



**NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service**

# **Yiraaldiya National Park**

**Draft plan of management**





# Acknowledgement of Country

The area now known as Yiraaldiya National Park and its surrounding lands and connecting watercourses has traditionally been under the care of the Dharug (also known as Darug or Dharruk) Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people have a deep spiritual and cultural connection to this Country. Their ancestors have lived here for thousands of years and, in doing so, form part of this living landscape.

Connections to Country and the significance of this park to Aboriginal peoples – past, present and future – are acknowledged and respected. NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) seeks to ensure that the management of this park reflects, embraces and celebrates the culture and heritage of Dharug people and their connection to this Country.

NPWS acknowledges Aboriginal peoples as the traditional custodians of Country and supports the role of Aboriginal people in identifying traditional connections and custodians for this place.



**Photo 1** Yiraaldiya National Park. David Bush/DCCEEW



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# Have your say

**Submissions must be lodged before 5 pm on 3 June 2025.**

Your submission will help in the preparation of a new plan of management for Yiraaldiya National Park. Submissions must be in written form and lodged via:



the online submission form at [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/about-us/get-involved/have-your-say](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/about-us/get-involved/have-your-say)



email to [npws.parkplanning@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:npws.parkplanning@environment.nsw.gov.au)



post to Manager, Planning and Assessment, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124.

Your submission may be provided to the statutory bodies that have an advisory role under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* in the preparation of each plan of management. These bodies include the Karst Management Advisory Committee, regional advisory committees and the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council.

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water complies with the *NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*, which regulates the collection, storage, quality, use and disclosure of personal information.



# Summary

Yiraaldiya National Park is protected in perpetuity through its reservation under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. The management of the park is designed to achieve the objects of this Act – to conserve the natural and cultural values of the park, as well as fostering public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of those values (Appendix 1).

This draft plan of management has been prepared to give members of the public an opportunity to contribute to the preparation of the first plan of management for this park.

As required under the National Parks and Wildlife Act, this draft plan of management was prepared with consideration for the matters listed under section 72AA of the Act and the management principles for national parks (Appendix 2).

When the public exhibition period is over, this draft plan and all submissions received will be considered by relevant statutory advisory bodies, who may then provide advice to the Minister for the Environment. Once adopted by the Minister, the plan of management will set those operations that are permitted within the park and provide strategic direction for management.



**Photo 2** Nodding geebung (*Persoonia nutans*). Enhua Lee/DCCEW

# 1. Yiraaldiya National Park

Yiraaldiya National Park is in the traditional Country of the Dharug people and was reserved in 2023. It is in western Sydney on the Cumberland Plain in the locality of Shanes Park, approximately 40 kilometres north-west of the Sydney CBD and 10 kilometres north-east of Penrith (see Figure 1). The 535-hectare park protects remnant swampy woodlands, open grassy woodlands and open forest vegetation.

The park name Yiraaldiya was established in consultation with the local Aboriginal community. It comes from an 1899 record of an Aboriginal word that described the area between South Creek and Eastern Creek. The area that is now Yiraaldiya National Park was set aside in 1959 for use as a radio transmission station to support intercontinental aviation. As a result, the area was largely protected from development. Only a small part of the site was modified for the transmission station leaving the remaining ecosystems largely undisturbed. The transmission station stopped operating in 2005 and the land was transferred to NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) in 2020, through the Sydney Growth Centres Program, in recognition of its biodiversity values.

The park's vegetation is predominantly dry sclerophyll forest, with smaller areas of dry sclerophyll woodland and river-flat forest. Six plant community types are found there, all of which are listed as threatened under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*. Three of these – Cumberland Shale Plains Woodland, River-flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains and Cooks River-Castlereagh Ironbark Forest – are listed as critically endangered.

The park provides habitat for a number of threatened plant and animal species. Five threatened plants have been recorded, including the Sydney bush-pea (*Pultenaea parviflora*), nodding geebung and *Hibbertia puberula*, and 9 threatened animals, including the little eagle, speckled warbler and Cumberland land snail. The park also has habitat suitable for other threatened species that have been recorded nearby and which could live in the park, as well a range of species that were once found on the Cumberland Plain but which became locally extinct following European settlement.

The park contains a range of significant biodiversity values but ecosystem functions in the area have diminished because of compounding changes in the broader landscape. These changes include land clearing, habitat degradation, changes in overland water flows, soil erosion, feral animal and weed impacts, decline of native species and loss of connectivity to other remnant vegetation.

The ecosystem surrounding the park was extensively modified in the 20th and 21st centuries. The park is now largely surrounded by industrial and residential development, which restricts or denies movement of native animals through the landscape. This limits the capacity for these animals to respond to seasonal conditions, undertake genetic exchange or recolonise from outside populations. Yiraaldiya National Park, the adjacent Wianamatta Regional Park, a network of smaller reserves and other areas of remnant vegetation provide corridors and intact areas of habitat which are critical for the protection of biodiversity values across western Sydney (see Figure 1).

A feral-predator-free area is being established in Yiraaldiya National Park as part of a network of feral-predator-free areas in national parks across New South Wales. Establishment of these areas is an essential part of NPWS *Threatened Species Framework for zero extinctions*, which aims to protect and restore the state's most vulnerable native species and ecosystems. The project at Yiraaldiya National Park builds on the success of the first feral-predator-free areas at Sturt National Park, Mallee Cliffs National Park and Pilliga State Conservation Area.



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Native animal species, which are either declining or are already locally extinct in this part of the Cumberland Plain, are being considered for reintroduction to the park. To date, eastern bettongs, koalas and the New Holland mouse have been released into the park. Other species, including the long-nosed bandicoot, brown antechinus, bush rat and common dunnart are being considered for reintroduction. The reintroductions will contribute to the ongoing survival of specific threatened species, reinstate ecological function, and improve the long-term health of the park's ecosystem.

Yiraaldiya National Park contains a range of cultural sites that reveal a long history of the landscape's use by Dharug people. The place continues to have traditional and contemporary significance for local Aboriginal people and the establishment of the park provides them with a unique opportunity in Western Sydney to connect with Country, and partner with NPWS to care for Country and restore native vegetation and species to the landscape. The vision for the park will be realised with:

- continuous consideration of Aboriginal culture in park management activities
- ongoing integration of opportunities for Aboriginal people to care for Country
- presentation of the park as a cultural landscape.

The park provides a rare opportunity for the people of western and greater Sydney to learn about and enjoy a natural environment within a highly urbanised landscape. It also provides opportunities for research and education about Aboriginal culture and the role of locally extinct and declining species in healthy ecosystems. The project to reintroduce locally extinct native animals is the first to be undertaken in an urban centre in New South Wales and its location will make it accessible to a large number of people.

Adjacent to the park are 2 areas that are vested in the Minister under Part 11 of the National Parks and Wildlife Act. These Part 11 lands do not form part of the national park however, they will be managed consistent with the National Parks and Wildlife Act and Regulations. They include:

- A strip of land on the park's southern edge is marked by the NSW Government for future use as a transport route. This area is inside the conservation fence. (Figure 2).
- A rectangular land parcel, also on the southern boundary of the park and within the future transport corridor, is leased to the Blacktown Pistol club. This area is outside the conservation fence (Figure 2).

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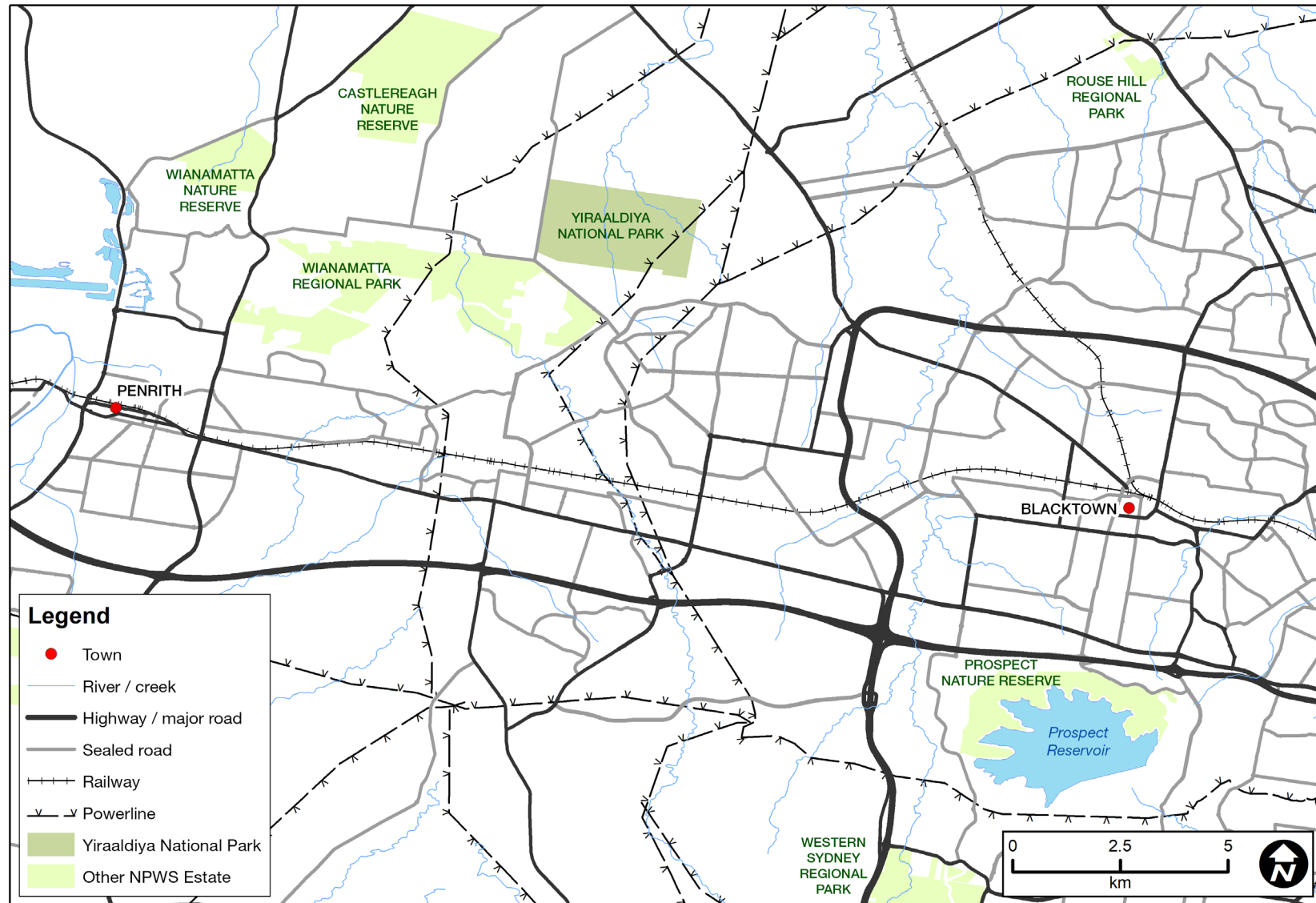


Figure 1 Yiraaldiya National Park



## 2. Challenges for conservation on the Cumberland Plain

Yiraaldiya National Park lies on the Cumberland Plain, within the Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia (IBRA) Cumberland subregion of the Sydney Basin Bioregion.

Before European settlement, the Cumberland subregion supported diverse native vegetation, including extensive grassy open forests, ironbark and turpentine forests, dry rainforests and floodplain forest, and wetland communities. Since the earliest years of European settlement the subregion has been extensively cleared for agricultural development and is now under increasing pressure from urban development. Only about 13% of the pre-1970 extent of native vegetation in the subregion remains intact, with a further 12% occurring as heavily degraded communities, and what remains is highly fragmented (DECCW 2011; DPE 2022). About 4% of the Cumberland subregion is within a protected area. Cumberland Plain native vegetation is endangered and all remnants play an important role in maintaining biodiversity in western Sydney.

Key threats to biodiversity within the subregion include habitat loss and fragmentation from land clearing, weed invasion, predation and competition from feral animals, altered fire regimes, altered hydrological regimes and water quality, particularly runoff from urban and agricultural areas, and spread of disease, including *Phytophthora* and myrtle rust (DPIE 2021).

Many native plant and animal species have declined in population or become extinct on the Cumberland Plain since European settlement, predominantly as a result of habitat alteration and loss, and competition and predation by feral animals. Native animal species formerly recorded on the Cumberland Plain but which are now locally extinct include the brush-tailed phascogale, brown antechinus, eastern quoll and eastern bettong.

The native animal species that are now declining or are locally extinct performed a range of functions in the ecosystems of the Cumberland Plain. For example, the eastern bettong, which became extinct in New South Wales more than 100 years ago, supports soil development, water infiltration, plant nutrient uptake and seed and spore germination by digging for native truffles. These fungi are an essential component of the ecosystems and rely on such animals to spread their spores. The loss of these species, and their ecological functions, has a negative effect on the long-term health of our ecosystems.



Photo 3 Yiraaldiya National Park. DCCEEW

## 3. Management themes

### 3.1 Supporting connection to Country

Yiraaldiya National Park is in the Country of the Dharug people who have lived here for thousands of years and their culture, stories and values are an integral part of the natural landscape. The park conserves an important part of this natural and cultural landscape.

Country is the term often used by Aboriginal peoples to describe their relationship to the lands, native plants and animals, waterways and seas to which they are connected. The term contains complex concepts about lore, place, custom, language, spiritual belief, cultural practice, material sustenance, family, belonging and identity. Country is holistic, living and spirit runs all the way through it.

NPWS is committed to recognising and realising the roles and responsibilities of Aboriginal people as custodians and managers of their Country and culture and the park provides an opportunity for them to connect with Country in western Sydney. NPWS will work with local Aboriginal communities to understand their goals in building connections with Country, looking after Country and sharing their knowledge and will support opportunities for these to be realised in the park. This could include cultural activities, engagement and participation in land management and healing Country, and the setting up of enterprises that use or reference the park.

The park will give visitors the opportunity to gain an appreciation of Aboriginal culture, history and Country and there is potential for it to be widely recognised as an Aboriginal cultural landscape. This can be achieved by:

- incorporating Aboriginal language in the naming of places, signage and interpretation
- activating cultural tourism
- the promotion and sharing of culture in the park by Aboriginal people.

NPWS will work with local Aboriginal people to help realise their aspirations for the sharing of Aboriginal culture, history and understanding of Country with park visitors.

Past Aboriginal occupation and use of the area is evident through Aboriginal objects and sites on park, including individual artefacts, artefact scatters and a quarry. The park is likely to contain many sites that have not yet been identified; only limited surveys have been carried out so far. Additional archaeological surveys may be undertaken when resources and circumstances allow, such as after fire or drought when visibility is optimal.

The NSW Government has legal responsibility for the protection of Aboriginal sites and places. NPWS acknowledges the right of Aboriginal people to make decisions about their own heritage and will consult with and involve Dharug people in:

- the protection and management of Aboriginal sites and places
- the presentation of Aboriginal culture and history and related issues.

Local Aboriginal people will be helped to engage in site and other park management activities. NPWS will also cooperate with them to develop strategies for further research, documentation and communication of their cultural heritage values.

### Objectives

- Recognise and promote an awareness of Aboriginal cultural rights.
- Support Aboriginal people to carry out their cultural obligations associated with the care of Country.



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- Acknowledge, respect and protect Aboriginal cultural heritage values in the park.
- Provide opportunities for visitors to experience Aboriginal names, voices, and languages, and develop an understanding of, and respect for, Aboriginal culture and heritage.

### Strategies

- Work with local Aboriginal people and communities to provide opportunities for Aboriginal people to determine their priorities for cultural management, connect to Country, practice culture on park and be actively involved in the management and protection of culture and Country.
- Work with Aboriginal people and communities to integrate Aboriginal knowledge about caring for Country into the management of the park.
- Work with Aboriginal people and communities to ensure that Aboriginal sites, objects and cultural values are appropriately identified, recorded, managed and protected.
- Work with local Aboriginal people to identify and implement appropriate opportunities to share Aboriginal culture, history and understandings of Country with park visitors, including collaborating with local Aboriginal people in the development of cultural tourism and other business opportunities.
- Facilitate greater the recognition of Country and culture in the community and enhance the identity of the park as part of an Aboriginal cultural landscape. This may include incorporating artwork and Aboriginal language in the naming of places and features, signage and interpretation.



Photo 4 Eastern bettong (*Bettongia gaimardi*). DCCEEW

### 3.2 Protecting and restoring natural values and healing Country

The Cumberland Plain has been extensively modified since European settlement, first for agriculture and then by development for residential, commercial and industrial purposes, which continue to intensify. Only 13% of the region's native vegetation remains intact bushland and is scattered across many sites, most of which are small, fragmented and under private ownership.

In 2011, there were only 81 remnants larger than 50 hectares. Large, intact patches of vegetation, such as Yiraaldiya National Park at 535 hectares are critical for the retention of biodiversity on the Cumberland Plain. The protection and restoration of the park's natural values and conservation of Cumberland Plain ecosystems are primary objectives of this plan.

The park's threatened animal and plant species are among its most significant natural values. Currently, the park protects at least 5 threatened plant species and 9 threatened animal species, as well as threatened ecological communities listed under the Biodiversity Conservation Act.

The key pieces of legislation that guide NPWS action on the conservation of threatened species, populations and ecological communities in New South Wales are the Biodiversity Conservation Act and the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

The National Parks and Wildlife Act enables the assessment and declaration of land in the national parks reserve system as an environmental or cultural asset of intergenerational significance. Such assets have a conservation action plan that must be adhered to.

The *Threatened species framework for zero extinctions* (NPWS 2021) is the primary framework for threatened species conservation on the national parks estate. The framework outlines a series of initiatives to secure and restore the threatened species populations that are most at risk of being lost to the reserve network. These initiatives include:

- declaration of important habitat as assets of intergenerational significance, attracting special legislative protection
- reintroduction of locally extinct species into a network of feral-predator-free areas
- implementation of the NSW Government's Saving Our Species program, which is the statutory biodiversity conservation program under the Biodiversity Conservation Act
- strengthening the integration of threatened species objectives in NPWS landscape-scale programs such as feral animal control and fire management
- delivery of a world-class ecological health monitoring framework
- effective collaboration and integration with threatened species conservation measures off park.

A number of these initiatives will be applied in Yiraaldiya National Park, including establishing of a feral-predator-free area and the reintroduction of locally extinct threatened species (see section 3.3).

Other Acts also inform threatened species conservation. For example, some elements of the *Rural Fires Act 1997* and *Biosecurity Act 2015* form part of the legal basis for protection and recovery of threatened native species. Also, New South Wales has a bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth government that guides how species protected by the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* are assessed and protected under NSW environmental impact assessment laws.

A range of factors currently threaten the integrity of the park's natural values, including feral predators and other feral animals, invasive weeds, loss of ecosystem function, inappropriate



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fire regimes and a range of impacts associated with climate change. Management of the park's natural values will focus on improving their condition through ecosystem restoration and minimising any threats.

NPWS will implement fire, weed and feral animal management programs and follow priority actions for the recovery of threatened species, threatened communities and any assets of intergenerational significance.

Many feral animal and weed species are present on the Cumberland Plain. They, along with habitat modification, are key drivers in the decline and local extinctions of many native species.

Feral animals recorded in the park include feral cats, foxes, pigs, fallow deer, goats, cattle, rabbits and hares.

A large number of weed species have been recorded in the park, particularly along drainage lines and the park boundaries. Some of the most invasive occurring in the highest densities are *Ludwigia peruviana*, narrow-leaf privet, cockspur coral tree, African olive and African love grass – a highly invasive grass with capacity to alter the structure of the park's grassy understories completely.

The management of feral animals and weeds in New South Wales is governed by legislation, policies and plans, including the Biosecurity Act and its regulations, the *NSW Invasive Species Plan* (NSW DPI 2023) and regional strategic weed management plans. Within parks, feral animal and weed management planning is generally undertaken at a regional scale and supplemented by park-specific programs. This approach ensures that regional and statewide priorities are observed and that management programs can respond to changing circumstances, such as discovering new feral animals and weeds.

Feral animal, weed and pathogen management in Yiraaldiya National Park will be in accordance with obligations of the Biosecurity Act, relevant NPWS feral animal and weed management strategies and park-specific programs for the management of feral animals within the feral-predator-free area.

Installing a feral-predator-proof fence (conservation fence) is a vital first step towards the eradication of feral animal species – foxes, feral cats, pigs, deer, rabbits, hares – within the fenced area. It will also prevent further incursions of these species.

Soils in the park are prone to erosion, particularly when cleared, and some areas are subject to localised seasonal waterlogging and flooding. The design of the conservation fence makes allowances for water flow and, in collaboration with neighbouring land managers, the overall management of water flow will make sure that park values and infrastructure, and neighbouring properties, are taken into account.

Fire is a crucial natural process that has shaped park ecosystems over time. It is necessary for the maintenance of the park's vegetation communities, but fire regimes that are too frequent or too infrequent can have a negative effect on vegetation structure and composition. Too frequent fire, particularly of high intensity, is listed as a key threatening process and poses a significant threat to the health of the park's ecosystems. The park has historically experienced high fire frequency.

The park's location in an urbanised landscape means that unplanned fire can significantly threaten life and property. The primary objective for the management of fire in NSW national parks is to protect life and property. Fire must be managed according to the requirements of the Rural Fires Act, its regulations and any plans developed under these, such as the fire access and fire trail plans.

Fire in the park must also be managed, through appropriate fire frequency and intensity, to support the health of vegetation communities and native animal species. Fire management will aim to develop a mosaic of fire histories across the park to increase the complexity of its

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ecosystems and minimise the likelihood of an unplanned broadscale fire that might simplify the park's habitats.

NPWS will undertake contemporary risk-based bushfire planning for the park to guide and identify adaptive actions for protecting life, property (including the protection of neighbouring properties), biodiversity conservation and other park values. Bushfire planning will also support the application of Aboriginal cultural practices in the park.

NPWS will implement fire management strategies and bush fire risk management treatments consistent with strategic fire management planning and relevant legislation. NPWS will be responsive to the special issues associated with managing fire in an area enclosed by a conservation fence and adjacent to residential areas.

A network of management trails is necessary for the maintenance of the conservation fence, fire management, feral animal and weed control, monitoring and research, emergency access and utility access and maintenance. NPWS may adapt the network of trails in the park to ensure it meets management purposes. This may involve works to construct, improve or close trails.

Climate change is a significant threat to endangered ecological communities and the overall condition of the ecosystem. It is expected to intensify the effects of threats such as drought, flooding, fire and weeds, and alter the ecosystem structure and composition and distribution of native and exotic species populations.

Highly cleared and fragmented ecosystems, such as those on the Cumberland Plain, are less likely to be resilient to the effects of climate change than larger more intact ecosystems. However, the protection and restoration of the park's habitats is expected to improve their capacity to adapt to climate change.

Park-specific management responses to climate change may be necessary following appropriate investigation, trials and environmental impact assessment. These responses could include activities such as the provision of supplementary feed and water and the ongoing translocation of species between the network of predator-free reserves and other suitable locations.

### **Objectives**

- Maintain and improve ecosystem function.
- Improve the condition of the park's natural values and their resilience to threatening processes including climate change.
- Expand understanding of the park's natural values and their response to the conservation programs being implemented in the park.

### **Strategies**

- Undertake or support actions to promote the conservation and recovery of threatened species, populations and ecological communities, and any assets of intergenerational significance in the park.
- Implement park-specific feral animal and weed management programs in accordance with obligations under the Biosecurity Act and applicable feral animal, weed and pathogen management strategies.
- Restore habitats where necessary and feasible, by assisting natural regeneration, ensuring suitable levels of coarse woody debris, undertaking revegetation and implementing a fire management regime which enhances biodiversity.
- Implement fire management strategies and bushfire risk management plan treatments consistent with strategic fire management planning and relevant legislation.

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- Encourage and participate in research and monitoring of the park's natural values, including their condition and responses to feral animal exclusions, habitat recovery and a changing climate.
- Review and alter management programs and policies as necessary to respond to new information and changing circumstances.
- Promote and encourage volunteer programs, aligning activities to the restoration of priority habitats and other park management priorities.



**Photo 5 Koala. Gareth Pickford/DCCEEW**



### 3.3 Reintroducing native animals

Many animal species have been lost from Australia's national parks and many others are at risk of disappearing. This decline in biodiversity has impacts on the overall ecosystem health of parks. Australia has the worst mammal extinction record in the world, with at least 34 mammal species becoming extinct since European settlement. In New South Wales, 14 bird species and 26 mammals have become extinct in the past 250 years. The range and abundance of surviving mammals have also been dramatically reduced. In New South Wales, around 50–60% of surviving mammal species are considered at risk of extinction.

While habitat loss and degradation are acknowledged to be major contributors to species decline, feral cats and foxes are considered to be the main drivers for at least two-thirds of species losses. Feral cats are found throughout Australia and are estimated to kill 1.5 billion native animals every year. They have contributed to most of the small mammal extinctions in Australia over the past 250 years and continue to have a significant impact on native mammals, reptiles and birds.

There are no effective landscape-scale control methods for feral cats, making it difficult to limit their impact on native wildlife. Landscape-scale control for foxes has delivered some success but it is very labour intensive and dependent on consistent ongoing effort. The results are variable across different landscapes.

In the absence of effective landscape-scale control for feral predators, feral-predator-free areas are an essential component of any overall strategy to prevent further extinctions and promote the recovery of the most susceptible species. The NPWS has set a zero-extinction target on the NSW national parks estate and is committed to creating permanent strongholds for the conservation and recovery of threatened species. A network of feral-predator-free areas is being established across the national parks estate in a range of different habitats. Feral-predator-free areas are contained within specially designed conservation fencing, which excludes feral predators and many feral herbivores. Eradication of feral animals within the fenced area can then be carried out, providing the opportunity to reintroduce native animals that were once components of the enclosed ecosystems but became extinct as a result of predation.

Yiraaldiya National Park was selected as a site for a feral-predator-free area on the Cumberland Plain for a number of reasons. The park is one of the larger areas of remnant Cumberland Plain vegetation, so it maximises the habitat available for ecosystem restoration. The park is not well connected to other native vegetation, so conservation fencing is unlikely to further limit native species movements through the landscape. The park's relatively flat terrain is well suited to the construction and maintenance of a conservation fence.

While the effective operation of a feral-predator-free area imposes some constraints on visitor use, the park will provide opportunities and facilities for a range of visitor uses that are compatible with the conservation of natural and cultural values and the operation of the feral-predator-free area.

An integrated feral animal management strategy will be undertaken in the park. This work will aim to eliminate the impacts of feral animals on park ecosystems by eradicating all feral predators, including feral cats and foxes, and all feral herbivores such as pigs, deer, goats and hares.

A feral-predator-proof fence (conservation fence) has been installed along the park boundaries and encloses the park to create the feral-predator-free area (see Figure 2). A range of species once found on the Cumberland Plain will be considered for reintroduction into this feral-predator-free area. These may include eastern bettongs, the New Holland mouse, koalas, brown antechinus, long-nosed bandicoot, common dunnart and a number of others. Initial release of eastern bettongs, koalas and the New Holland mouse into a soft

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release area in the park has already occurred. Over time, reintroductions will lead to improved ecosystem function through the restoration of ecological processes such as seed and spore dispersal, soil engineering and predator–prey relationships.

Baseline surveys of ecological health have been undertaken in the park and nearby control sites. Monitoring will be carried out to identify the effects on the park's ecosystems of feral predator eradication and native species reintroductions. The monitoring results will guide adaptive management of the feral-predator-free area.

The management of feral-predator-free areas is complex and requires a flexible approach, that is, adaptive management. Such an approach is needed to address the unknowns of future reintroductions, including achieving genetic diversity. It should also help to prevent problems such as the possibility of native species becoming overabundant, or negative interactions between introduced species. Management of the feral-predator-free area will be guided by a range of policies and plans, including translocation plans, monitoring and research strategies.

Management of the feral-predator-free area and associated research and monitoring may call for a range of supporting facilities in the park, such as storage and overnight accommodation. Areas of the park that have previously been disturbed and have poor ecosystem function will be the preferred sites for such facilities. NPWS will continue to investigate the adaptive reuse of existing abandoned facilities for these purposes.

Part of the feral-predator-free area is on designated land, which has received relevant approvals for the purpose of animal research under the *Animal Research Act 1985* and the Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes.

### Objectives

- Exclude and eradicate feral predators, including feral cats and foxes from within the feral predator-free area.
- Eradicate feral herbivores that impact ecosystem recovery from within the feral predator-free area.
- Reintroduce and naturalise a range of species formerly found on the Cumberland Plain.
- Establish genetically diverse and self-sustaining populations of reintroduced and already-occupying native animal species.
- Restore ecosystem processes such as predator–prey relationships, seed and spore distribution and soil development.

### Strategies

- Establish and maintain conservation fencing and other assets related to the feral-predator-free area.
- Develop and implement feral predator and herbivore eradication programs.
- Monitor for any feral animal incursions into the park and manage incursions as per the feral animal eradication and response plan for the park.
- Reintroduce native animals formerly found on the Cumberland Plain following assessment of the appropriateness of species and the park's capacity to support them.
- Monitor the populations of native animals and adapt species management as required.
- Monitor ecological health in the feral-predator-free area and the control sites to develop an understanding of the effects that feral animal eradication and native species reintroductions are having on the park's ecosystems.

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- Adapt management programs as necessary to achieve the objectives of the feral-predator-free area. Adaptations may include, but are not limited to, altering strategies for species reintroductions, maintaining and improving genetic diversity, providing supplementary food and water resources, managing overabundant native species, and managing negative interactions between native species.
- Make sure that other uses of the park, such as visitor activities and the management of utilities, are compatible with the requirements of the feral-predator-free area. This may include management of visitor numbers and spatial or temporal restrictions on park use.



Photo 6 New holland mouse (*Pseudomys novaehollandiae*). Zain Kruyer/DCCEEW



### 3.4 Learning about Country and native species

Establishing a feral-predator-free area in the park provides an opportunity for visitors to step back in time and experience the Australian bush as it was before the arrival of foxes, feral cats and other feral animals. Yiraaldiya National Park is the first feral-predator-free area in New South Wales to be developed in an urban setting. This creates a unique opportunity for residents of Sydney, as well as domestic and international visitors to learn about locally extinct and declining species, their importance in healthy ecosystems and the role of feral predators in their decline. It also provides an opportunity for Aboriginal people of western Sydney to develop and share Aboriginal cultural programs with park visitors.

A range of facilities and programs will be developed to help visitors understand and appreciate the values of the park. Potential facilities include day-use facilities such as barbecues and toilets, interpretive signage, walking tracks, an educational centre and small-scale visitor accommodation designed to support opportunities for night viewing of nocturnal animal species.

There is a range of opportunities for the development of educational programs, including Aboriginal cultural programs, syllabus-linked environmental education for students and guided night-time spotlighting walks to see reintroduced nocturnal mammals in their habitats.

#### Objectives

- Encourage park visitors to learn about Aboriginal culture and history and the reintroduction of locally extinct and declining animals, their importance in healthy ecosystems and the threats posed by feral predators to ecosystem health.
- Maximise opportunities for environmental education through the development of appropriate public access, interpretation and education programs.
- Engage the community through interpretive facilities and programs.

#### Strategies

- Investigate opportunities and develop an education centre to support visitor understanding of the park and the delivery of environmental education programs if feasible.
- Investigate and implement facilities and programs that help visitors to experience and gain an understanding of Cumberland Plains ecosystems as they were before the introduction of feral predators.
- Develop, install and publish a range of interpretation materials that provide information on the park and its programs, catering to park visitors, students and the interested public.
- Work with traditional owners and local Aboriginal communities to develop opportunities for visitors to learn about the park's values as seen through their eyes.

### 3.5 Providing opportunities for visitors

The creation of Yiraaldiya National Park presents an opportunity to create a unique destination for visitors where they can learn about Aboriginal culture, the natural values of the Cumberland Plain and the reintroduction programs occurring in the park. Once the feral-predator-free area is established and operating successfully, opportunities will be provided for visitors to experience the recovering landscape and the newly resident native animals. The park will also provide an additional green space for local residents to enjoy the physical and mental health benefits of spending time in nature.

This plan designates a portion of the park as a visitor facility zone (Figure 2). The management focus of this zone will be to help foster public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of nature and cultural heritage and its conservation. Construction of visitor facilities has commenced and additional facilities may be developed within this zone in the future to support the objectives of this plan.

Within the visitor facility zone, in the area previously used as the transmission station, there will be staged development of a visitor precinct with day-use facilities such as car parking, barbecues and picnic tables, toilets, sealed pathways and walking tracks. A concept plan has been developed to explain what the visitor precinct may look like and what opportunities may be offered.

NPWS may also construct and operate an education facility in the visitor precinct to provide a unique opportunity for visitors to learn about Australian native animals, the impacts of feral animals on their populations, the importance of protecting their remaining habitat and the role played by predator-free sanctuaries. Facilities for camping and other low-key accommodation options may also be provided in the visitor facility zone, with the intention of supporting educational opportunities for viewing nocturnal animal species. The adaptive reuse of the abandoned transmission station structures will be considered for visitor and park management facilities.

A previously disturbed area to the south-west of the visitor precinct is also part of the visitor facility zone. This area has potential for development of visitor facilities to support outdoor education, recreation or camping. The park entry and Eastern Quoll Trail are also within the visitor facility zone and may include infrastructure to support and manage visitor access and provide a welcome to the park.

Facilities will provide for activities such as picnicking, birdwatching, nature appreciation, bushwalking and on-trail cycling that are compatible with the parks objectives for restoring natural values and reintroducing native species.

Activities, such as off-track walking and running, skateboarding, electric scootering and horse riding, and events such as orienteering, cycle racing and events will not be permitted because they are not compatible with these objectives. Opportunities for these activities will continue to be provided in other nearby parks, including Wianamatta Regional Park.

All areas outside the visitor facility zone are designated as a general management zone (Figure 2). The management focus of this zone will be on conservation however, the zone may include some infrastructure to support visitor access and education, such as walking tracks, board walks, interpretation signage, art installations and bird hides. In developing a walking track network, NPWS will use existing tracks and management trails as much as possible, while supplementing the network with new tracks and linkages where necessary. The general management zone may also include infrastructure such as fences, gates, release cages and watering stations to support the operation of the feral-predator-free area.

Public vehicle access to the park will be through an entry off Stony Creek Road, where the Eastern Quoll Trail will provide access to the visitor precinct. The park entry will be regulated as necessary to support protection of the park and the operation of the feral-predator-free area. Internal gates will manage vehicle access inside the park and restrict public vehicular

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access beyond the visitor precinct. Opportunities to develop other public access points are limited by the development that surrounds the park and the effective operation of the feral-predator-free area. NPWS may investigate, implement and regulate alternative or additional public vehicle access along the northern and southern boundaries, and alternative pedestrian and cycle access points at suitable locations, if feasible.

Visitor access to the park, or areas of the park, may be restricted on a temporary or seasonal basis to support management of the feral-predator-free area, such as during feral animal control programs or species reintroductions, or to minimise disturbance during breeding events. Overnight access to the park may be restricted to minimise impacts on reintroduced animal species, many of which are nocturnal. Limits on visitor numbers may be needed.

The park includes a heritage feature, known as the Llandilo International Transmitting Station, which was previously included on the Commonwealth Heritage List. While the site has been removed from the list (as a result of transfer of the land from the Commonwealth to New South Wales) the historic heritage values of the park will continue to be considered and protected as appropriate. In the future, NPWS may adaptively reuse the transmission station facilities for visitor use or park management purposes after the assessment of heritage values.

### **Objectives**

- Provide recreation opportunities for visitors that are compatible with the protection and restoration of the park's values and consistent with the operation of a feral-predator-free area.
- Facilitate opportunities for visitors to learn about the reintroduction program and experience the park's special values.

### **Strategies**

- Develop a visitor precinct with day-use facilities. These may include camping and other low-key accommodation options, designed to support education and research programs and potentially opportunities to view nocturnal animal species.
- Rationalise the management trail network, and minimise its negative impact on park values, by closing trails not required for management or visitor use, minimising the development of new trails and upgrading existing trails.
- Using the management trail network as a base, investigate and develop walking routes that are accompanied by interpretation to aid visitor appreciation of park values. Short connecting walking tracks may also be provided, to optimise and enhance the visitor experience and or support research and monitoring operations.
- Monitor visitor use and its impacts on park values and management operations and use the results to adaptively manage visitation and visitor infrastructure. This may include expanding or limiting visitor numbers, expanding or contracting facilities, and/or limiting access to the park at particular times.
- Implement temporary or seasonal restrictions on visitor use of the park, or areas of the park, as necessary to support the undertaking of feral animal control, native species reintroductions and breeding events.
- Identify and assess the historic heritage values of the park and manage those in accordance with their significance.
- Remove infrastructure in the park that is surplus to operational needs, subject to the outcomes of heritage and environmental assessments.



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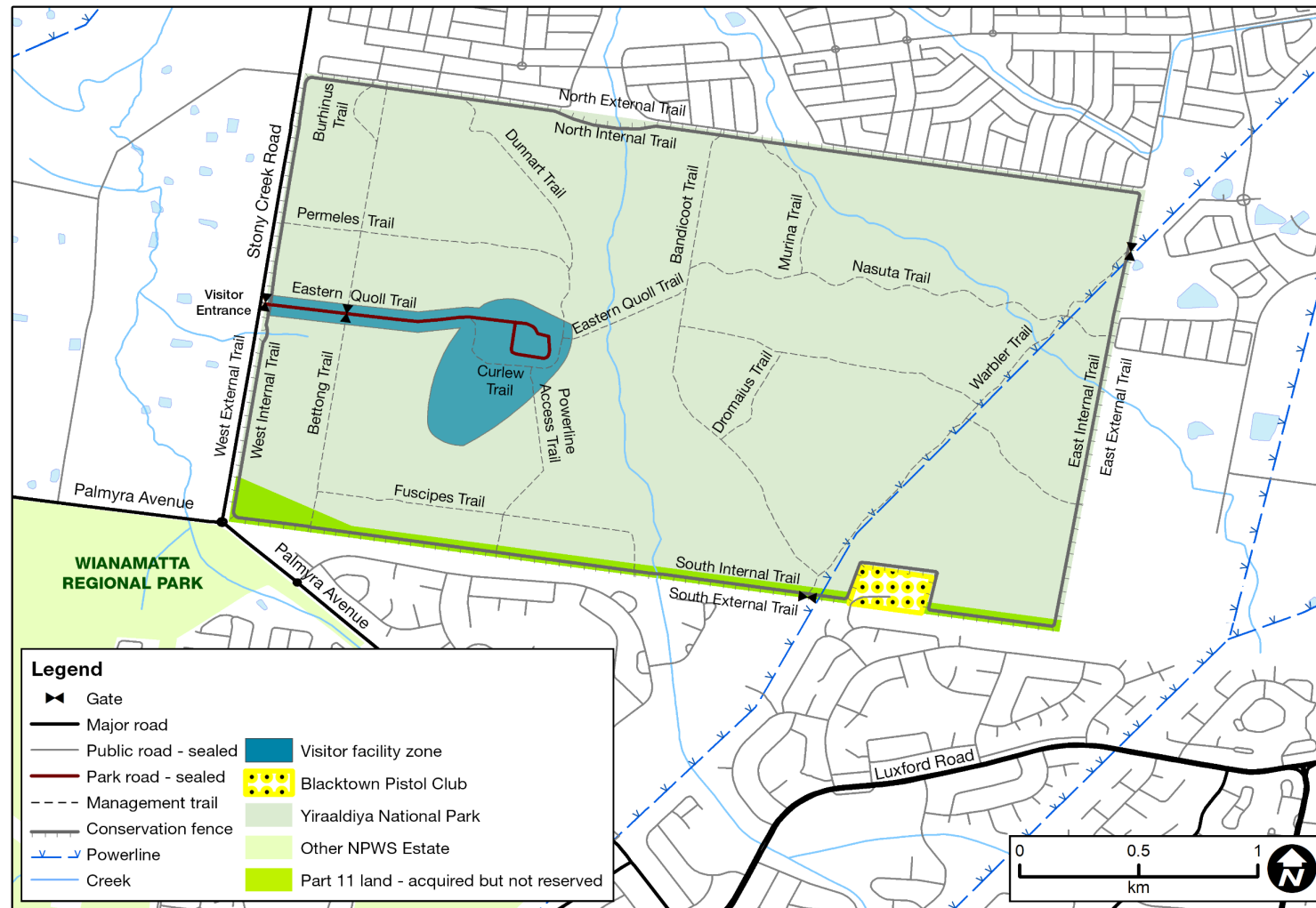


Figure 2 Park management zones and access

## 4. Permitted operations

The NPW Act specifies that operations (or activities) may not be undertaken in a park unless those operations are in accordance with the relevant plan of management.

The NPW Act, and the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation, together with this plan specify the operations that are prohibited in the Yiraaldiya National Park. This plan also specifies the operations that may be permitted in the park and the conditions that will apply.

Table 1 below outlines the key operations under this plan that may be permitted, those that are not permitted, and the conditions that will apply to permitted operations. NPWS may set additional conditions at any time if necessary to facilitate the effective management of the park or to help achieve the objects of the NPW Act.

Permitted operations that meet the definition of development under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EPA Act) are also subject to the planning and approval requirements of the EPA Act. This may include the preparation of a review of environmental factors or other forms of environmental assessment.

In addition to those outlined in Table 1, NPWS may undertake a broad range of park management operations necessary to manage the park and achieve this plan's objectives. These may include operations associated with the strategies in this plan as well as operations such as visitor safety works, education, feral animal control, weed control, asset maintenance and refurbishment, fence construction, fire management and suppression, species translocation and reintroduction, revegetation and asset removal. All routine park management operations necessary to manage the park and achieve the objects of the NPW Act may be permitted.

**Table 1 Summary of permitted operations**

Operations	Conditions
<b>Visitor facility development</b>	
Day-use facilities	Development of new facilities such as car parking, barbecues, shelters and picnic tables, toilets, sealed pathways and walking tracks may be approved after appropriate assessments. Any new day-use facilities will be confined to the visitor facility zone (Figure 2).
Visitor/education centre	Development of a visitor and/or education facility may be approved in the visitor precinct within the visitor facility zone after appropriate assessments (Figure 2).
Visitor accommodation	Accommodation, in existing buildings or semi-permanent options such as glamping tents or mobile huts, may be developed and operated by NPWS within the visitor facility zone to support research and education programs (Figure 2). Commercial services may be engaged to support its operation.
Kiosk or café	Development and operation of a kiosk or café in buildings in the visitor facility zone under a lease or licence may be considered and approved. The operation of mobile vendors in the visitor facility zone under a licence may also be considered and approved (Figure 2).
Adaptive reuse of structures	Adaptive reuse of structures may be considered and approved after any necessary heritage assessments.

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Operations	Conditions
Outdoor education infrastructure	The establishment of infrastructure to support outdoor education such as ropes courses or adventure play facilities may be considered and approved in the visitor facility zone after appropriate assessments (Figure 2).
Walking tracks	Walking tracks may be developed in the visitor facility zone and the general management zone after appropriate assessments and approval. Walking tracks may include board walks, signage, and other small-scale facilities such as art installations and bird hides.
<b>Management of utilities and park management infrastructure</b>	
Staff and research accommodation	Staff and researcher accommodation may be developed in the visitor facility zone after appropriate assessments and approval.
Park management infrastructure	Management trails and infrastructure associated with the feral-predator-free area, such as fences, gates, release cages, watering stations may be established throughout the park after appropriate assessments and approval.
Development of utility infrastructure	The development of utility infrastructure that is in the public interest and consistent with the provisions of the NPW Act may be considered and authorised in accordance with the NPW Act. Approval will be subject to necessary assessments and confirmation that alternative locations outside the park are not feasible.
Maintenance of utility infrastructure	The maintenance of utility infrastructure may be authorised in accordance with the NPW Act and any other necessary approvals.
<b>Research and monitoring</b>	
Research and monitoring	NPWS may undertake research and monitoring. Appropriate research to be undertaken by qualified individuals and organisations may be approved through a consent. Additional permissions may also be required under other legislation.
<b>Commercial activities</b>	
Commercial tours, events and functions	Commercial tours, events and functions may be approved through a consent. Consent for commercial tours, events and functions that are not centred on the appreciation of natural or cultural values or visitor education will be limited to the visitor facility zone (Figure 2).
Filming and photography	Filming and photography may be approved through a consent.
<b>Visitor activities</b>	
Access for wheelchairs, prams and walking	Access for wheelchairs, prams and walking is allowed on designated walking tracks and management trails. Off-track access is not allowed. Access may be closed on a temporary or seasonal basis.
Barbeques	The use of barbeques will be allowed in NPWS-provided facilities. They will not be allowed elsewhere.
Camping	Camping may require booking and may be permitted at designated sites.
Cycling	Cycling is allowed on park roads and management trails. Access may be closed on a temporary or seasonal basis. Cycling is not allowed on walking tracks or off-trail.



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Operations	Conditions
Dog walking and visiting with pets	Visitors to national parks in NSW cannot be accompanied by pets. A person may be accompanied by their trained assistance animal provided they meet the requirements of proof and other conditions set out in the NPWS Pets in Parks Policy.
Drones and model aeroplanes	Drones may be used for park management and emergency or law enforcement purposes. The use of drones for activities that support park management objectives (e.g. education) may be authorised through a consent (conditions, exclusion areas and civil aviation regulations apply). Recreational use of drones and model aeroplanes is not permitted.
Fossicking	Not allowed
Horse riding	Not allowed
Non-commercial events, functions and group gatherings	Consent is required for non-commercial group events, functions and gatherings of greater than 40 people. In the general management zone, group activities will be limited to those involving appreciation of the natural and cultural values of the park. Access may be closed on a temporary or seasonal basis.
Slack-lining	Not allowed
Vehicle access (including motorbikes)	Registered vehicles are allowed on park roads and as directed within the visitor facility zone (Figure 2). Access may be closed on a temporary or seasonal basis.
Wood fires	Wood fires are only allowed in the fireplaces provided. All fires may be restricted by a parkwide or total fire ban.

## 5. Appendices

### **Appendix A: Objects of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974***

The objects of the NPW Act, set out in section 2A of the Act are:

- a. The conservation of nature, including, but not limited to, the conservation of—
  - i. habitat, ecosystems and ecosystem processes, and
  - ii. biological diversity at the community, species and genetic levels, and
  - iii. landforms of significance, including geological features and processes, and
  - iv. landscapes and natural features of significance including wilderness and wild rivers,
- b. the conservation of objects, places or features (including biological diversity) of cultural value within the landscape, including, but not limited to—
  - i. places, objects and features of significance to Aboriginal people, and
  - ii. places of social value to the people of New South Wales, and
  - iii. places of historic, architectural or scientific significance,
- c. fostering public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of nature and cultural heritage and their conservation,
- d. providing for the management of land reserved under this Act in accordance with the management principles applicable for each type of reservation.

## **Appendix B: Management principles for national parks**

The management principles for national parks, as set out in section 30E of the NPW Act are:

- a. the conservation of biodiversity, the maintenance of ecosystem function, the protection of geological and geomorphological features and natural phenomena and the maintenance of natural landscapes,
- b. the conservation of places, objects, features and landscapes of cultural value,
- c. the protection of the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations,
- d. the promotion of public appreciation and understanding of the national park's natural and cultural values,
- e. provision for sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment that is compatible with the conservation of the national park's natural and cultural values,
- f. provision for the sustainable use (including adaptive reuse) of any buildings or structures or modified natural areas having regard to the conservation of the national park's natural and cultural values,
- g. provision for appropriate research and monitoring.



## 6. References

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Cover photo: Release of eastern bettong into Yiraaldiya National Park. Peter Taseski/DCCEEW

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