degraded vehicle routes.

Key considerations

- The existing road/trail network is generally in poor condition.
- Glow Worm Tunnel Road is an established destination with historic links to Lithgow, Newnes railway and industrial history.
- Existing roads on the plateau are relatively flat, providing opportunity for upgrading to 2WD use.
- Sandstone soils of the area are highly erodible.
- Provision of effective trail drainage is essential.
- Management of use of roads during rain events with temporary track closures..
- Off-road access is not permitted outside of the designated road network.
- Access for fire fighting and for fire management is required.
- Maintenance vehicle access to visitor locations is required.
- Ongoing access requirements to mining infrastructure and monitoring sites to be considered.
- Degradation of existing roads and trails through illegal vehicle use.

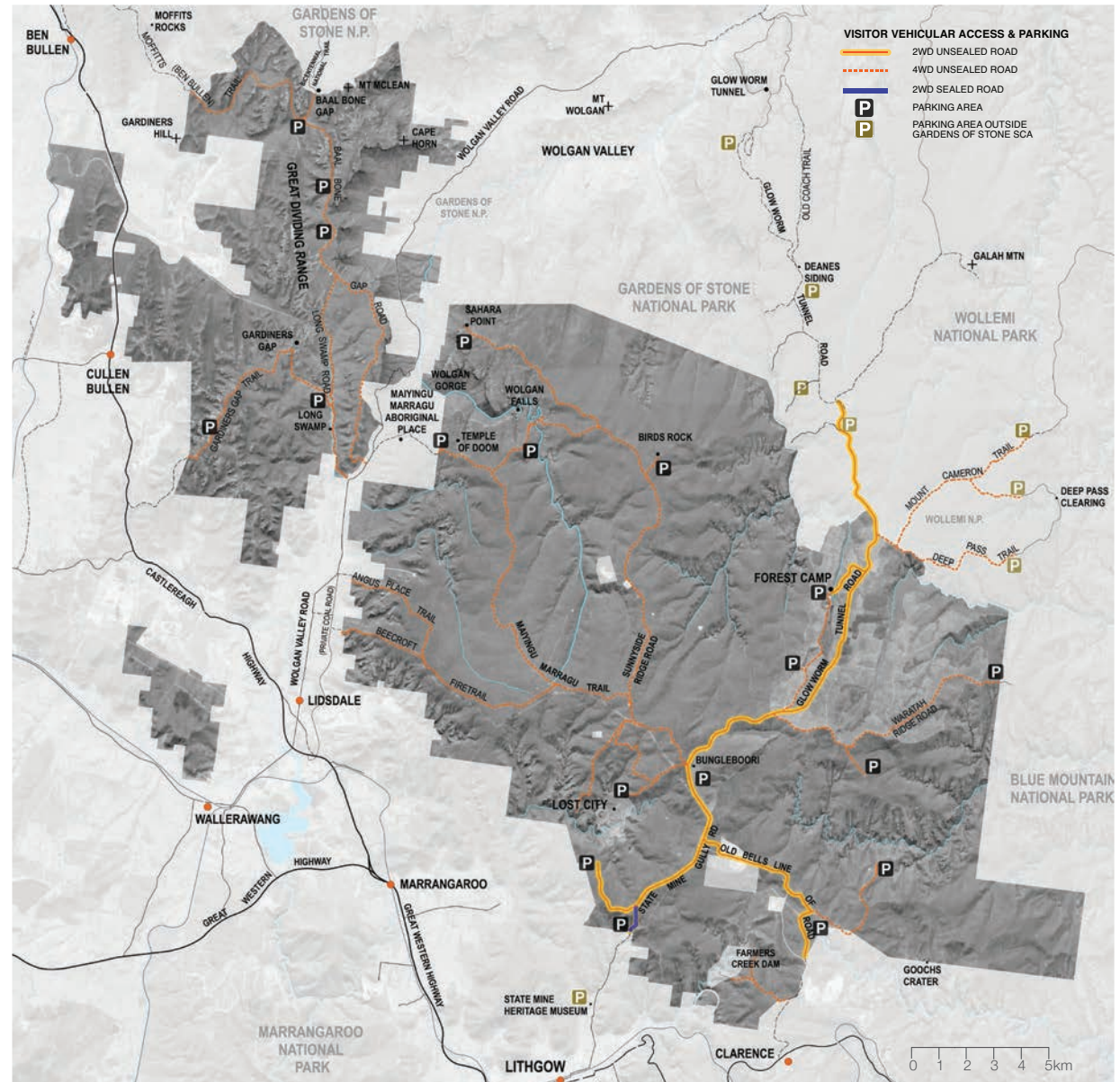


Figure 8 Vehicular access strategies

Strategies

1. Provide a 2WD vehicular access strategy that aligns with the user experience for the park precincts, with self-drive itineraries developed to capture key visitor highlights.
2. Use the existing major gravel roads to form the core access road structure and touring route for the Gardens of Stone SCA:
 - State Mine Gully Road
 - Glow Worm Tunnel Road
 - Maiyingu Marragu Trail.
3. Provide all-weather asphalt sealed surface to higher gradient sections of the core 2WD access road structure.
4. Provide road edge/verge drainage via swales and culverts to the core access road structure where possible to avoid major kerb or gutter infrastructure and maintain low-key character.
5. Upgrade short sections of gravel trails to 2WD gravel roads from the core access road structure and touring route to provide access to carparks at planned high-use lookouts.
6. Mitigate impact of rain events or flooding and erosion on roads, trails and adjacent areas through improvements to gravel surface, grading and drainage design.
7. Undertake road/trail closures where trails are not required for visitor access or management purposes and rehabilitate road/trail surfaces.
8. Provide clear information on the road network to ensure visitors are aware of trail conditions and vehicle limitations through signage.
9. Provide clearly defined visitor parking areas at visitor hubs for day use.
10. Generally carparking areas to be gravel to have a lower impact and be sympathetic with natural surroundings. Consider alternatives where drainage and erosion constraints preclude gravel surface.
11. Provide space for minibuses to drop-off and park at parking areas at high visitation sites.

12. Consider minibus access to key locations such as Lost City carparks for visitor drop-offs.
13. To limit road usage as part of sustainable management program, consider potential for minibus shuttle from Lithgow Station and potentially State Mine Heritage Park.
14. Location of visitor parking facilities, especially on plateau and escarpment areas, to consider visual impacts of not only roadway but to distant views ('reflection' from windscreens etc). Where possible position within ridge-top forested areas to ensure negligible impact on views/vistas.
15. Provide adequate gravel surfaced visitor parking for overnight use at drive-in camping areas.
16. Develop a park access strategy which includes consideration of trail rehabilitation and remediation as well as the extent of trail and road network requirements.

Management and fire fighting access (not shown on map)

17. Clearly define management access routes to visitor hubs.
18. Maintain fire access trails throughout conservation areas.
19. Where fire and maintenance trails do not form part of the planned visitor touring routes these trails require appropriate gates and management to prevent unauthorised access.

4WD recreational access

20. Provision of a 4WD touring routes consistent with the reserve access strategy.
21. Provision of designated skill-graded 4WD trail network including dry weather only accessible trails.
22. Closure of existing degraded roads and trails in more-sensitive areas and topography with high erosion potential.
23. Develop a park access strategy which includes consideration of trail rehabilitation and remediation as well as the extent of trail and road network requirements.



Glow Worm Tunnel Road



Old Bells Line of Road



Long Swamp Road

3.2 Park planning strategies: visitation and use

3.2.8 Bushwalking and pedestrian access

Objectives

- To provide a network of walking tracks with diversity of experiences, walking difficulty, distance and time.
- To provide a suite of family-friendly loop walks, seamlessly connected with visitor hubs.
- To provide a suite of iconic walks for all fitness levels, including easily accessible, low-gradient walks on the plateau.
- To cater to experienced walkers with challenging walks which traverse remote terrain that is unique to the area.
- To provide broad opportunities for visitors to experience nature at strategically placed lookouts and walking tracks, seamlessly connected with complementary visitor experiences within the park.
- To integrate multi-day walking opportunities, including the Wollemi Great Walk, within the walking track network.

Key considerations

- Visitor safety and risk management around pagoda formations and cliff or escarpment areas.
- Pagodas are vulnerable to damage from walkers.

Strategies

1. Review the existing track network and identify the existing tracks that meet all or some of the following criteria:
 - Functional and direct route to a visitor node or feature
 - Providing an experience of a landscape type or multiple landscapes
 - Capturing attractive views
 - Representing a culturally significant journey
 - Can be sustainably managed to mitigate and manage environmental impacts and degradation.

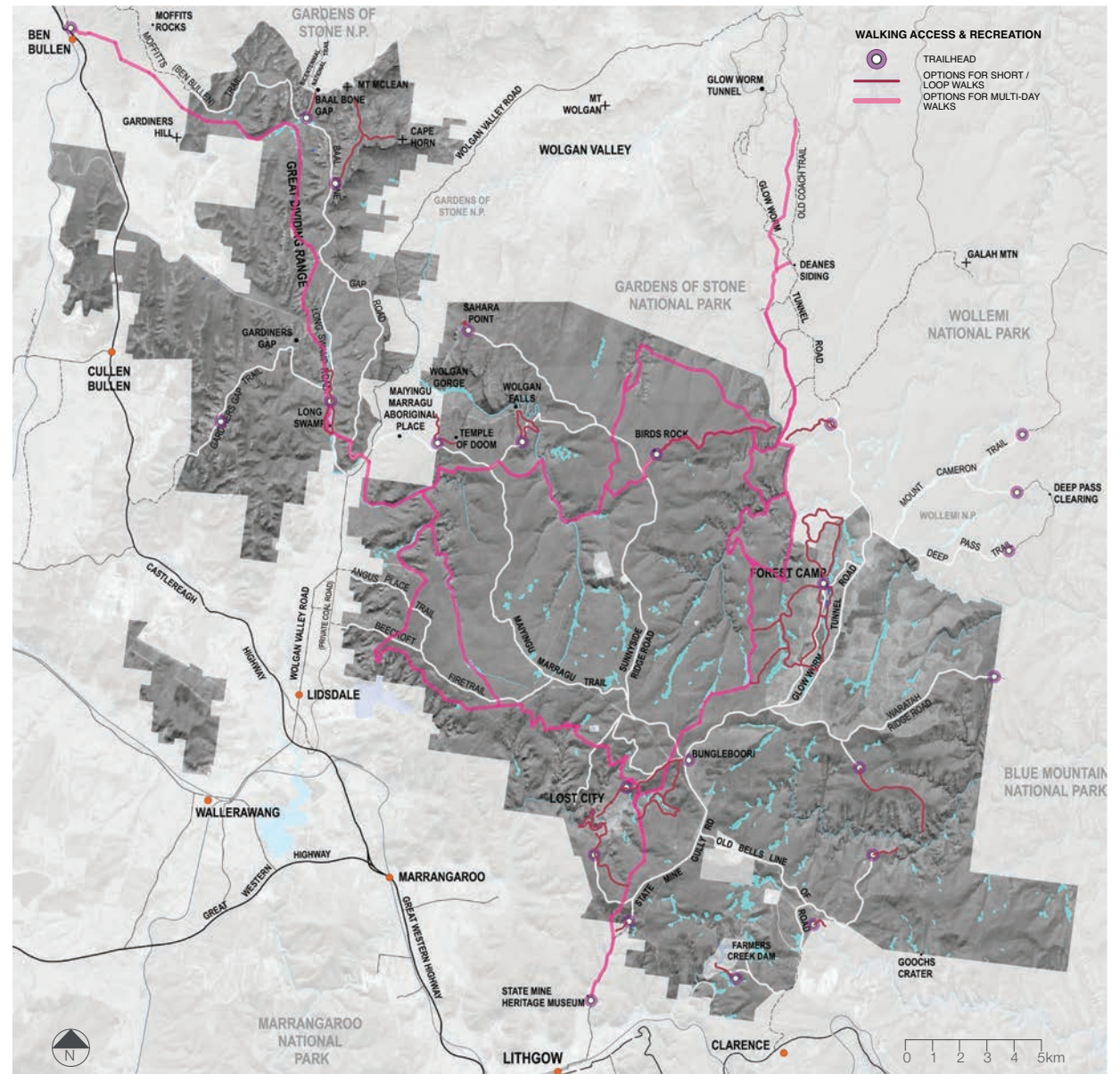


Figure 9 Bushwalking and pedestrian access strategies

Strategies (cont)

2. Use the existing track network outlined in strategy 1 as a framework to develop a network of walking tracks within and across key visitor nodes that will:
 - a. provide access to a range of landscapes including:
 - canyon and pagoda landscape
 - valley
 - plateau
 - forests
 - upland swamp experiences
 - b. provide a range of walks of different distances, walk times and difficulties including walks that are family-friendly and take advantage of gentle grade changes.
3. Based on the arrangement of visitor nodes, identify short accessible walks from carparks to planned high-use lookouts and consider:
 - minimum/maximum distance
 - minimal grade changes
 - the experience of a journey and revealing of the view.
4. Consider strategy for access to potable water integrated with multi-day walking track routes.
5. Using the general track access network, where appropriate develop a multi-day walk considering links with the Bicentennial National Trail and beyond the park boundary (such as with the Gardens of Stone National Park and Wollemi National Park). Multi-day routes to consider:
 - beginning and end locations and related ease of use and planning for walkers
 - provision of 'special' experiences and access to unique locations
 - provision of walk-in camping locations that facilitate sustainable low-impact camping
 - provision of walk-in locations that facilitate sustainable low-impact supported and guided walking accommodation.
6. Apply the Australian Walking Track Standard (AS 2156) to the identified track access network system to determine required levels of infrastructure provision.
7. Walking track design to consider potential views and appropriate material use, track width, position within the landscape and adjacent height and type of vegetation.
8. Walking track design to consider the sensitive and rare plant communities of the elevated swamps by tracks being set back to avoid harm and by providing boardwalk/bridge access where required.
9. Walking track design and visitor access to pagoda and sensitive geological areas to consider level of disturbance acceptable in each location. Consideration to allow limited access zone to particular formations so that visitors can have contact with these remarkable formations where the risk of a low level of disturbance is acceptable.
10. Walking track design and visitor access to consider cultural heritage values and on-ground sites. Conduct detailed assessments as required of proposed routes.
11. Walking track design to consider associated visitor facilities at head of walks that is parking, picnic areas/shelter/seating to be set back allowing buffer areas to sensitive areas and protection from erosion and visual impacts.
12. Clearly define walking tracks which are shared use (with cycle/MTB use) and walking only.
13. Provide coordinated wayfinding and interpretation to tracks. Walking recreation will be supported by appropriate wayfinding and align with self-guided itineraries to support the visitor experience.
14. Interpretational and educational mediums to be embedded within the recreational track network.
13. Support on-park track wayfinding with online platforms integrating park and interpretational information.

Track condition



Dobbs Drift (Photo: N.Eva)



Track worn by Trail bike



Potential route without existing track

3.2 Park planning strategies: visitation and use

3.2.9 Mountain biking and cycling access

Objectives

- To establish the Gardens of Stone SCA as a premier recreational cycling precinct, catering to all abilities and age groups.
- To formalise and curate opportunities for sustainable recreational cycling experiences in Gardens of Stone SCA.
- To attract a wide range of users that may not otherwise be aware of the Gardens of Stone SCA.
- To support all cycle networks with wayfinding for bike touring and mountain bike users.

Key considerations

- The Glow Worm Tunnel Road is already an established destination with historic links to Lithgow, Newnes railway and industrial history and provides walking and mountain bike connections into Newnes.
- Potential for shared use of key visitor routes with cyclists / walkers and or other vehicles with consideration of mining access and safety provisions.
- Existing vehicle trail network provides opportunities to rehabilitate degraded landscapes and incorporate or convert trails to cycling and/or mountain bike single-tracks.
- Extensive cleared areas of former pine plantations provide opportunities to develop mountain bike facilities with limited impact on existing sensitive environments.

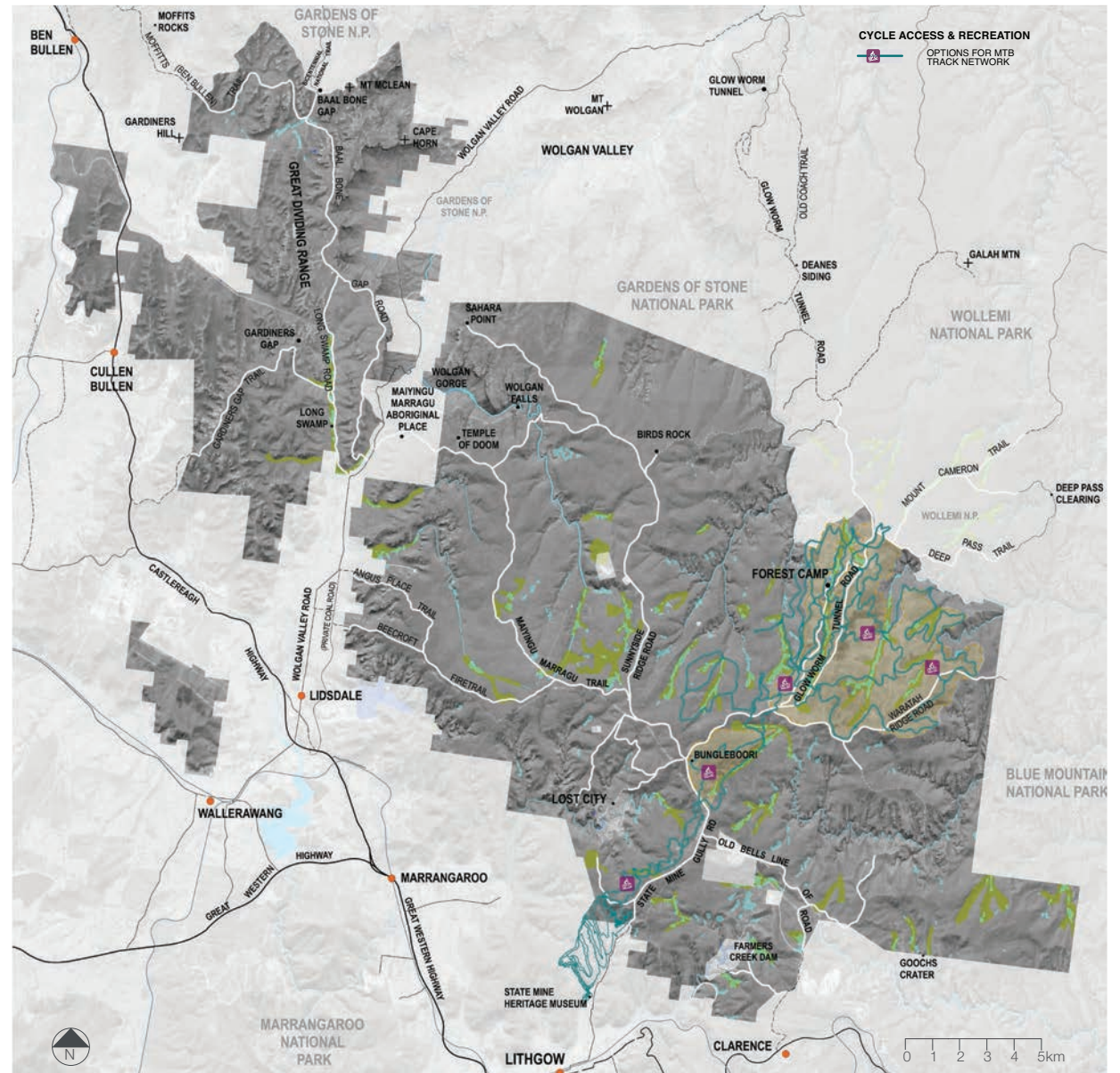


Figure 10 Mountain bike and cycling strategies

Strategies

1. Plan and develop an mountain bike hub at a suitable location, potentially the State Mine Heritage Park or within the former pine plantation, that will provide:
 - a range of destination mountain bike facilities such as mountain bike circuit, e-bike charging facilities and bike maintenance and service facilities
 - a multi-use flexible event space for mountain bike riders and the community
 - open managed grassed parkland area for picnics and family recreation
 - potential cafe or kiosk concession
 - access to drive-in camping at proposed Forest Camp site.
2. Develop an extensive network of mountain bike single-track within Gardens of Stone SCA through adaptation of sustainable sections of existing informal tracks linking with some sections of shared track and/or fire trails to establish a network of touring tracks.
3. Mountain bike tracks to be shared with fire trails where suitable.
4. Provide a diversity of landscape experiences along the track network and track types to cater for diverse user groups.
5. Clearly define dedicated mountain bike only tracks from shared tracks and walking only tracks.
6. Provide facilities for bike users at visitor hubs (e.g. bicycle racks).
7. Provide facilities for e-bikes (e.g. provision of charging stations at major visitor hubs).
8. Integrate the track network with the Rail Trail (along Newnes Railway), cycle and walking trail.
9. Provide on-road/off-road cycle access routes from Lithgow to Gardens of Stone SCA (collaborate with Lithgow City Council).
10. Support on-park track wayfinding with online platforms integrating park and interpretational information.

Mountain bike trails



3.2 Park planning strategies: visitation and use

3.2.10 Adventure tourism

Objectives

- To provide access to iconic nature-based adventure tourism experiences that capture the unique attributes of the area and are sympathetic with the natural surroundings.
- To provide access to iconic nature-based tourism experiences and recreation opportunities that are accessible and family-friendly.
- To support the development of state-of-the-art infrastructure to establish the park as a premier adventure tourism destination.
- To provide new activities and experiences designed for the whole family and all ages and abilities.
- To provide unique and memorable experiences that will encourage new and repeat visitation.

Key considerations

- Sandstone soils of the area are highly erodible.
- Cliff/escarpment/gorge areas are very rugged, and therefore require specific management measures for general visitors without specialist skills.
- Potential for siting of an adventure experience near the eastern edge of Gardens of Stone (Lost City) for proximity to Lithgow and related ease of access.
- Creation of economic opportunities in sharing information and in contributing to the tourism industry and regional visitor economy.
- Provision of facilities to attract tourists, groups, events and educational tours.

Strategies

1. Support and maintain existing canyoning, abseiling and rock climbing activities by experienced individuals and groups at suitable or designated locations.
2. Locate and design new facilities to minimise cultural and environmental impacts through construction and ongoing operation.
3. Locate and design new facilities to limit visual impacts to views and vistas to and from site.
4. Design facilities are designed to facilitate future removal with minimal disturbance to site.
5. Seamlessly integrate visitor safety into design, location of visitor facilities, lookouts and walks. Where required, provide physical safety barriers appropriate to each location and to minimise visual impacts.
6. Design pedestrian access around facilities and pagoda viewing points in accordance with lookouts strategies:
 - provision of safe access routes to more isolated features and lookouts/view points to be provided from walking tracks
 - elevated boardwalks where appropriate to encourage use of defined routes and provide access to otherwise unsafe locations.
7. Subject to appropriate cultural heritage and environmental impact assessment provide new adventure experiences (e.g. zip-lines, via ferrata assisted climbing route and a canyon adventure) through the development of an iconic visitor project at the Lost City Precinct. Develop the Lost City visitor adventure activity node to support the precinct including:
 - sensitively integrated into landscape.
 - sensitive architecturally designed structure celebrating the location through its subtle and site responsive form and materials

Strategies

- incorporating café area with expansive views of Lost City,
 - provision of visitor amenities,
 - provision of management and operations space.
8. Explore opportunity for provision of a 'Via Ferrata' assisted climbing experience within the Lost City precinct.
 9. Provision of a signature attraction long distance zip line within the Lost City precinct.
 10. Explore the opportunity for an elevated canyon walk within the Lost City precinct.
 11. Provision of walking tracks on the canyon floor within the Lost City precinct suitable for a range of visitors to further explore the landscape.
 12. Integrate visitor experiences with heritage structures such as former dams to canyon floor walks.



Abseiling (Photo: Scoopon.com.au)

3.2.11 Events and organised activation

Objectives

- To provide multi-purpose spaces to facilitate event activations, amplify visitation and provide low impact infrastructure to support diverse user groups.
- To explore potential for visitors to experience the site in new and diverse ways.
- To provide potential to expand awareness and understanding of site that may create further visitation.

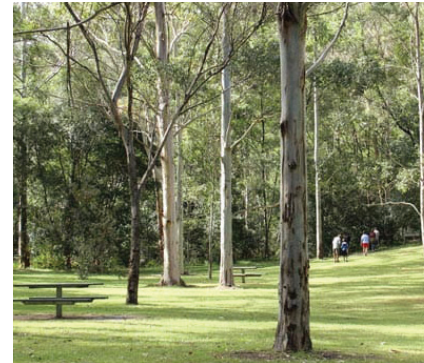
Key considerations

- Potential to build on existing users:
 - 4WD groups,
 - adventure groups.
- Potential to attract new user groups
 - Families
 - Mountain bike community
 - Music and cultural festivals
 - broader community.
- Potential to utilise existing disturbed/cleared areas of Gardens of Stone SCA for hosting/staging of recreational events – Mountain bike, endurance runs and walks or music festivals.
- Need to consider fixed infrastructure requirements, bump in facilities, operational i.e. waste management.
- Nearby access to key attractions in adjoining National Parks i.e. Glow Worm Tunnel, Deep Pass, Deanes Siding, Bicentennial National Trail.

Strategies

1. Provide a multi-use space that is capable of hosting events for use by different user groups and activities including cater for up to 5000 people, have access to appropriate event and support space, have access to permanent and support temporary camping areas
2. Provision of facilities that will enable flexible hosting of events including areas for group vehicle based camping, ease of access to 'event' trails, facilities for day-use visitors to event areas
3. All event use will be guided by NPWS event policies, cultural and environmental assessment procedures
4. Develop an event strategy for Gardens of Stone SCA that considers the number, type of events to attract and cater for on an annual basis, for development of management strategies around access, facilities and ongoing maintenance
5. Enable events to use a range of spaces and locations as part of an integrated event (i.e. Old Forest camp, Bungleboori, Plantation area).

Central parkland



Mill Creek picnic area



Village Green, Blue Gums Regional Park



Casuarina Point Picnic area

Major events



Falls Festival (Photo: musicfeeds.com.au)



Hill End Community event



Wollombi Wild Ride (Photo: Visitnsw.com)

3.2 Park planning strategies: visitation and use

3.2.12 Camping and on-park accommodation

Objectives

- To provide a range of camping options from drive-in to walk-in.
- To provide focal vehicle-based camping area and 4WD support facility suitable for family and group camping in close proximity to mountain bike and events spaces.
- To provide innovative camping options in remote locations that leverage the Gardens of Stone SCA's qualities and establish the area as a truly unique recreational offering.
- To provide opportunities for sustainable tourism businesses to offer tailored low-impact accommodation associated with the Wollemi Great Walk.
- To make use of and repurpose existing disturbed areas/ clearings for new visitor facilities.

Key considerations

- Necessity for low-impact facilities.
- Establishment of diverse options to encourage a broad range of new users groups to Gardens of Stone SCA.
- Fixed versus temporary infrastructure requirements.
- Ease of accessibility for new user groups.
- Capacity to provide camping areas including dedicated 4WD and 2WD camping sites suitable for recreational vehicles, caravans, camper trailers and tents.

Strategies

1. Develop a range of camping facilities that cater for different modes and user types including:
 - 2WD drive-in access with basic amenities
 - recreational vehicle and large camper trailer camping with basic amenities (as temporary or short-term facility for events)
 - 4WD only drive-in access with basic amenities
 - walk-in only access
 - ride and walk-in (mountain bike/walker) only access.

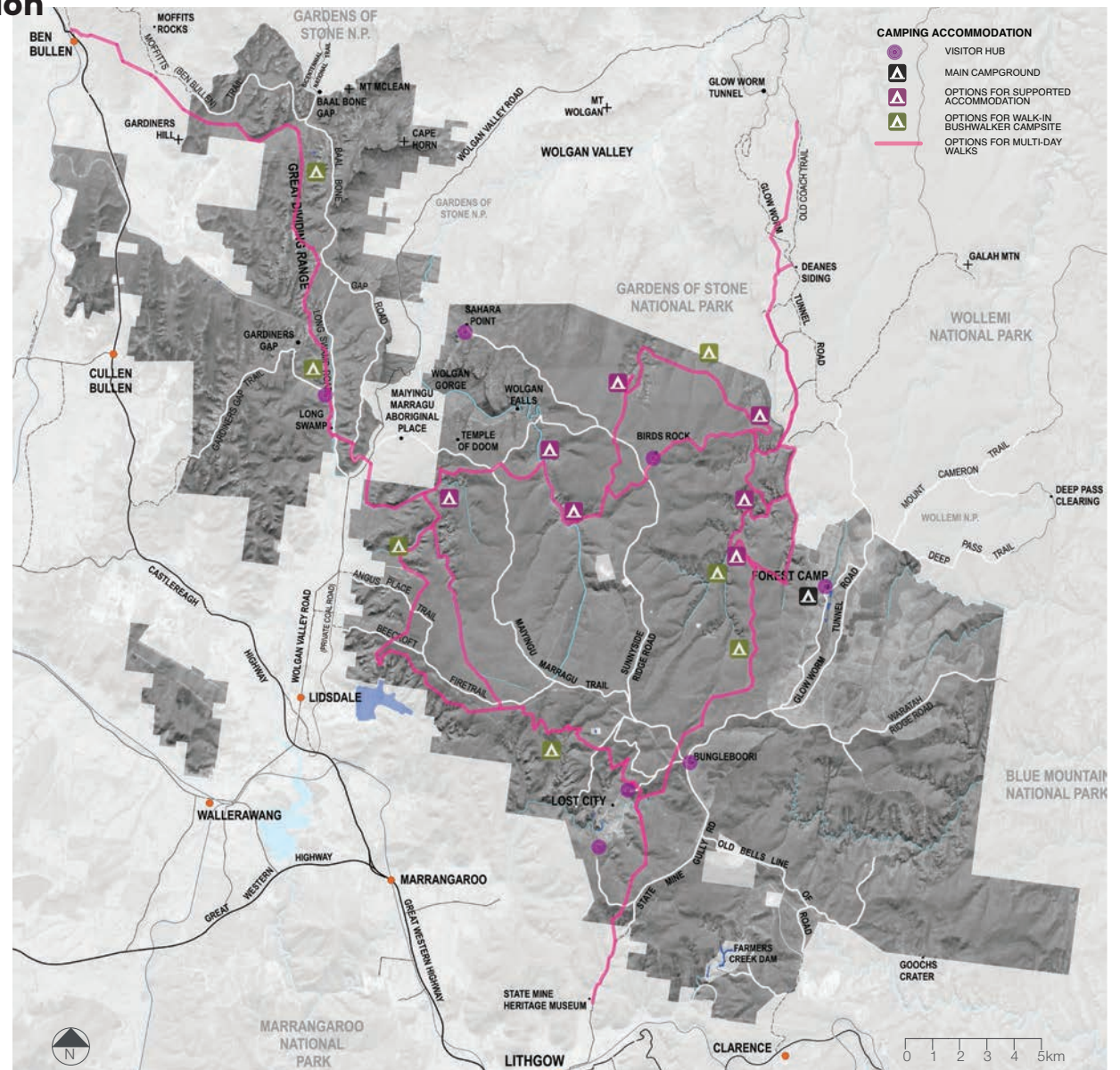


Figure 11 Camping accommodation strategies

Strategies (cont)

2. Make use of existing disturbed/cleared areas for major campsites and associated facilities:
 - Forest Camp
 - former pine plantation area.
3. Develop main campground for Gardens of Stone SCA at Forest Camp, taking advantage of existing cleared areas and proximity to dam water bodies. Planning to consider:
 - access road through campground
 - variety of campsites in small 'glades' including vehicle and tent camping, trailer camping, 4WD camp
 - existing worn and eroded area to be converted to grassed green for large group camping
 - central camp kitchen
 - dispersed barbecues and shelters
 - central amenities blocks
 - access decks/pontoons to dams
 - connections to walking track and mountain bike track networks.
4. Provide 4WD camping areas on 4WD recreational routes and through routes as part of longer touring tours. In general, provide designated campsites on elevated camping decks to manage environmental impacts and to define camping footprint Consider potential for remote toilet facility.
5. Consider developing recreational vehicle camping area for events and temporary facilities can be provided.
6. Identify potential sites for supported sustainable accommodation opportunities to be managed by a suitable tourism operator in association with the Wollemi Great Walk. Consider potential for remote toilet facilities and capacity to provide water supply.

7. Provide walk-in only camping sites to remote areas on multi-day walking track routes. In general, provide designated campsites on elevated camping decks to manage environmental impacts and to define camping footprint. Consider potential for remote toilet facilities and capacity to provide water supply.
8. Provide ride-in camping sites to remote areas on multi-day mountain bike track routes. Consider potential for remote toilet facility and capacity to provide water supply.
9. Provide group style vehicle-based camping area that is, for family/friends 4WD groups.
10. Increase accessible camping options and facilities.
11. Support camping areas with on-park wayfinding and information supported by online platforms integrating park and interpretational information.



Camping potential



3.2 Park planning strategies: visitation and use

3.2.13 Services and facilities

Objectives

- To provide access to nature-based experiences that meet visitor expectations and align with park vision and values.
- To provide new activities and experiences designed for the whole family and all ages and abilities.
- To provide unique and memorable experiences for repeat visitation.
- To provide visitor hubs and appropriate amenities to serve precincts.
- To ensure built structures respond to and contribute to precinct character and identity.

Key considerations

- Extent of existing cleared areas for former pine plantations.
- Presence of existing built water supply and mining services infrastructure.
- Scale of site and likely levels of visitation will require permanent NPWS operational and maintenance presence.

Strategies

Services and facilities generally

1. Management of Gardens of Stone SCA effectively balances its conservation function / environmental protection with its evolving as an iconic place of recreation.
2. Visitor experiences, facilities and recreation to be based around defined precincts that can provide different offerings to users.
3. Existing facilities, old building foundations, clearings and disturbed areas (e.g. Forest Camp) provide opportunities for adaptive re-use for visitor areas.
4. Existing water storage dams and water infrastructure on-park – at Lost City and Forest Camp are integrated into precinct use and interpretation.
5. Effective provision of facilities for on-site NPWS staff presence and management.

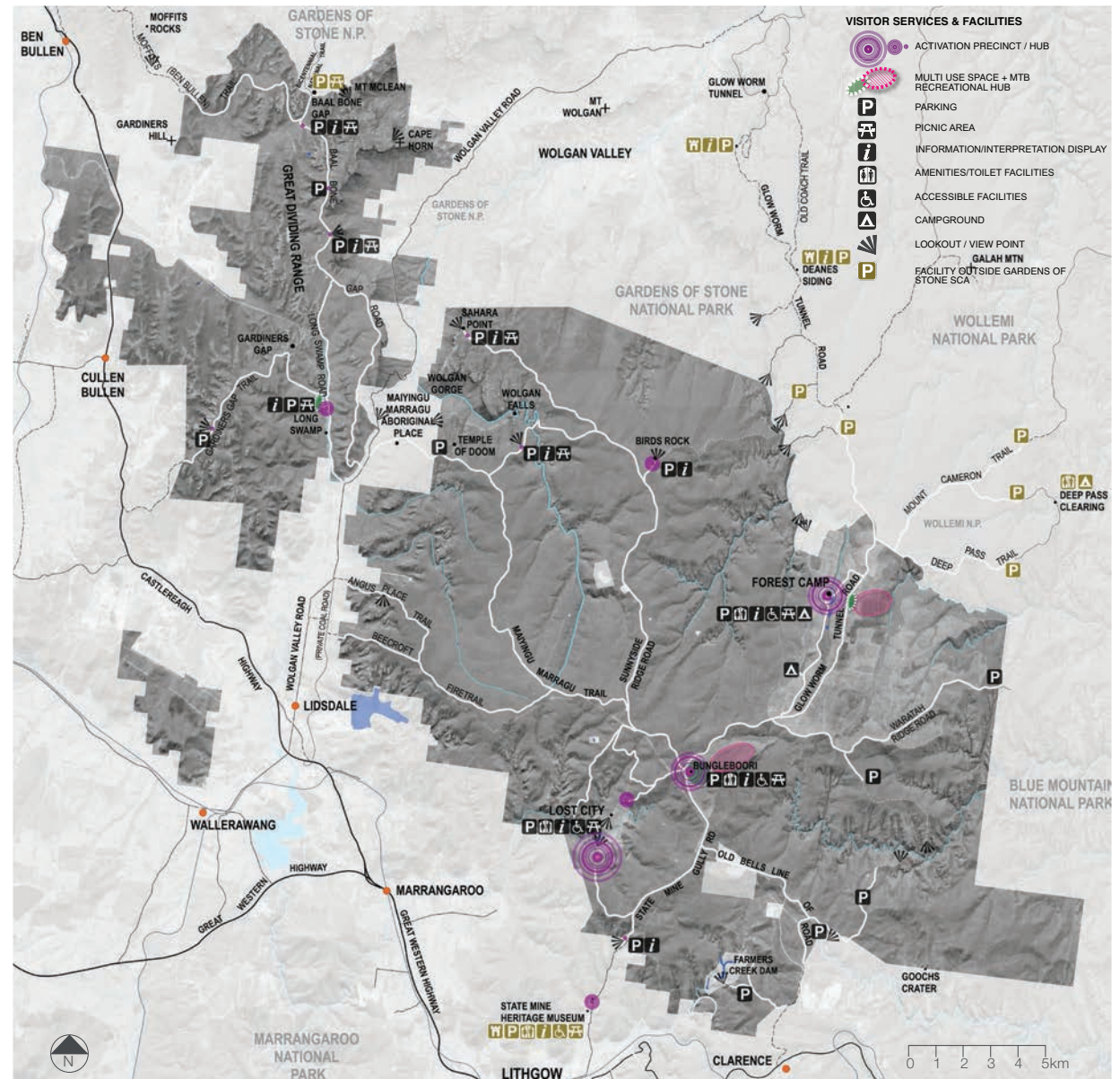


Figure 12 Visitor facilities and services

Strategies (cont)

Precinct specific

1. Lost City and State Mine Gully Precinct:

This is the easily reached gateway precinct and 'backyard' for Lithgow. Strategies include:

- facilities to be suitable for high-use
- cater for minibuses, people with mobility challenges
- capture hero visitor highlights (e.g. photographic opportunities)
- provide the iconic lookout spot down the valley to Lithgow
- provide the iconic adventure recreation experiences of Lost City
- access to amenities, picnic areas and loop walks.

2. Former Plantation Precinct

- to support full day experiences to overnight stays
- adaptive reuse of the Forest Camp for family/group and mountain bike touring camping area with camp kitchen, amenities, and BBQ shelters
- day use areas
- mountain bike Hub and trail heads for mountain bike network
- major event space

3. Carne Creek Precinct

- a series of loop walks taking in different features
- Series of Lookouts:
 - Carne Creek Lookout (southern)
 - Carne Creek Lookout (northeast).

4. Long Swamp Precinct:

- precinct provides a complex network of natural and cultural attractions with easy access from Wolgan Road
- access, walking tracks and parking to other nearby sites and lookouts
- Long Swamp access, interpretation and picnic area suitable for flexible use for gatherings, school groups and access to walking tracks and nearby sites.

Precincts



Lost City and State Mine Gully Precinct (potential visitor drop-off area)



Carne Creek and Former Plantation Precinct



Birds Rock Precinct



Long Swamp Precinct (Photos: N. Eva)

3.2 Park planning strategies: visitation and use

3.2.13 Services and facilities (continued)

Strategies	Strategies
<p>Facility specific</p> <p>1. NPWS Operations:</p> <p>1.1 Provide maintenance facility / storage within major drive-in camping area to Forest Camp.</p> <p>2. Visitor orientation/information</p> <p>2.1 Investigate potential major visitor orientation at Lithgow State Mine Heritage Park in close proximity to Lithgow town.</p> <p>2.2 Consider options for online visitor orientation and information to capture and integrate visitor experiences.</p> <p>2.3 Coordinated wayfinding and interpretive strategy to guide wayfinding information across the site.</p> <p>3. Lost City</p> <p>3.1 Integrate hub visitor facilities building within Lost City servicing this high visitation tourism location – integrate outdoor seating with views to pagodas and canyons.</p> <p>3.2 Provide facilities for temporary (i.e. pop up) food and beverage.</p> <p>4. Camp Kitchen</p> <p>4.1 Provide purpose-designed camp kitchen to the main drive-in camp ground at Forest Camp.</p> <p>4.2 Site-responsive architecture to build identity and character.</p> <p>5. BBQ Shelters</p> <p>5.1 Shelters to be provided at selected larger picnic areas with available space and landscape character to absorb role.</p> <p>5.2 Accessible to 2WD drive-in locations.</p> <p>6. Picnic shelters</p> <p>6.1 Picnic shelters to be provided at selected picnic areas with available space and landscape character to absorb role.</p> <p>6.2 May be applicable to drive-in and / or walk-in/ride-in sites.</p>	<p>7.0 Lookouts</p> <p>7.1 Analyse each lookout site as per lookout strategies.</p> <p>7.2 Identify optimal views and where visitors will gravitate to.</p> <p>7.3 Seek to provide a memorable viewing experience that is safe for all visitors to the area.</p> <p>7.4 Consider low-key structured access (e.g. boardwalk) to optimise views, protect pagodas, and limit erosion.</p> <p>7.5 Generally minimise the level of structure and barriers where feasible at each site.</p> <p>7.6 Use materials and colours that minimise visual impact.</p> <p>8.0 Seating</p> <p>8.1 Provide park/backed seating to high-use drive-in locations that are accessible.</p> <p>8.2 Maximise availability of informal seating opportunities (i.e. rocks/ level changes).</p> <p>9.0 Walk-in/ride-in camping</p> <p>9.1 Strategic review of camping activities to identify suitable, site-specific camping options.</p> <p>9.2 Provide camping platforms to define camping areas and minimise disturbance on ground.</p> <p>10.0 Interpretation</p> <p>10.1 As per heritage strategies embed stories of the place in precinct design through an 'interpretive landscape' approach where stories of place are embedded in design and materials and supported by a variety of interpretive mediums.</p>

Example facilities



Lookout facilities



Boardwalks



Boardwalks



Picnic facilities



Barbecue shelter



Information shelters



Toilets



All photos NSW National Parks Parks Facilities Manual unless noted otherwise

3.2 Park planning strategies: visitation and use

3.2.14 Collaborative opportunities

Objectives

- To explore and pursue collaborative opportunities to optimise visitor experiences and effective environmental management of the park.

Key considerations

- The potential Lost City Adventure Experience provides opportunities for NPWS to partner with commercial operators with specialised skills in similar operations.
- Collaboration with Wiradjuri stakeholders in ongoing planning and development of the Gardens of Stone SCA master plan proposals and commercial opportunities.
- Potential collaboration with State Mine Heritage Park (integration as key arrival and entry point).
- Proximity to Lithgow township.
- Relationship to long-distance Wollemi Walk.
- Proximity to Rail Trail proposals (i.e. Wolgan Valley Wilderness Trail and Newnes Rail Trail).
- Proximity to Farmers Creek visitor node close to Lithgow, outside Gardens of Stone SCA.
- Proximity to Hassan Walls MTB network – Lithgow City Council.
- Proximity to Zig-Zag Railway.
- Proximity to Old Wallerawang Power Station development.
- Key attractions in adjoining Gardens of Stone National Park and Wollemi National Park (i.e. Glow Worm Tunnel, Deep Pass, Deanes Siding, Bicentennial National Trail).

Strategies

- Develop and evolve collaboration with Lithgow City Council, Destination NSW and relevant state and international tourism bodies to promote the inter-relationship of the region to the Gardens of Stone SCA and the related recreational tourism and commercial benefits:
 - hub and staging point for day visits
 - varied accommodation options
 - hub and staging point for day walking and riding visits
 - hub and staging point for multi-day walking and riding
 - hub and staging point for major events in Gardens of Stone SCA.

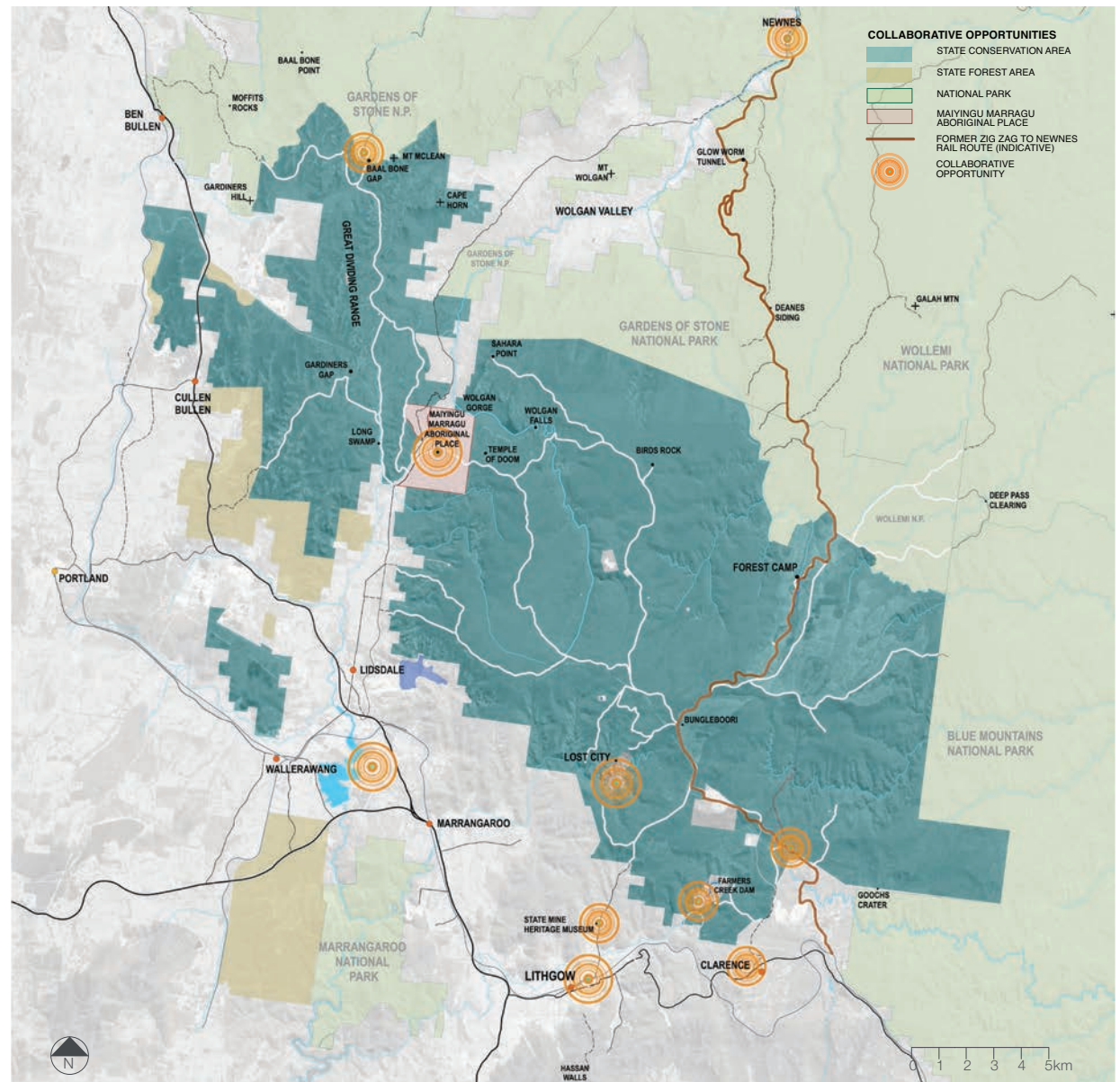


Figure 13 Collaborative opportunities

Strategies (cont)

2. Investigate collaborative partnering for Lost City precinct with potential role in:
 - planning and design
 - development
 - management.
3. Investigate collaborative partnering with State Mine Heritage Park with potential role as arrival/entry point and orientation facility for the Gardens of Stone SCA.
4. Collaboration with state and national tourism organisations to elevate awareness of iconic tourism product to new and emerging audiences.
5. Integrate walking track network and multi-day walking options with Bicentennial National Trail.
6. Investigate joint promotion of Bicentennial National Trail and Gardens of Stone SCA multi-day walks.
7. Investigate potential for integration and linkages to the Nenes Rail Trail and Wolgan Valley Wilderness Trail.
8. Investigate potential for integration and connections to Farmers Creek visitor node.
9. Consider relationship and integration of tourism and recreation offerings with adjacent attractions, including:
 - Glow Worm Tunnel
 - Deep Pass
 - Deanes Siding.
10. Investigate benefits and potential for developing relationships and connections to adjacent cultural and recreational features including
 - regional mountain bike development proposals
 - Old Wallerawang Power Station development.



Lithgow (Photo: Lithgow Tourism)

The proposals provide a wide range of new and exciting, eco-adventure experiences that encourage visitors to connect with the natural and cultural heritage of the area, while driving tourism opportunities and restoring and protecting the conservation values of the pagoda landscapes



Dobbs Drift Pagodas (Photo: A. Hunter)

4 Precinct concept recommendations

Introduction

The precinct concept plans illustrated in this section 4 provide details of the proposed visitor facility improvements in key areas of the Gardens of Stone SCA.

These plans illustrate the potential development and implementation of the park planning strategies provided in section 3. The precinct concepts do not cover all of the SCA and so should be read in conjunction with section 3. All proposals are indicative and are subject to environmental and planning approvals, detailed investigations, and stakeholder consultation.

There are 3 levels of concepts provided:

- **Precinct strategic plan** – overall plan indicating access, key user locations and major facilities
- **Visitor area plan** – intermediate level plan of specific visitor areas with additional detail of access and facilities
- **Visitor node plan** – concept level plan of visitor node outlining more detailed circulation and facilities.

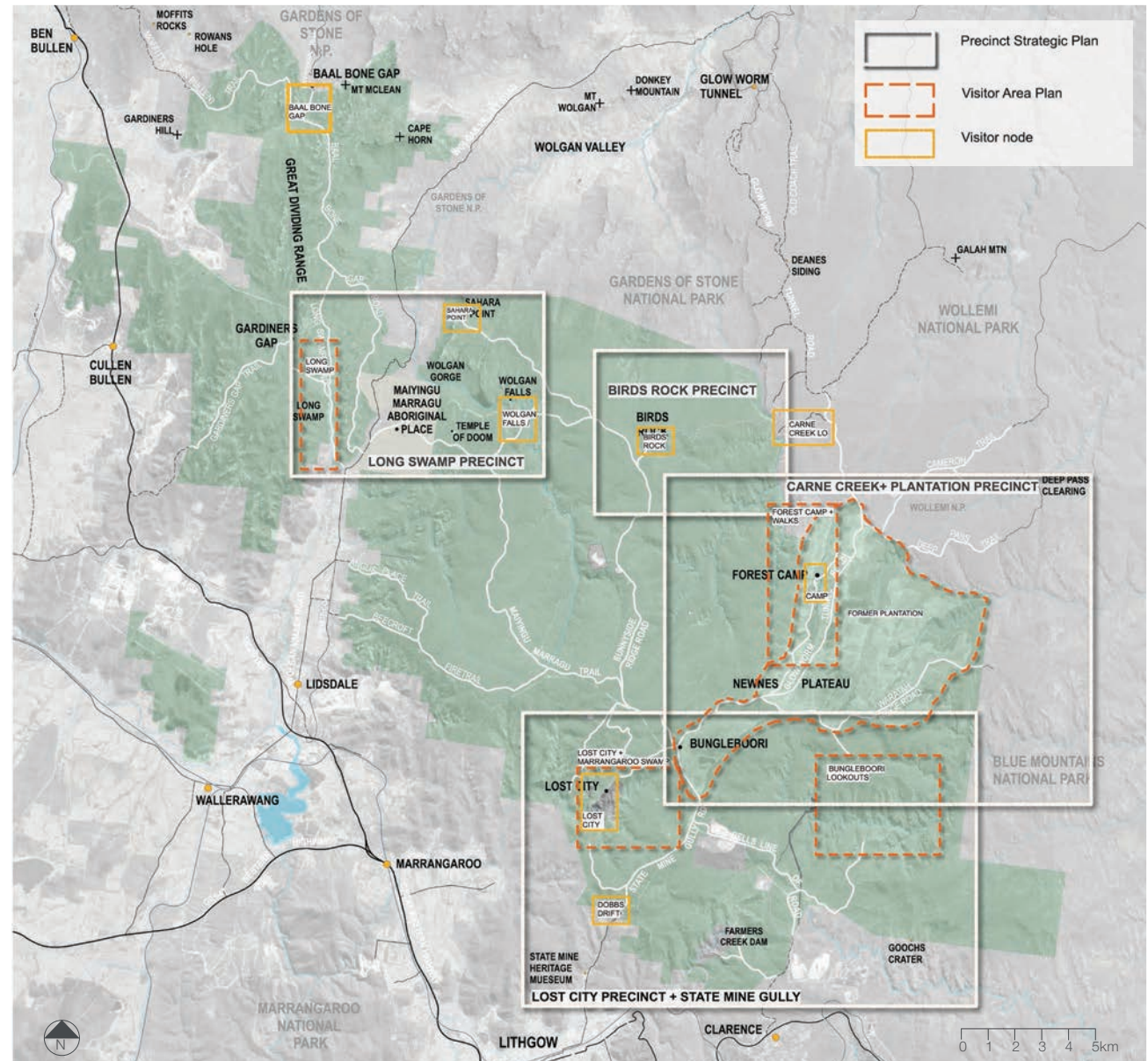


Figure 14 Precinct planning key plan

4.1 State Mine Gully and Lost City Precinct

Overview of existing conditions

This precinct encompasses quality examples of the pagoda and upland swamp landscapes and marks the rise from the Farmers Creek valley and Lithgow to the Newnes Plateau. State Mine Gully Road is heavily used but severely degraded, as is much of the existing road and trail network.

Overview of proposals

This precinct is proposed to provide the key 'gateway' to the Gardens of Stone SCA, providing access through Lithgow along State Mine Gully Road.

The arrival experience will ensure visitors are oriented to the SCA's:

- core values and features of the natural and cultural landscape
- key visitor locations and the options for accessing these
- opportunities for recreation and activities.

The precinct incorporates some of the landmark features of the SCA including Lost City and Dobbs Drift and the Bungleboori Valley.

Lost City is proposed to become a major visitation destination providing an experience of the pagoda landscape and nature based, adventure tourism within 10 minutes drive of Lithgow.

Protecting natural and cultural values

Protect and conserve sensitive geological formations, habitat and water systems to the plateau and valleys. Provide opportunities to view and experience the natural character of the place.

Protect places and sites of Wiradjuri significance. Research and integrate Wiradjuri stories and connections to Country with the planning and design of improvements. Protect and interpret historical sites and fabric.

Arrival and wayfinding

Optimise Lithgow as the transport and service hub to the Gardens of Stone SCA. Investigate collaborative orientation and an interpretive centre at State Mine Heritage Park, supplemented by the Bungleboori day use site.

Vehicle access

All-weather 2WD road upgrade to State Mine Gully Road, and link roads to key destinations such as Lost City. 4WD touring access on designated selected trails.

Accommodation

Promote Lithgow as the accommodation and service hub to Gardens of Stone SCA. Provide wayfinding to Forest Camp in Carne Creek and plantation precinct.

Facilities

Provide parking and a varied range of other facilities (toilets, picnic tables) at trailheads and improve facilities to lookout points generally.

Recreation and leisure

Extensive walking and mountain bike track network linking to Lithgow through State Mine Gully. Lost City adventure experience based on sustainable design and management within a 10 minute drive of Lithgow, along with access to canyoning and abseiling areas in Marangaroo and Bungleboori Creek valleys.

Precinct strategic plan

Proposals - Access

- 1 Lithgow town centre providing rail transport from Sydney, accommodation and services
- 2 State Mine Gully Road access from Lithgow
- 3 Potential State Mine Heritage Park arrival and orientation centre
- 4 Discourage arrival via Old Bells Line of Road
- 5 Multi-day walks from Lithgow
- 6 Loop and destination walks to lookouts and other features
- 7 Mountain bike trail network

Proposals - Activation and facilities

- 8 Dobbs Drift Lookout
- 9 Lost City adventure experience
- 10 Bungleboori Day Use Area and orientation node
- 11 Bungleboori Lookouts
- 12 Mountain bike facilities

Numbers refer to the precinct plan on the next page.

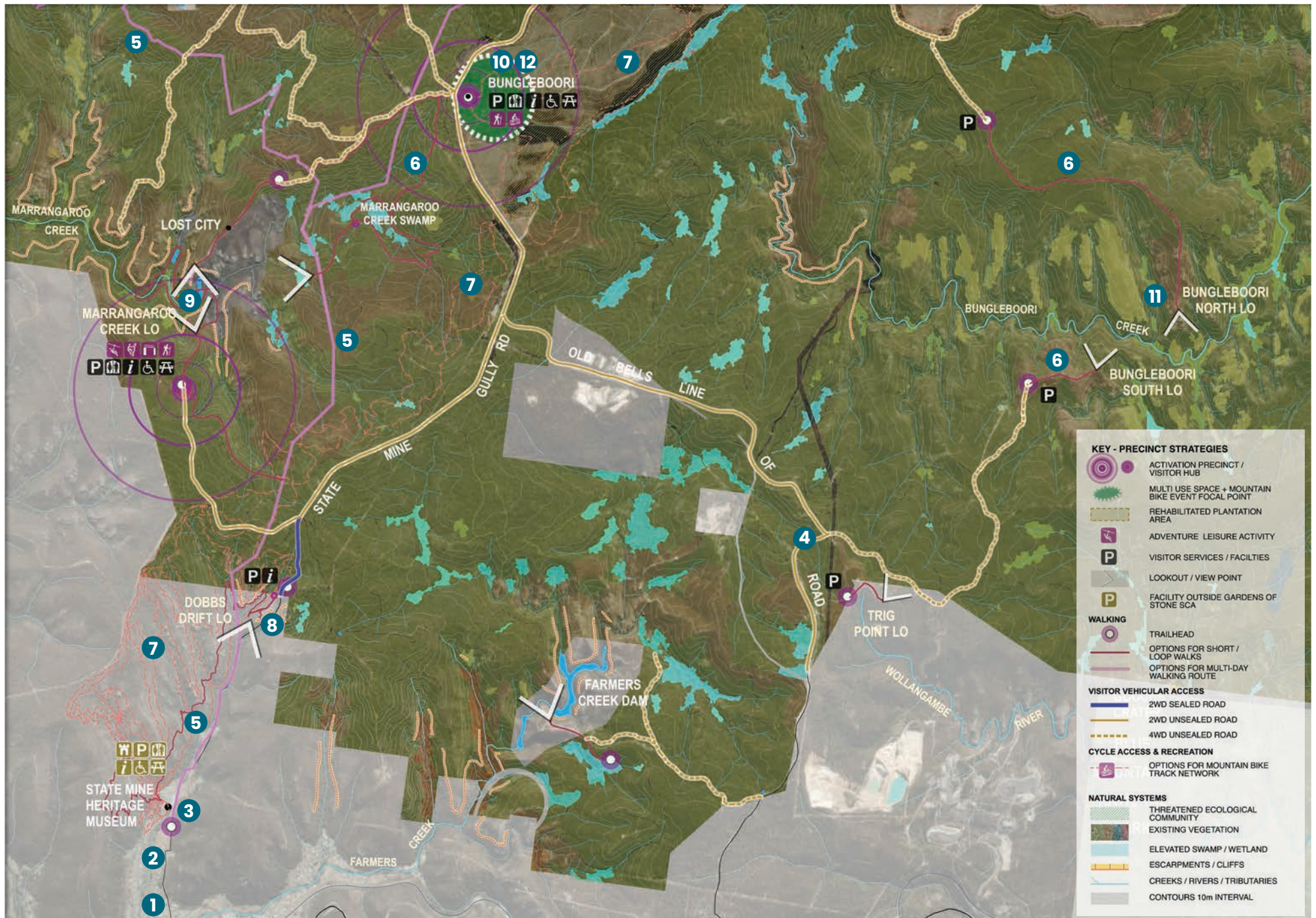


Figure 15 State Mine Gully and Lost City Precinct Strategic plan

4.1 State Mine Gully and Lost City Precinct

4.1.1 Lost City and Marangaroo Swamp Visitor Area

Lost City and Marangaroo Swamp

Lost City is the most accessible representation of the Gardens of Stone SCA landscape with the upland swamps of Marangaroo Creek draining to incised creek valleys overlooked by pagodas and sheer cliffs.

Safe and sustainable adventure experiences set in nature will be a focus at Lost City, linked to walking and mountain bike tracks.

Visitor area plan

Proposals - Access

- 1 2WD vehicular access from Lithgow.
- 2 Parking for Lost City (south/north)
- 3 Accessible visitor drop-off loop
- 4 Multi-day walk
- 5 Mountain bike track network
- 6 Loop and destination walks

Proposals - Activation and facilities

- 7 Lost City adventure experience – visitor centre (subject to detailed investigations, design and planning approvals)
- 8 Zip-line facility (subject to detailed investigations, design, and planning approvals)
- 9 Via ferrata managed climbing activity (subject to detailed investigations design, and planning approvals)

Numbers refer to visitor area plan this page.

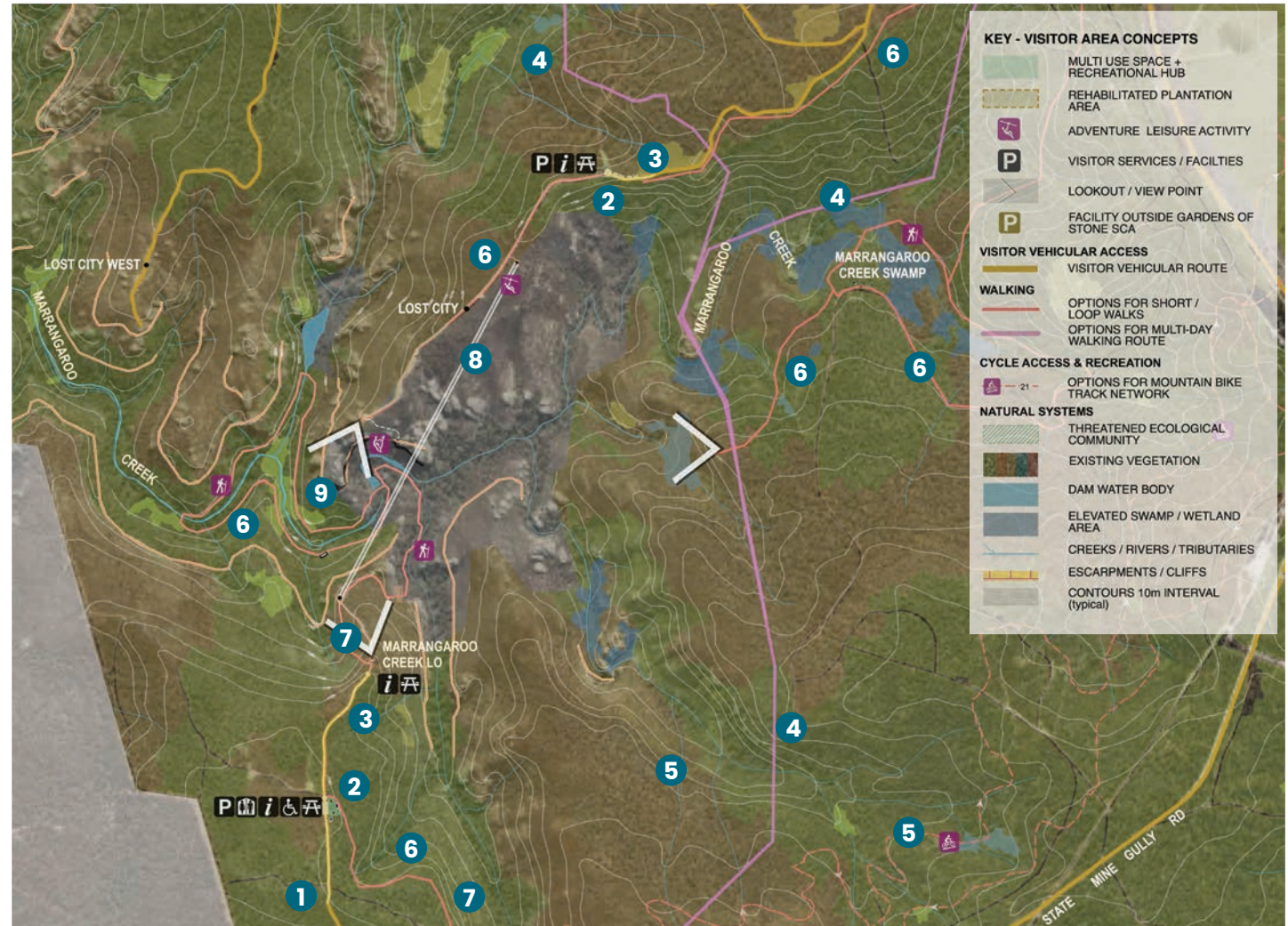


Figure 16 Lost City and Marangaroo Creek Swamp Visitor Area Plan

4.1.2 Lost City Visitor Node

Visitor node plan

Overview of existing conditions:

The site is accessed by degraded 4WD trails.

Access around the pagodas and cliffs is unrestricted and there are no park facilities.

Proposals - Access

- 1** Visitor accessible drop-off at Lost City South
 - upgrade existing informal trail for 2WD access
 - vehicle drop-off and turning area to provide accessible access to lookout
- 2** Main visitor walking path from visitor carpark
- 3** Walking path to lower lookout
 - upgrade existing degraded track to walking track and revegetate adjacent areas
 - provide rest stop and view points along track
- 4** Potential visitor drop-off and parking (outside node plan area)
 - small parking and picnic area to access Lost City North
 - drop-off for shuttle bus to service adventure recreation activities
- 5** Potential walking tracks
 - potential to link upper and lower lookout viewing areas
 - potential loop to connect adventure recreation locations with longer walk
 - potential to provide access to Marrangaroo Creek canyon loop walk
- 6** Potential cycling / mountain bike tracks (outside node plan area)
 - integrate and connect with park-

- wide mountain bike track network
- provision of end of trip facilities / bike parking at drop-off area

Proposals - Activation and facilities

- 7** Marangaroo Creek / Lost City South Lookout
 - accessible viewing decks with integrated seating set into escarpment
 - panoramic views over Lost City
 - potential to integrate building beneath for all-weather viewing area, services and amenities
 - potential cafe and hub for adventure activities
- 8** Lower Marangaroo Creek / Lost City South Lookout
 - viewing area
- 9** Lost City North Lookout
 - viewing decks with integrated seating integrated into existing degraded area
- 10**.Adventure Recreation – zip-line
 - potential locations for long zip-line with 'start and landing decks integrated into slope
- 11**.Adventure recreation – Via Ferrata / (protected climbing route)
 - potential location for a protected climbing route employing steel cables, rungs or ladders, fixed to the rock
 - potential cliff-top track to climbing platform
- 12** Existing dams not in use and decommissioned.
- 13** Interpretation along trail network and at lookouts and other facilities

Numbers refer to visitor Node Plan on this page.

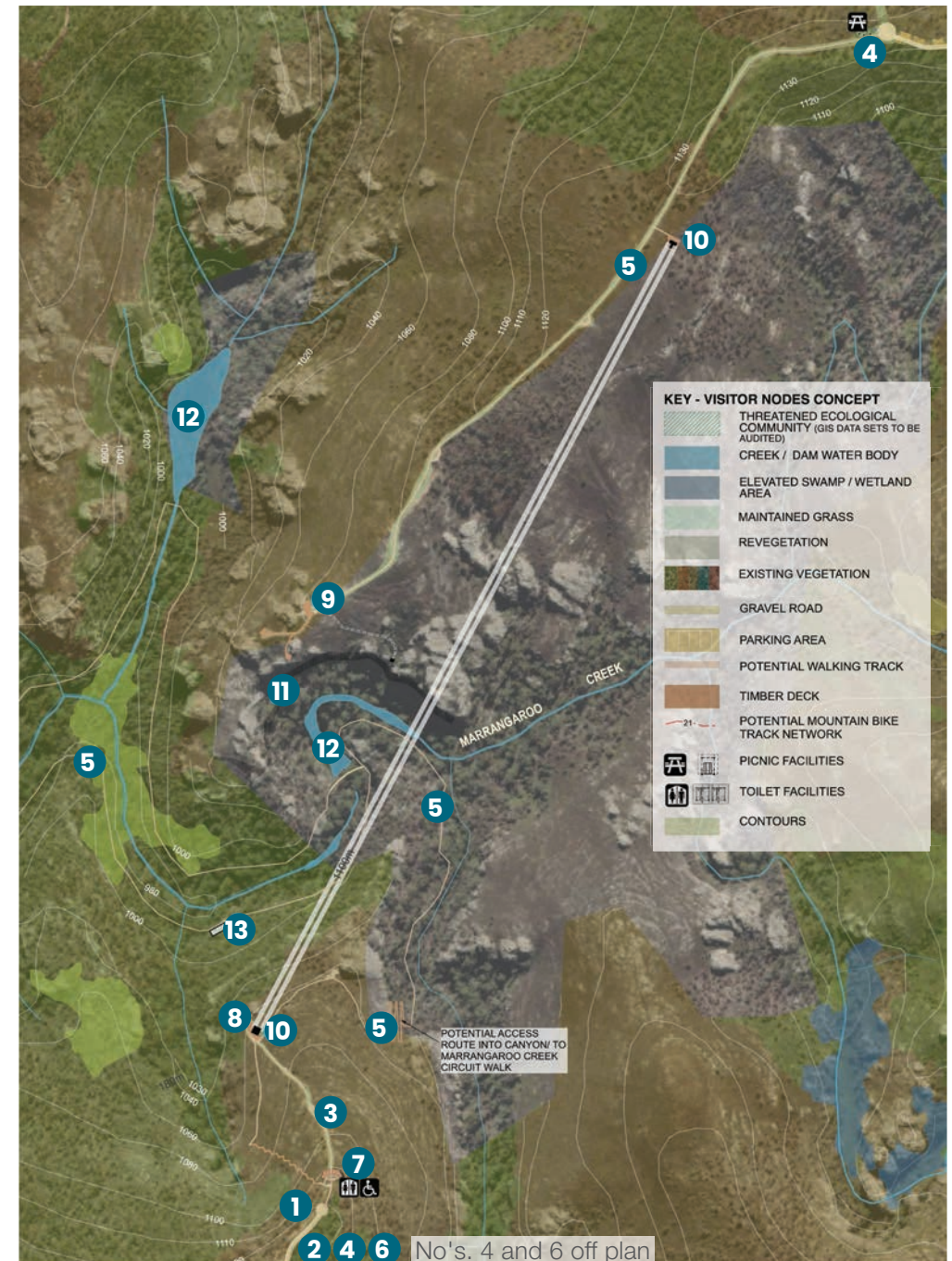


Figure 17 Lost City Visitor Node Plan

4.1 State Mine Gully and Lost City precinct

4.1.2 Lost City visitor node



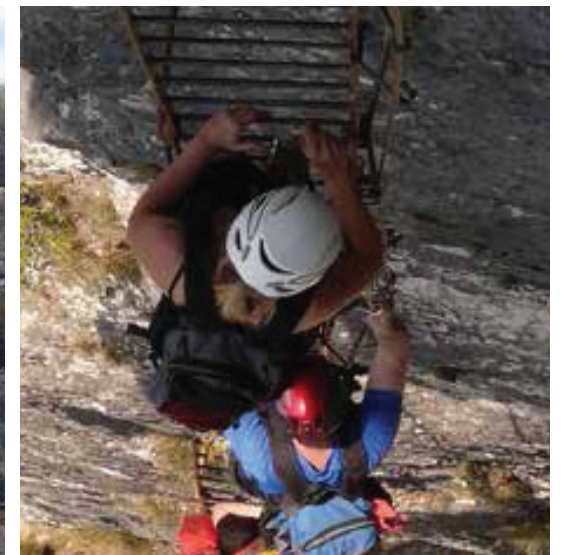
Existing site: Lost City access trail 4WD degradation and erosion.



Existing site: Lost City access trail 4WD degradation and erosion.



Illustrative views: Example zip-line facilities



Example: Via ferrata facilities



Lost City viewed from south towards north-west

4.1 State Mine Gully and Lost City Precinct

4.1.3 Dobbs Drift Visitor Node

Visitor node plan

Overview of existing conditions:

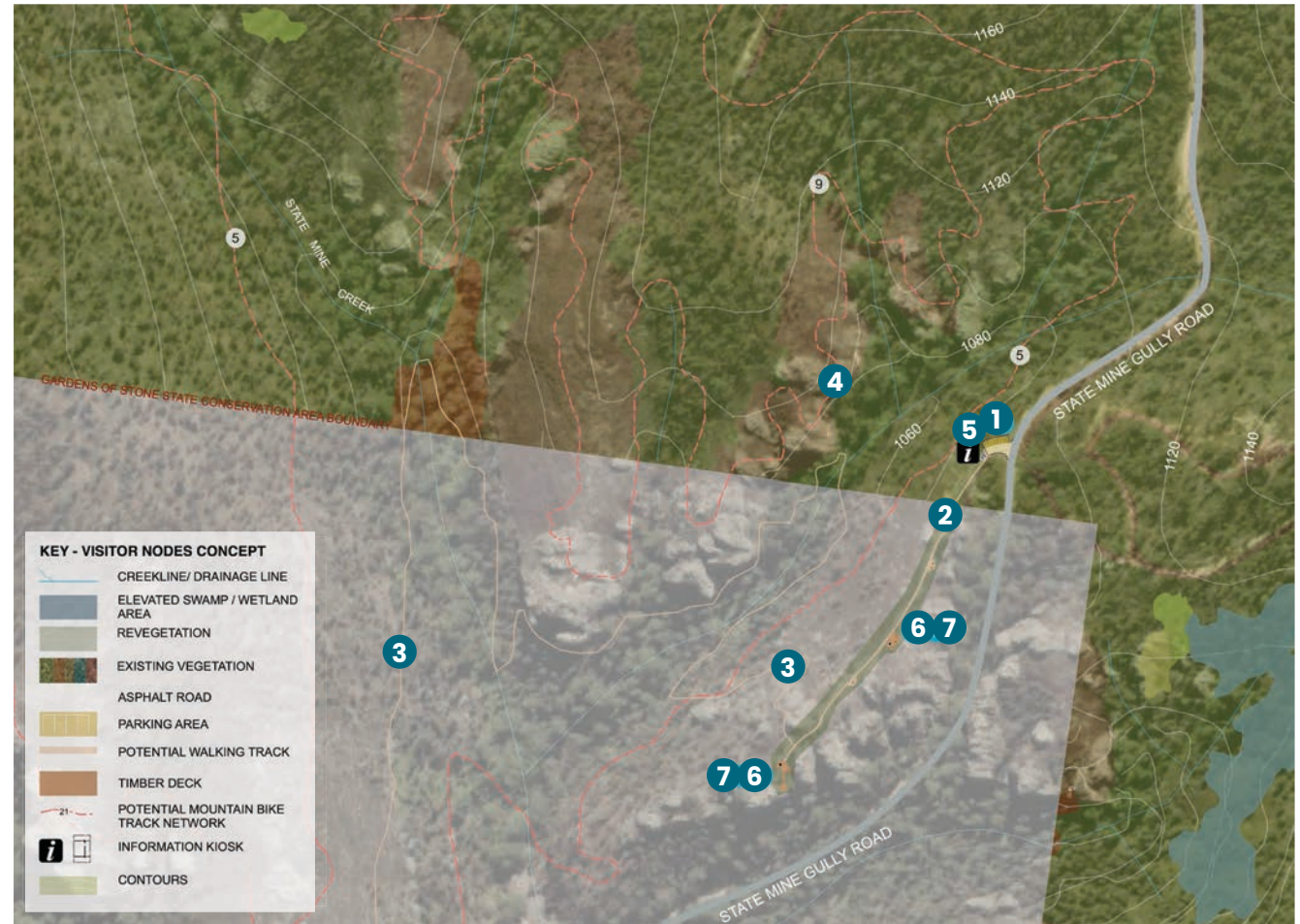
An informal gravel surface leads to a gravel track which is accessed by 4WD vehicles and is damaging vegetation and rock formations. Access to views to valley and Lithgow is difficult and requires climbing over pagodas.

Proposals - Access

- 1 Visitor parking
 - formalise existing parking area
 - provide barriers to prevent unauthorised vehicle access to lookout
- 2 Visitor walking path to lookouts
 - upgrade and repair existing track for high visitor usage
 - integrate rest / viewing areas along track
 - rehabilitate and revegetate adjacent degraded areas
 - connection to potential walking track via State Mine Gully to and from Lithgow
- 3 Potential walking tracks
 - walking track to State Mine Heritage Park and Lithgow
- 4 Mountain bike tracks
 - single-track connection to State Mine Gully network and Lithgow

Proposals - Activation and facilities

- 5 Information shelter and rest area
 - entry point to walking path to lookout and viewing areas
- 6 Viewing decks
 - accessible viewing decks with integrated seating
 - views to unique pagoda formations to the north-west (Sphinx Pagoda)
 - views along the valley to Lithgow
- 7 Interpretation to trails and facilities



Existing site: Lookout access track looking north towards parking area
(Photo: A. Hunter)

Figure 18 Dobbs Drift Visitor Node Plan

4.1.4 Bungleboori Lookouts Visitor Area

Bungleboori Lookouts

This south-western precinct lies around the Bungleboori Creek catchment and adjoins Blue Mountains National Park to the east.

The precinct will cater for walking experiences to lookouts and canyoning.

Visitor area plan

Proposals - Access

- 1 4WD unsealed access from Old Bells Line of Road
- 2 Small gravel parking area with wayfinding
- 3 Loop and destination track access to Bungleboori South Lookout
- 4 Loop and destination track access to Bungleboori North Lookout from Waratah Ridge Road

Proposals - Activation and facilities

- 5 Bungleboori North Lookout
- 6 Bungleboori South Lookout

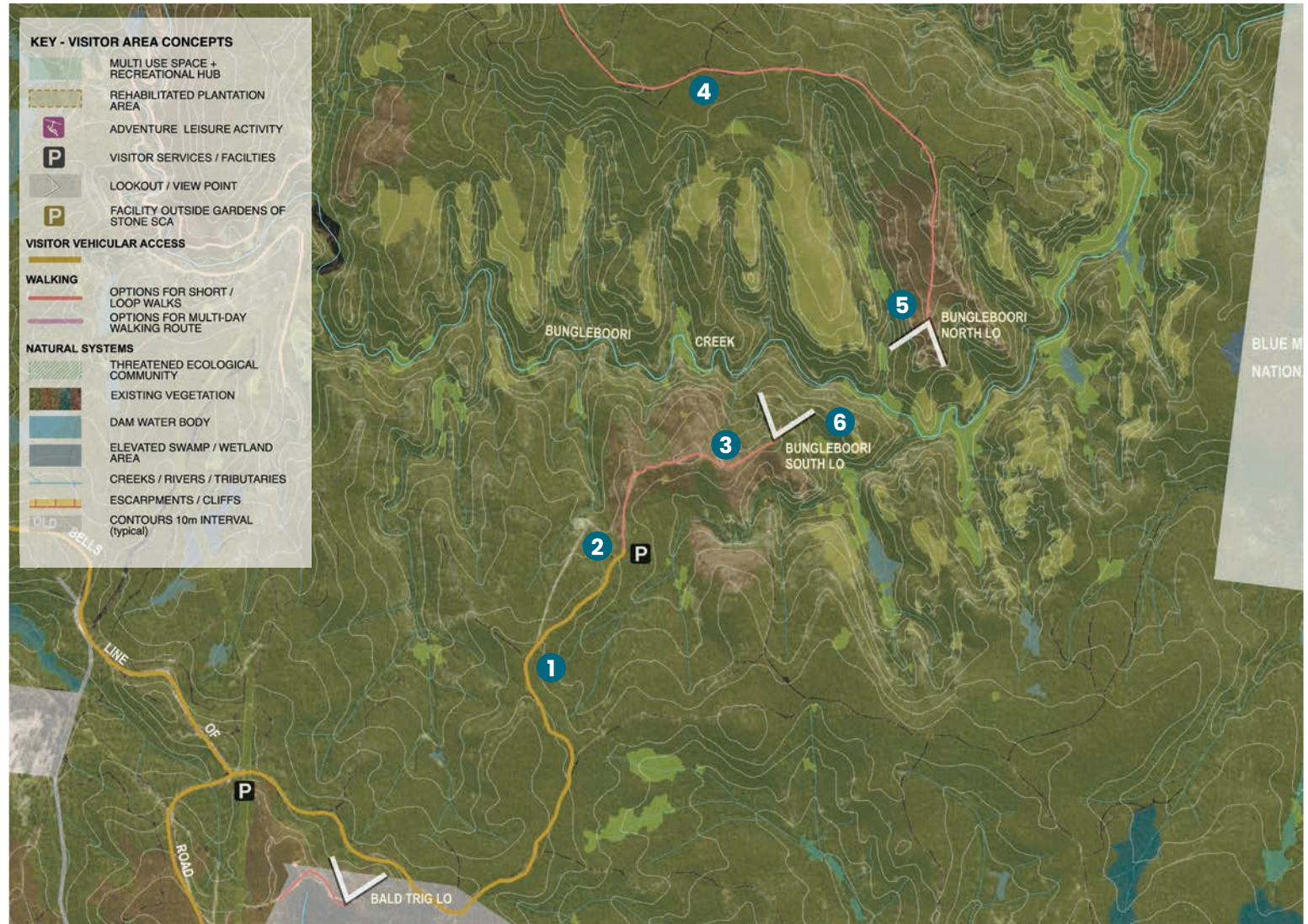


Figure 19 Bungleboori Lookouts Visitor Plan

4.2 Carne Creek and Former Plantation Precinct

Overview of existing conditions

This precinct is focused around the former pine plantations at Bungleboori and north of Waratah Ridge Road.

The former pine plantations covered over 2,000 hectares, and have left a major imprint on the landscape. Forest Camp, to the north-west of the pine plantation, originally served plantation activities but also served as a school outdoor activities camp.

The former plantation areas have been extensively used for trail bike riding and 4WD activity, leading to degradation of vegetation and erosion of existing ground.

Overview of proposals

This precinct will be the focus of major facilities to service the visitation of the SCA and is accessed off the Glow Worm Tunnel Road.

A drive in campground is proposed for the Forest Camp site. These facilities will take advantage of existing cleared and degraded lands.

These facilities have excellent access to the walking track networks in Carne Creek and Marangaroo Creek, in addition to the proposed mountain bike track network.

Protecting natural and cultural values

Protect and conserve sensitive geological formations, habitats and hydrological systems to the plateau and valleys. Rehabilitate significant sections of the former pine plantation with native species, integrating benchmark science. Provide opportunities to view and experience the natural character of the place, including the transition from degraded to healthy landscape.

Protect places and sites of Wiradjuri significance. Research and integrate Wiradjuri stories and connections to Country into the planning and design of improvements. Protect and interpret historical sites and fabric. Adaptively re-use remnant fabric where suitable.

Arrival and wayfinding

Proposed Bungleboori day use area at a key intersection provides orientation and stopover picnic and interpretive area.

Vehicle access

All weather, 2WD road upgrade to State Mine Gully Road, Glow Worm Tunnel Road and to link roads to key destinations such as campgrounds. Provide 4WD touring routes on designated trails.

Camping

A drive-in campground is proposed for the former camp site. This will adaptively re-use existing fabric including walls and slabs, take advantage of existing dams, and provide access to adjoining walks and mountain bike tracks. Toilets, camp kitchen and picnic facilities are provided to support camping.

Additional small-scale, drive-in campsites are possible in cleared areas to the west of main camp.

Facilities

Provide parking and a varied range of other facilities (toilets, picnic tables) at trailheads and improve facilities at lookout points generally.

Recreation and leisure

Walking and mountain bike track network, abseiling areas in Carne Creek valley. Major event space in parkland.

Precinct strategic plan

Proposals - Access

- 1 State Mine Gully Road access from Lithgow
- 2 Glow Worm Tunnel Road to Newnes
- 3 Maiyingu Marragu Trail
- 4 Multi-day walks from Lithgow
- 5 Loop and destination walks to lookouts and other features
- 6 Mountain bike track network

Proposals - Activation and facilities

- 7 Lost City adventure experience
- 8 Bungleboori Day Use Area and orientation node
- 9 Carne Creek lookouts
- 10 Birds Rock Lookout
- 11 Forest Camp campgrounds
- 12 Mountain bike facilities hub

Numbers refer to the precinct plan on the next page.

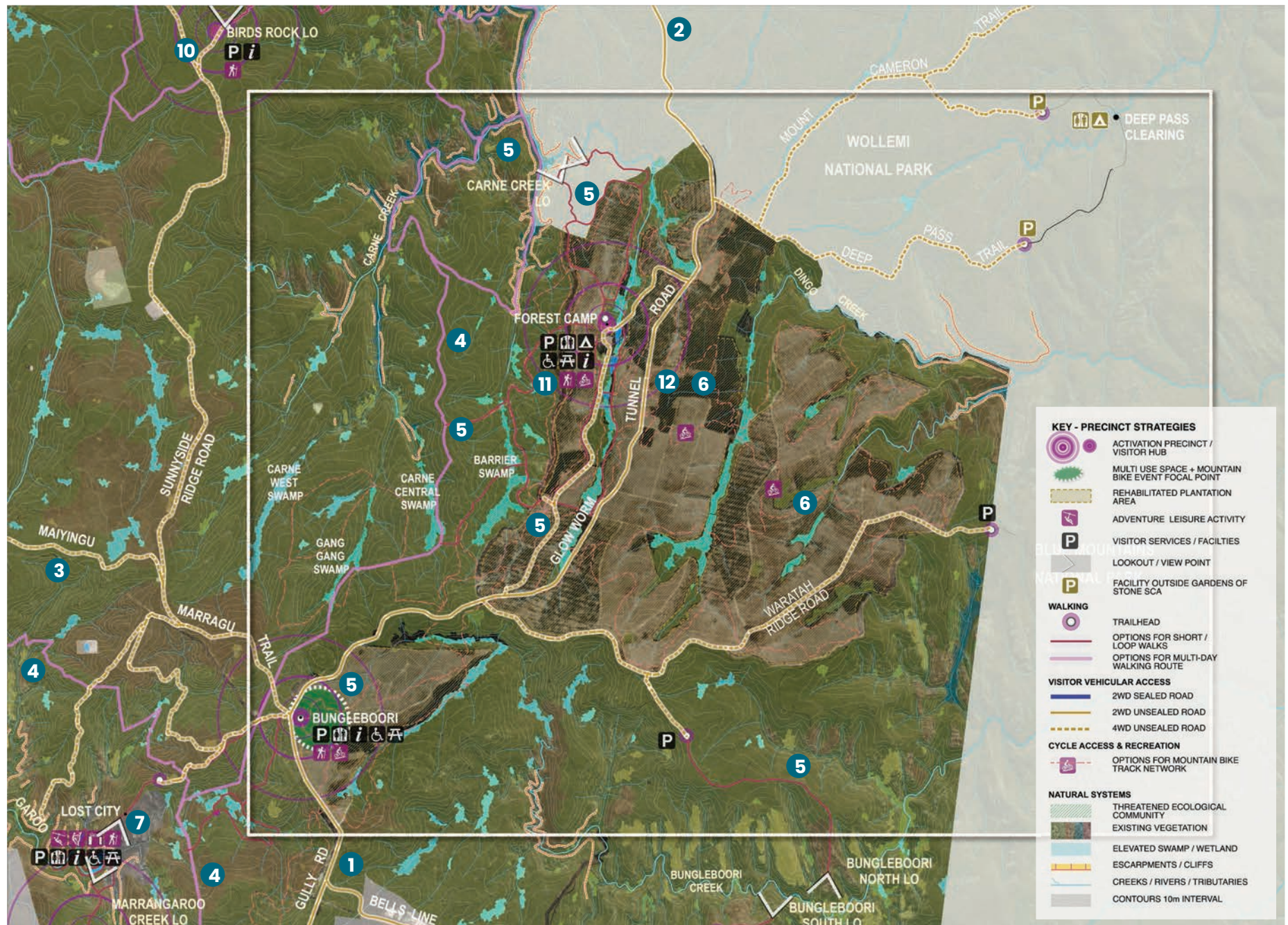


Figure 20 Carne Creek and Former Plantation Precinct Strategic Plan

4.2 Carne Creek and Former Plantation Precinct

4.2.1 Former Plantation Visitor Area

Former plantation area

The facilities within the precinct combine to create the main visitation and activation hub for the Gardens of Stone SCA, catering for multi-day visits, day visitation and for the hosting of major events.

Visitor area plan

Proposals - Access

- 1 State Mine Gully Road access from Lithgow
- 2 Road access to campground
- 3 Parking areas for lookout walks
- 4 Multi-day walks from Lithgow
- 5 Loop and destination walks to lookouts and other features
- 6 Walking track to Bungleboori North Lookout
- 7 Mountain bike track network

Proposals - Activation and facilities

- 8 Bungleboori Day Use Area and orientation node
- 9 Carne Creek lookouts (south)
- 10 Mountain bike hub
- 11 Forest Camp campgrounds

Numbers refer to visitor area plan this page.

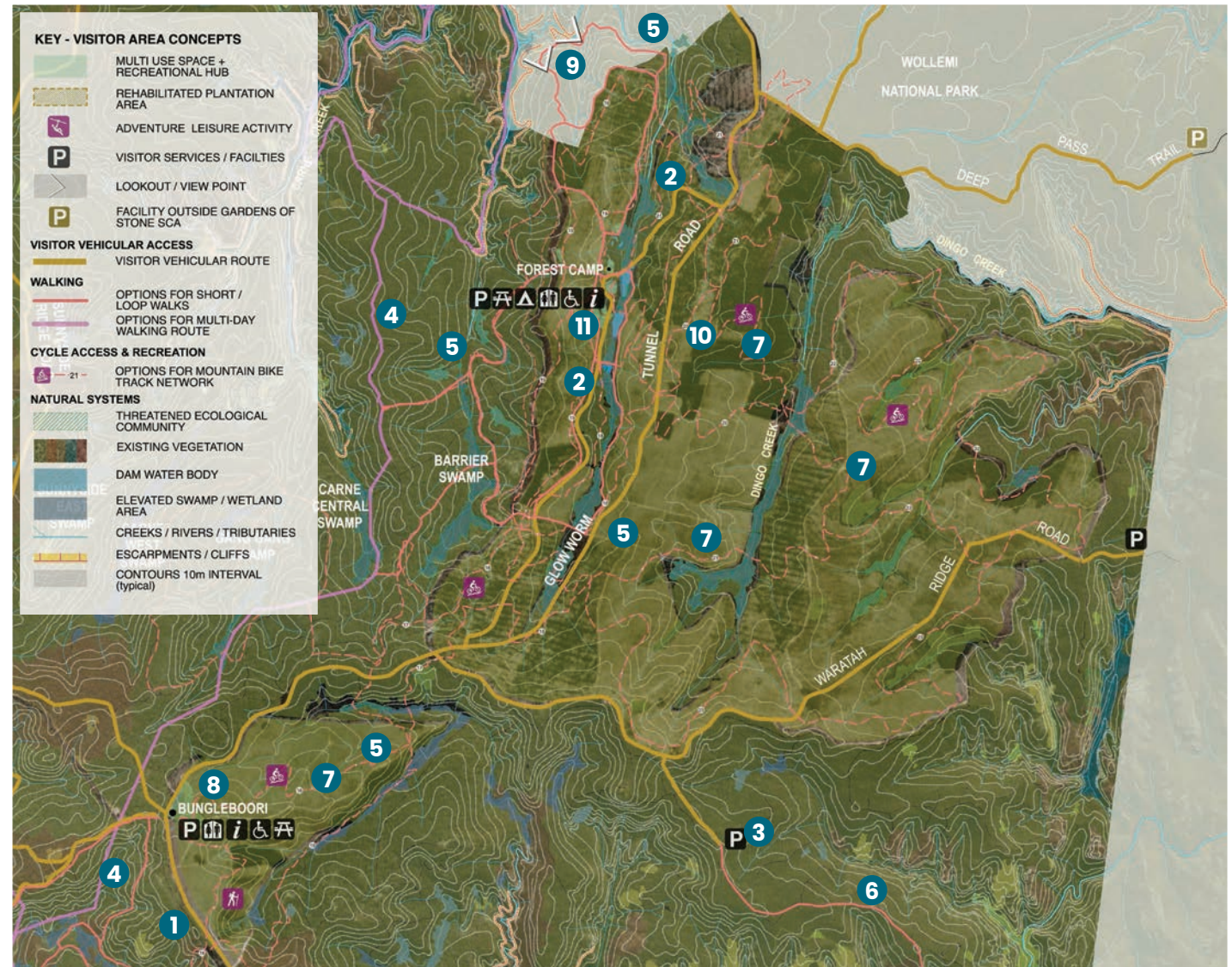


Figure 21 Former Plantation Visitor Area Plan



4.2.2 Forest Camp Visitor Node

Visitor node plan

Proposals - Access

- 1** Access / entry
 - defined circulation route to camping area
 - separate day use traffic from camp area and access to nearby destinations
- 2** Potential walking tracks
 - dam/swamp-edge loop walking track for family/all ages with links to viewing decks, boardwalks
 - links to walking tracks and lookouts at Carne Creek Gorge
 - Integrate with 'rail trail' route (Zig Zag to Newnes Railway)
- 3** Potential cycling / MTB tracks
 - integrate and connect with park-wide MTB track network
 - provision of cycling opportunities for families as part of campsite experience –children's skills track
 - other biking opportunities – for example e-bike touring?

Proposals - Activation and facilities

- 4** Forest Camp Ruins
 - utilise existing stone terraces, steps and garden walls for flexible use area
 - tent camping, and campground picnic areas
 - drive-in camping, park and short walk tent sites
 - toilet and picnic facilities

- 5** Existing degraded clearing
 - level grassed area
 - drive-in group camping
 - central naturalised swale / creek to drain area
 - new native shade tree canopy
 - flexible use space
 - toilet and picnic facilities
- 6** Grassy pine tree area
 - drive-in group/family camp sites
 - toilet facilities
- 7** Multi-purpose area
 - communal area with seating, fire pit, barbecues and picnic area overlooking creek and wetland
 - potential small camping lawn
- 8** Northern tree area adjacent wetland/swamp
 - retain and enhance as natural buffer area to camping area
- 9** Potential day use areas
 - locate in proximity to walking track connections
 - gravel carpark
 - toilet and picnic facilities
 - grassed area with shade tree integrated with revegetation

- 10** Existing ponds/wetlands
 - potential for boardwalk, environmental interpretation, water quality improvement etc.
 - low key viewing decks
- 11** Interpretation
 - adaptative re-use of remaining structures

Numbers refer to the visitor node plan this page

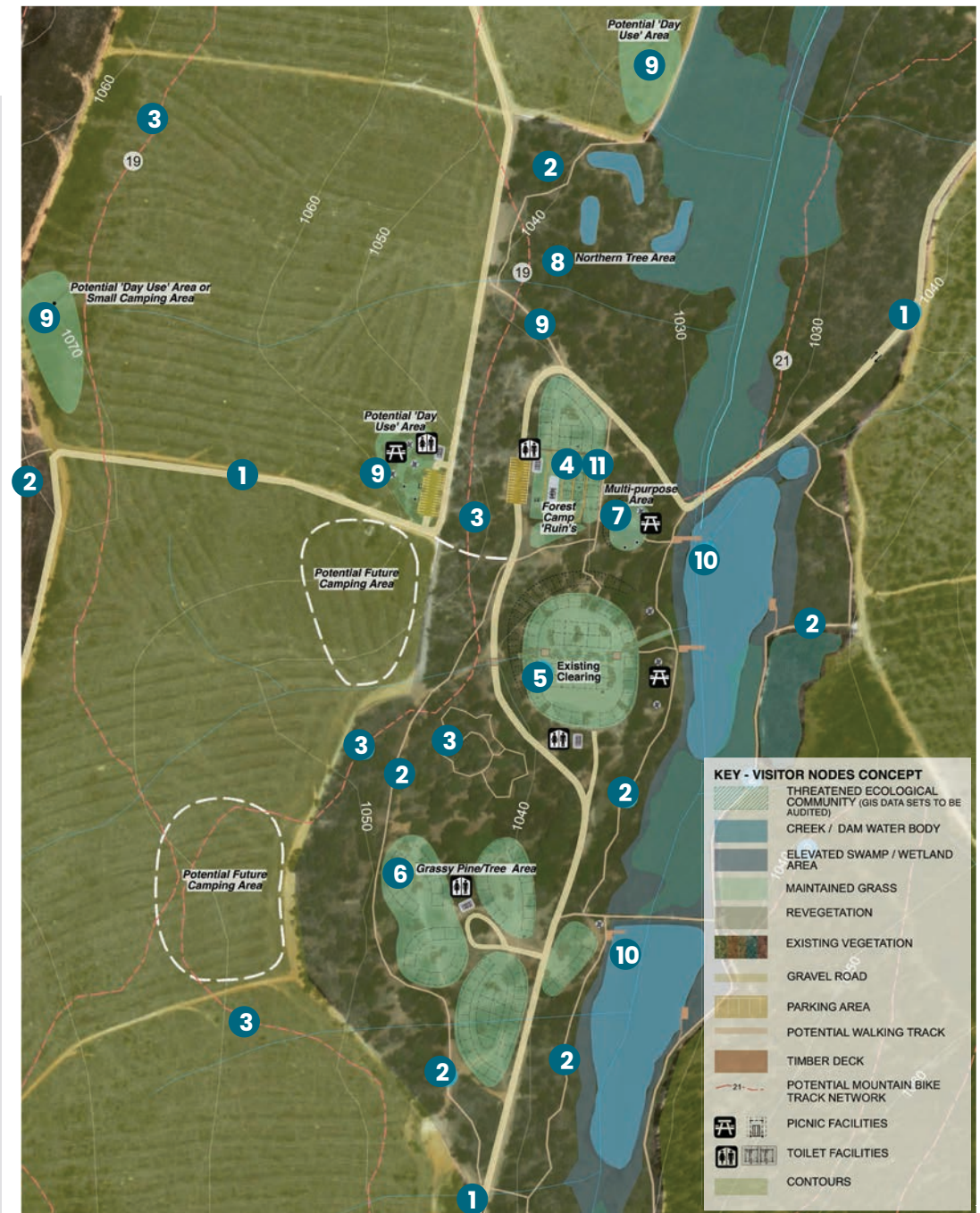
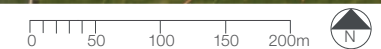


Figure 24 Forest Camp Visitor Node Plan



4.2 Carne Creek and Former Plantation Precinct

Forest Camp visitor node to existing terraces



Existing view: Existing Forest Camp terraces (Photo: N. Eva)



Illustrative view: Adaptive re-use of existing Forest Camp terraces for camping and facilities



Existing view: Open cleared area – potential to rehabilitate as grassed multi-purpose space for camping and other activities (Photo: A. Hunter)



Existing view: Existing slabs offering potential for facilities (Photo: A. Hunter)



Existing view: Existing ponds adjacent to Forest Camp (Photo: A. Hunter)

4.3 Birds Rock Precinct

Overview of existing conditions

The Birds Rock Precinct lies on the northern edge of the SCA adjoining the Gardens of Stone National Park. It is focused on the popular Birds Rock formation and lookout, along with providing walking access to the south side of the Carne Creek gorge and its diverse lookout points.

Birds Rock is accessed from the Sunnyside Ridge Road. The Carne Creek south, east and north lookouts are accessed from Forest Camp and Glow Worm Tunnel Road.

Sunnyside Ridge Road and Birds Rock Trail are impacted by 4WD use, with lower sections of the latter extremely eroded. There are no visitor facilities within the precinct and access around lookouts and cliffs is unrestricted.

Overview of proposals

Proposals are low-key and aimed at addressing impacts on the environment, enabling passive nature-based recreation to occur, and for visitors to experience the precinct's dramatic scenic qualities. 4WD access will be facilitated by gravel roads to Sunnyside Ridge Road and Birds Rock Trail to Birds Rock. A carpark will be provided at Birds Rock and vehicle access controlled. Walking track networks including the northern arm of the proposed northern multi-day walk route will be implemented. Access will be subtly controlled at lookouts as required.

Protecting natural and cultural values

Protect and conserve sensitive geological formations, habitats and water systems to the plateau and valleys. Rehabilitate eroded tracks not maintained as part of the access network

Protect places and sites of Wiradjuri significance. Research and integrate Wiradjuri stories and connections to Country into the planning and design of improvements. Protect and interpret historical sites and fabric.

Arrival and wayfinding

Wayfinding mediums along Maiyingu Marragu Track and Sunnyside Ridge Road to Birds Rock Trail.

Vehicle access

4WD unsealed road to Sunnyside Ridge Road and Birds Rock carpark.

Camping

Potential overnight campsites along multi-day walk route supported by camping decks to limit environmental impact.

Facilities

Provide parking and a varied range of other facilities (toilets, picnic tables) at trailheads and improve facilities at lookout points generally.

Recreation and leisure

Traversed by north multi-day walk route including potential overnight campsites. Walking track loops for one- to half-day walks and for access to Carne Creek north lookouts and walking access to Forest Camp along multi-day walk route and local loops.

Abseiling and canyoning activities areas for the experienced can be accessed in in Carne Creek valley.

Precinct strategic plan

Proposals - Access

- 1 Sunnyside Ridge Road continues to Sahara Point
- 2 Sunnyside Ridge Road continues to Maiyingu Marragu Trail – provide wayfinding
- 3 4WD unsealed access road to carparking for Birds Rock visitor node
- 4 Multi-day walking route from Lithgow
- 5 Multi-day walking route to Ben Bullen and Bicentennial National Trail
- 6 Loop and destination walks to lookouts and other features

Proposals - Activation and facilities

- 7 Carne Creek West Lookout
- 8 Carne Creek North Lookout accessed from Glow Worm Tunnel Road
- 9 Carne Creek Lookouts South - accessible from Forest Camp walking trails
- 10 Upper Carne Creek Lookouts (accessed from Glow Worm Tunnel Road (off SCA)
- 11 Birds Rock Lookout

Numbers refer to the precinct plan on the next page.

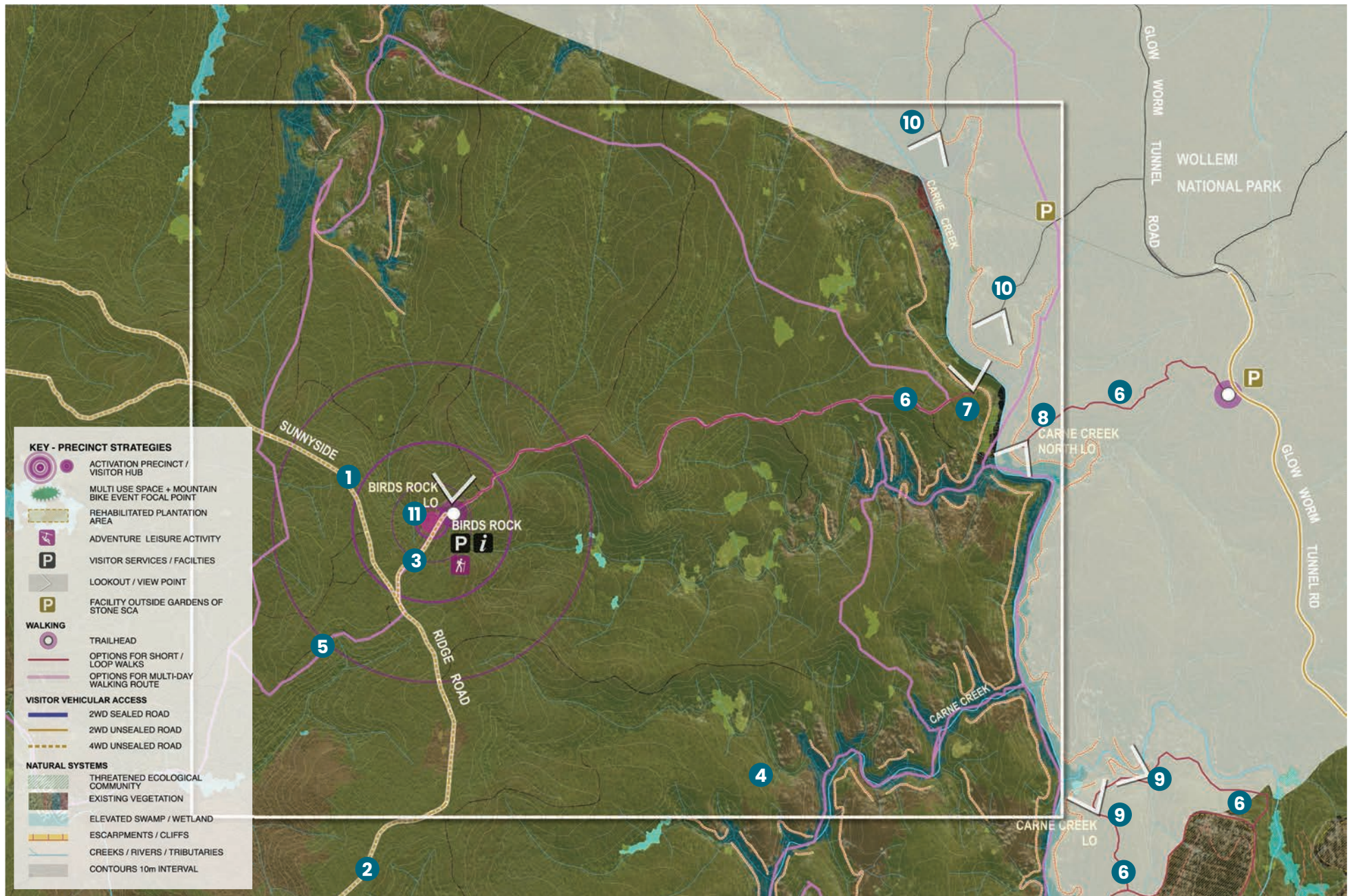


Figure 25 Birds Rock Precinct Strategic Plan

4.3 Birds Rock Precinct

4.3.1 Birds Rock Lookout Visitor Node

Visitor node plan

Overview of existing conditions:

The Birds Rock Trail is severely impacted by 4WD access. There is no wayfinding to the trail system or interpretation of the vistas and habitat values.

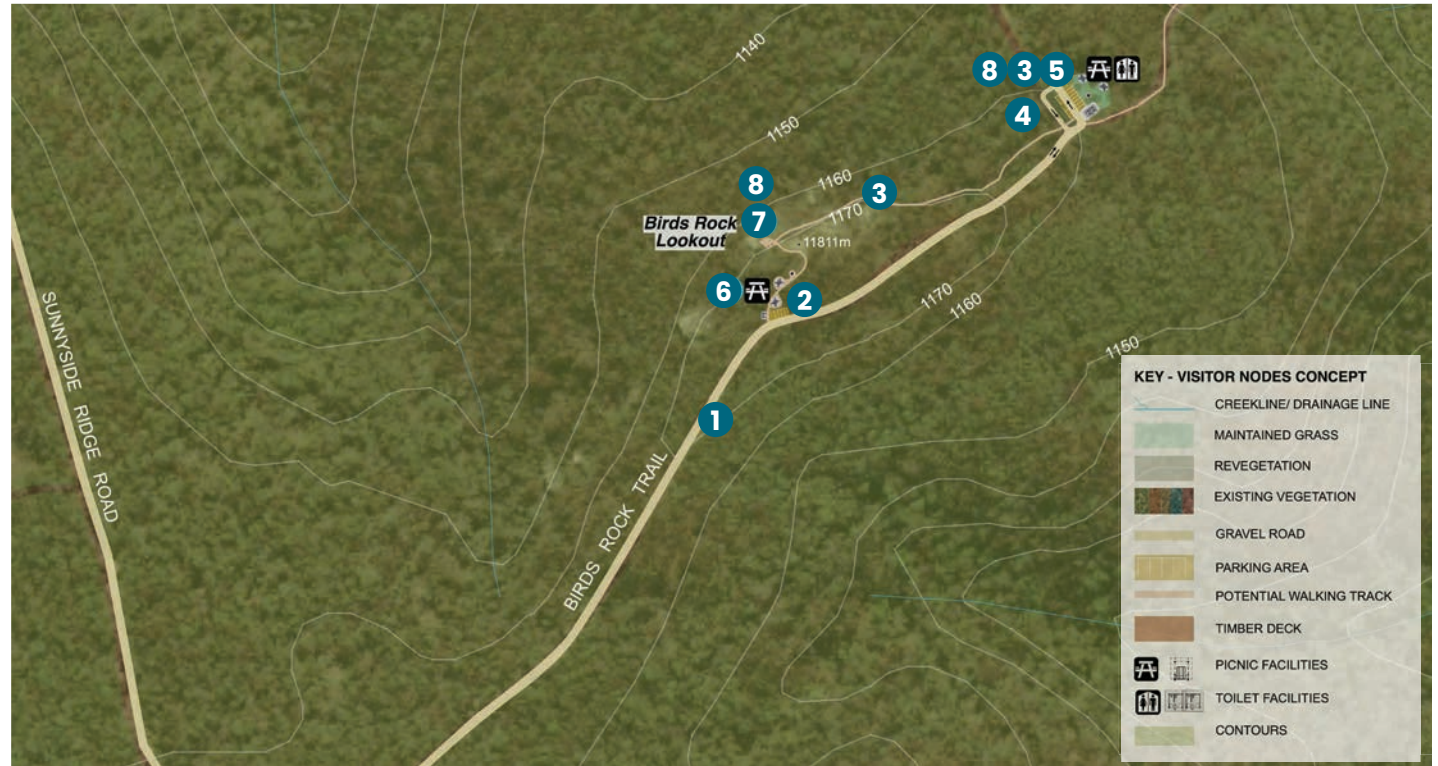
Proposals - Access

- 1 Visitor vehicular access
 - Upgrade existing 4WD unsealed road and terminate on higher ground.
- 2 Visitor parking area near lookout:
 - formalise small carpark area
 - information bay.
- 3 Turn around and parking using existing clearing.
- 4 Potential walking tracks and wayfinding link to potential day use area
 - potential loops walks integrated with the Birds Rock Trail to Carne Creek Gorge.

Proposals - Activation and facilities

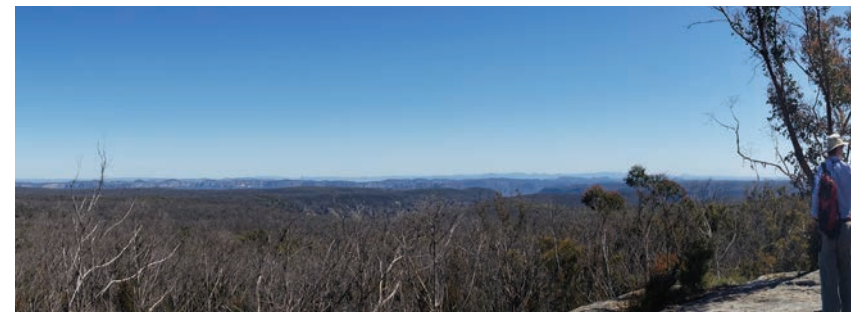
- 5 Potential day use and picnic area
 - provide picnic area and amenities to service lookout and potential walking track loops
- 6 Picnic area
 - picnic tables and shelters accessed from walking track.
- 7 Birds Rock Lookout
 - provides panoramic views towards Wolgan Valley
 - viewing area with informal seating
 - connection to loop walking track to potential day use area.
- 8 Interpretation mediums to be incorporated into facilities

Numbers refer to the visitor node plan on this page.



Existing site: Eroded Birds Rock trail (Photo: A. Hunter)

0 50 100 150 200m N **Figure 26** Birds Rock Visitor Node Plan



Existing view: View from Birds Rock Lookout (Photo: N. Eva)

4.3.2 Carne Creek North Lookouts Visitor Node

Visitor node plan

Overview of existing conditions:

The trail leading from Fire Trail 3 has been degraded by uncontrolled 4WD access. There is unrestricted access and no facilities at lookout points.

Proposals - Access

- 1 Visitor parking area
 - formalise small parking area adjoining Glow Worm Tunnel Road in existing cleared area
 - provide vehicular barriers to prevent unauthorised access to walking track / lookout.
- 2 Information shelter at track head.
- 3 Walking track (two-way route)
 - utilise existing track and upgrade to walking track.

Proposals - Activation and facilities

- 4 Carne Creek North Lookout
 - Viewing area with informal seating / rest area
 - provides views over Carne Creek Gorge and nearby pagoda formations
- 5 Carne Creek West Lookout
 - lookout accessed from Birds Rock walking track / Sunnyside Ridge Road with main views looking north and west.
- 6 Interpretation mediums to be incorporated into facilities

Numbers refer to visitor node plan on this page

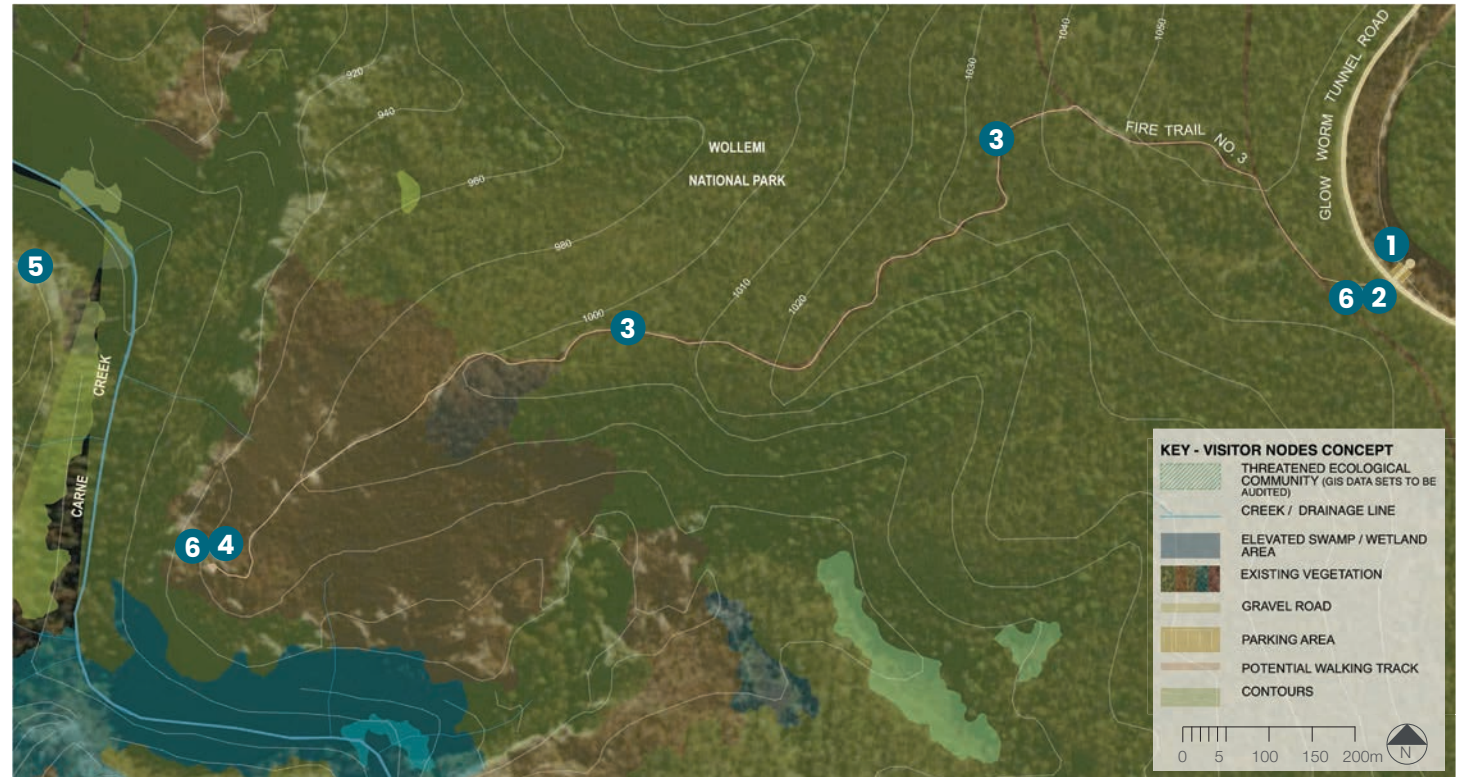


Figure 27 Carne Creek North Lookouts Visitor



Existing view: Carne Creek west lookout areas overlooking canyon (Photo: A. Hunter)

4.4 Long Swamp Precinct

Overview of existing conditions

Long Swamp is less than 20 minutes from Lithgow on the Wolgan Valley Road and provides a diversity of experiences including waterfalls, canyons and caves, and panoramic views. Long Swamp can also be accessed from the eastern SCA precincts along Maiyingu Marragu Trail, from which iconic locations such as Wolgan Falls and Temple of Doom are also accessed.

Long Swamp is a picturesque valley flanking the Coxs River and home to threatened vegetation communities such as Snow Gum Candle Bark Woodland and Typha Rushland. The Long Swamp Road is low lying in places and subject to flooding and related erosion.

There are limited recreation and tourism facilities currently provided.

Overview of proposals

The Long Swamp Valley can be expected to be a focal visitation destination for the west of the SCA. Long Swamp is to be accessed by 4WD trail and is traversed by the western section of the multi-day walk connecting in the north to Ben Bullen and the Bicentennial National Trail.

Sunnyside Ridge Road provides access to the iconic views of the Wolgan Valley from Sahara Point which is proposed to have low-key improvements to control access and enhance visitor experience of its panoramic views.

Protecting natural and cultural values

Protect and conserve sensitive geological formations, habitats and water systems to the plateau and valleys. Rehabilitate eroded tracks not maintained as part of the access network.

The Gardens of Stone SCA will protect places and sites of Wiradjuri significance.

This plan recommends ongoing research and consultation to integrate Wiradjuri stories and connections to Country into planning and design of improvements.

In addition planning and design should protect and interpret historical sites and fabric through the SCA.

Arrival and wayfinding

Wayfinding along Wolgan Valley Road and along Maiyingu Marragu Trail to the various destinations. Provide arrival and orientation experience for visitors coordinated with the Maiyingu Marragu Aboriginal Place to balance the identities of both it and the SCA.

Vehicle access

4WD unsealed track to the Long Swamp Road links will provide vehicle accessibility. 4WD touring access provided to selected tracks.

Camping

Potential overnight campsites along multi-day walk route supported by camping decks to limit environmental impact.

Facilities

Provide parking and a varied range of other facilities (toilets, picnic tables) at trailheads and improve facilities at lookout points generally.

Recreation and leisure

Traversed by north multi-day walk route including potential overnight camp sites. Walking track loops for one- to half-day walks to lookouts and key destinations like Wolgan Falls and Sahara Point.

Precinct strategic plan

Proposals - Access

- 1 Gardens of Stone SCA arrival experience
- 2 Gardens of Stone SCA identity and Long Swamp wayfinding on Wolgan Valley Road
- 3 Sahara Point Lookout accessed by 4WD Sunnyside Ridge Road
- 4 Wolgan Falls walk accessed by 4WD trail and loop track access
- 5 Consider future surface hardening of Maiyingu Marragu Trail in steep sections
- 6 4WD recreational access provided to selected trails
- 7 Multi-day walking route from Lithgow
- 8 Loop walking track access with wayfinding
- 9 Multi-day walking route to Ben Bullen and Bicentennial National Trail

Proposals - Activation and facilities

- 10 Sahara Point Lookout
- 11 Wolgan Falls walks and lookout
- 12 Temple of Doom rock formation – access from Maiyingu Marragu Trail – parallel gravel parking bays adjoining trail
- 13 Long Swamp Picnic Area

Numbers refer to the Precinct Plan on the next page.

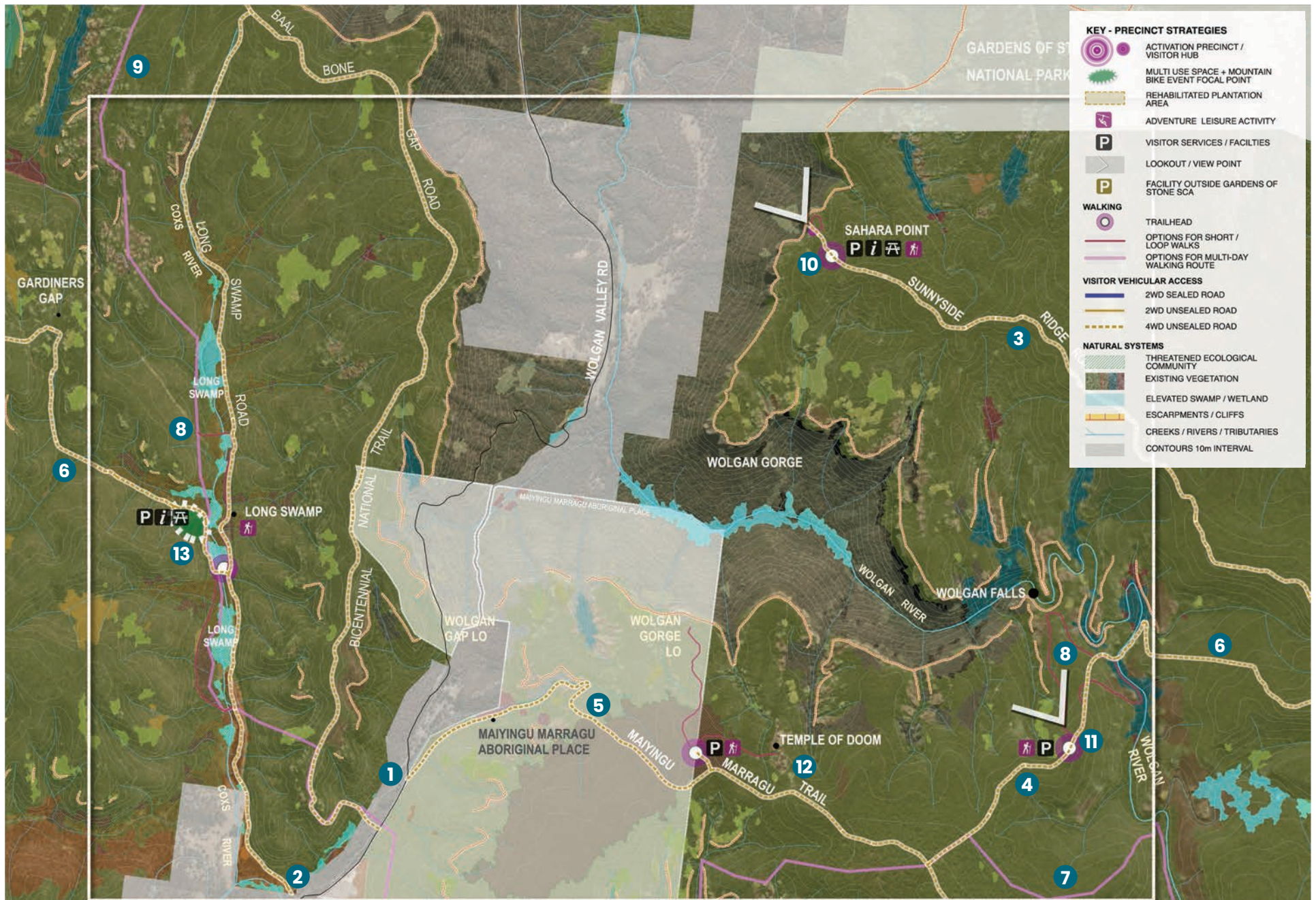


Figure 28 Long Swamp Precinct Strategic Plan

4.4 Long Swamp Precinct

4.4.1 Long Swamp Visitor Area

Long Swamp

The Coxs River Valley supports a delicate ecosystem which has been impacted by pastoral uses and 4WD access. The swamplands are in places heavily weed impacted and track access is eroded and degraded.

Visitor area plan

Proposals - Access

- 1 Long Swamp wayfinding to Wolgan Valley Road
- 2 2WD access to Long Swamp Road as 'in and out' 2WD route terminating at Baal Bone Gap Road
- 3 4WD recreational access to Gardiners Gap Trail connecting to Castlereagh Highway in west
- 4 Loop walking trails with wayfinding
- 5 Multi-day walk to Lithgow along Lambs Creek and Kangaroo Creek

Proposals - Activation and facilities

- 6 Rest point with viewing deck over swamp linked to picnic area
- 7 Long Swamp Picnic Area adjoining creek and swamp including toilets, interpretive mediums linked to multi-day walk route
- 8 Multi-day walk with overnight camping locations integrating camping decks to Ben Bullen and Bicentennial National Trail

Numbers refer to visitor plan on this page



Existing site: Coxs River corridor



Existing site: Long Swamp Road



Figure 29 Long Swamp Visitor Area Plan

4.4.2 Wolgan Falls Visitor Node

Visitor node plan

Overview of existing conditions:

The Wolgan River gully provides a highly scenic and varied landscape experience. The steep sandstone topography has been severely impacted by 4WD and trail bike activity. There are no visitor facilities or wayfinding.

Proposals - Access

- 1 Visitor vehicular access
 - upgrade existing gravel track for 4WD access as far as picnic area and walking trackhead
- 2 4WD visitor vehicular access:
 - existing track to provide 4WD-only access beyond visitor area
- 3 Visitor parking area
 - gravel carpark for 10 car spaces
 - turning area integrated into track
 - information bay
- 4 Potential walking loop
 - links to Wolgan Falls with wayfinding
 - integrates with existing 'No.5 Fire Trail' to create loop from picnic/lookout area.

Proposals - Activation and facilities

- 5 Picnic / lookout area
 - picnic tables and shelters accessed from walking track
 - lookout provides panoramic views towards Wolgan Valley
 - viewing area with informal seating
 - connection to loop walking track to Wolgan Falls.
- 6 Wolgan Falls
- 7 Rehabilitation of existing trail
 - upgrade and repair existing trail for walking access
 - revegetate adjacent degraded areas.

Numbers refer to visitor Node Plan on this page.



Existing site: Track at plan #7



Existing site: Wolgan River Valley (Photos: A. Hunter)

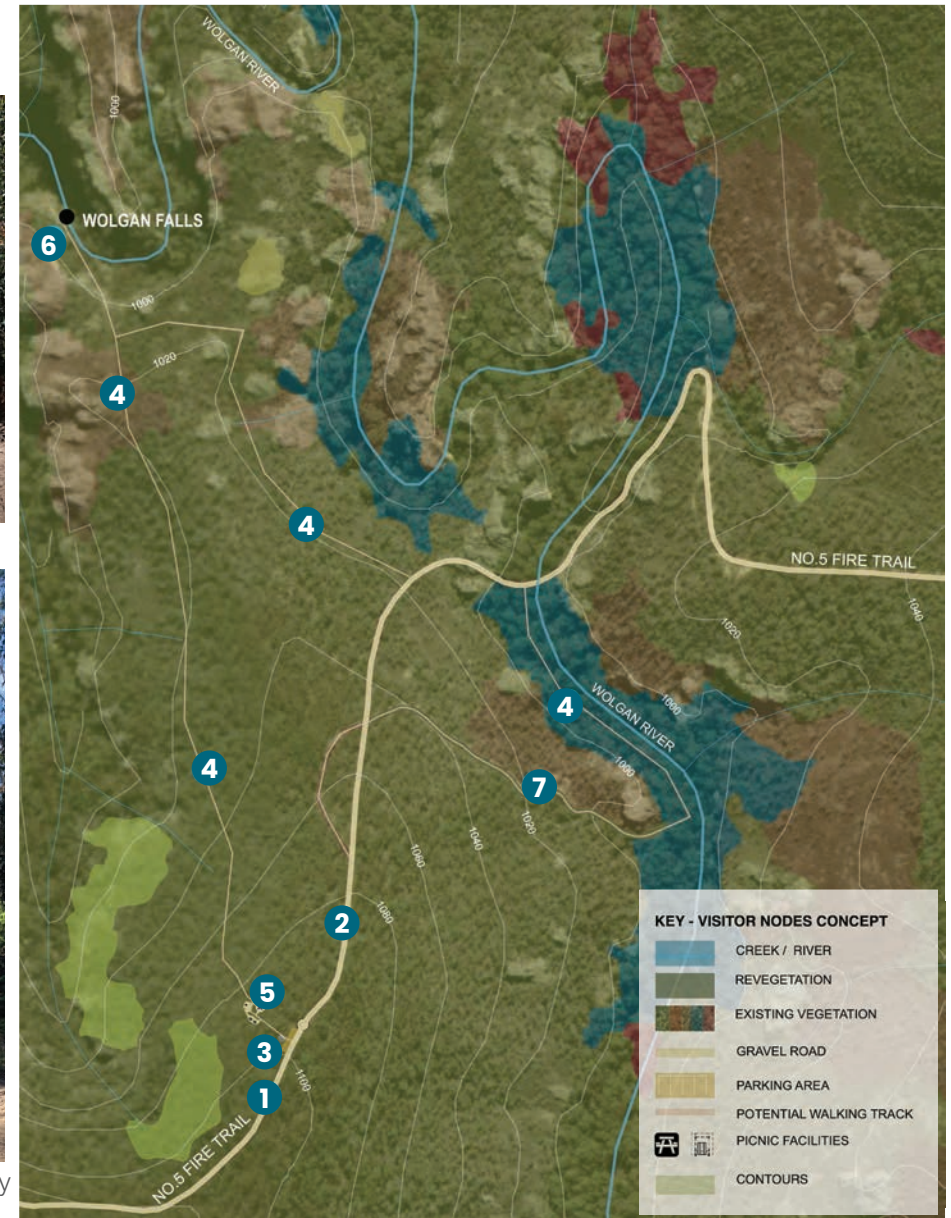
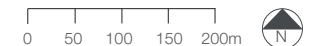


Figure 30 Wolgan Falls Visitor Node Plan



4.4 Long Swamp Precinct

4.4.3 Sahara Point Visitor Node

Visitor node plan

Overview of existing conditions:

Sunnyside Ridge Road provides access to Sahara Point with its panoramic views to the west and north over the Wolgan Valley. The track requires upgrade to be suitable for 2WD access.

Access around the cliffs is unrestricted and there are no park facilities.

Proposals - Access

- 1 Visitor vehicular access
 - upgrade existing track for 4WD access
- 2 Visitor parking areas
 - formalise carpark areas with direct access from roadway
 - provide barriers to prevent unauthorised vehicle access to lookout
- 3 Potential walking track
 - potential short loop (250 metre) 'flora/nature' walk

Proposals - Activation and facilities

- 4 Potential day use and picnic area
 - utilise existing clearing for picnic facilities and walking track loop to lookout area
 - potential to improve setting by revegetating degraded areas with understorey planting
- 5 Sahara Point Lookout
 - provides panoramic views across Wolgan Valley
 - viewing area with informal seating
- 6 Interpretation mediums integrated with facilities.

Numbers refer to visitor node plan on this page.

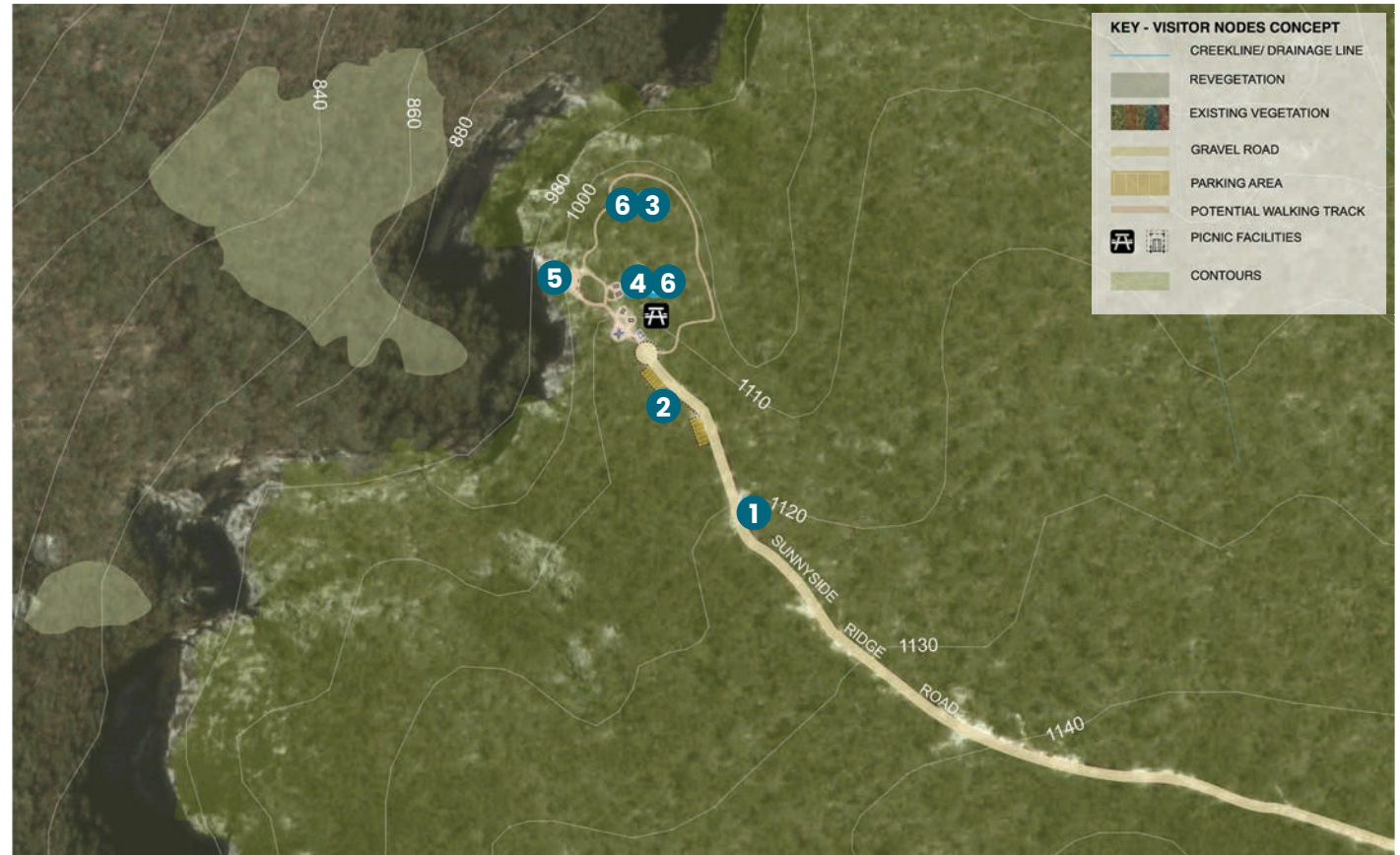
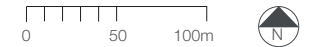


Figure 31 Sahara Point Visitor Node Plan



Existing site: View from Sahara Point (Photo: A. Hunter)

4.4.4 Baal Bone Gap Visitor Node

Visitor node plan

Overview of existing conditions:

Baal Bone Gap lies at the boundary of the Gardens of Stone SCA and the Gardens of Stone National Park. It is a remote location accessible by high-clearance 4WD vehicles only, but offers picturesque pagoda scenery and bushwalking.

Proposals - Access

- 1 Visitor vehicular access
 - upgrade and repair existing gravel track for 4WD access
- 2 Visitor parking area
 - gravel carpark for 10 car spaces
- 3 Bicentennial National Trail
 - walking track access between Baal Bone Gap, Moffitts Trail and potential new picnic and rest area
- 4 Control extent of vehicular access to Bicentennial National Trail at Moffitts Trail intersection
- 5 Potential walking tracks
 - links to Baal Bone Gap
 - links to potential multi-day walk route

Proposals - Activation and facilities

- 6 Upgrade existing viewing and picnic area
- 7 Potential day use and picnic area
 - integrate small picnic area within existing vegetation
 - picnic tables and shelters accessed from Bicentennial National Trail and Baal Bone Gap Road
- 8 Maintain current open grassed horse camping area

Numbers refer to visitor node plan on this page.



Figure 32 Baal Bone Gap Visitor Node Plan



Existing site: Ben Bullen/Moffitts Trail



Lost City (Photo: A. Hunter)

5 Priorities

5.1 Criteria for setting priorities

The realisation of a master plan vision such as that outlined in this plan for the Gardens of Stone SCA will be a long term undertaking.

The scope of works to establish sustainable and safe visitor access to the area, to address environmental degradation by past land uses, and to provide appropriate facilities to support recreational use is significant.

As such it is necessary to approach implementation in a staged manner that prioritises the most important tasks and that aligns activities in a logical and efficient sequence.

For the purposes of this draft master plan a series of key criteria for setting priorities have been identified. These should be applied to future decision-making in relation to priorities.

Collaboration and engagement

- Continue and further develop role of Wiradjuri stakeholders in ongoing planning.
- Identify and establish collaborative arrangements that can help guide and implement management actions.

Investigations and assessments

- Undertake ongoing investigations and assessments into environmental, cultural heritage and recreational influences to inform ongoing planning, design and management.
- Further investigate the broader Wiradjuri connections to Country within the SCA and integrate into ongoing planning, design and management.

Environmental management

- Prioritise stabilisation of ongoing soil erosion through cessation of vehicle access to key areas and mitigation and management of erosion within designated ongoing vehicular access areas.
- Initiate rehabilitation of former plantation areas as an ongoing process.

Enabling recreational activation

- Identify practical and meaningful areas to promote activation within the park that are:
 - readily accessible
 - provide a good representation of the Gardens of Stone landscape and related scenic qualities
 - that may have a degree of existing environmental damage where activation can assist site rehabilitation.

6 Materials and finishes

6.1 Indicative landscape materials and finishes

Materials for use in the implementation of park improvements to the Gardens of Stone SCA will meet the following general principles:

- sustainably sourced and supplied
- locally sourced where possible
- sustainable lifecycle cost
- effective to maintain
- durable
- compliments natural environment and character of the SCA
- reflects standard National Parks finishes where appropriate.

Some examples of key materials and finishes are illustrated on this page.

Roads

Provide simple, robust and cost-effective surfaces fit for purpose of the intended traffic role.



Asphalt road



Crushed rock road



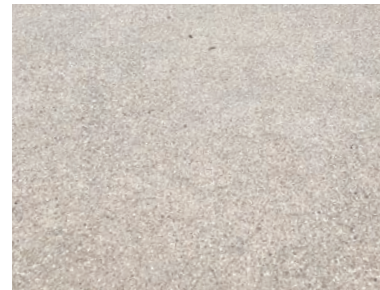
Exposed aggregate concrete threshold

Pavements & pathways

Pavements reflect existing materials and colour themes and convey a hierarchy of importance of spaces.



Stone flagging to key pedestrian nodes



Concrete with light exposed aggregate finish



Stabilised gravel pavement

Tracks

Tracks reflect existing materials and colour themes compatible with NPWS's *Parks Facilities Manual* requirements.



Crushed rock formed track



Gravel overlain bush track



Natural ground bush track

Furniture

Furniture is drawn from the NPWS's *Parks Facilities Manual*.



Shelters seats tables and BBQ's



Steel post and cable barriers



Steel bollard



Lost City viewed toward north west

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More information

ArcGIS REST Services Directory website, World imagery (MapServer) used for aerial photo bases for precinct plans.

[Destination Pagoda](#) – Visit Gardens of Stone webpage

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