



NSW NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE

# Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park and Island Nature Reserves

Plan of management discussion papers –  
summary of submissions



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Cover photo: View of Barrenjoey Head from West Head Lookout, Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. Photo: Clare Manson Photography

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# Introduction

## Background

The existing plan of management for Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, Lion Island Nature Reserve, Long Island Nature Reserve and Spectacle Island Nature Reserve was written in 2002. Since that time there has been a steady increase in visitors coming to the park, new recreational uses have become popular, information about the values of the park has improved, and new approaches to managing fire and pests and weeds have been developed.

Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park (the park):

- has significant Aboriginal cultural heritage values
- is surrounded by highly urbanised environments with large populations
- has experienced significant increases in visitation since 2008
- has significant natural and shared heritage values
- is part of the traditional Country of Aboriginal people who maintain their connection to the land
- is an important local, domestic and international visitor destination.

A new plan of management is required to meet the challenges of managing the park's natural and cultural heritage values and visitor use in this management context. The new plan of management will also apply to Lion Island Nature Reserve, Long Island Nature Reserve and Spectacle Island Nature Reserve (the island reserves).

As the first stage in the development of a new plan of management, the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) released 5 discussion papers exploring the challenges and opportunities for managing the following in the park:

- Aboriginal cultural heritage values
- natural, visitor experience and shared heritage values
- recreational activities
- visitor destinations
- leases, licences and consents.

The papers were available for comment between 2 August and 15 September 2019.

## Overview

A total of 157 individuals and 28 groups made 411 submissions across the 5 discussion papers and raised 1143 points for consideration. See Table 1 for the number of points raised on each.

This report summarises the comments and feedback from individuals and groups and provides advice on how NPWS will address this feedback when developing the draft plan.



**Table 1 Number of points raised on each discussion paper**

| Discussion paper  | Points raised <sup>1</sup> |
|---|----------------------------|
| Aboriginal cultural heritage values                     | 67                         |
| Natural, visitor experience, and shared heritage values | 206                        |
| Recreational activities                                 | 446                        |
| Visitor destinations                                    | 256                        |
| Leases, licences and consents                           | 168                        |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>1143</b>                |

1 Numbers are approximate as some comments and points raised were manually attributed to individual discussion papers. Additionally, some submissions raised the exact same points. In these cases, the points raised have been counted once.

This document is not intended to provide a detailed or exhaustive assessment of the feedback. Our response to the feedback will be provided in the draft plan of management and associated planning considerations report.

## What will happen next?

We will consider all feedback and comments when preparing the draft plan of management and associated planning considerations report.

The community will have another opportunity to comment on management of the park and the island reserves when the draft plan and planning considerations report are released for public comment.



**Photo 1 The parks are a significant cultural landscape. Photo: Michele Cooper/DPIE**

# 1. Aboriginal cultural heritage values

This discussion paper explored the important Aboriginal cultural heritage values of the park and opportunities for increasing Aboriginal involvement in management of these values. The paper also explored different ways that Aboriginal people may wish to be involved in managing the park and opportunities to engage visitors in learning about and appreciating those values.

A total of 67 issues were raised for consideration. These have been grouped and summarised.

## What we heard

- Managing and protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage in the park is very important.
- Ensuring that Aboriginal people are engaged in the management and interpretation of their cultural heritage is essential.
- The continued protection and monitoring of sites is important, especially with increasing visitation and projected impacts of climate change.
- Some sites are threatened by vandalism and/or natural weathering and require increased management attention. For example, rock art near Elvina Track and Coasters Retreat.
- There is a desire to improve understanding of the Aboriginal cultural heritage values of the park.
- Opportunities exist to increase awareness of Aboriginal cultural heritage values through on-site signs, displays and guided tours at some destinations, such as Barrenjoey Head.
- Opportunities for Aboriginal people to establish businesses is supported, particularly businesses that increase opportunities for visitors to learn about and appreciate the Aboriginal cultural heritage values.
- It is important to support Aboriginal people to take advantage of a full range of opportunities, including direct employment as well as businesses.

## What we will do

When preparing the draft plan of management, we will consider:

- opportunities to work with Aboriginal groups in the protection and monitoring of sites
- education programs and tour operations in the park including opportunities to work with Aboriginal people to better interpret Aboriginal cultural heritage values
- collaboration with the Aboriginal community to:
  - prevent vandalism of sites and respond to reports of vandalism and damage
  - review signage and investigate other opportunities to communicate Aboriginal cultural heritage values, including digital technology
  - investigate opportunities to support Aboriginal people in businesses and employment.

## 2. Natural, visitor experience and shared heritage values

This discussion paper explored the key natural and shared heritage values of the park and the threats to those values. This paper also explored how we might manage and protect these values while providing rewarding visitor experiences.

A total of 206 points were raised for consideration. The points have been grouped and summarised.

### What we heard

#### Park values and management objectives

- Protection of the natural and cultural values should underpin management of visitor use.
- The plan should recognise the purpose of reserving the area as set out in the original land grant.
- We should work with local councils to enhance wildlife corridors, protect biodiversity and identify lands that could be added to the park.
- Marine habitats should be included as a natural value and appropriately managed.
- The plan could make provisions for the reintroduction of native wildlife.
- Adaptive re-use of buildings is supported but not necessarily for commercial use.
- The parks are appreciated for their natural and cultural heritage values, and for the opportunities provided for visitors to connect with nature and participate in nature-based recreation.
- The park's value for research is important for monitoring and managing objectives.

#### Managing threats

- Fire management, planning and communication is critical to reduce fire risks and to protect life, property and biodiversity.
- It is important that we support and cooperate with local communities to reduce fire risks and plan for emergencies.
- We should consider incorporating cultural burning practices into its fire management programs.
- We need to implement and fund priority regional pest management programs.
- NPWS, Roads and Maritime Services (Transport for NSW) and local councils should work together to address the impacts of stormwater runoff, pests and weeds.
- Climate change and actions to address impacts should be clearly identified.

#### Other

- We should work with mountain bike groups to manage impacts of illegal trail building.
- Traffic could be managed more effectively by changing park fee collection methods.
- Illegal activities are a problem. Management approaches could include education, signs, policy and security cameras.
- An evidence-based approach is required when assessing the impacts and threats to park values attributed to visitor use.
- Park user fees should be applied to all users.



## What we will do

When preparing the draft plan of management, we will consider:

- park values, including marine habitats, and management objectives for those values
- opportunities to improve park management, and protect natural and shared heritage values by improving connectivity
- approaches to biodiversity conservation programs including reintroduction of threatened species
- strategies to manage threats to the park's values including fire, pest and weed management
- the predicted impacts of climate change on park values.



**Photo 2** The state heritage listed lighthouse complex on Barrenjoey headland is a popular visitor destination. Photo: David Finnegan/DPIE

### **3. Recreational activities**

This discussion paper summarised the range of recreational opportunities in the park and explored how these opportunities might be managed to protect park values.

Many submissions outlined the values of recreation in the park, with 446 points raised for consideration. The points raised have been grouped and summarised.

#### **What we heard**

##### **Boating**

- The history of boating should be acknowledged as an important value of the park.
- Boating is a significant recreational activity providing important visitor experiences and contributing to the region socially and economically.
- Waterways of the park are some of the safest in New South Wales.
- Education is key to protecting park values and visitor safety.
- Marinas make an important contribution to sustainable visitor use of the park.
- There is a desire for more public and club-managed swing moorings in the park.

##### **Rock climbing**

- Rock climbing can be conducted without impacts to natural or cultural heritage values if it is well managed in cooperation with rock climbers.
- We should engage and talk to rock climbing groups before making decisions about rock climbing activities in the park.

##### **Walking**

- The walking experience would be improved by separating conflicting activities on existing shared tracks, making fire trails more walker-friendly and maintaining walking tracks.
- Opportunities exist to establish an iconic walk along the Pittwater foreshore.
- Walking experiences could be improved by establishing new walking tracks.
- There is support for volunteer groups to help us maintain tracks and trails in park.

##### **Camping and accommodation**

- Adaptive reuse of the Barrenjoey Light station buildings for short-term accommodation is not generally supported.
- Options for camping should be considered for long-distance tracks such as the Great North Walk and the Harbour to Hawkesbury walking routes.
- There is support for providing a range of camping styles at the Basin, including maintaining affordable camping options.
- Consideration needs to be given to providing carparking facilities for visitors to The Basin who travel there by ferry.
- Boats should be recognised as a form of accommodation in the park.
- Consider relocating the Brooklyn Dam camping site to discourage camping not associated with the Great North Walk.

## Road cycling

- Road cycling is an important visitor use of the park.
- Improving cycling safety is important, and there are various options that can be explored to improve road safety in the park.
- Traffic calming devices need to be carefully designed to prevent risks to cyclists.
- Education and signage are essential to improve cyclist, driver and pedestrian safety.

## Mountain biking

- There is a desire for sustainable single trails and longer cross-tenure trails.
- There is a preference for coordinated response to mountain biking across land managers and NSW Government agencies.
- Engaging with mountain bike groups to develop sustainable tracks and mitigate the impacts of illegal track building on park values is important.
- The need to protect natural and cultural heritage values is essential to developing sustainable mountain biking experiences in the park.

## Horse riding

- The current arrangements for horse riding should be maintained.
- Actions related to horse riding trails from the current plan should be implemented.
- We should review the sustainability of horse riding.
- Shared trails need to be managed carefully to maintain safety.



**Photo 3** Management trails in the park are multi-use trails. Photo: Clare Manson photography



## Other

- Use of recreational drones in the park is generally not supported.
- We should consider allowing dogs on leads at Barrenjoey Head.
- There are varying ideas about how events and group activities should be managed, including limits to group sizes and limits to the number and size of events.
- Group activities and events should be carefully managed to ensure they do not unfairly affect other visitors.
- There is potential to develop a kayak trail in Hawkesbury/Berowra Creek.
- Recreational uses and facilities should be assessed and monitored for long-term environmental impacts.
- Park facilities need to be upgraded.
- Consider introducing shuttle buses during periods of peak visitor use and encourage the introduction of more public transport options.

## What we will do

When preparing the draft plan of management, we will consider:

- management of park waterways with other government agencies with responsibilities for management of waterways, fisheries and marine habitat
- working with government agencies that have responsibility for roads and road safety to assess and review park road safety for cyclists, vehicles and pedestrians
- recreation use policies such as pets in parks and drones in parks
- management of tracks and trails including options for shared use, mountain biking, horse riding and long-distance walks
- the management and assessment for events and group activities in the park
- options for monitoring impacts of recreational use
- reviewing arrangements for rock climbing in the park.



## 4. Visitor destinations

This discussion paper explored how the visitor destinations in the park might be managed in future to support sustainable visitor use and provide more rewarding visitor experiences. The paper focused on the options for managing increasing levels of visitation.

Submissions on visitor destinations raised 256 points for consideration. The points have been grouped and summarised.

### What we heard

#### Bobbin Head and Apple Tree Bay

- We should make better use of the Bobbin Head Inn building.
- Facilities at Bobbin Head need upgrading.
- The Bobbin Head and Apple Tree Bay precinct masterplan should be fully implemented.
- There is support for exploring options for an online booking system at Bobbin Head during peak visitor periods, but it is not clear how this would work.
- More signs will help to encourage appropriate use of the canoe/kayak launch facilities.

#### West Head and Resolute

- Review carparking design and traffic flow.
- Formalise parking at Resolute picnic area.
- We could consider introducing timed parking options.



Photo 4 Bobbin Head visitor precinct. Photo: David Finnegan/DPIE

## **The Basin**

- There is support for providing a range of camping styles at the Basin but not at the expense of the current camping experience.
- We should undertake business planning before developing new camping experiences at The Basin.
- There is support for maintaining the current camping arrangements at The Basin.
- Affordable camping options should be maintained.

## **Barrenjoey Head**

- Adaptive re-use of heritage buildings at Barrenjoey Head is supported by some but not for short-term accommodation or other commercial purposes.
- Provision of visitor services should be in keeping with the heritage values and significance of the site.
- Barrenjoey Head would benefit from precinct planning that considers the site in the context of the surrounding lands and visitor facilities.
- Repairs to heritage buildings are required.
- More information on the values of the site (in signs, displays and guided tours) is desirable.
- Improved interpretation of Aboriginal heritage values of the site is desirable.
- Provision of public toilets is supported.

## **Akuna Bay and Illawong**

- Provide a children's playground at Illawong or Akuna Bay.
- There is scope to improve interpretation of Aboriginal heritage values at Illawong.
- Discarded rubbish is a problem at Illawong foreshore.
- There is support for a walking track at Illawong to supplement existing visitor experiences and to provide a link between Illawong and Akuna Bay.

## **Kalkari**

- The Kalkari Discovery Centre displays need updating.
- The purpose of the centre requires review to ensure that it continues to provide a rewarding visitor experience.
- The proposed master plan for the Bobbin Head and Apple Tree Bay visitor precinct could incorporate the Kalkari area.

## **Cottage Point**

- Develop walking tracks and parking areas at Cottage Point.
- Review public access at Cottage Point.

## **Brooklyn Dam**

- Consider composting toilets at Brooklyn Dam.
- Consider relocating the Brooklyn Dam camping site to discourage camping not associated with the Great North Walk.



## Other

- There is a desire for more ranger presence for compliance issues.
- There is a desire to improve interpretive and information signs throughout the park.
- We should maintain the existing visitor precincts and not develop new sites.
- There is a need for improved parking (short-term and overnight), traffic management and park access at Cottage Point, West Head and Resolute, including:
  - introduction of short-term parking options at visitor destinations
  - facilitation of overnight carparking for visitors staying on boats
  - introducing shuttle services in peak times and public bus transport to the park.

## What we will do

When preparing the draft plan of management, we will consider:

- existing precinct plans and concept plans
- undertaking initial precinct planning where required
- management of visitor use of existing visitor destinations
- visitor access options including public transport options
- ways to reduce congestion at park entry stations
- options to manage peak use including online booking systems and public transport options.



**Photo 5** The Basin visitor precinct. Photo: Clare Manson Photography

## 5. Leases, licences and consents

This discussion paper explored the management of commercial activities including events, filming and photography, businesses and pre-existing private interests in the park.

Submissions on leases, licences and consents raised 168 points for consideration. The points have been grouped and summarised.

### What we heard

#### Park businesses

- Commercial opportunities should be managed in a way that protects park values.
- Pop-up businesses that unfairly compete with existing businesses are not supported.
- More guided walks by experienced and certified operators are supported.
- Businesses require access to reliable power.
- The Aboriginal community should be supported to take advantage of business opportunities.
- There is a desire for flexibility for businesses in leases and licences.

#### Commercial events, filming and photography

- Events should be managed to preserve park values and enhance visitor experiences.
- Frequency and number of events should be considered when assessing applications for all events including non-commercial large groups.
- Events that exclude public use of large parts of picnic areas or other public spaces should not be allowed in peak times.
- We could consider other approaches to manage commercial film and photography.

#### Private interests

- Leasing and licensing arrangements in the park need to be reviewed.
- Existing use rights should be confirmed, and consistent approaches established for management of private interests in future.
- Management of private interests should be objective, impartial and generate returns to the community.
- Management of access to private property across NPWS-managed lands needs to be clarified in some sections of the park.

#### Other

- Management of public use of the foreshore areas adjacent to foreshore communities needs to be clarified.



## What we will do

When preparing the draft plan of management, we will consider:

- the arrangements for licensing and managing existing use rights and private interests
- the management of events and filming and photography licences in the park
- the management of foreshore areas in the park including permitted activities.



**Photo 6** Boat moorings at Cottage Point. Photo: Clare Manson Photography