



NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

Wollemi Great Walk

**Establishing a signature visitor experience in
the Central West**



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Published by:

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

Report pollution and environmental incidents
Environment Line: 131 555 (NSW only) or info@environment.nsw.gov.au
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Overview

The Wollemi Great Walk will be an iconic multi-day walking experience, with some optional cycling routes, showcasing the unique natural and cultural highlights of the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area, Gardens of Stone National Park and Wollemi National Park.

The visitor experience will be a major drawcard for visitors to Lithgow and the Central West, offering a signature walking and cycling experience that captures the protected area's varied terrain – ranging from cliff-top views, rainforest-lined gullies and complex stone pagoda formations.

Building on an existing network of walking tracks and remote vehicle trails, the Wollemi Great Walk has been developed in response to a growing demand for nature-based experiences that appeal to diverse audiences and evoke a sense of discovery. The visitor experience will support visitor dispersal and provide opportunities for new tourism development in regional New South Wales.

The visitor experience will connect people to the natural environment and enhance the status of New South Wales as a walking destination both nationally and internationally.

Accommodation, including sustainable camp sites and off-park partner-provided facilities, will reduce impacts and facilitate visitation by diverse user groups. Thoughtful walking track alignment and construction will keep visitors safe and support conservation values.

Key features include:

- a unique walking experience, with some cycling options, connecting Lithgow to the Mudgee region
- supported by a broad selection of visitor services, including accommodation, hospitality, cultural activities, recreational services and commercial tour operations
- on-park and off-park accommodation options available catering to diverse markets
- can be completed in sections to provide a range of duration options for walkers

Publicly accessible on-park facilities will be managed and operated by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), working with tour operators, transport providers and other business partners to provide optional support services where appropriate.

Any on-park infrastructure will undergo rigorous environmental planning assessments to ensure compliance with relevant conservation management plans under state and Commonwealth legislation. The current route alignment and draft concept plans are subject to change to mitigate potential impacts on natural and cultural values, if required.

The proposal will deliver a range of environmental, social and economic benefits for the Central West region, including ongoing protection of natural and cultural heritage, new opportunities for visitors to explore and connect with nature, economic stimulus for the local regional, and improved wellbeing for visitors and local communities.

The Wollemi Great Walk will attract local, domestic and international visitors to the region and create new business opportunities for local operators – such as bike hire, e-bike rentals, shuttle services, luggage transfer, accommodation and hospitality opportunities. It will also present new opportunities for tour operations and immersive experiences, including cultural tours, historic heritage experiences, and nature-based tours such as cycling, bushwalking and stargazing.

The proposal complements the diversity of recreational experiences within the region's unique national parks and protected areas, including bushwalking, camping, climbing, canyoning and mountain biking.

Vision and objectives

The Wollemi Great Walk will deliver signature walking and cycling trails in NSW national parks to further enhance economic activity in regional New South Wales.

Showcasing spectacular views and iconic natural areas, it will deliver a multi-day experience for walkers, and segments for cyclists, in a landscape rich in Aboriginal cultural heritage. Local economies will benefit from the introduction of much-needed tourism services and opportunities to support the aspirations of Aboriginal custodians. These benefits will continue to grow as future track linkages to nearby communities are harnessed by local partners.

Tourism is a major driver for the Central West economy, with the 2022–2030 Destination Management Plan (DMP) reporting an annual visitation of 5.2 million, resulting in 6.3 million visitor nights for the year ending December 2019.

Nature-based tourism is identified as a major opportunity in the Central West DMP, led by walking and cycle touring opportunities, which strengthen connectivity to regional centres. Diversification is another common theme in all Central West Regional Economic Development Strategies to build a broader visitor offering that captures heritage tourism, ecotourism, nature trails and cultural tourism.

Key objectives

- Create a new multi-day visitor experience of international standing that highlights dramatic pagoda country and Wollemi landscapes
- Protect, respect and promote the park's environmental and cultural heritage
- Improve connectivity between national parks and regional communities
- Create nature-based experiences which foster future conservation advocacy and stewardship
- Provide opportunities for Aboriginal communities to share their culture and benefit from the visitor economy
- Offer new opportunities for visitors to connect with nature
- Generate economic benefits for the local community with sustainable tourism growth
- Create safe tracks and campsites with minimal impact and long-term sustainability
- Provide opportunities to establish and strengthen partnerships with business, government and local communities

Location

The Wollemi Great Walk traverses 3 reserves; the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area, Gardens of Stone National Park and the Wollemi National Park.

Lithgow serves as the regional gateway from Sydney, located 140 kilometres or 2.5 hours' drive west of the Sydney CBD. Lithgow is the proposed starting point for the walk and is easily accessible via train or car. Lithgow is also well-serviced with accommodation and hospitality providers. Visitor services are available in the Wolgan Valley and Mudgee, with road connections to regional communities, including Glen Davis, Rylstone, Kandos and Capertee.

Product development

National Parks and Wildlife Service is leading the establishment of the Wollemi Great Walk in collaboration with local businesses, Traditional Owners, targeted stakeholders, tour operators, accommodation providers, community groups and local councils.

State, regional and local tourism bodies are actively involved in product development as part of a coordinated and strategic approach to align with established and emerging trends and leverage strategic product positioning and partnerships.

NSW Great Walks strategy

The Wollemi Great Walk is recognised as a key visitor experience in the NPWS Great Walks program, which seeks to deliver a network of spectacular multi-day walks across New South Wales.

Released by NPWS in 2023, the NSW Great Walks program identifies a number of iconic walking opportunities to drive regional economic growth, build a legacy of support for conservation and encourage new visitors to explore national parks.

The Wollemi Great Walk meets the NPWS Great Walks criteria as a multi-day walking experience predominantly located within national parks, featuring on- or off-park accommodation.

It also aligns with the objectives of the Great Walks program, which seeks to establish New South Wales as an internationally recognised walking destination with low-impact facilities which facilitate memorable walking experiences for the burgeoning walking visitor market.

The NPWS is creating a network of spectacular multi-day walks across New South Wales to give people a chance to connect with nature in some of the state's most breathtaking landscapes. The Wollemi Great Walk is one of 13 NSW great walks identified across the state that are operating or in development.

The NSW Great Walks will deliver exciting new bushwalking opportunities and drive economic growth in regional communities. The walks will also help build a legacy of support for conservation. The more people who visit national parks, the more people will appreciate the need to protect and restore our environment.

NSW Great Walks will assist to build the reputation of New South Wales as a destination for nature-based tourism and walking holidays.

Visitor experience

The Wollemi Great Walk is designed to be completed in stages, or as an end-to-end experience, providing opportunities for short stays and repeat visitation to the Central West.

The complete visitor experience covers roughly 90 kms from Lithgow to the Widden Valley, covering diverse terrain. The route alignment has been divided into sections to support visitor use; some sections support dual-use for walking and cycling, while other sections are dedicated only to bushwalking due to the terrain and use of steps.

The Wollemi Great Walk map provides an overview of the complete visitor experience, with individual sections detailed below.



Photo 1 Wolgan River crossing, Wollemi National Park. Elinor Sheargold/DPE

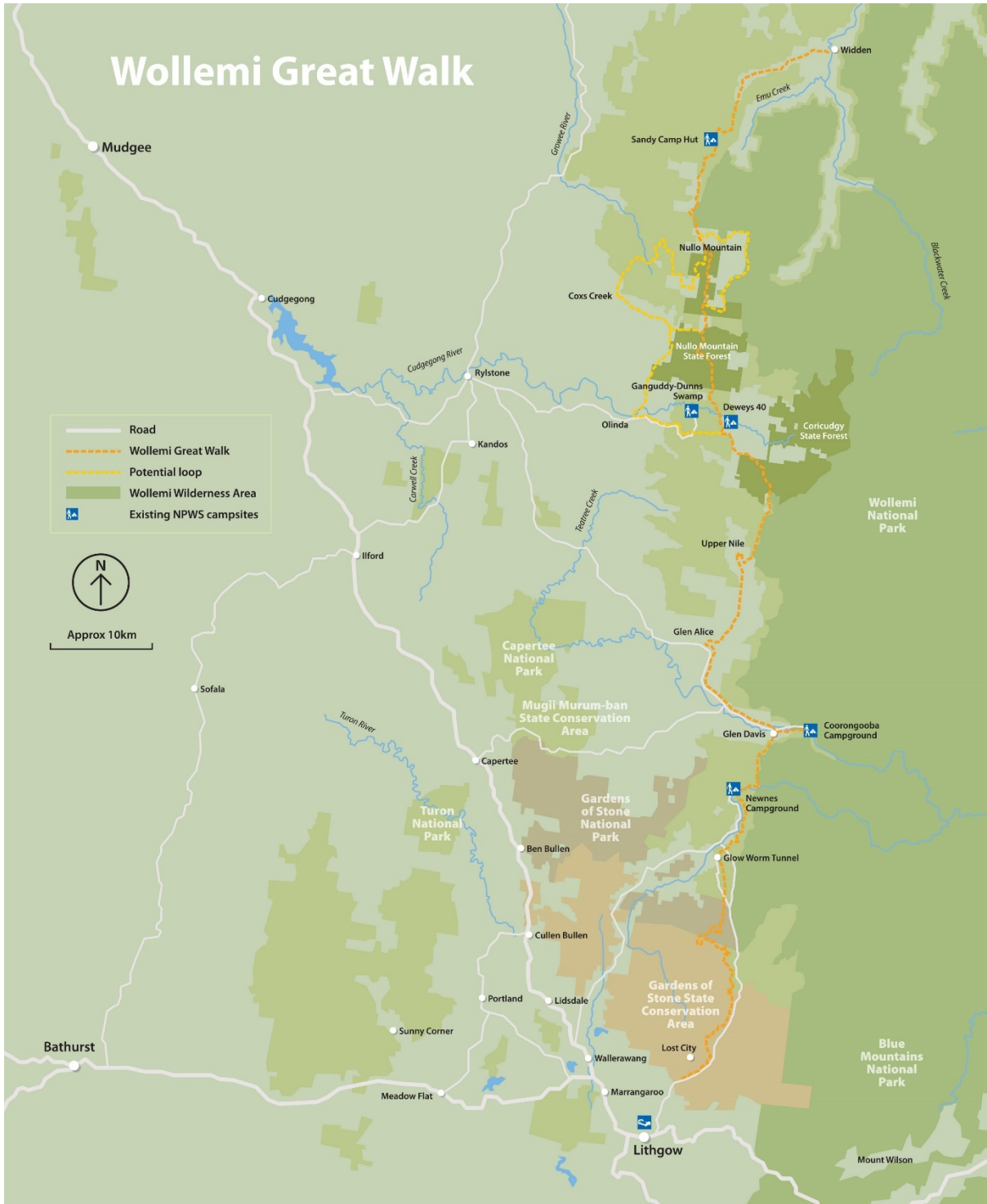


Figure 1 Map of Wollemi Great Walk

Section 1 – Lithgow to Glen Davis

Section 1 of the Wollemi Great Walk extends from Lithgow to Glen Davis, with a number of day trips and multi-day options available for walkers and cyclists. Lithgow serves as the base of Section One, with accommodation and services readily available. Refer to the Wollemi Great Walk Section 1 map for more detail.

The trail network commences from the Lost City visitor precinct with the Lost City Canyon Walk, an accessible short loop trail featuring unrivalled views of iconic pagoda landscapes. The journey begins in a woody forest along an existing fire trail before opening up to panoramic views of the Lost City skyline.

Pagoda landscapes are a key feature of the Lost City experience, which follows the Marrangaroo Creek and explores heritage items, including dams and mining infrastructure established in the early 1900s during the coalmining boom.

A dual-use walking and cycling track will connect the Lost City Canyon Walk to a range of visitor services within the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area, including a mountain biking network, picnic areas and a family campground.

Predominantly following the historic Wolgan Railway alignment, the dual-use track will capture the colourful history of the railway with low-impact visitor interpretations and provide connections to a network of family mountain biking trails in the reserve.

Visitors travelling from Sydney can spend the first night in Lithgow, or access the new NPWS Forest Campground by vehicle, with options to explore day walks or the mountain bike network within the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area.

Bushwalkers looking for a stand-alone 3 to 4 day walking experience can also experience the section of the Wollemi Great Walk commencing in the centre of the state conservation area, traversing the Carne Creek Canyon and Glow Worm Tunnel.

The track alignment has been established with extensive input from local community groups, bushwalkers and experts in walking track design to deliver a multi-day walking experience that appeals to families, seasoned hikers and small groups new to overnight walking.

Fully accessible to the public, the new walking track will feature panoramic views of Carne Creek and adjoining pagoda country while improving access to visitor facilities at the popular Glow Worm Tunnel precinct. It also provides a critical link to Newnes Campground and established visitor services further north at Glen Davis.



Figure 2 Wollemi Great Walk. Section 1: Lithgow to Glen Davis

Highlights of the proposed new Lithgow to Glen Davis part of the Great Walk include:

- an immersive visitor experience which provides a sense of safety and confidence for visitors new to overnight bushwalking
- varied terrain, including open heathland, sandstone escarpments, forested gullies, canyons and pagoda country
- connections to shared-use trail network from Lithgow
- publicly accessible remote campgrounds and facilities (shelters, camping platforms, toilets, water tanks)
- connections to Glow Worm Tunnel visitor precinct, Newnes Campground and the Wolgan Valley
- direct economic benefits for Lithgow, including additional visitation, overnight stays and visitor spend.

New track alignment

The proposal to construct a new track section as part of the Great Walk, from Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area to the Glow Worm Tunnel, has been developed in collaboration with leaders in remote walking track establishment. The track alignment has been thoughtfully considered to minimise environmental impacts, leverage natural assets and support sustainable ongoing maintenance. Best practice remote area facility principles will ensure that tracks, camps and lookouts have minimal impact on natural and cultural values.

A number of factors have been considered in establishing and refining the current alignment, including:

- incorporating points of interest, including lookouts, rock formations, rainforests, waterfalls, gullies and unique features where possible
- avoiding roads and operational mining infrastructure
- capturing a sense of remoteness
- linking public campsites within comfortable walking distance of each other
- providing critical links to complementary visitor infrastructure and experiences, while supporting economic outcomes for regional towns and communities

All track developments are subject to rigorous environmental approvals. Track alignments are subject to change pending environmental, historic heritage and Aboriginal cultural heritage assessments.

Walking track standards

The New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service has a proven track record of excellence in walking track design and construction.

Following the Australian Walking Track Grading System, the track standard will be a combination of Grade 3 and Grade 4 to provide a sense of remoteness while balancing the needs of key user groups, including those new to overnight bushwalking.

Track width will vary between 600 mm and 900 mm with primary use of timber steps, carved steps, sandstone steps and drains, and safety barriers as required.

Campground locations will be carefully considered to capture unique features, including panoramic views, pagoda fields, dry canyons, eucalypt forests, ferned gullies and creek crossings. Distances between campgrounds will be within a comfortable day's walk.

Public facilities

The walking track will be publicly accessible, with remote campgrounds featuring basic facilities. Distances between public campsites will support a remote visitor experience, with facilities to include elevated camping platforms, shelters and remote toilets.

Bookings for public campsites will be managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service to support and manage sustainable visitation to the area.



Figure 3 Similar infrastructure to proposed remote campsites on the Wollemi Great Walk

Top left – Acacia Flat campground, Blue Mountains National Park.

Top right and bottom images – Oaky Beach Campground, Murrumbidgee National Park.

Credit: John Spencer/DPE

Private, low-impact eco-style campsites are proposed at 3 locations within the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area to support the establishment of a guided walking experience. Locations of these facilities are identified in the *Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area plan of management*.

All infrastructure will be subject to rigorous environmental and cultural approvals in accordance with the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

No new exclusive-use or commercial facilities will be established in the Gardens of Stone National Park or Wollemi National Park.

Glow Worm Tunnel Visitor Precinct and beyond

The Glow Worm Tunnel visitor precinct is a major drawcard for visitors to the Central West, attracting more than 50,000 visitors annually.

Significant upgrades are underway to improve the visitor experience and restore the Glow Worm Tunnel Track following recent bushfires and floods. Future improvements to this precinct will include the upgrade of the existing old railway alignment to establish a shared-use walking and cycling track from the Old Coach Road junction through to Newnes Campground.

On-park camping is available at the Newnes Campground and Coorongooba Campground (Glen Davis), with boutique accommodation also available in the Wolgan Valley and Glen Davis.

Additional upgrades as part of the Wollemi Great Walk include:

- shared walking/cycling track upgrade from Old Coach Rd junction to Newnes Campground
- Pipeline track upgrades to improve walking access between Newnes Campground and Glen Davis
- enhancing the visitor experience offering in the Wolgan Valley and Glen Davis, delivering a welcome boost to the local visitor economy.



Photo 2 Newnes Plateau. Rosie Nicolai/DPE

Section 2 – Glen Davis to Ganguddy-Dunns Swamp

Beyond Glen Davis, the shared-use network provides connections to Ganguddy-Dunns Swamp via existing roads and fire trails, flanked by Wollemi Wilderness to the east.

Visitors can enjoy uninterrupted views of the Wollemi escarpment and Capertee River, with on-park accommodation available at Coorangooba and Ganguddy-Dunns Swamp in the Wollemi National Park.

Highlights include:

- cycle touring connections from Glen Davis to Ganguddy-Dunns Swamp
- tourism product development opportunities for supported visitor experiences and shuttle services
- walking track and cycling trail connections and loops
- connections to visitor services in Rylstone, Kandos and Capertee
- improved access to cultural tours and services at Ganguddy-Dunns Swamp.



Photo 3 Ganguddy-Dunns Swamp. Jennifer Frappell/DPE

Section 3 – Ganguddy-Dunns Swamp to Widden Valley

The final section of the Wollemi Great Walk provides additional linkages to National Parks and Wildlife Service facilities and established accommodation providers further north towards the Widden Valley.

Catering for walkers and cyclists, the visitor offering includes day loops and connections to Rylstone and Mudgee, with the completion of the final stage taking visitors to Widden via the existing National Trail. Highlights include:

- family friendly connections to Ganguddy-Dunns Swamp visitor precinct
- tourism product development opportunities for group tours, connections, hospitality and logistics
- on-park and off-park accommodation options available
- cycle touring options available, including short loops and connections to Widden and Mudgee.



Photo 4 Regent honeyeater (*Anthochaera phrygia*), Widden Valley. Mick Roderick/DPE

Frequently asked questions

Q: How will the environment be protected during the construction of new walking tracks and facilities?

All visitor infrastructure, including the trail network, lookouts and supporting structures, public campsites and visitor precincts must be delivered in accordance with requirements under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act).

The NPW Act seeks to protect a range of habitats and ecosystems, a diversity of plant and animal species, significant geological features and landforms, as well as Aboriginal cultural heritage sites, heritage buildings and historic sites.

All on-park infrastructure proposals will undergo rigorous environmental planning approvals to ensure compliance with relevant conservation management plans under state and Commonwealth legislation.

Specialist assessments are required to inform all park planning, including Aboriginal Cultural Heritage, historic heritage, and flora and fauna. Additional consideration is also granted to soil and water management, sediment control and erosion, and ongoing monitoring may be required in some circumstances.

Q: How large will the remote campsites be?

Publicly accessible campsites will be established, managed and maintained by NPWS in selected locations. Visitor facilities will be designed to meet the needs of users, with distances between campgrounds to be within comfortable walking distance.

The design and placement of visitor infrastructure – including elevated camping platforms, remote area toilets, water tanks and camping shelters – will respond to the natural surroundings with minimal environmental impacts.

The number of camping platforms at each campsites will be limited to ensure sustainable maintenance and management.

Q: How will disruption to local wildlife be minimised during construction?

Fauna assessments will be completed for new infrastructure works, in accordance with the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.

Fauna assessments can assist in determining the extent of fauna (vertebrate and invertebrate) in the area and provide valuable information about species composition, biodiversity and the presence of protected or threatened species.

Fauna surveys are used to inform planning decisions and provide quantitative data and qualitative observations to inform construction and ongoing park planning and management.

Q: How will waste disposal be managed along the trail?

NPWS is committed to improving awareness of conservation values by delivering low-impact visitor experiences that foster an appreciation of the environment.

All publicly accessible on-park campsites will be managed as part of an ongoing park management plan, including waste removal and facilities maintenance. Visitors will be encouraged to tread lightly and take their rubbish with them.

Remote area toilets will be established at some public campgrounds, with human waste to be contained on-site and removed as part of a fly-in, fly-out, program.

Q: Has fire management and planning occurred?

The NPWS has fire management strategies in place for the Wollemi Great Walk and will further develop actions for ongoing visitor management.

All visitors will be required to book public campsites prior to arrival to ensure important messaging about fire safety can be delivered in a timely manner.

Q: Why is the trail alignment dual-use?

Sections of the alignment has been designed as a dual-use track in response to growing demand for walking and cycling experiences in regional New South Wales.

Section 1 of the Wollemi Great Walk provides a number of walking options for bushwalkers looking for multi-day walking experiences, including short walks and options to extend the experience further north to Mudgee.

Sections 2 and 3 of the trail provide regional connections to a number of popular NPWS precincts, with longer distances that favour independent cycling or adventure tours.

Opportunities exist for tourism operators to establish new tours that build on the strengths of the area, including cycling and walking tours, cultural tourism and multi-day adventure tours.

Q: How will visitor safety be managed on the dual-use network?

The trail alignment has been divided into sections to align with diverse terrain along the 90 km route.

Targeted messaging will be established on sections of the route alignment that support dual-use, including appropriate visitor signage in high-use areas. Some sections of the Wollemi Great Walk do not support dual-use and are not accessible to cyclists due to the varied terrain and use of steps.

More information

- [Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area Plan of Management](#)