



**NSW NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE**

# **Macleay Coast Destination draft master plan**

**Arakoon and Hat Head national parks**



© 2022 State of NSW and Department of Planning and Environment

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

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

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

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

Cover photo: Rocky shoreline, Arakoon National Park, GeoLINK

Photo credit: All photos in this report by GeoLINK unless otherwise noted.

**Published by:**

Environment and Heritage Group  
Department of Planning and Environment  
4 Parramatta Square, 12 Darcy St Parramatta NSW 2124  
Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124  
Phone: +61 2 9995 5000 (switchboard)  
Phone: 1300 361 967 (Environment and Heritage enquiries)  
TTY users: phone 133 677, then ask for 1300 361 967  
Speak and listen users: phone 1300 555 727, then ask for 1300 361 967  
Email: [info@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@environment.nsw.gov.au)  
Find out more about your environment at:  
[www.environment.nsw.gov.au](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au)

ISBN 978-1-922899-99-6  
EHG 2022/0524  
October 2022



# Contents

<b>Acknowledgment of Country</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Draft precinct improvement plan - Trial Bay</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Draft precinct improvement plan - Cardwell Street</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Draft precinct improvement plan - Little Bay</b>	<b>50</b>
1.1 Background	10	<b>9</b>	<b>Draft precinct improvement plan - Smoky Cape</b>	<b>56</b>
1.2 The study area	11	<b>10</b>	<b>Walking trails and shared paths</b>	<b>61</b>
1.3 The precincts	12	<b>11</b>	<b>Design intent</b>	<b>64</b>
1.4 Aboriginal culture	16	11.1 Materials		65
1.5 European heritage	16	11.2 Natural aesthetic		66
1.6 Natural values	16	11.3 Built heritage		66
<b>2 Project methodology</b>	<b>17</b>	11.4 Designing with Country		67
2.1 Project methodology	18	11.5 Accessible accomodation		67
<b>3 Vision and design principles</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>12 Project priorities</b>		<b>68</b>
3.1 Vision	20	12.1 Project priorities		69
3.2 Project design principles	20	12.2 Staging		69
<b>4 Tourism planning context</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>More information</b>		<b>69</b>
4.1 Tourism on the North Coast	25			
4.2 Tourism on the Macleay Valley Coast	25			
4.3 Current visitation	26			
4.4 Market segments	27			
4.5 Accessible tourism	27			
4.6 Events	28			
<b>5 Community engagement</b>	<b>29</b>			
5.1 Inform	30			
5.2 Consult	30			
5.3 Public exhibition	30			
5.4 Related projects	30			

## Figures

<b>Figure 1.1</b> Regional locality	10	<b>Figure 9.2</b> Smoky Cape - precinct improvement plan - west	58
<b>Figure 1.2</b> Map of the study area	11	<b>Figure 9.3</b> Smoky Cape - precinct improvement plan - east	60
<b>Figure 1.3</b> Map of Trial Bay	12	<b>Figure 10.1</b> Walking trails and shared paths - north	62
<b>Figure 1.4</b> Map of Caldwell Street	13	<b>Figure 10.2</b> Walking trails and shared paths - south	63
<b>Figure 1.5</b> Map of Little Bay	14		
<b>Figure 1.6</b> Map Smoky Cape	15		
<b>Figure 4.1</b> Summary of visitor statistics	26		
<b>Figure 4.2</b> Helix Personas extract	27		
<b>Figure 6.1</b> Trial Bay - opportunities and constraints	32		
<b>Figure 6.2</b> Trial Bay - existing vehicle circulation	34		
<b>Figure 6.3</b> Trial Bay - proposed vehicle circulation	35		
<b>Figure 6.4</b> Trial Bay - existing pedestrian circulation	36		
<b>Figure 6.5</b> Trial Bay - proposed vehicle circulation	37		
<b>Figure 6.6</b> Trial Bay - precinct improvement plan	38		
<b>Figure 6.7</b> Trial Bay - precinct improvement plan - south	39		
<b>Figure 6.8</b> Trial Bay - precinct improvement plan - west	41		
<b>Figure 6.9</b> Trial Bay - precinct improvement plan - north	43		
<b>Figure 7.1</b> Caldwell Street - opportunities and constraints	46		
<b>Figure 7.2</b> Caldwell Street - precinct improvement plan	48		
<b>Figure 8.1</b> Little Bay - opportunities and constraints	51		
<b>Figure 8.2</b> Little Bay - precinct improvement plan - north	53		
<b>Figure 8.3</b> Little Bay - precinct improvement plan - south	55		
<b>Figure 9.1</b> Smoky Cape - opportunities and constraints	57		

## **Acknowledgment of Country**

The precincts featured in this master plan are on Dunghutti Country. NPWS acknowledges the Dunghutti People, the traditional owners and custodians of these lands and waters, who have been part of this landscape for many thousands of years. We acknowledge their continued connection to the land, seas and waterways and pay our respects to their Elders of the past, present and future.



# Summary



## What is proposed?

The Macleay Coast Destination project aims to improve community wellbeing, enhance the regional visitor economy and increase nature based tourism in NSW.

The project, which includes funding of \$6.7 million, will complement the existing historic and cultural significance of key visitor precincts in Arakoon and Hat Head national parks by increasing the range and quality of experiences on offer and improving park visitor facilities.

In addition, a new walking track south of Gap Beach will complete the Smoky Cape to Little Bay walking track, providing stunning views over the coastline and meet the increasing demand for bushwalking opportunities.

The project will be implemented in 3 stages, with the initial \$6.7 million in funding focused on delivering stages 1 and 2 over the next 4 years.

### Stage 1

Develop a blueprint to meet long-term visitor demands of key visitor precincts in Arakoon and Hat Head national parks and determine priorities for implementation.

### Stage 2

Use project funding to improve the visitor experience by improving pedestrian, cycle and traffic circulation, separating non-compatible uses and modernising facilities in priority areas.

### Stage 3

Undertake remaining works as funding becomes available over the 10-year life of the master plan.

#### Four different precincts have been identified:

**Trial Bay** – The focus of initiatives in the Trial Bay precinct, in Arakoon National Park, is to improve cycle, pedestrian and vehicle movement by improving overall safety, helping to separate different user groups; creating new campground infrastructure including hard-roofed accommodation for disabled visitors; creating new amenities for day visitors; and improving beach access.

**Cardwell Street** – This precinct, in Arakoon National Park, includes the former NPWS office and compound and will become a key attraction for day visitors, with much improved parking and facilities. It is proposed that the NPWS office be repurposed as the campground office (replacing Trial Bay Goal) and that a scaled down depot supports local operational needs. A new walking/cycling track will link this precinct to Trial Bay.

**Little Bay** – This precinct, in Arakoon National Park, will feature enhanced facilities and new family friendly walking and bike paths, reinvigorating this cherished precinct as a favoured location for family gatherings.

**Smoky Cape** – Improved parking and day visitor facilities at Smoky Cape, Hat Head National Park, coupled with a small kiosk in one of the repurposed lighthouse buildings will improve services and increase the visitor appeal of this already iconic site.

## Why is the project needed?

Facilities and services in the Trial Bay, Little Bay and Smoky Cape precincts have been developed in an ad hoc manner over the past 40 years. Some facilities are in an advanced state of disrepair and others have had to be demolished to address immediate safety concerns. Ad hoc development has also left a legacy of inconsistent and poor-quality design and construction of infrastructure between (and even within) the precincts.

The ongoing decline in the quality of visitor infrastructure will diminish the appeal of the area to existing visitors and limit our capacity to encourage new visitor markets. Upgraded and improved facilities and experiences in Arakoon National Park and the Smoky Cape precinct will secure existing visitor markets and entice new visitors. They will also increase the length of time people stay and support sustainable levels of visitation throughout the year.



Trial Bay - Inconsistent mix of materials

## How will the project vision be achieved?

The planning process has been greatly aided by the establishment of project design principles. They encompass current thinking, issues, challenges, opportunities and trends, and help set the 'ground rules' to ensure the project vision (see Section 3.1) is met. The design principles for the project are:

- protect cultural and historic heritage
- minimise environmental impacts
- enhance enjoyment and understanding
- separate day and overnight uses
- provide high-quality camping
- diversify accommodation experience
- improve vehicle access and movement
- manage vehicle parking
- improve walking and cycling.

Each of the precinct plans was developed in accordance with these principles (see Section 2 'Project methodology' for more detail).



Little Bay - Shelter style to be used throughout the precincts

## Community and visitor involvement in the project

NPWS collects information on park related travel, attitudes, needs and interests from a wide range of sources. These include on site visitor surveys, post-visit campground surveys, statewide population-based surveys, tourism industry surveys and other market research. This information has provided excellent insights into visitor motivations and has served as the basis for precinct planning.

The project team has also sought wider community input via an online form on the project webpage since 2019. Stakeholders have been invited to register their interest and have been directly provided ongoing information and updates. The formal public exhibition of this draft master plan is the main opportunity for community members to contribute to the future direction of planning for each precinct.



Consulting with stakeholders on-site





01

## Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Arakoon and Hat Head national parks are located 450 km north of Sydney and a similar distance south of the Gold Coast. The closest town of South West Rocks, less than 5 km from the Trial Bay Gaol, has a permanent population of approximately 4,600 but this increases dramatically during peak holiday periods. Kempsey (population 30,000) is the nearest city, less than 40 km away.

The State heritage listed Trial Bay Gaol (Arakoon National Park) and Smoky Cape Lighthouse (Hat Head National Park) are 2 of the most iconic tourist attractions on the Mid North Coast of NSW. The national parks in which they are located collectively attract over a million visitors annually and are major contributors to the local economy of the Kempsey Shire. Those visiting from outside the local area are predominantly from other parts of NSW and have typically been families and older Australians drawn to the area by the coastal environs, natural environment and outstanding heritage.

There is now little doubt that existing visitor infrastructure does not complement, and in fact detracts from, the natural and cultural heritage values of the area. Infrastructure within the Trial Bay Gaol campground has evolved over time in an ad hoc manner, largely without the benefit of a consistent vision or detailed economic or environmental planning. This has created inconsistencies in design and materials used in park infrastructure, impacting aesthetics, road layout, traffic flow and creating conflicting visitor uses. A study commissioned by NPWS in 2016 found that infrastructure in Trial Bay campground and the parks generally were undermining the

visitor experience by lagging way behind market trends and visitor expectations. At that time it was predicted that growth would be negative without significant upgrading. Given the key role this precinct plays as a major visitor attraction, any downturn in visitation would have major impacts on the regional visitor economy and the many local people and businesses who rely on this to support livelihoods and the ongoing provision of community services.

The Macleay Coast Destination project aims to address these concerns and at the same time provide a much-needed boost to the regional visitor economy and community wellbeing.

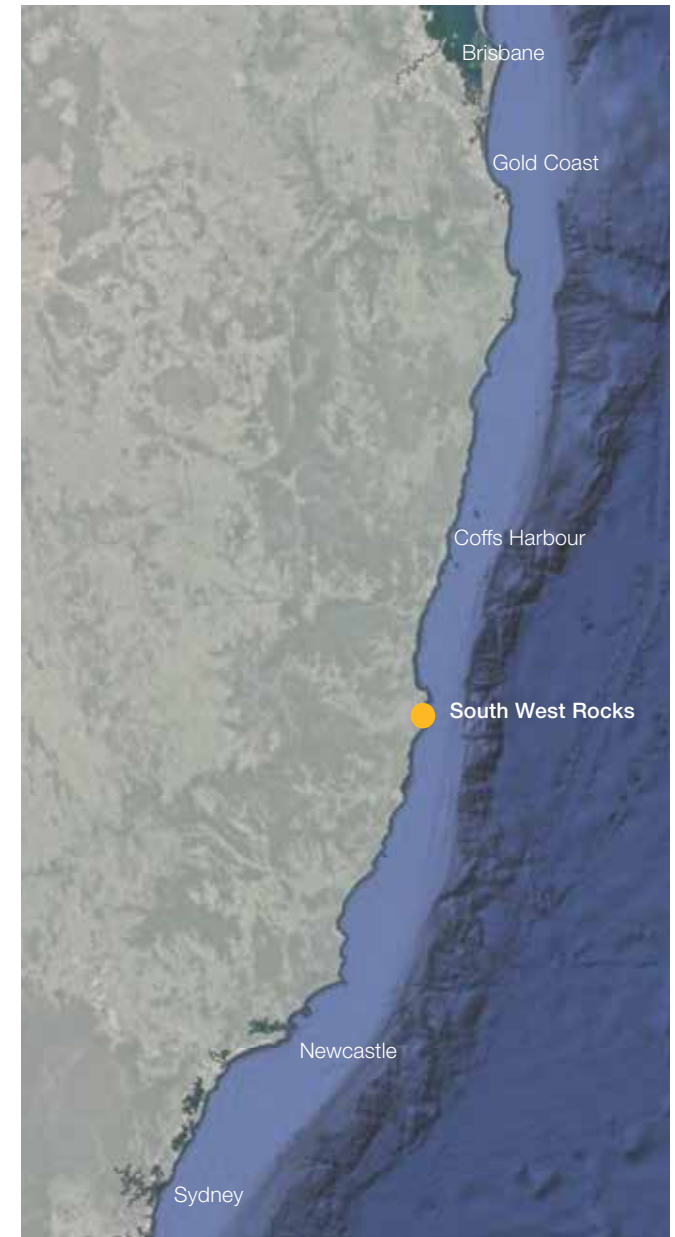


Figure 1.1 Regional locality (Google Earth)

## 1.2 The study area

The study area is located within the Kempsey Shire on the NSW Mid North Coast and includes key visitor precincts in Arakoon and Hat Head national parks.

### Legend

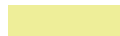
Existing track



Proposed track



### Arakoon National Park

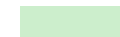


1. Trial Bay Gaol

2. Cardwell Street

3. Little Bay

### Hat Head National Park



4. Smoky Cape



Figure 1.2 Map of the study area

## 1.3 The precincts

### 01 – Trial Bay

Trial Bay, in Arakoon National Park, is a key site and landscape feature within the National Parks and Wildlife Service coastal reserve system

Often described as the jewel in the crown of the Macleay Valley Coast, it is widely acknowledged as one of NSW premier coastal visitor destinations. It is equally important to the local community who use Trial Bay's beach, foreshore and surrounding natural environment, for a range of recreational activities.



Figure 1.3 Map of Trial Bay

## 02 – Cardwell Street

A popular location used by locals and visitors accessing the Front Beach for walking and general beach usage. The location has been utilised as a storage area, nursery and depot, however these uses are in transition.



Figure 1.4 Map of Caldwell Street

### 03 – Little Bay

This location offers scenic coastal views, with opportunities for whale watching, fishing and walking. Monument Hill walking track and the Bridle Trail access this location creating opportunities for a variety of walks and experiences.



Figure 1.5 Map of Little Bay

#### 04 – Smoky Cape

Standing high on a narrow headland, Smoky Cape Lighthouse is surrounded by the stunning coastal scenery of Hat Head National Park. The location provides access to the 2 km return walk along Jack Perkins walking track and the longer walk along the Smoky Cape Range walking track.



Figure 1.6 Map of Smoky Cape

## 1.4 Aboriginal culture

Arakoon and Hat Head national parks are part of the lands of the Dughutti People, who maintain a strong connection to Country. These connections may be maintained in spiritual or cultural practice, storytelling, activities, teaching and remembering, or as physical evidence (for example middens).

NPWS is committed to working with the Dughutti community to ensure their cultural heritage is acknowledged, protected and respected as a part of living culture.

Note that the proposals in this draft master plan have not yet been subject to Aboriginal heritage assessment, which will be conducted prior to the completion of the final master plan.

## 1.5 European heritage

The study area has significant European heritage values, with Trial Bay Gaol and Smoky Cape Lighthouse being listed on the State Heritage Register. Conservation management plans are in place to guide restoration and management of these significant shared heritage places. These plans also guide the use of sites for recreation and tourism to ensure that heritage and conservation values are maintained alongside visitor engagement.



### **Trial Bay Gaol**

**Dating from 1886, Trial Bay Gaol is a unique example of a public works prison. It was also one of only 5 internment camps for Germans in NSW during the First World War. Today, this picturesque historic ruin stands as a testament to those who lived and died here, with a museum and memorial for visitors to get a better idea of life in those days.**

Photo: David Finnegan/DPE



### **Smoky Cape Lighthouse**

**Standing high on a narrow headland, Smoky Cape Lighthouse is surrounded by the stunning coastal scenery of Hat Head National Park. Built in 1891, this heritage lighthouse is one of the last designed by the Colonial Architect James Barnet, and now provides superior visitor accommodation in its lighthouse keepers' cottages.**

Photo: John Spencer/DPE

## 1.6 Natural values

Arakoon and Hat Head national parks are places of outstanding natural beauty and protect native plants, animals and ecosystems of exceptional scientific importance. The varied and spectacular landscape, from granite cliffs and ocean beaches, and the diversity of vegetation draws many visitors to these parks.

The vegetation across the study area is varied. Low heathland and grassland dominate Monument Hill, allowing views along the coast, across to South West Rocks and inland. Tall melaleuca dominates the swamp sclerophyll forests between Trial Bay campground and Cardwell Street, and again at Little Bay. Between Little Bay and Smoky Cape the vegetation includes a large patch of littoral rainforest (a threatened ecological community) on the sheltered slopes behind Gap Beach, fringed by wet sclerophyll forest and shrubby dry sclerophyll forest on more exposed sites.

The Smoky Cape Syenogranite, which forms Little Smoky and the Arakoon peninsula, provides a spectacular backdrop to the study area and is one of few significant coastal outcroppings of granite between Bundaberg in Queensland and Moruya Heads in southern NSW. The granite was used to construct the prison – the quarry is still evident below the gaol – and is of both scientific and educational value.



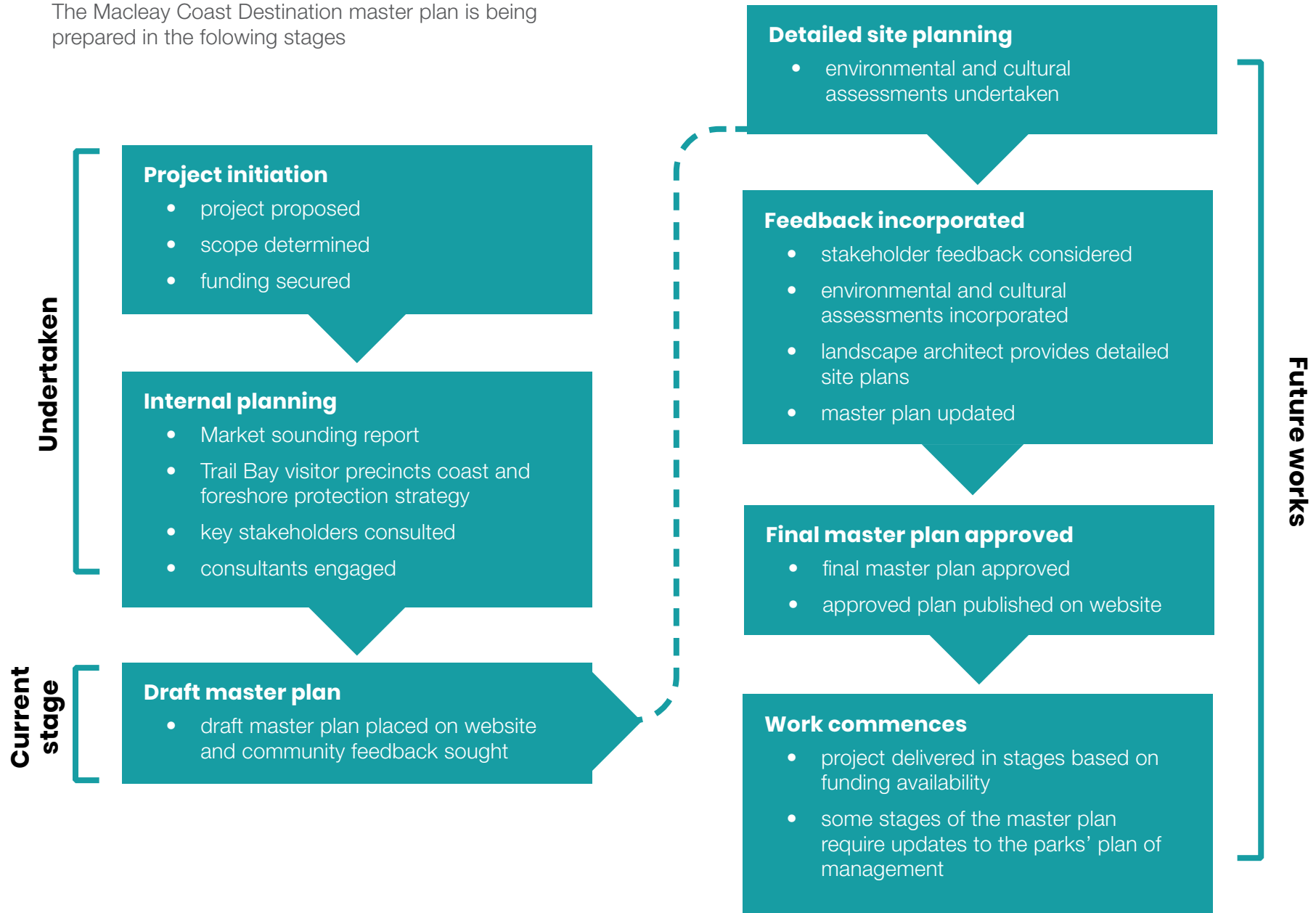
**02**

## **Project methodology**



## 2.1 Project methodology

The Macleay Coast Destination master plan is being prepared in the following stages



**03**

**Vision and design principles**



### 3.1 Vision

The Macleay Coast Destination project will provide new and upgraded infrastructure within Arakoon and Hat Head national parks to strengthen the region's appeal as a quality destination, and will provide the kinds of facilities and services that:

- increase the number of day visitors to regional areas, with dispersal to adjacent areas
- increase the average length of stay and spend in the region
- increase participation in national park-based activities and experiences
- contribute to ongoing maintenance costs and financial sustainability
- enable a positive contribution to job creation in the tourism and hospitality sectors
- foster the future stewardship of natural and cultural assets.

### 3.2 Project design principles

The project design principles establish high level guidance for planning and design providing a foundation for the development of precinct strategies. The design principles streamline the decision process and assist in rationalisation of improvements for current and future funding. As well as short, medium and long-term priorities.

The design principles encompass current thinking, issues, challenges, opportunities and trends and existing documentation.

There are 9 design principals for the project, grouped under 5 themes, each of which are expanded on in the following pages.

- recreation and activation
  - improve walking and cycling
- environment
  - protect cultural and historic heritage
  - minimise environmental impacts
- visitor experience
  - enhance enjoyment and understanding
  - separate day and overnight uses
- accommodation
  - diversify accomodation experience
  - provide high-quality camping
- circulation
  - improve vehicle access and movement
  - manage vehicle parking.



(D. Finnegan/DPE)

## Recreation and activation

### Improve walking and cycling

- Increase number of people walking and cycling to and within the site.
- Provide safe, enjoyable pathways and that connect to the South West Rocks township.
- Facilitate experiences that enable visitor contact with and experience of the natural environment.
- Improve experiences by reducing impacts of car access and providing open space links.
- Explore targeted new track links to create significant day walk experiences by connecting existing tracks, precincts and developing loops.
- Develop flexible potential for events able to be hosted within the day use precinct and that complement site character.



## Environment

### Protect cultural and historic heritage

- Conserve and protect identified Aboriginal sites.
- Interpret and promote cultural and historic heritage assets.
- Provide a visitor experience and facilities that interpret, foster education, awareness and respect for the Aboriginal occupation in the region.
- Enhance access to the Gaol from within the site.
- Improve car parking at entrance to Gaol by creating formalised entry court / buffer.
- Locate any new infrastructure so as to minimise impacts on cultural and heritage assets.



## Environment

### Minimise environmental impacts

- Interpret and promote natural heritage and geological site features.
- Conserve existing vegetation and habitat assets.
- Improve habitat links and connectivity.
- Improve where possible the hydraulic function of the creek.
- Mitigate impact of flood events.
- Improve creek bank and base stability.
- Reduce impacts of sea level rises and inundation.
- Investigate water management such as storm water harvesting, grey water, reuse, or treatment.



## Visitor experience

### Enhance enjoyment & understanding

- Provide design uniformity and cohesion.
- Provide visitor hubs to serve accommodation and day use precincts.
- Develop flexible potential for events to be hosted within the day use precinct and that complement site character.
- Improve interpretation and information for visitors.
- Deliver local economic benefits by supporting visitation, 'dwell time' and overnight stays in the region.
- Disperse visitors across the park, particularly in peak times and encourage visitation in the quieter off-peak seasons.

## Visitor experience

### Separate day and overnight uses

- Create a publicly accessible waterfront.
- Resolve existing conflicts of use between those seeking to enjoy the site for day use - picnickers, beach-goers, visitors to the Gaol - and those seeking an overnight experience.
- Provide targeted information to enable clear navigation on arrival.
- Allocate functions and uses to logical and clear zones / areas across the site.
- Avoid day use links through camping areas.

## Accommodation

### Diversify accommodation experience

- Expand the range of options including accessible accommodation.
- Provide a wider range of accommodation that is suitable for non-traditional campers and that will extend the camp's tourism period outside of peak summer and Easter holiday periods.
- Integrate flexibility and adaptability into all accommodation options.
- Provide a range of price points that maintain a high degree of affordability.
- Integrate potential for pre-pitch camping offering.
- Disperse visitors across the park, particularly in peak times and encourage visitation in the quieter off-peak seasons.



## Accommodation

### Provide high quality camping

- Ensure no net loss of camping across the site.
- Separate accommodation and day use areas.
- Avoid day use links through camping areas.
- Maximise capacity of camping as the primary site accommodation offering.
- Provide a fixed proportion of camp sites with power provision.
- Formalise camping sites and zones where possible.
- Provide amenities at sufficient capacity to serve camping and RV/Van accommodation.
- Disperse visitors across the park, particularly in peak times and encourage visitation in the quieter off-peak seasons.

## Circulation

### Improve vehicle access & movement

- Improve gateway experience when accessing the park.
- Reduce vehicular congestion throughout the site.
- Provide functional and clear circulation routes to key destinations within the park.
- Establish pedestrian priority through managed traffic speeds.
- Provide targeted information on approach to arrival.
- Reduce extent of day use vehicular circulation and parking in accommodation areas.

## Circulation

### Manage vehicle parking

- Remove conflicts between parking and other uses.
- Remove car parks from prime recreational green spaces.
- Formalise and define parking in unstructured parking areas.
- Ensure no net loss of parking across the site.
- Provide defined and functional parking areas to service day use visitation.
- Provide parking hubs with recreation links to key site features.



**04**

**Tourism planning context**





## 4.1 Tourism on the North Coast

Tourism is a significant industry in the NSW North Coast region (which encompasses the Mid North Coast), contributing \$3.7 billion to the economy with 12 million visits per annum, making it the third most popular tourism destination in Australia, based on domestic visitor nights. At the same time the population of the North Coast is growing rapidly and transport links to the urban growth areas of South East Queensland and Greater Sydney are improving.

The aim of the North Coast destination management plan 2018 to 2021 (currently under review) is to help sustainably grow the North Coast visitor economy. Developing nature-based experiences is a key focus and a way of differentiating the North Coast from other coastal destinations.

## 4.2 Tourism on the Macleay Valley Coast

The Macleay Valley Coast encompasses the main town of Kempsey, the popular tourist destinations of South West Rocks and Crescent Head, and numerous smaller villages in the hinterland and along the coast. The region is defined by its stunning coastline, with the mountainous hinterland providing a spectacular backdrop. The Macleay River also features prominently in the local landscape as it flows through the valley from the hinterland to the coast. The Macleay Valley's tourism sector has been identified as an important pillar of the region's future prosperity.

Arakoon and Hat Head national parks are a vital component of the local tourism economy which generated \$83 million in gross revenue and

supported over 400 local jobs in 2021. NPWS's most recent economic modelling found that direct operational investment, the visitors we hosted and combined flow-on effects generated over \$600 million in expenditure and directly/indirectly supported over 700 jobs in many different sectors of the Macleay Coast economy.

Kempsey Shire Council's Macleay Valley Coast destination management plan 2019–2029 was prepared to complement council's economic development efforts. By addressing the challenges and capitalising on the opportunities to grow the Macleay Valley Coast visitor economy, the destination management plan provides the framework for action to guide Kempsey Shire Council and its partner organisations in delivering actions to help fulfil the vision for the region's visitor economy.

To realise Kempsey Council's vision, the new strategic approach embodied in their destination management plan focuses on higher-yield tourism. This will require higher standards of accommodation and hospitality services to match or better what is offered by overseas packages and other regions in Australia. The proposed improvements at Arakoon and Hat Head national parks will help provide these services.

*Our vision for a vibrant visitor economy will see the **Macleay Valley Coast** establish itself as a premier regional visitor destination through the development of iconic natural visitor attractions, driving growth in high-yield and environmentally sustainable tourism.*

Extract from Macleay Valley Coast destination management plan 2019–2029 (page 48).

## Economic value of national parks on the North Coast\*

The positive impacts of visitation to national parks on the North Coast include:

- \$5.8 billion of direct and flow-on expenditure as a result of park-related visitation
- direct and flow-on expenditure that supported over 11,000 full-time jobs in the North Coast
- \$1.42 billion of recreation value provided by North Coast parks
- annual visitation to North Coast parks of 7.3 million visits.

\*This information relates to the NPWS North Coast Branch region, which encompasses the coast and escarpment from Laurieton to the Queensland border. The statistics are based on 2018 information.



Visitors enjoying a campfire, Arakoon National Park. (Nick Cubbin/DPE)

### 4.3 Current visitation

Both Arakoon and Hat Head national parks and many of the precincts therein are popular search terms used during the 10 million plus page views the NPWS visitor website receives each year. Amongst the 150,000 search terms NPWS regularly monitors, Trial Bay campground was the 24th most popular search term in the last 12 months, Trial Bay Goal 53rd, and Hat Head National Park 196th. Trial Bay/Hat Head camping was also high up in the ranking as well.

Arakoon National Park is estimated to attract over one million visits per year, with Trial Bay campground the most visited location. Both parks are also popular locations for overnight visitors, with Arakoon hosting 20,000 visitors who stayed for 57,000 nights, and Hat Head hosting 10,000 visitors who stayed for 20,000 nights in 2021–22.

Occupancy rates for Trial Bay campground vary across the seasons and site types, with an overall occupancy rate of around 40% over the last 5 years. The Bayview caravan sites are the most popular with 75% occupancy in 2021, followed by the powered sites with around 60%, and tent-only sites at around 30% occupancy.

Visitation to the parks is highly seasonal, which aligns with trends in wider North Coast domestic travel data. Bookings at Arakoon and Hat Head national park campgrounds in 2021–22 were:

- high in November through to February, and in April (summer peak and autumn school holidays)
- moderate in October, March, and May to July (summer shoulder months and early winter)
- low in August and September (late winter and early spring).

Visitors to the parks come from far and wide with around 90% of the market originating from NSW, 7% from Queensland and over 2% from Victoria. The largest individual group of NSW based visitors come from Sydney 35%, followed by North Coast 29%, Hunter 12%, Central Coast 5%, and other regions.

Over half of all visitors travel more than 300 km to reach the area, with only 6% being locals. This is important, as it means that new money is being injected into the local economy. People visit the parks in a variety of travel groups. In Trial Bay over summer for example, the largest travel party type (67%) is friends/family groups, followed by immediate family 17%, couples represent around 7% of the overall market, and singles, while a relatively small travel party type (around 7%), are growing globally in significance.

Motivations to visit the parks also vary with the most popular revolving around socialising with friends and families, enjoying the natural surrounds, rest and relaxation, introducing children to nature, exploration and exercise. Other reasons for visiting include learning about the parks' natural values and the area's Aboriginal and European heritage.

Not surprisingly many of the most popular summer activities relate to the coastal environs including swimming, fishing, kayaking/paddle boarding, surfing and boating. Other popular activities include picnicking/BBQs, sightseeing, exploring local heritage sites/culture, bike riding and bushwalks. More widely, 24% of North Coast overnight travellers engage in bushwalking or rainforest walks.

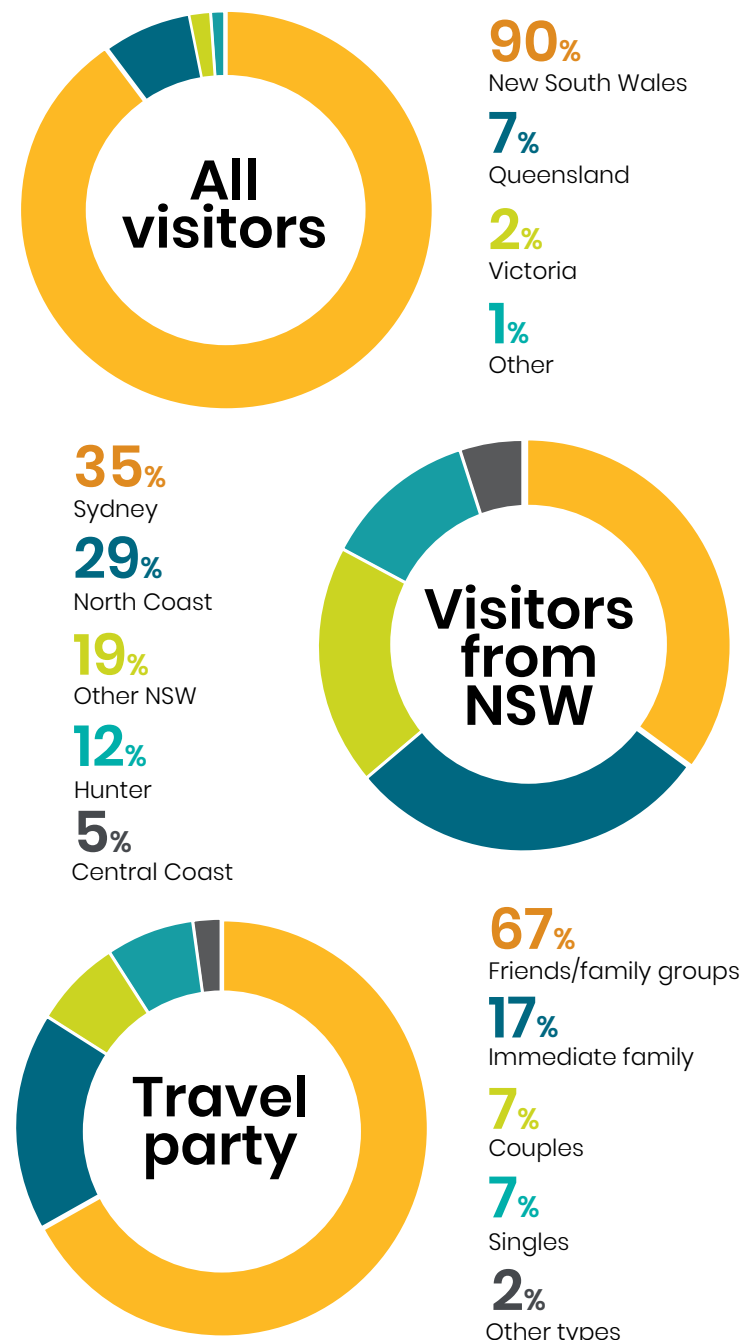


Figure 4.1 Summary of visitor statistics



Figure 4.2 Helix Personas extract (raymorgan.com)

## 4.4 Market segments

Domestic visitors to NSW national parks are profiled using the Roy Morgan Helix Personas classification system. In total there are 54 different personas grouped into 6 broad communities.

The Hearth and Home community – reflecting the average Australian family and conventional family life – and the Fair Go community currently form the core groups of long-term visitors to Trial Bay campground.

Across the state, national park visitation skews strongly towards the Leading Lifestyles community – high income, highly educated, progressive and career focused people – with 35% of visitors to NSW parks falling into this category. Representation of this community is lower at Trial Bay, at 27%.

Local tourism stakeholders have also raised the opportunity to retain customers who visited for the first time during COVID. Interestingly, many of these were Leading Lifestyles, who experimented with the area due to their inability to travel overseas or interstate because of border closures. These travellers were more affluent (and therefore potentially higher yielding) and eager for a deeper, richer engagement with nature and culture.

Along with the under-represented Metrotechs – highly educated, socially aware, hardworking, ambitious and culturally diverse young singles – these 2 communities offer strong potential for aspirational and off-peak visitation growth.

## 4.5 Accessible tourism

National parks are places for connecting with nature, culture and heritage. Everyone should have the opportunity to enjoy the experience and the benefits that come from visiting a park.

The benefits of access to national parks are well known. These include increased wellbeing, better physical and mental health, independence, dignity, social integration and improved quality of life for individuals, friends and family.

Barriers that can limit people's ability to access parks and enjoy these benefits can include a combination of physical obstacles, a lack of information, or inadequate services or assistance.

Barriers to accessing parks are often most acutely experienced by people with a disability. However, everyone may experience access barriers at different times in their lives, including when elderly, caring for young children, or experiencing illness or medical conditions.

The historic landscapes, cultural sites and natural environments of Arakoon and Hat Head national parks present particular challenges for reducing or removing barriers to access.

NPWS is committed to improving access where possible by integrating accessibility considerations into precinct planning. Some examples considered include accessible campsites and cabins, improved beach access and formal pedestrian pathways.

## 4.6 Events

The parks host a range of events from Aboriginal cultural events and Sculptures in the Gaol to triathlons and running festivals. These events are integral to the region's events calendars and can help to attract visitors in shoulder and off-peak seasons. Weddings and small scale functions and events provide another opportunity to draw visitors to precincts such as Smoky Cape Lighthouse, Little Bay and Trial Bay Gaol and encourage overnight stays.

The project team has considered the opportunities and constraints for planning event spaces in consultation with event organisers including Aboriginal groups.



Sculptures in the Gaol event- 2022 (Kampai Pty Ltd/DPE)



**05**  
**Community engagement**

## 5.1 Inform

The project team has informed the community during the development of the Macleay Coast Destination project by:

- establishing a consultation webpage for the Macleay Coast Destination project in 2019
- establishing a consultation webpage for the Arakoon and Hat Head national parks plan of management in 2020
- providing email updates to stakeholders and the register of interest list
- providing ongoing briefings for key stakeholders.

## 5.2 Consult

NPWS consulted widely and considered a range of community input during the development of the master plan through the following channels.

### Stakeholder meetings

- Field inspections and monthly project team meetings were held with NPWS staff, internal experts and NPWS regional advisory committee.
- Engagement with Traditional custodians and Aboriginal community groups was undertaken, including South West Rocks Figtree Descendants and South West Rocks Aboriginal corporations.
- Fifteen meetings were conducted with key stakeholders, such as Kempsey Shire Council, Destination North Coast, Dunecare, Voices of South West Rocks and others.

### Market sounding

A research review and series of 18 interviews with tourism sector experts to understand visitor market trends and opportunities was undertaken by Mayvin Global.

### Visitor surveys

A total of 58 visitor groups were surveyed over the 2020 summer school holidays with 25% being day visitors and 75% staying overnight. They were asked about their visit motivations, activities, satisfaction and suggested enhancements.

### Post-visit campground surveys

All visitors staying at Trial Bay campground are offered the opportunity to complete a short survey about their stay. We analysed 941 post-visit survey responses from July 2019 to June 2020, including ratings, comments and suggested improvements. Local staff monitor all ongoing responses.

### Register of interest

Almost 200 people have registered their interest in the Macleay Coast Destination project and park plan of management as promoted by 25 posters. The comments they provided about their interests, values and ideas for future management have informed the project.

### Park neighbours

The project team posted an invitation to join the register of interest to nearly 1,000 properties that adjoin or are located close to Arakoon and Hat Head national parks, so they may be notified about public consultation opportunities.

## 5.3 Public exhibition

NPWS recognises that community input adds value to the work that we do and we encourage everyone to 'Have your say' during public exhibitions.

### Macleay Coast Destination draft master plan

This draft master plan is on public exhibition from late November 2022 to 10 January 2023. NPWS invites community and stakeholders to 'Have your say' on the master plan during this time. Details on how to provide a submission are available on the master plan web page at [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/Macleay-Coast-Destination-master-plan](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/Macleay-Coast-Destination-master-plan)

## 5.4 Related projects

### Arakoon and Hat Head national parks plans of management

Any actions identified in this master plan must be consistent with the plans of management for these parks. A replacement combined plan for these parks is in development. The community and stakeholders will have opportunities to provide input on broader park management issues during the plan of management's public exhibition.

### Trial Bay visitor precincts coast and foreshore protection strategy

This strategy aims to guide adaptive coastal management and mitigate beach and foreshore erosion at Trial Bay. It will help inform and optimise NPWS investment and management decisions, including this master plan.

Public exhibition of the draft strategy took place in April 2022 and 33 submissions were received and were considered prior to the finalisation of the strategy.

**06**

**Draft precinct improvement plan**

**Trial Bay**





Legend  
 ■■■ Opportunity  
 ■■■ Constraint

Figure 6.1 Trial Bay - opportunities and constraints

### 6.1 Opportunities and constraints

1. Road width prevents two-way vehicular traffic circulation resulting in a one-way system that directs all traffic through a section of the camping area. The resulting traffic movement detracts from the camping experience, reduces privacy, increases pedestrian vehicle conflict.
2. General vehicle access is currently allowed throughout the camping areas, creating conflict issues during peak periods with congestion due to varying road widths and a reduction in the general amenity for campers.
3. Vehicle turning area at the intersection has a steep gradient with a small turning radius, which results in drivers taking a wider turn when entering from the south and there is evidence of loss of traction when exiting.
4. Trial Bay access road is used by cyclists and pedestrians accessing the precinct from South West Rocks. Tight corners, no road shoulder and steep grades create an unsafe environment for this user group.
5. Car parking area is approx. 1300m<sup>2</sup> which can be configured and formalised to maximise vehicle parking spaces.
6. Location provides opportunity for alternate accommodation due to the proximity to services, topography, and general visual seclusion which will not affect heritage values.



7. Existing informal path alignment provides pedestrian / cycle access to and from South West Rocks. Formalising the path will enable a broader user group to utilise the path. Current flow directs users through the walk-in camp area, which should be avoided to improve camping amenity.
8. Foreshore affected by coastal processes requires remediation to reduce further erosion.
9. Existing camp kitchen provides ample facilities however additional covered seating would provide additional gathering space for communal campers.
10. Car parking during peak periods is used by day use visitors creating issues with available parking for campers.
11. Amenities require upgrades to suit current expectations for camping within NPWS facilities.
12. Road system constrains public open space.
13. Ocean frontage within close proximity to vehicle parking creates a desirable location for day use visitation
14. Beach access point is dilapidated and unnecessary due to proximity of alternate access point.
15. Access points close to the day use and camping areas require upgrades to provide safe access
16. Lack of clear pedestrian right of way access and defined beachfront camping areas creates a conflict between day use visitors and campers with regard to personal space and public access.

17. Amenities require upgrades to suit current expectations for camping within NPWS facilities.
18. Heritage items reduce the usable space for vehicle parking.
19. Boat ramp access requires separation from user groups during peak periods to reduce conflicts. Vehicles parking at dawn to access the ramp creates noise issues for campers within the proximity.
20. Northern section of road has no pedestrian separation due to coastal geology, creating a vehicle dominated location.
21. Area opposite the Gaol wall offers views over Trial Bay with possible access along the exterior of the Gaol walls.
22. Vehicles dominate and encroach into a location that provides expansive views over the ocean.
23. Pedestrian entry to the Gaol is exposed to vehicle movements creating a hazardous environment for visitors accessing the Gaol.
24. Lack of defined paths reduce navigation experience around the Gaol and surrounding precinct.
25. Opportunity to provide footpath adjacent to access connecting Monument Hill Trail to the Gaol entry area.





Legend

- Camping area
- Camping vehicle access only
- All vehicle access
- Vehicle parking
- Vehicle direction

**Figure 6.2** Trial Bay - existing vehicle circulation

## 6.2 Existing vehicle circulation

The lack of clear navigation through the precinct creates a confusing experience for vehicle users due to multiple access points and destination opportunities including:

- Trial Bay Gaol and campground office
- Trial Bay Kiosk
- camping areas
- beach access
- boat ramp access
- parking to access walks.

General vehicle access is directed through camping areas, which detracts from the camping experience, reduces privacy, increases pedestrian vehicle conflict.

### Key parking destinations

1. Boat ramp and parking
2. Car and trailer parking intended for boat ramp users
3. Primary car park for visitors to Trial Bay Gaol and campsite office
4. Sanitation dump point
5. Car parking predominantly used by patrons attending the Trial Bay Kiosk
6. Walk in camp area parking
7. Day use parking



**Legend**

- - - - - Camping area
- - - - - All vehicle access
- █ Camping vehicle access only
- - - - - Vehicle parking
- ← Vehicle direction
- - - - - Road closed

**Figure 6.3** Trial Bay - proposed vehicle circulation

### 6.3 Proposed vehicle circulation

The reconfiguration of the existing access road will enable two-way traffic to access the day use areas and boat ramp without needing to pass through the camping area.

To prevent vehicles accessing the camp sites from the south, the road will be closed, enabling access to the car park area only.

By creating a two-way road, a section of road along the ocean frontage will no longer be required and can be re-claimed as public space.

#### Key parking destinations

1. Boat ramp and parking
2. Car and trailer parking intended for boat ramp users
3. Primary car park for visitors to Trial Bay Gaol and camp site office
4. Sanitation dump point
5. Car parking predominantly used by patrons attending the Trial Bay Kiosk
6. Walk in camp area parking
7. Day use parking



**Legend**

- Formalised path
- Pedestrian movement off road with no formal path
- Pedestrian movement on road

**Figure 6.4** Trial Bay - existing pedestrian circulation

### 6.4 Existing pedestrian circulation

The Trial Bay Precinct is dominated by vehicle movement with minimal allowance for separated pedestrian and cycle access. The result is an unsafe pedestrian environment which detracts from the casual camping experience and day use due to the lack of formal pathways.

Five-minute walk, also known as the “pedestrian shed” is considered to be the distance people are willing to walk before opting to drive. Based on the average walking speed, a five-minute walk is represented by a radius of 400 meters.

**Key destinations**

1. Trial Bay Gaol and campground office
2. Amenities
3. Trial Bay Kiosk
4. Beach access
5. Camp kitchen
6. Break water



**Legend**

Formalised path

Pedestrian movement off road with no formal path

Pedestrian movement on road

Shared path / cycleway

**Figure 6.5** Trial Bay - proposed pedestrian circulation

## 6.5 Proposed pedestrian circulation

Removal of day use access to the camping areas provides a safer pedestrian zone within the roadways as is typically experienced in a camping environment.

The provision of sealed footpaths enables sustainable access to locations for all user groups creating an inclusive experience.

### Key destinations

1. Trial Bay Gaol and campground office
2. Amenities
3. Trial Bay Kiosk
4. Beach access
5. Camp kitchen
6. Break water



## 6.6 Precinct improvement plan

The overall plan endeavours to improve simplify vehicular access and create zones for camping and day use visitation to enable maximum utilisation of the Trial Bay Precinct.

The following plans identify possible options to facilitate these outcomes.

Figure 6.6 Trial Bay - precinct improvement plan



## 6.6 Precinct improvement plan - south

1. Camping access and exit only defined by entry feature.
2. Road alignment is based on existing road to minimise earthworks. Additional road design is required to identify cut and fill constraints.
3. Formalise pedestrian path to direct pedestrians away from camp sites.
4. Relocate recently installed picnic shelter and seating to camp kitchen area.
5. Relocation of electrical lines to underground to be investigated to improve general visual amenity of the location and increase usable space for accommodation. If relocation is not feasible retain as campsites.
6. Possible future area for additional cabins.
7. Vehicle passing bay to prevent vehicle encroachment onto campsites.
8. Service vehicle access only with screened bin storage area and turning area for refuse truck.
9. Day use vehicle parking configured with 33 spaces, with pedestrian connections to the Gaol, bay and kiosk.
10. Day use and kiosk vehicle entry to have road profile improved.

Figure 6.7 Trial Bay - precinct improvement plan - south

11. Existing amenities to be replaced with new facility reflective of visitor and camper capacity.
12. Proposed location for accessible studio cabins positioned in visually sheltered location so as not to impinge of heritage values.
13. Amenities for camp patrons only to be refurbished, rainwater capture tanks installed for re-use.
14. Existing steps and handrails to be replaced with new.
15. Remove existing access bridge and re-grade drainage channel to improve drainage. Install new bridge as per drainage plan to comply with AustRoads shared path guidelines and enable NPWS ride on mower.
16. Shared pedestrian / cycleway linking Trial Bay to South West Rocks located to maximise public open space and walk in camping sites.
17. Erosion control to be implemented as per Trial Bay visitor precincts coast and foreshore protection strategy - management action 19. Remove infrastructure affected by coastal erosion processes and construct shared path set as far back into dune to reduce risk of coastal erosion conflicts.
18. Picnic shelter and seating relocated next to camp kitchen to provide additional for sheltered spaces for dining and gathering.
19. Vehicle parking for walk in camp sites only.



Entry to Trial Bay Gaol, Arakoon National Park (N. Cubbin/DPE)





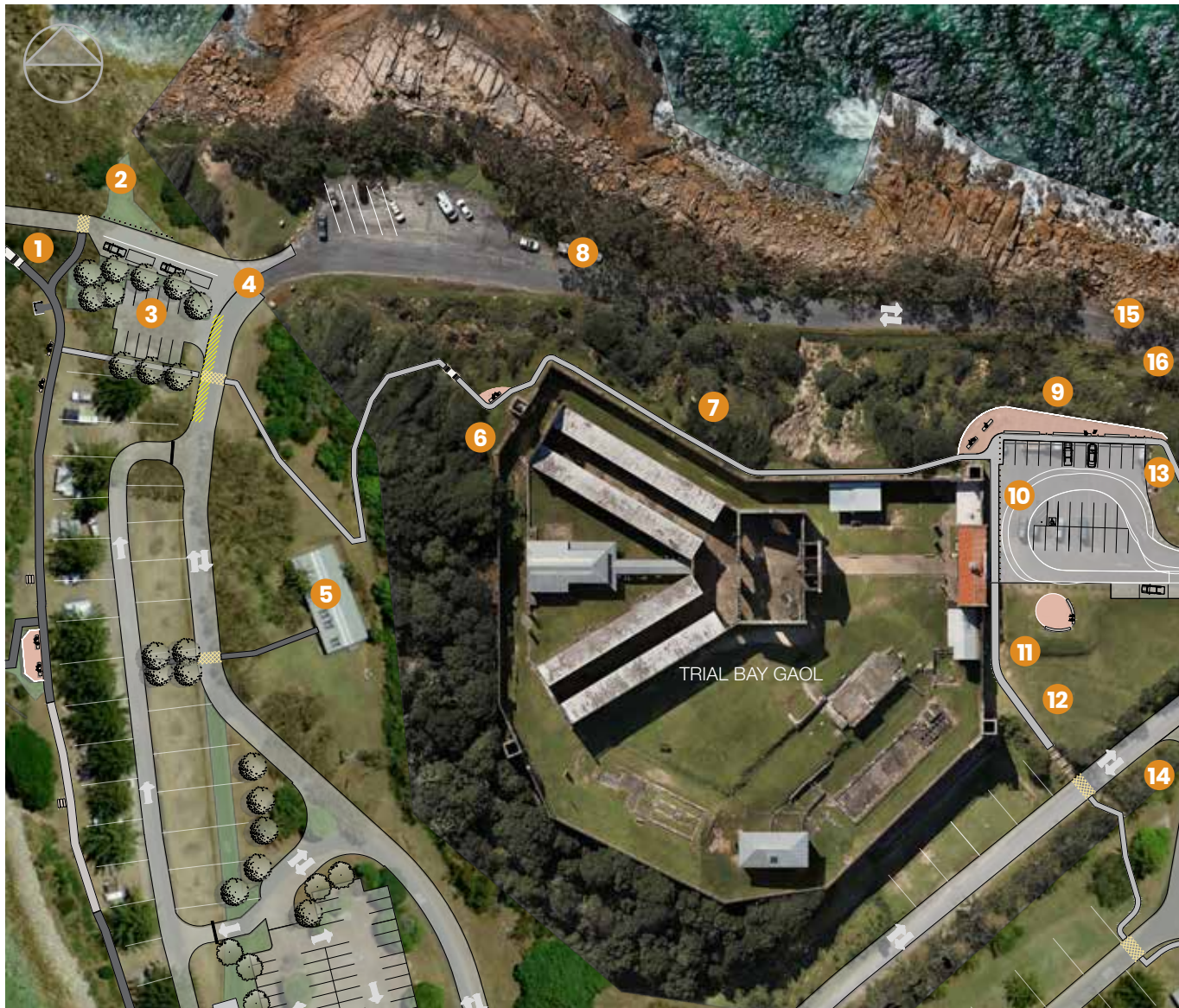
## 6.7 Precinct improvement plan - west

1. Remove existing infrastructure and replace with new access ramp and viewing area.
2. Vehicle entry and exit point to be relocated and reconfigured for pedestrian access.
3. 1.8 metre-wide pedestrian path along waterfront to provide safe and scenic walking access to Lagers Point. Physical separation to be identified between campers and public space to provide delineation for campers and pedestrians. Certain sections may require boardwalks due to existing grades.
4. Waterfront camp site to have one way vehicle access with all sites having greywater points installed.
5. Realigning the road will enable the extension of several of the sites to suit larger vans.
6. Day use car parking to be formalised to maximise space with heritage site capped to enable construction. A drop off zone provides options for visitors during peak periods.
7. Amenities with change rooms located so as not to affect view lines and maximise public open space.
8. New showers to be consistent with new furniture palette.

Figure 6.8 Trial Bay - precinct improvement plan - west

9. Gathering space with views over the bay to have a mix of seating opportunities and cultural / heritage information (layout to be refined) with redundant boat ramp replaced with steps and platforms in a similar location. Steps at beach will require consideration of coastal processes to ensure erosion and inundation is accounted for.
10. Access steps to be removed and foreshore rehabilitated.
11. Stairs to be removed to direct pedestrian flow to beach access node with retaining wall rebuilt and extended to create level space.
12. Dated infrastructure to be removed.
13. New shelters and seating. Ocean front infrastructure must consider coastal erosion with regards to remediation works required prior to the installation of infrastructure.
14. Viewing area located to provide views over the bay with beach access ramp with steps to provide alternate seating opportunities.
15. Track intersection node with directional signage and information with bike parking and water station.





## 6.8 Precinct improvement plan - north

1. New steps constructed to avoid pedestrian vehicle conflicts at beach access point. Steps at beach will require consideration of coastal processes to ensure erosion and inundation is accounted for.
2. Vehicle access to be prohibited to create safe pedestrian access to break wall.
3. 12 day use car parking spaces located opposite beach access point. Vegetation removal will be mitigated with additional plantings to create visual screen from the camping area.
4. Reconfigured car park will require road widening to enable boat launching and waiting area. No standing zone will be identified to prevent boat ramp traffic queuing alongside camp sites. Spaces within the northern vehicle and trailer parking area will be utilised during peak boat ramp periods.
5. Public amenities.
6. Old track to be upgraded and realigned to offer additional walking opportunities which will take in the native vegetation, Gaol walls and provide the opportunity for a small viewing area overlooking the breakwater.
7. Connection path between the breakwater view platform and Gaol entrance will be dependent on erosion stabilisation outcomes.

Figure 6.9 Trial Bay - precinct improvement plan - north

8. Pedestrian access path along northern edge subject to future investigation.
9. Parking area to be reconfigured to create viewing / gathering space. Line marking to be reconfigured with wheel stops located to prevent vehicle encroachment into pedestrian area. Seats provide a secondary physical barrier and creates a division between the parking and viewing area.
10. Bollards located to provide safe pedestrian access to the Gaol entry.
11. Coach drop off area and short stay car and trailer parking with group gathering space, seats and information.
12. Pedestrian access to be defined and where necessary steps to be installed. Existing infrastructure maintained in accordance with heritage guidelines.
13. Link to Monument Hill walking trail.
14. Left turn will require detailed assessment and design.
15. Shelter to be relocated due to exposed nature and possible risk to users.
16. Car parking to be formalised to maximise usage with road width reduced to create pedestrian amenity. Turning area to be reinstated considering rock fall area.



A wide, sandy beach with numerous footprints leading towards the ocean. The water is a deep blue, and the sky is a clear, bright blue with a prominent sun flare in the upper right corner. In the distance, there are dark silhouettes of trees and hills.

**07 Draft precinct improvement plan  
Cardwell Street**



Legend

●●●● Opportunity

●●●● Constraint

**Figure 7.1** Cardwell Street - opportunities and constraints

## 7.1 Opportunities and constraints

1. Opportunity for low key platform / seating area to take in views of Trial Bay.
2. Vehicle parking at beach entry reduces the natural visual aesthetic.
3. Vehicle and pedestrian access is constrained creating conflict between user groups and pedestrian safety concerns.
4. Area being utilised as laydown storage area detracts from the natural aesthetic of the beach side setting.
5. Central area provides opportunities for public open space, additional parking and amenities.
6. Loop road has drainage issues due to low lying nature of the location with vegetation constraining the road width.
7. Single entry / exit point for all users creates conflict issues with user groups due to lack of separated access for pedestrians and vehicles.
8. Opportunity to utilise existing buildings for commercial usage and repurpose as NPWS camping office to remove the need for campers to park at the Gaol on arrival.
9. Pedestrian / cycle crossing point has poor sight lines.
10. Opportunity to provide entry feature to the Trial Bay precinct.

11. Bridle Trail users park on the side of the road and access the trail by walking along Trial Bay Access Road. Sight lines and road widths are not suitable for widening. Alternate access and car parking should be investigated.
12. Existing informal path alignment provides pedestrian / cycle access to and from South West Rocks. Formalising the path will enable a broader user group to utilise the path.





## 7.2 Precinct improvement plan

1. Path / boardwalk to be of a suitable surface for equitable access to enable wheelchairs, prams, walkers etc. to have access to a low-level deck with seat located to gain maximum views of the bay. Bike racks positioned to provide secure location to leave bikes.
2. Vehicular beach access to be restricted to emergency vehicles only, with area used for 4WD parking to be regenerated.
3. Shower to be relocated, with new shower facilities located at proposed amenities item 6.
4. Nursery to be relocated and space to be converted to maximise area for public use and events with authorised vehicle access for event set up.
5. Road will require some slight vegetation removal, road widening and drainage to be upgraded to ensure all weather access.
6. Amenities with showers and accessible toilets, located next to a shelter with picnic table and benches. Option to close parking area during events for use such as transition zone etc.
7. Vehicle access to car parking areas will be via a one-way system to create a safe pedestrian zone.

Figure 7.2 Cardwell Street - precinct improvement plan

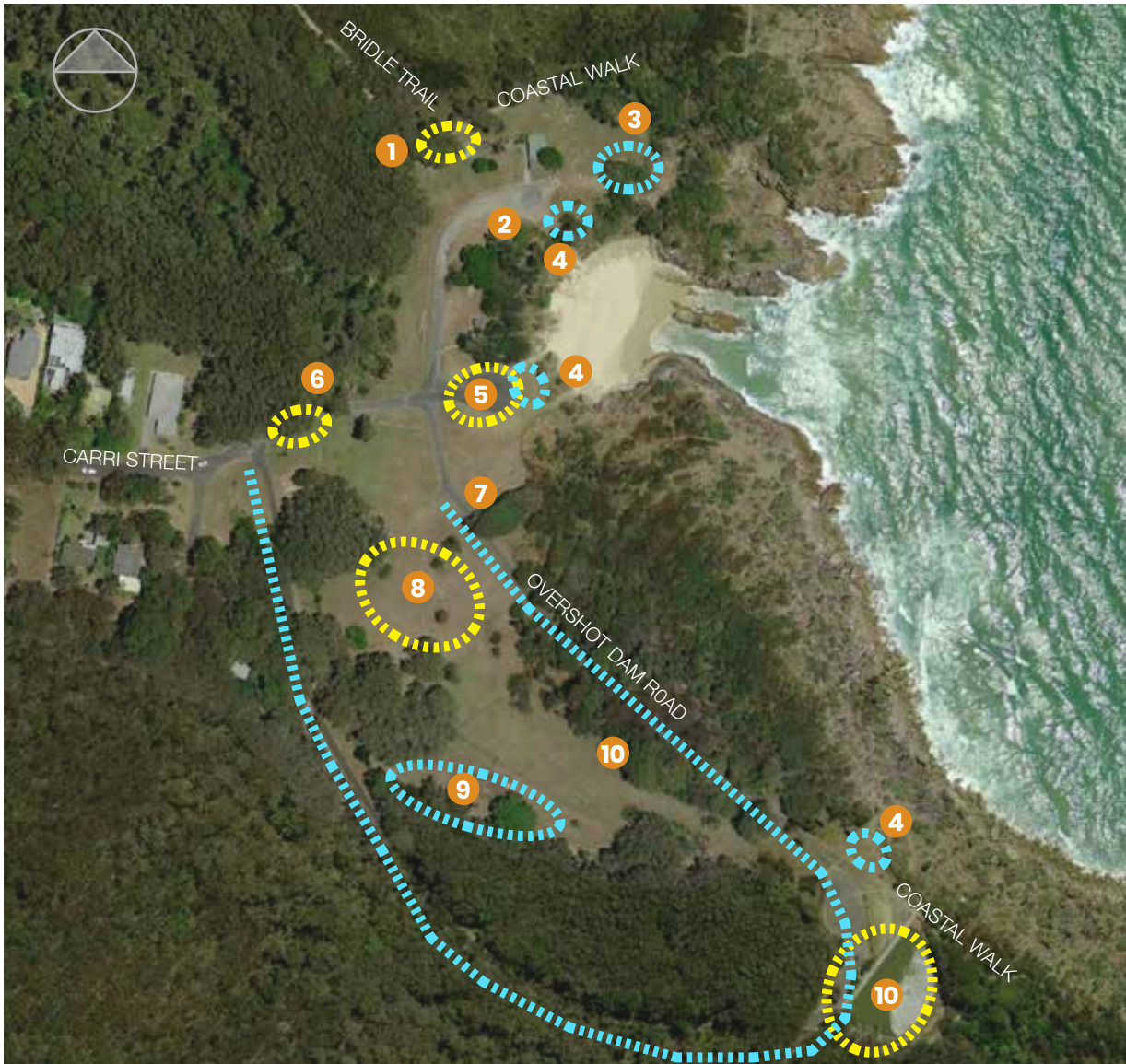


8. Car and trailer parking provided to enable early arrivals / checkouts to park vehicles and utilise precinct facilities.
9. Installation of new road will require widening and culvert upgrades to enable two-way traffic flow.
10. Pedestrian access via boardwalk to provide safe separation from vehicles.
11. Building space to be converted to NPWS Trial Bay camping office with short stay parking for visitors accessing the office and information. Vehicle access to depot will need to be addressed to prevent vehicle / pedestrian conflict
12. Track intersection node with directional signage.
13. Parking for the Bridle Track will be promoted at the Cardwell Street precinct with a new access path linking to the exiting trail to provide a safe crossing point maximising sight lines along the Trial Bay Access Road.
14. Shared pedestrian / cycleway linking Trial Bay to South West Rocks.



**08 Draft precinct improvement plan  
Little Bay**





Legend

■ Opportunity

■ Constraint

**Figure 8.1** Little Bay - opportunities and constraints

## 8.1 Opportunities and constraints

1. Lack of clear signage or information on arrival and exit from Little Bay results in uncertain navigation of the location.
2. Dilapidated road surface detracts from the natural aesthetic and reduces the functional space.
3. Topography and landscape elements provide an opportunity to create a performance / gathering space with views over the bay.
4. Raised topography of the coastal edge provides natural views over the bay.
5. Vehicle parking encroaches onto pedestrian beach access and impinges on the pedestrian movement through the location. Views of the ocean are still captured from the midpoint of the carparking area.
6. Entry / exit point for all users creates conflict issues with user groups due to lack of separated access for pedestrians and vehicles.
7. Restricting vehicle access along Overshot Dam Road provides an opportunity for a safe pedestrian link for the Coastal Walk and creates a loop walk within Little Bay.
8. Anti-social behaviour with vehicles accessing the open space reduces the visual aesthetic and creates maintenance issues.

9. Opportunity to utilise secluded location for camping or gathering space.
10. Visual amenity of existing infrastructure at Overshot Dam should be investigated to provide a consistent palette of materials within the precincts.





## 8.2 Precinct improvement plan - north

1. Coastal walk sign located to enable clear navigation through Little Bay precinct.
2. Provide covered BBQ and construct paths to provide equitable access to amenities.
3. Realign path to direct pedestrian flow to track intersection node with directional signage and information creating an entry point to Little Bay.
4. Parking area upgraded and formalised to allow for short term minibus parking with turning area. Bollards located to prevent no unauthorised vehicle access to public open space.
5. Level turf area to be created to form informal gathering space with a path at a consistent grade from the existing shelter to viewing deck. this will enable equitable access to seating located to capture views over the bay utilising existing shade from Norfolk Island Pine tree.
6. Amphitheatre located to utilise natural landform with underground power to be installed to enable audio and lighting equipment.
7. Path constructed to enable clear navigation to and from beach access steps.
8. Path constructed to connect coastal walk through Little Bay.

Figure 8.2 Little Bay - precinct improvement plan - north

9. Existing shower to be upgraded to improve drainage with additional towel rails and seat.
10. Beach access and exit point to be prioritised to reduce erosion and vegetation damage in other locations along foreshore.
11. Viewing platform with seats to enable surfers, anglers and visitors to observe the ocean conditions. NPWS information to be presented at this location.
12. Car parking to be formalised to prevent vehicles encroaching on public space and to improve general amenity. Additional parking spaces have been created with a short stay car and trailer parking area and 15-minute short stay parking only on beach front parks to enable transient vehicular viewing of the ocean conditions.
13. New shelter located close to car parking to allow convenient access for picnics.
14. Overshot Dam Road to be closed for general vehicular access and retained for pedestrian / cycle access only. Public vehicular access will only be allowed during organised events.
15. Construction of new road will require widening and culvert upgrades to enable two-way traffic flow.





### 8.3 Precinct improvement plan - south

1. Coastal walk sign located to enable clear camping for organised groups positioned in a location to provide an experience away from general day visitation and allow for sense of seclusion and privacy. A lockable amenities block and car parking will be located for group camping use.
2. Removable bollards installed to prevent group campers taking vehicles into pedestrian zone.
3. Overshot Dam Road to be closed for general vehicular access and retained for pedestrian / cycle access only.
4. Vehicle turning area to be retained with additional existing hard surfaces removed and revegetated to improve visual amenity.
5. Natural viewing area to be formalised with viewing platform and seating.
6. Coastal walk sign located to provide clear navigation through Little Bay precinct.
7. Overshot Dam drainage issues to be resolved with safety fence to be replaced with new style to create consistent furniture palette within the precincts.

Figure 8.3 Little Bay - precinct improvement plan - south



**09 Draft precinct improvement plan  
Smoky Cape**





## 9.1 Opportunities and constraints

1. Amenities requires upgrading to provide equitable access.
2. Topography of the coastal edge provides opportunities for natural views over the bay.
3. Opportunity to provide a group gathering space in a location close to amenities.
4. Vehicle access and car parking dominate the entry to the precinct with no safe pedestrian access provided.
5. Turning area is not suitable for large vehicles such as coaches.
6. Combined vehicle and pedestrian access create conflicts.
7. Building previously used as stables provides opportunities for alternate usage.
8. Access path to and from the lighthouse is steep, with no passing or identified rest points creating a challenging walk for less mobile visitors.

### Legend

■■■■ Opportunity

■■■■ Constraint

**Figure 9.1** Smoky Cape - opportunities and constraints



## 9.2 Precinct improvement plan - west

1. Amenities to be refurbished and extended to allow for disabled access toilet to be installed.
2. Seat orientated to capture views.
3. Relocated shelter.
4. New covered shelters with accessible picnic settings and separate shelter with 2 BBQs.
5. Vegetation to be managed to maintain views whilst taking into consideration views and visual amenity from opposite headlands and beaches to ensure they are not affected by infrastructure upgrades at Smoky Cape.
6. Central location provides a larger viewing area and gathering space for groups or tours.
7. Accessible viewing area orientated to capture views located within close proximity to the accessible parking.
8. Space reconfigured to provide safe gathering / refuge point within car parking area to define entry point to visitor amenities.
9. Traffic calming located to control vehicle speeds and reduce vehicle / pedestrian conflict.

Figure 9.2 Smoky Cape - precinct improvement plan - west

10. Carparking to be formalised to maximise spaces with car wheel stops installed to prevent encroachment onto footpath to provide safe pedestrian access.
11. Damaged surface to be repaired to maximise car parking spaces.
12. Coach drop off / pick up point only. Coaches and group transport will be requested to leave for the duration of the visit and return to pick up passengers to reduce congestion within the car park area during peak visitation periods.
13. Coach turning area only.
14. New footpath provides safe pedestrian access during busy periods.
15. Interpretive / educational sign providing local information, map, cultural and, flora and fauna values specific to the area.





### 9.3 Precinct improvement plan - east

1. Caretaker vehicle access to the cottages to be upgraded.
2. Adaptive re-use of stables including viewing platform, small kiosk, and interpretation space.
3. Access to be upgraded to improve pedestrian amenity, whilst considering vehicle access requirements to the lighthouse.
4. Rest/viewing areas located approximately every 30 metres to provide stopping points.
5. Consideration should be given to improving visitor experience through upgrades to access and general amenity with improvements to viewing area, signage and pedestrian access.

Figure 9.3 Smoky Cape - precinct improvement plan - east



10

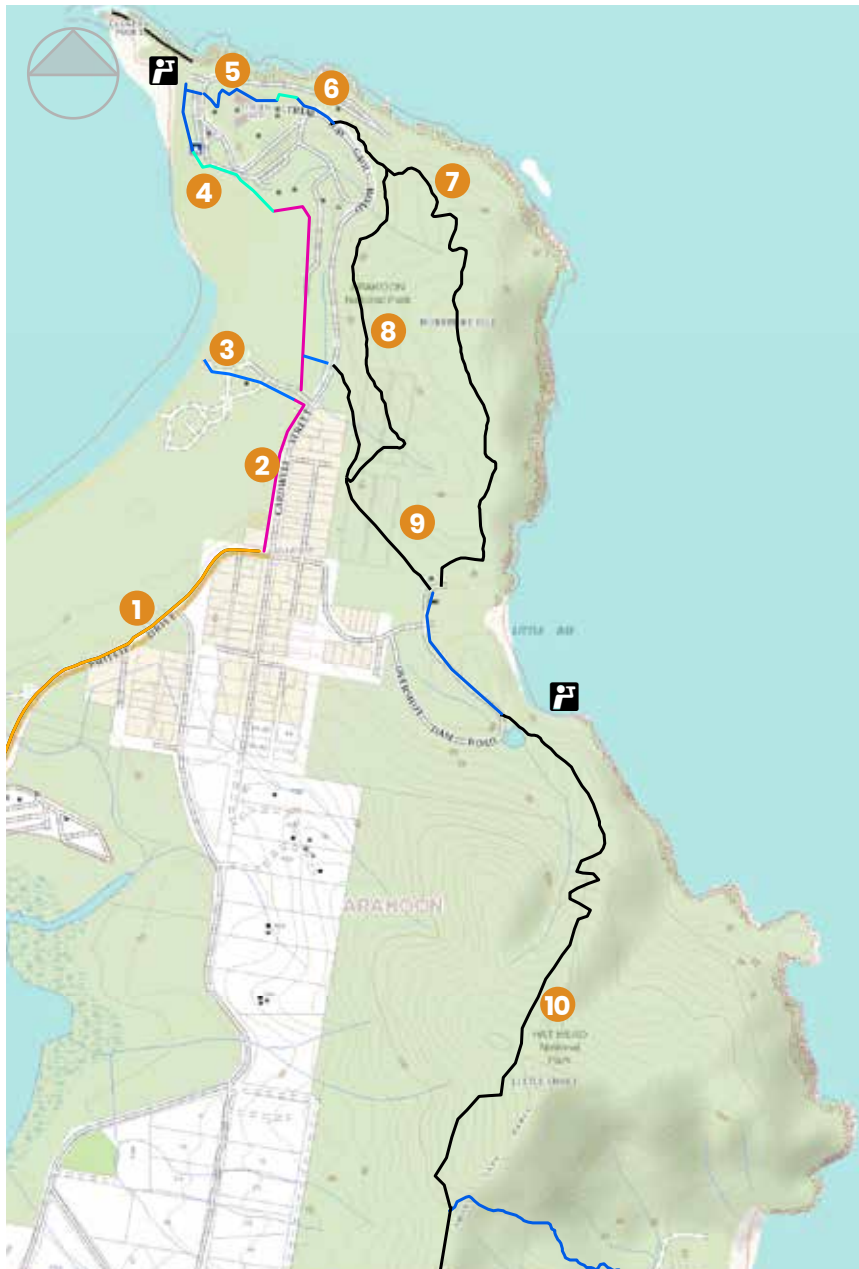
## Walking trails and shared paths

Trial Bay Gaol  
Arakoon National Park

- Sealed Road
- Walking track
- Cycle Trail
- National Park
- Information
- Parking
- Bus Parking
- Toilets
- Historic Site
- Lookout
- Swimming
- Interpretive v
- Boat ramp
- Cycle track

Scale  
0 100 200 300 400 M





### 10.1 Overview

The proposed walking track from Little Bay to Smoky Cape encompasses some existing walking tracks and showcases spectacular scenery and a variety of vegetation types, including coastal rainforest, heath, grassland and dry eucalypt forest. From Overshot Dam the track rises almost to the summit of Little Smoky at 200 m before descending to stunning Gap Beach at the halfway point of the walk. A new section of track leading south from Gap Beach hugs the coastline before joining the existing track network and ascending from North Smoky Beach to the Smoky Cape Lighthouse carpark.

Existing shared path from South West Rocks terminates at the corner of Wilson and Cardwell Street. To access the Cardwell Street and Trial Bay precincts pedestrians and cyclists currently utilise the road verge and existing gravel track as well as the Trial Bay Gaol road.

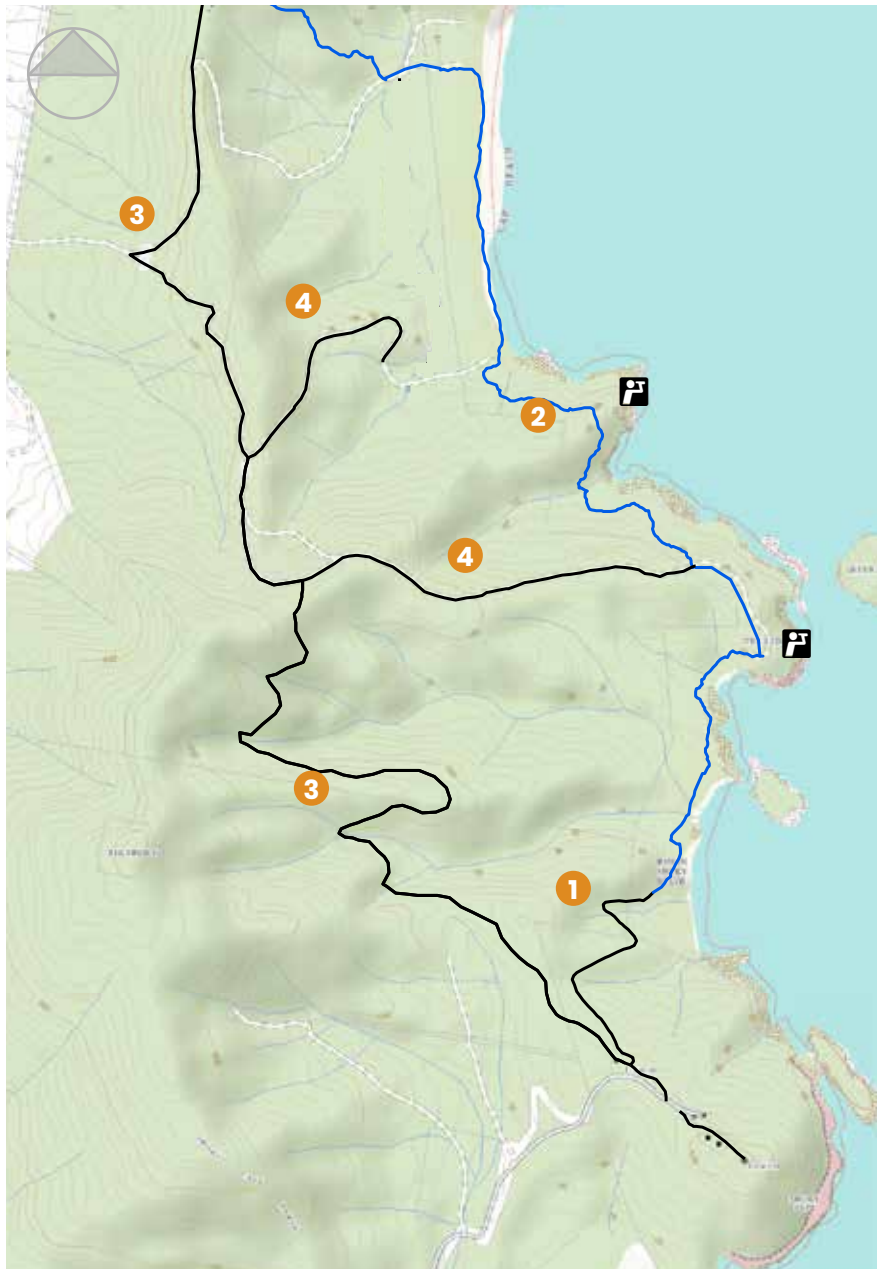
1. To enable safe access a shared path is proposed following the existing gravel track. Raised boardwalks will be required in flood prone areas to enable all weather access. The shared zone will terminate at the Front Beach.
2. Proposed pedestrian access through the Cardwell Street precinct will lead to a low-level deck.

3. Proposed pedestrian path along waterfront to provide safe and scenic walking access to Laggars Point.
4. Proposed track to offer additional walking opportunities which will take in the native vegetation, gaol walls and provide the opportunity for a small viewing area overlooking the breakwater.
5. Proposed pedestrian connection from Trial Bay Gaol to the Monument Hill track
6. Monument Hill track.
7. Powder Magazine walking track.
8. Bridle trail.
9. Gap Beach walking track.

Legend

- Existing shared path
- Proposed shared path
- Proposed path
- Existing track
- Proposed track
- Proposed lookout

Figure 10.1 Walking trails and shared paths - north



1. Jack Perkins walking track
2. Proposed Smoky Cape track
3. Existing Smoky Cape track
4. Green Island walking track

Legend




-  Existing track
-  Proposed track
-  Proposed lookout

Figure 10.2 Walking trails and shared paths - south

# 11

## Design intent

### SHAPeless MASS and ENDLESS BICKERING

There is not the slightest doubt that when it is finished, it will be the noblest work of Australia will be a harbour, city.

In the 19th Century, shipping was the major form of transport along Australia's east coast, but the narrow straits between Sydney and the Trial Bay, half way between Sydney and Brisbane, was particularly a 'harbour of refuge' but needed protection from the marauding sea. The State Parliament agreed to a six-year plan to build a breakwater with 13 bays, a Public Works Prison planned for Trial Bay.

Disputes arose and construction began on the 5000 foot 13 bay breakwater. Progress was slow, a series of storms causing major wash-aways. Meanwhile, the breakwater itself caused rapid silting of the bay.

In 1903, a change of engineering methods by French officials led to the use of larger rocks filled with rubble, leaving nothing to 'break' the force of the waves. This was contentious, and amongst private contractors who rallied in support of the Engineers. Later that year, storms reduced the breakwater to a shapeless mass of less than 1000 feet 100 metres. Within 3 months, the project folded and the Coast was closed.





## 11.1 Materials

NPWS utilise a standardised system that creates a recognisable identity and image for facilities in national parks and reserves. This has been achieved through a system of consistent designs that allow for materials, as well as a supporting 'kit of parts' including screening and walling, to be tailored to reflect the local site conditions and character.

Trial Bay, Cardwell Street, Little Bay and Smoky Cape have a range of furniture and finishes that span decades of use. Future works and upgrades would see the removal of dated items being replaced with a consistent palette.



Directional signage



Information sign



Shelter



Seating



Permeable surfaces



## 11.2 Natural aesthetic

The precincts are characterised by a mix of natural environments and vegetation communities which will be preserved and improved through the management of vehicle and pedestrian movement and remediation works to reduce the impacts of coastal erosion.



An assortment of coastal environments creates a dynamic experience



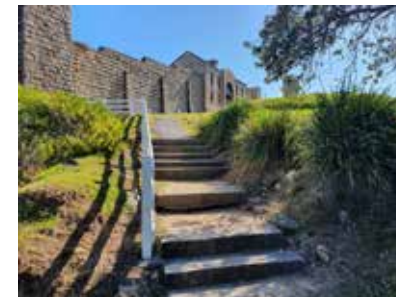
Natural shade creates pleasant locations for walking and recreation

## 11.3 Built heritage

Buildings and structures reflect the post-contact history of the site and impose their characters on the natural environment. From the granite walls of Trial Bay Gaol to the pristine white of the Smoky Cape Lighthouse these structural elements will be maintained to ensure that the visual character is retained.



Trial Bay Gaol



Trial Bay Gaol



Smoky Cape Lighthouse

## 11.4 Designing with Country

Greater recognition of Aboriginal heritage should be incorporated into the fabric of proposed works through engaging with and involvement of the Aboriginal community. This can take on many forms from information on signage, creative interpretation through artwork and incorporation of elements into the built form.



Royal Adelaide Hospital



Dorrigo National Park  
Wonga Walk



Mutton Bird Island

## 11.5 Accessible accommodation

The provision of accessible accommodation enables a wider variety of user groups to visit and experience the Trial Bay Precinct. The accommodation will be designed to sit within the existing topography so as not to detract from the heritage values.



Parks Victoria Tidal River



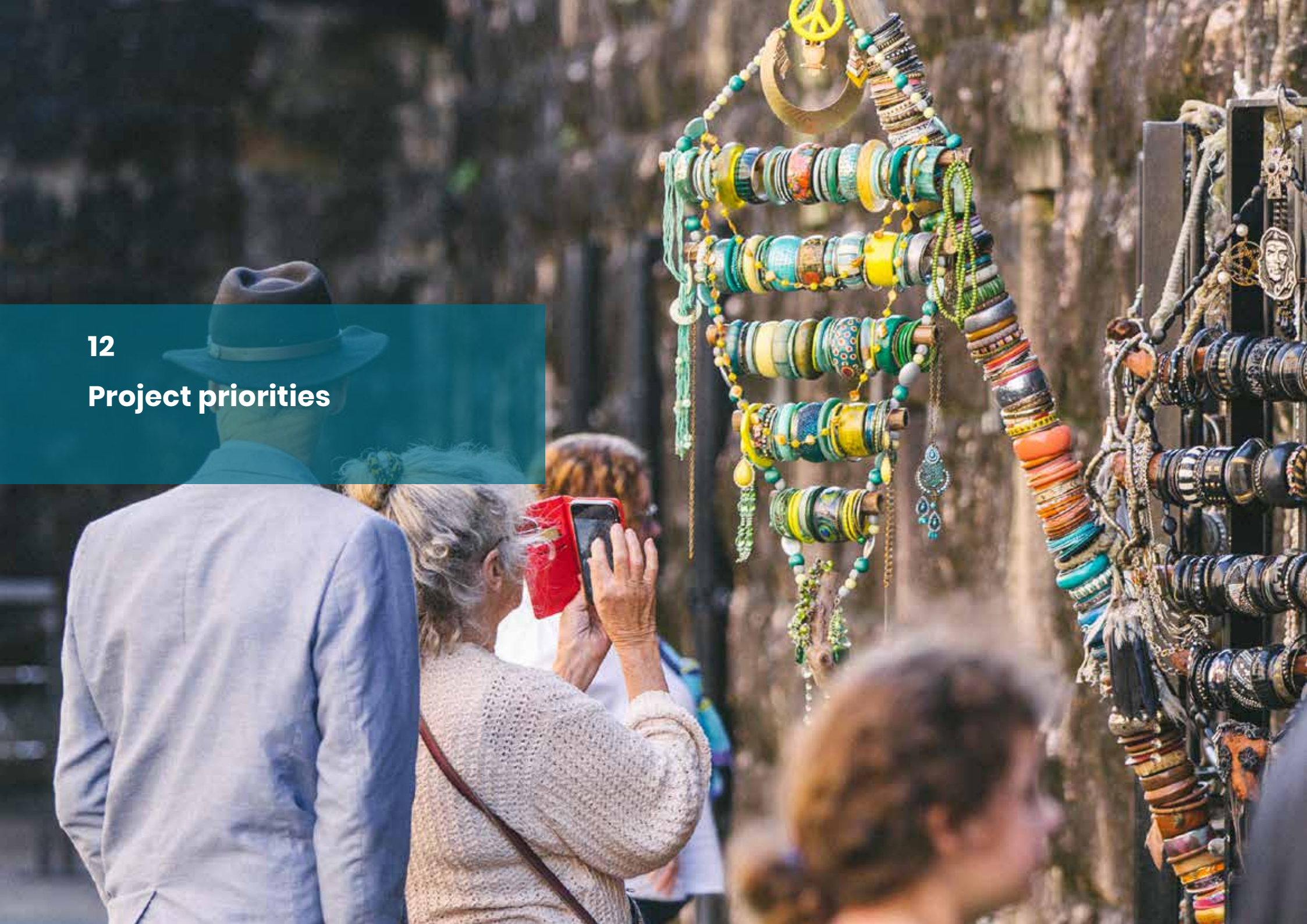
Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary



Unyoked

12

## Project priorities



## 12.1 Project priorities

The strong links between the visitor precincts in Arakoon National Park and Smoky Cape in Hat Head National Park have meant that an integrated planning process was needed to ensure complementarity outcomes are achieved. Each precinct has been planned to offer its own unique experience based on site-specific features while adhering to the project design principles.

Initial cost estimates to complete each precinct and the walking tracks indicate that approximately \$20 million is required, so the Macleay Coast Destination project budget will focus on improving pedestrian, cycle and traffic circulation; separating non-compatible uses; relieving pressure on the Trial Bay precinct; and modernising facilities in priority areas. For the most part, this means that initial works will focus on the Trial Bay and Cardwell Street precincts. NPWS will seek alternative funding sources to complete improvements at Little Bay, Smoky Cape and the walking tracks over the life of the master plan.

## 12.2 Staging

The project will be implemented in 3 stages, with the initial \$6.7 million in funding focused on delivering stages 1 and 2 over the next 4 years. The 3 stages are:

### Stage 1

Develop a blueprint to meet long-term visitor demands of key visitor precincts in Arakoon and Hat Head national parks and determine priorities for implementation.

### Stage 2

Use project funding to improve the visitor experience by improving pedestrian, cycle and traffic circulation, separating non-compatible uses and modernising facilities in priority areas.

### Stage 3

Undertake remaining works as funding becomes available over the 10-year life of the master plan.

## More information

[Arakoon State Recreation Area plan of management \(NPWS 1987\)](#)

[Hat Head National Park plan of management \(NPWS 1998\)](#)

[Macleay Coast Destination project webpage](#)

[Macleay Valley Coast destination management plan 2019–2029 \(Kempsey Shire Council 2019\)](#)

[North Coast destination management plan 2018 to 2021 \(Destination North Coast 2018, currently under review\)](#)

[Roy Morgan Helix Personas classification system](#)

[Trial Bay visitor precincts: coast and foreshore protection strategy \(NPWS 2022\)](#)

