



NSW NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE

Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area

Plan of Management



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Acknowledgement of Wiradjuri Country

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

Summary

Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area (the park) is an area of outstanding natural and cultural value. It protects ancient sandstone pagodas, rich eucalypt forests, an array of threatened species and important Wiradjuri cultural heritage. It is also an outstanding destination that will attract visitors and support the continued growth of the Lithgow region's economy.

The establishment of Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area as a park ensures that the park's special values are protected in perpetuity. It is an extremely significant addition to the state's network of protected areas, complementing the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, as well as the adjacent Blue Mountains, Wollemi and Gardens of Stone national parks.

Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area is reserved under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act). All parks reserved under the NPW Act in New South Wales are managed to achieve the objects of this Act. These objects are centred on conserving the natural and cultural values of the park, as well as fostering public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of these values (see Appendix A).

The park's classification as a state conservation area requires it to be managed in accordance with the management principles under the NPW Act for state conservation areas (see Appendix B). These principles require the park to be managed for conservation and public appreciation and enjoyment, while also enabling the continued operation of existing mining infrastructure within the park and the continuation of economically important coalmining operations beneath the park.

The NPW Act requires a plan of management to be developed for each state conservation area as soon as practicable after its reservation and for a draft plan to be placed on public exhibition. The *Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area draft plan of management* was placed on public exhibition from 6 May to 5 July 2022.

It was finalised following consideration of the management principles for state conservation areas listed in Appendix B, the matters listed under section 72AA of the NPW Act, all submissions received on the draft plan, and advice provided on the draft plan by the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council and the Blue Mountains Regional Advisory Committee.

1. Introduction

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

The park is located approximately 5 km north of Lithgow and 140 km west of Sydney at the junction of the Great Dividing Range and the Blue Mountains Range in the NSW Central Tablelands region (see Figure 1). It adjoins Blue Mountains National Park to the east and Wollemi National Park and Gardens of Stone National Park to the north. These parks, along with 5 other parks, form the World Heritage-listed Greater Blue Mountains Area.

The park is part of a significant Wiradjuri cultural landscape. It contains many Aboriginal heritage sites and adjoins the Maiyngu Marragu Aboriginal Place – a significant rock art site and cultural educational precinct with strong connections to Mingaan Wiradjuri Aboriginal Corporation.

The park has a number of strong supporters within the community, many of which contributed to its conservation and advocated for its establishment as a park over many years. This provides a foundation for ongoing community stewardship and involvement in conservation programs.

The park has been used over many years for sightseeing, walking, 4-wheel driving, trail bike riding and camping. This has resulted in the incremental formation of numerous tracks, lookout points and camping areas. Facilities to support visitors are limited, and many of these areas have not been properly planned and constructed. As a result, the negative impact of recreation on vegetation is now quite widespread and the facilities are not of a standard that visitors to parks expect.

A number of coalmines are located underneath the park, including Angus Place, Clarence and Springvale mines which supply coal to the Mount Piper Power Station.

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

This plan provides a summary of the park's most significant values and provides an overview of the primary factors that are expected to influence management. The plan also defines the desired outcomes of management and initial actions that will be implemented to achieve those outcomes.

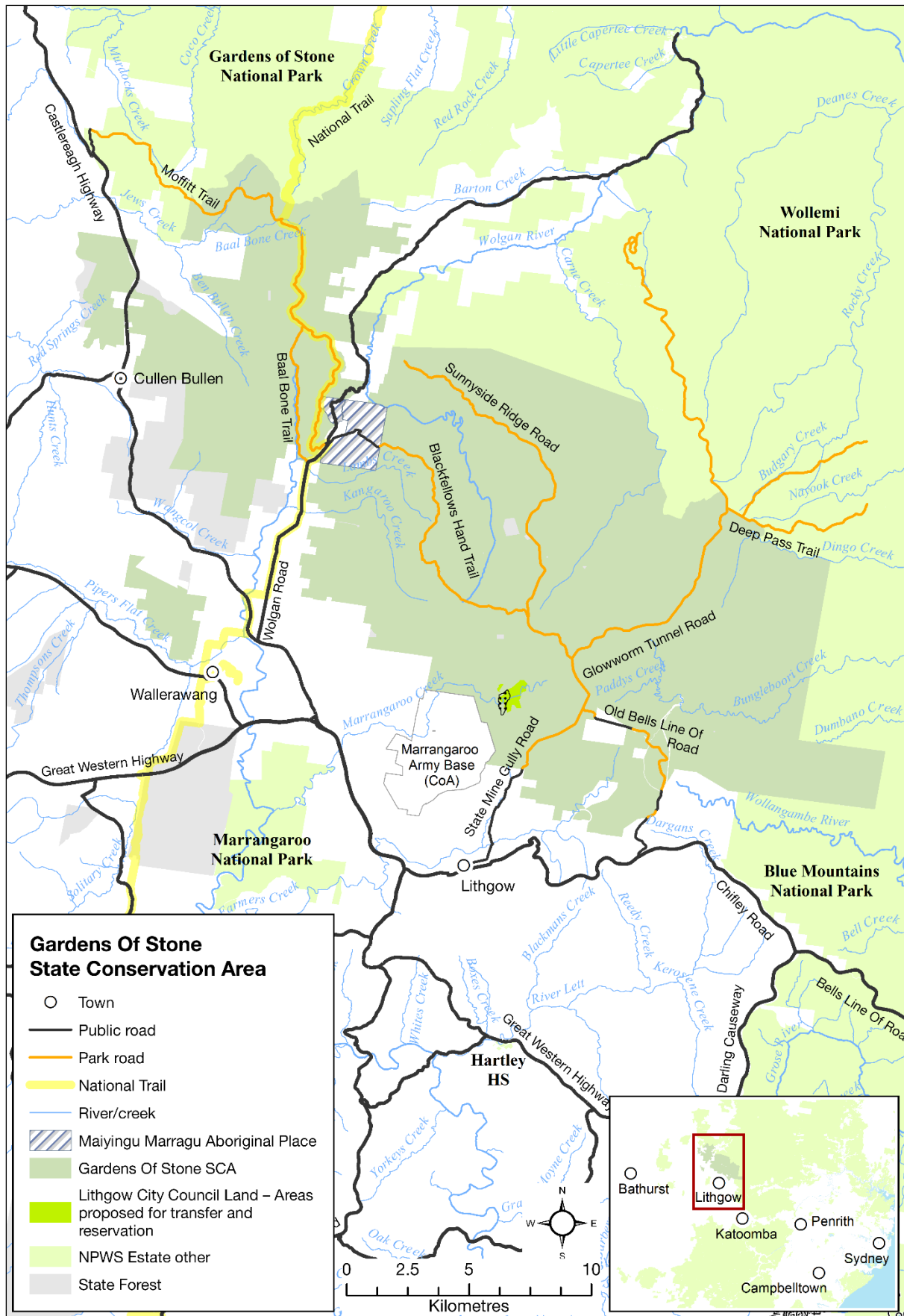


Figure 1 Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area

2. Significance of Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area

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

Nationally significant pagoda landscapes. The weathering of Triassic-era sandstones on the western margin of the Sydney Basin has resulted in a striking landscape of rocky landforms, including massive beehives, domes and plates known as pagodas. The Newnes Plateau area of the park contains some of the most spectacular sections of this nationally significant landscape, as well as ‘platy’ pagodas (which have ridged profiles formed by more resistant bands of ironstone interspersed by sandstone) which are considered rare on a global scale. The landscape also contains spectacular sandstone pinnacles, rugged cliff lines, slot canyons, gorges and overhangs set among dense bushland. This dramatic and complex terrain is of considerable scenic, cultural, geological and aesthetic value.

Rich biodiversity. The complex rocky landforms of the upland plateau provide a diversity of habitats for plants and animals, resulting in rich biodiversity. Key flora and fauna values include:

- over 1,000 plant species
- 33 vegetation communities, 3 of which are threatened:
 - White Box – Yellow Box – Blakelys Red Gum Woodland Endangered Ecological Community (EEC)
 - Newnes Plateau Shrub Swamps EEC
 - Montane Peatlands and Swamps of the New England Tableland, Sydney Basin, South East Corner, South Eastern Highlands and Australian Alps bioregions EEC
- 16 vegetation communities that are of limited distribution or were previously unrepresented in the reserve system
- 25 threatened plant species including the Newnes Plateau geebung which is an endemic species only found on the Newnes Plateau and Deane’s boronia, a swamp-dependent shrub that has a substantial range representation within the reserve
- over 300 vertebrate animal species
- 42 threatened animal species including the giant dragonfly, koala, spotted-tailed quoll, Blue Mountains water skink, broad-headed snake, regent honeyeater, scarlet robin and several species of microbats.

Historic heritage values. There are several historic sites and artefacts within and adjacent to the park. These include evidence of early European exploration, historic railways such as the Clarence–Newnes Railway which supported 19th century kerosene and oil shale (torbanite) mines at Newnes in the adjacent Wollemi National Park, and 20th century coalmining.

Opportunities for recreation and tourism. The Gardens of Stone landscape is an awe-inspiring natural setting. Once access has been upgraded and visitor sites have been developed, the park will provide opportunities for people to learn about Wiradjuri culture,

connect with nature and enjoy outdoor recreation activities. The area has historically been used for a variety of recreational activities, including 4-wheel driving, trail bike riding, horse riding, mountain biking, birdwatching, bushwalking and rock climbing. The National Trail, a walking, cycling and horse riding route from north Queensland to southern Victoria, traverses the park. The park will continue to provide for a range of sustainable recreation while also supporting new tourism and recreational experiences. Its establishment as a major new visitor destination will drive the growth and diversification of local and regional economies.

3. Planning context

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

The *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act) provides for the proper care, preservation and protection of Aboriginal objects and places in the park. A native title claim (NC2018/002) has been lodged over part of the park. The park will be managed in accordance with the NPW Act and the *Native Title Act 1993*. This includes adherence to procedures in relation to future activities in park. This legislation will enable National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to give effect to Wiradjuri knowledge, aspirations and approaches to land management and for the long-term care of Country.

The rights and legal responsibilities of Wiradjuri organisations are acknowledged and respected. As such, appropriate Wiradjuri representatives will continue to be invited to participate in planning for the park. Wiradjuri People, neighbours, nearby residents, recreational user groups and conservation advocates have a strong interest in the park's future and seek opportunities to provide input into plans relevant to their area of interest. Facilitating the ongoing involvement of the community will be a priority.

The park's classification as a state conservation area provides for the continuation of existing exploration and mining entitlements under the *Mining Act 1992*. This includes the continued operation and maintenance of supporting surface infrastructure such as dewatering bores, vents, powerlines and tracks. Mining operations will continue alongside conservation activities.

The establishment of the park as a major sustainable visitor destination is a key driver for this plan. The park has not previously been developed or promoted as a destination, however, its dramatic landscape is ideal for a range of activities. In addition, its close proximity to the large population of Sydney and easy access to public transport, accommodation, services and other attractions located at Lithgow provide a unique opportunity to establish a major new nature-based destination for people of the greater Sydney region.

The park was heavily impacted by the 2019–20 fires. As a result, some vegetation communities are particularly vulnerable to the impact of further fires, spread of weeds, off-road vehicle use and erosion. A changing climate could exacerbate these impacts by causing an increase in the intensity and frequency of fires in this landscape.

The park contains a significant number of threatened vegetation communities, plants and animals. However, a detailed understanding of ecosystem function, biodiversity values and threats to these values is not yet in place. The development of a strong foundation of science to support the conservation of biodiversity and to complement Wiradjuri knowledge will be a priority.

Most of the park was previously within state forest and managed for native hardwood or plantation softwood production. Forestry and recreational vehicle activities have resulted in a very high density of trails, many of which are not necessary for public access and are eroding or fragmenting habitat. Most of the softwood plantations were harvested in the late 2010s. While some small areas of plantation remain unharvested, much of the former plantations is now either highly degraded or partially regenerating. Sand extraction has also occurred previously in Newnes State Forest near Clarence and continues in adjacent quarries on freehold land.

Off-road 4-wheel driving and trail bike riding, and the use of poorly constructed tracks has resulted in erosion and the loss of vegetation. There are an estimated 700 km of tracks and trails in the park, many of which are not required for park management purposes and are unlikely to add value to the visitor experience. A high proportion of the park's tracks and

trails are not properly constructed and use of these is resulting in erosion and sedimentation which is negatively impacting park values. Many areas exist which contain high densities of parallel and braided trails which would be more appropriately serviced by a single trail of an appropriate standard.

4. Management outcomes and actions

4.1 Supporting Wiradjuri aspirations for Country

The park sits in Wiradjuri Country and management of the park and the activities that occur on it have potential to affect Country. NPWS is committed to developing appropriate partnerships with Wiradjuri People, incorporating Wiradjuri perspectives into management of the park, and supporting their aspirations for their Country.

The park's establishment provides opportunities for Wiradjuri People to progress their aspirations for Country. This could include participation in cultural activities in the park, involvement in park management activities such as cultural burning, employment, establishment of park-based businesses or educating visitors about Wiradjuri culture.

Creation of the park also provides opportunities for visitors to gain a greater appreciation of Wiradjuri culture and the cultural landscape through interpretive information, guided activities and the use of Wiradjuri language.

There are many known Aboriginal sites within the park, and it is likely that there are many others that have not yet been recorded and which remain vulnerable to disturbance. Wiradjuri representatives will continue to manage sites that are in the park and on their Country with support from NPWS and others as appropriate.

Actions:

- **Wiradjuri people and NPWS working together** – Develop protocols or a memorandum of understanding to guide respectful and culturally appropriate collaboration between Wiradjuri People and NPWS representatives.
- **Sharing Wiradjuri culture** – Work with Wiradjuri People to support the sharing of culture with visitors and to investigate options for co-naming of the park. Support Wiradjuri-led cultural tourism and incorporate Wiradjuri language, art and perspectives into interpretive material.
- **Aboriginal cultural site protection** – Cooperate with appropriate Wiradjuri organisations to protect known sites and to develop strategies for further research, documentation and promotion of cultural heritage values.
- **Caring for Country** – Work with Wiradjuri to identify aspirations for Country, implement park establishment works and commence delivery of agreed joint priorities.

4.2 Setting a sound foundation for the conservation of biodiversity

The park contains a range of biodiversity values. Programs and strategies for the management of these values, informed by Wiradjuri and scientific knowledge, will be developed and implemented to provide the foundation for their ongoing conservation. Where gaps in this knowledge exist, research will be undertaken to better inform management of the park's biodiversity values, and programs and strategies may be updated in response to the findings.

Many people have studied this landscape and their work was instrumental in building a case for its protection and establishment as a park. A considerable body of Wiradjuri and scientific knowledge about the park's natural and cultural values and threats to these values exists. This includes flora and fauna surveys and a number of research programs on specific park values. This information will enable the establishment of programs for biodiversity conservation, however, it is not comprehensive and further research is required.

Priority areas of research include those which will support understanding of the impacts arising from threatening processes (including erosion of tracks, subsidence of upland swamps, feral animals, weeds and habitat fragmentation arising from past activities), and inform development of programs to mitigate these. Similarly, additional knowledge is also needed to fully understand the conservation needs of ecological communities, including those communities that are under the most stress. This includes communities that are recovering from fire, subject to mining, subject to past native forest harvesting, were cleared for softwood production, or have been impacted by off-road vehicle activity.

NPWS welcomes partnerships with universities, researchers and scientific specialists to progress projects that will better inform the management of the park's biodiversity values. To consolidate the park boundary, assist in the conservation of biodiversity and enhance the use and enjoyment of the park, 2 strategically significant parcels of land are currently proposed for reservation and incorporation into the park (see Figure 2).

NPWS will develop and implement strategies for the management of biodiversity values. Focus areas include feral animal and weed control, management of threatened species and ecological communities, and a park fire management strategy that will seek to maximise ecological outcomes for the park by establishing a mosaic of recently burnt and unburnt areas while protecting life, assets and property. These strategies will be updated as necessary in response to new knowledge.

Actions:

- **Understanding natural values** – Identify priorities for protection and further research through a review of information about the area's flora, fauna, historic, geological and other values.
- **Conservation programs** – Identify priorities and implement programs to conserve and increase the resilience of vegetation communities, key habitats and threatened species.
- **Fire management** – Develop and implement fire management plans and strategies. These will include a fire access and fire trail plan that identifies tracks and trails to be retained and managed for fire management in the park.
- **Research and monitoring** – Encourage research that addresses knowledge gaps and assists in setting priorities and designing future conservation programs.

4.3 Assisting the recovery of a landscape under stress

The park is recovering from the broadscale impacts of fires during 2019–20 and softwood plantation establishment and harvesting. In addition, off-road vehicle activity over many years and the establishment of tracks to support mining and past forestry activities have resulted in widespread erosion and the extensive fragmentation of habitats. Landscape recovery will improve ecosystem resilience, visitor experience and water quality, and will contribute to protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage.

There are also impacts arising from coalmining operations under areas of Newnes Plateau Shrub Swamp EEC and Newnes Plateau Hanging Swamp. These vegetation communities are collectively commensurate with Temperate Highland Peat Swamps on Sandstone – an endangered ecological community listed under the Australian Government's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

Mining activities will continue to be managed in accordance with consents and associated performance measures that have been granted under the Mining Act, *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act), NPW Act and EPBC Act.

Accurate information about the impacts of weeds and feral animals, including feral predators, has not yet been collated. However, these factors are certain to be placing additional stress on recovering vegetation communities and native fauna populations. The effective control of feral predators, particularly cats and foxes, is essential for the recovery of many threatened animal species, especially mammals and ground-dwelling birds.

Tracks and trails that are not suitable or not required for park access, recreation or fire management will be progressively closed and rehabilitated. Similarly, areas degraded through prolonged off-road vehicle activity will be assessed and stabilised over time.

The park is adjacent to the Marrangaroo Army Base which is operated by the Australian Defence Force (ADF) (Figure 1). There are 3 sites within the park that have been identified as having been affected by previous or current defence activities.

The Waratah Ridge Chemical Disposal Site is located on Waratah Ridge, east of Glowworm Tunnel Road (Figure 1). This site was used for chemical disposal during World War Two and is now temporarily closed to the public for remediation operations.

A hazard zone associated with a former Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Demolition Range is located in the park to the north of the Marrangaroo Army Base. An operational ADF Demolition Area is located on the Army Base. The Demolition Area is not in the park, but the identified hazard zone extends into the park to the west of the Lost City adventure activity precinct (Figure 2). This hazard zone does not overlap with the Lost City precinct. Prior to establishment of the park, fencing and warning signs were established on the boundary of the hazard zone to manage potential environmental and safety risks associated with previous and current defence activities in this area. An occupation permit in respect of the hazard zone was granted to the Australian Defence Force prior to establishment of the park under the *Forestry Act 1916* and currently remains in effect through provisions of the NPW Act.

There are no visitor facilities within the hazard zones and measures are in place to ensure public safety. NPWS will work with the ADF to ensure ongoing assessment and management of any risks associated with the hazard zones.

NPWS has committed to being carbon-positive by 2028. This new Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area may have significant potential to contribute to NSW's *Net zero plan* and NPWS's *Carbon positive* goals by regenerating degraded parts of the park and storing carbon in the growing native vegetation. A carbon project to assist regeneration of native vegetation will be investigated. If approved, the proposed project will boost investment and enable carbon and conservation works in the park, which are above and beyond the legal

requirements and standard land management activities conducted by NPWS on the national park estate. Any decision to undertake relevant projects is conditional on the Australian Government registering those projects as eligible Emissions Reduction Fund projects (ERF projects).

Actions:

- **Surplus tracks and trails** – Identify, close and rehabilitate tracks and trails that are not suitable or not required for park access, recreation or park management purposes.
- **Feral animal and weed management** – Conduct initial assessments of weeds, feral predators and other feral animals. Develop and implement strategies for the management of priority weeds, feral predators and other feral animals.
- **Softwood plantations** – Facilitate the return of endemic vegetation communities in extant standing softwood plantations conditional on the Australian Government registering relevant projects as eligible Emissions Reduction Fund projects (ERF projects).
- **Mining** – Develop and implement environmental management plans to minimise impacts on park values arising from mining activities, monitoring, mining infrastructure and mining decommissioning/rehabilitation works. Work with mine operators to develop decommissioning schedules for mines and supporting infrastructure.
- **Cleared areas** – Identify potential investment sources (such as carbon projects) to enable rehabilitation and restoration of priority revegetation projects, conditional on the Australian Government registering relevant projects as eligible ERF projects.
- **Defence** – Liaise with the Australian Defence Force to ensure that risks to cultural values, visitor safety and natural values are addressed and managed in accordance with appropriate authorisations.

4.4 Establishing a major new visitor destination in the Blue Mountains

Establishing the park as a major new visitor destination will require high-quality access roads, signs and carefully designed facilities that meet the needs of future visitors, including camping areas, toilets, information shelters, lookouts, fireplaces and walking and cycling tracks. Once constructed, this infrastructure will provide opportunities for a broad range of safe, attractive and environmentally sustainable experiences to help drive the growth of tourism in the region.

The park will offer opportunities for a range of guided and independent activities, including learning about Wiradjuri culture, camping, sightseeing, rock climbing, canyoning, sustainable 4-wheel driving, cycling and bushwalking.

Cultural and nature-based tourism businesses will play a key role in establishing the park as a major tourism destination. Businesses will provide a range of nature and culture-based experiences which will attract visitors and diversify the ways in which visitors can enjoy the park. Enabling visitors to experience and appreciate the park will foster public support for the park and its long-term conservation.

This plan provides for the development of a multi-day walk and associated camping areas that will be publicly accessible. Low-impact, small-scale accommodation may be developed as an alternative for walkers and operated under a lease or licence by a private sector partner. Any future accommodation on the multi-day walk will be sited and designed to ensure that it has a minimal visual and environmental impact and does not compromise the experience of walkers. The approval of all development within the park will be subject to environmental and cultural assessment processes as specified under the EP&A Act. The indicative location of potential visitor accommodation nodes is shown in Figure 2.

This plan also provides for an adventure activity precinct at the Lost City (see Figure 2) that could be operated under lease by a private sector partner. A lease within this precinct may enable the development of visitor infrastructure to support a range of adventure activities such as rock climbing, abseiling, canyoning, zip-lining, elevated walkways and via ferrata (a system of permanently fixed infrastructure to support rock climbing by people with a range of skill levels). This precinct is predominantly located on land proposed for reservation and incorporation into the park (see Figure 2). Subject to the reservation of this land under the NPW Act, this precinct will be developed to provide an outstanding adventure recreation experience while also ensuring that all visitors to the park have an opportunity to experience the area's remarkable pagoda landscape.

All development in the Lost City adventure activity precinct will be sited and designed to minimise environmental and visual impacts, to the extent reasonably practicable, and will be subject to environmental and cultural assessment processes as specified under the EP&A Act. It will be located and managed to ensure that areas within the precinct remain publicly accessible and continue to provide opportunities for all visitors to experience the pagoda landscape.

The specific type and location of new infrastructure and the location of areas to be designated for vehicle access, cycling, camping and horse riding will be determined during the development of a detailed master plan and in consultation with Wiradjuri representatives and relevant recreational user groups. Some of the work to be guided by the master plan will be implemented over several years and will require further input from stakeholders, and regular progress updates will be provided to interested members of the public.

The master plan will ensure an appropriate mix of recreational activities, taking into account natural and cultural values. The master plan will also ensure that supporting infrastructure (roads, car parks, tracks, trails, toilets, shelters etc.) are appropriately located and designed to minimise any adverse impacts while also meeting the needs of visitors and providing easy

access to and from Lithgow. The establishment of new tracks, trails and camping areas will be subject to environmental and cultural assessments. Once their location and type of use has been determined, they will be formally designated (see Table 1).

The *National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2019* became applicable to the park upon reservation. As a result, the regulations applicable to some activities, such as off-road vehicle use and visiting with pets, have changed. It will be necessary to provide information for visitors, raise awareness about the range of activities that are allowed in the park, and undertake compliance activities.

Actions:

- **Access roads** – Upgrade roads and associated signage, including State Mine Gully Road and Glow Worm Tunnel Road to provide 2-wheel drive access to key visitor sites and camping areas.
- **Multi-day walk** – Design and develop a multi-day walk that provides camping for independent walkers and scope for leased, low-impact, serviced accommodation.
- **Adventure activity precinct** – Within the Lost City adventure activity precinct (Figure 2), seek to establish an adventure activity precinct that provides scope for operation under a lease with a suitable private sector partner.
- **Camping and day-use sites** – Identify, design, designate and construct a series of camping and day-use sites that enable visitors to enjoy a range of experiences and learn about the park.
- **Vehicle touring routes** – Designate appropriate vehicle touring routes and make any improvements necessary for their environmental sustainability. Further information about the authorisation of vehicle access is provided in Table 1.
- **Recreational tracks and trails** – Develop an access strategy that identifies track/trail networks for recreation, including walking, cycling and horse riding. The establishment of loops, linkages and connections to Lithgow will facilitate non-vehicle-based access. Further detail about the authorisation of walking, cycling and horse riding is provided in Table 1.
- **Surplus assets** – Identify, decommission and/or remove building and other assets that are unsafe, not of an appropriate standard or surplus to requirements.
- **Safety** – Following risk assessments of known visitor destinations, promote upgraded visitor sites, restrict public access to dangerous sites if necessary, remove any substandard infrastructure, provide safety advice to visitors and install any necessary safety infrastructure.

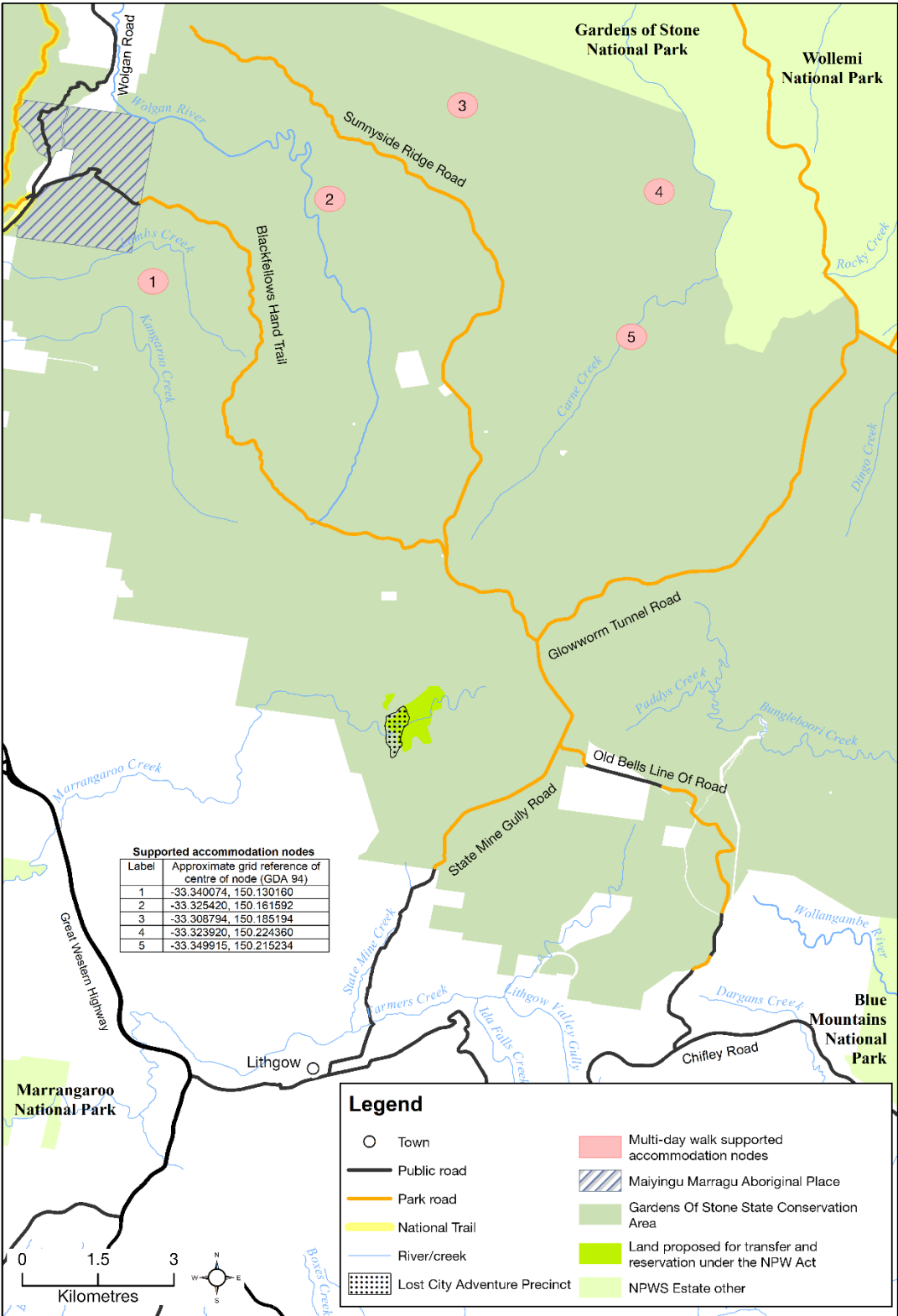


Figure 2 Lost City adventure activity precinct and multi-day walk visitor accommodation nodes

5. Authorised activities

Table 1 Authorised activities in Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area

Activity	Description
Extractive industries	
Mining	Activities associated with operation of the Springvale mine are authorised under the Mining Act, EP&A Act, NPW Act and EPBC Act.
Utilities and access	
Granting of easements, rights of way, leases and licences	The grant of relevant authorisations for utility infrastructure (including but not limited to) pipelines, telecommunications infrastructure and access purposes may be considered on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the NPW Act.
Defence	
Granting of easements, rights of way, leases and licences	The grant of relevant authorisations necessary to facilitate the management and rehabilitation of land affected by Australian Defence Force activities and to protect visitors from the risks associated with these activities will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
Research	
Research	Research may be allowed under a consent.
Commercial activities	
Accommodation development and operation	The development and operation of visitor accommodation may be authorised in up to 4 of the 5 identified multi-day walk visitor accommodation nodes (Figure 2). Development and operation under a lease with conditions may be considered.
Filming and photography	Commercial filming and photography may be allowed under consent.
Commercial tours, events and functions	Commercial tours, events and functions may be allowed under a consent.
Adventure recreation infrastructure development and operation	The development and operation of elevated walkways, zip-lines, rope swing, high ropes, via ferrata and flying-fox infrastructure may be authorised in the Lost City adventure activity precinct (Figure 2). Development and operation under a lease or other consent with conditions may be considered.
Visitor activities	
Abseiling, rock climbing and canyoning	These activities are allowed across the park. The installation and maintenance of bolts and other fixed protection points may be allowed under a consent. NPWS will not install, assess or guarantee bolts or other fixed protection points. Participants in these activities are solely responsible for their own safety.
Barbecues	The use of permanent barbecues is allowed at sites where these are provided. The use of portable gas stoves and liquid stoves is allowed throughout the park.
Bushwalking	Bushwalking is permitted.
Camping	Vehicle-based camping and walker-only camping may be allowed at specific sites upon their designation for camping. Bush camping is allowed at sites further than 200 m from park infrastructure such as roads, walking tracks and lookouts.

Activity	Description
Cycling	Cycling is allowed on park roads and management trails. It may also be authorised on additional tracks and trails upon their designation for cycling. Cycling is not allowed on designated mine access trails, walking tracks or off-trail.
Non-commercial events, functions and group gatherings	Private functions and group gatherings involving more than 40 people may be allowed under a consent. Public events such as public ceremonies, club and sporting events may be allowed under a consent.
Dog walking	Dogs that are not assistance animals are not allowed in state conservation areas. Assistance animals are allowed throughout the park, however, they must be kept under effective control at all times with a leash or harness.
Vehicle access (including motorbikes)	Registered vehicles (including 4-wheel drives and motorbikes) are allowed on public roads (Figure 1). Vehicle access may also be authorised on additional roads and trails upon their designation for vehicle access. Vehicle access may be regulated through mechanisms such as by club permit or a booking system. Roads and trails may be temporarily closed to prevent damage, such as in wet weather, or to support management activities. Off-road access is not permitted. Motorcycle use of walking tracks, single-tracks and cycle tracks is not permitted.
Fossicking	Not permitted.
Hang-gliding, paragliding, parasailing and base jumping	Not permitted.
Horse riding	Horse riding is allowed on park roads and management trails. It may also be authorised on additional tracks upon their designation for horse riding. Horse riding is not allowed on designated mine access trails, walking tracks, cycling tracks or off-trail. Horse riding events require consent.
Model aeroplanes and drones	The use of model aeroplanes or drones may be allowed under a consent. The operation of drones under a consent will also be subject to conditions and relevant civil aviation regulations.
Public access	Public access may be restricted in accordance with the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2019. Restrictions may apply to lease areas, areas associated with mining operations, areas impacted by Australian Defence Force activities and other areas that could present a significant risk to visitors.
Slack-lining and high-lining	Slack-lining, high-lining and similar activities may be allowed under a consent.
Wood fires	Wood fires are allowed in constructed fireplaces. To support bush camping, wood fires are allowed outside of constructed fireplaces at locations further than 200 m from park infrastructure such as roads, walking tracks and lookouts. Wood fires are prohibited outside of constructed fires at all locations within 200 m of park infrastructure and during total and park fire bans.

6. Scheme of operations

This plan of management defines the desired outcomes for the park and sets the high priority actions that will be implemented in the short to medium term to achieve those outcomes. Additional strategies and actions will be implemented as necessary, consistent with the objectives of the NPW Act, the objectives of this plan, Table 1 (Authorised activities), relevant NPWS policies and the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2019.

The scheme of operations in Table 2 outlines how the key short to medium term actions will be implemented.

Table 2 Scheme of operations

Supporting Wiradjuri aspirations for Country		
Action	Implementation	This action will also support:
Wiradjuri People and NPWS working together	Protocols for collaboration will be developed through a partnership between NPWS and Wiradjuri representatives. Once established, they will ensure that Wiradjuri perspectives and aspirations are considered, and that the appropriate Wiradjuri People are involved in decisions about the park and in the assessment of potential impacts on cultural values.	• setting a sound foundation for the conservation of biodiversity • Aboriginal cultural site protection • caring for Country
Sharing Wiradjuri culture	Once established, protocols for collaboration will also enable culturally appropriate Wiradjuri themes to be chosen and incorporated into signs, infrastructure and stories provided to visitors.	• caring for Country • setting a sound foundation for the conservation of biodiversity • establishing a major new visitor destination in the Blue Mountains

Setting a sound foundation for the conservation of biodiversity

Action	Implementation	This action will also support:
Understanding natural values	This action will rely on harnessing the knowledge of the group of people that studied this area and campaigned over many years for its protection. Through the establishment of a collaborative network, existing scientific and anecdotal information will be collated and analysed to identify knowledge gaps and influence initial priorities for conservation.	• caring for Country • establishing camping areas, visitor sites, access roads, vehicle touring routes, recreational tracks and trails, the multi-day walk and the adventure activity precinct • research and monitoring • conservation programs
Conservation programs	The commencement of programs for the conservation of flora and fauna species under threat is a priority for the park. Detailed plans to guide conservation activities will be developed to increase the resilience of ecosystems and to guide the conservation of target species.	• caring for Country • establishing a major new visitor destination in the Blue Mountains • facilitating the return of endemic vegetation communities in extant standing softwood plantations
Fire management	Fire management for the protection of life and property is a key priority. NPWS will work with partners to develop fire management strategies to guide incident response, hazard reduction and the ecological management of vegetation communities consistent with relevant statutory obligations.	• caring for Country • assisting the recovery of a landscape under stress • conservation programs

Assisting the recovery of a landscape under stress

Action	Implementation	This action will also support:
Surplus tracks and trails	Initially, tracks and trails that are surplus will be identified through the development of the master plan and access strategy. This process will involve consultation with user groups. Additional tracks and trails that pose a threat to the park's natural values may also be identified, closed and rehabilitated in the longer term after liaison with user groups.	• conservation programs • access roads • vehicle touring routes • recreational tracks and trails • safety
Feral animal and weed management	Detailed plans to guide this work will be developed. Work may be implemented in conjunction with park neighbours and as a part of coordinated, landscape-scale programs. It may involve aerial and ground shooting, aerial and ground baiting and trapping, and weed management through a range of strategies.	• conservation programs • caring for Country

Establishing a major new visitor destination in the Blue Mountains		
Action	Implementation	This action will also support:
Recreational tracks and trails	Tracks and trails for walking, cycling and horse riding will be identified in the access strategy, taking into account input from walking, cycling and horse riding groups. The vehicle access network, areas for camping, cycling and horse riding will be formally designated and communicated to visitors through online information and on-park signs.	- establishing a major new visitor destination in the Blue Mountains - assisting the recovery of a landscape under stress
Access roads and vehicle touring routes	Access roads and other vehicle access routes will be identified in the access strategy, taking into account input from the community. The vehicle access network will be formally designated and communicated to visitors through online information and on-park signs. Information may also be provided about trail difficulty, restrictions on certain vehicle types and wet weather constraints.	- conservation programs - surplus tracks and trails - safety
Multi-day walk	The multi-day walking experience may be developed in conjunction with an experienced nature-based tourism business selected through an expression of interest process. Construction of the walking track will be managed by NPWS and subject to environmental and cultural assessments. The siting and design of any accommodation will be subject to approval by NPWS, environmental and cultural assessments and leases and/or licences under the NPW Act.	- conservation programs - caring for Country - establishing a major new visitor destination in the Blue Mountains
Adventure activity precinct	The adventure activity precinct may be developed in conjunction with an experienced adventure tourism business selected through an expression of interest process. The establishment of all infrastructure will be subject to environmental and cultural assessments, approval by NPWS and leases and/or licences under the NPW Act.	- conservation programs - establishing a major new visitor destination in the Blue Mountains

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 state conservation areas

The management principles for state conservation areas, as set out in section 30G of the NPW Act are:

- a. the conservation of biodiversity, the maintenance of ecosystem function, the protection of natural phenomena and the maintenance of natural landscapes,
- b. the conservation of places, objects and features of cultural value,
- c. provision for the undertaking of uses permitted under other provisions of this Act in such areas (including uses permitted under section 47J) having regard to the conservation of the natural and cultural values of the state conservation area,
- d. (ca) provision for the carrying out of development in any part of a special area (within the meaning of the *Hunter Water Act 1991*) in the state conservation area that is permitted under section 185A having regard to the conservation of the natural and cultural values of the state conservation area,
- e. provision for sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment that is compatible with the conservation of the state conservation area's natural and cultural values and with uses permitted under other provisions of this Act in such areas,
- 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 state conservation area's natural and cultural values and with uses permitted under other provisions of this Act in such areas,
- g. provision for appropriate research and monitoring.