Executive summary

In May 2008 a Taskforce on Tourism and National Parks in New South Wales was established by the New South Wales Government.

The Taskforce was engaged to provide advice on practical methods to expedite the realisation of NSW State Plan objectives, and report on opportunities for an enhanced level of sustainable nature tourism on New South Wales public lands, particularly national parks, marine parks and reserves. The Government emphasised that proposals must be compatible with the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage values of those areas. The Taskforce was asked to:

- identify ways to promote and protect the State’s biodiversity and cultural heritage values through appropriate use of its national parks and reserves
- create a platform whereby visitor numbers and tourism expenditure can be increased
- identify ways to increase management resources and conservation benefits from tourism in national parks and reserves.

The Taskforce was chaired by Brian Gilligan, former Director General of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Taskforce members included:

- Sally Arundell (Forests NSW)
- Sally Barnes (DECC)
- John Bates (Tourism NSW)
- Bob Costello (NSW Department of Lands)
- Penelope Figgis AO (Independent)
- Lyndel Gray (Tourism NSW)
- Evan Hall (Tourism and Transport Forum)
- Robert Pallin (Independent)
- Penny Spoelder (joint secretariat DECC/Tourism NSW).

The Taskforce held ten meetings, received presentations from tourism and conservation experts, consulted with key groups and called for submissions from the public to inform its findings.

While the terms of reference particularly focused the Taskforce’s attention on parks and reserves protected under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NPW Act), consideration has also been given to other public and freehold lands with potential for increased sustainable nature tourism, including marine reserves, State forests, state parks and Crown lands.
Key findings

1. **Sustainable nature tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in the Australian tourism market and New South Wales is well placed to share some of this growth**

   Tourism is one of the State’s significant industries however New South Wales has been losing its share of the total Australian tourism market in recent years. Despite the overall downturn, visitation to natural areas such as national parks remains popular and continues to grow.

   Sustainable nature tourism opportunities in key regions offering outstanding experiences can be a significant point of differentiation between destinations, encouraging people to visit Sydney or regional New South Wales and to stay for longer periods. Positive sustainable nature tourism experiences will increase the likelihood of repeat visitation and encourage visitors to recommend their experiences to friends.

   Nature tourism is a key driver of economic activity and sustainable employment, particularly in regional New South Wales.

2. **All public lands can contribute to sustainable nature tourism but well managed, protected reserves are best positioned to provide internationally competitive and sustainable, nature based tourism experiences**

   Together, parks and reserves managed under the NPW Act, marine parks and other land tenures such as State forests, state parks and Crown land reserves, provide visitors with a wide range of recreation and tourism opportunities across New South Wales. However our national parks and marine parks have a special importance as they protect our most beautiful and iconic places which are the key attractions of the Australian tourism industry.

   Planning for sustainable nature experiences needs to provide for a broad range of activities in the most suitable environment. Some lands are better placed to cater for low impact recreation while others can sustain a broader range of activities.

   Some submissions suggested that additional recreational activities could be better catered for within national parks and reserves, such as mountain bike and cycling tracks, conservation volunteering opportunities, hunting, four-wheel driving and horse riding. The Taskforce considers that these activities could be provided for, but some activities are likely to have a detrimental impact on the conservation values of some areas. Therefore, all activities should be considered within the context of their impact on the environment and the legislation governing the use of the area.

3. **Sustainable nature tourism can only be successful for reserves established under the NPW Act if the conservation values are maintained or enhanced by the activities undertaken**

   A primary purpose for establishing parks and reserves under the NPW Act is the ongoing protection and enhancement of conservation values. This pre-eminent value of parks must remain and all tourism and visitor use must be compatible with this core role.

   The national park ‘brand’ has marketing value for the tourism industry but the essence of that ‘brand’ is naturalness and beauty and therefore it will only have currency if the conservation values of parks and reserves are secured and enhanced.
4. **Sustainable nature tourism can help build a broader constituency for parks and reserves and address equity issues**

It has long been accepted that sustainable nature tourism to parks and reserves can be a useful and effective tool for conservation and management of protected areas (IUCN 2002). Individuals, community and conservation groups have worked tirelessly over many decades supporting the establishment and management of an enviable system of public spaces, parks and reserves in New South Wales. Increasing support for the ongoing protection of parks and reserves, particularly for those managed under the NPW Act, will only be achieved if they remain relevant to the community. People tend to value what they know, therefore relevance can be strengthened by encouraging visitation and facilitating meaningful and memorable experiences.

The Taskforce has concluded that there is a potentially wider constituency of park visitors who can be attracted to parks if appropriate facilities are available to provide them with more meaningful and memorable experiences based on natural and cultural heritage.

Concern was expressed in some submissions that additional sustainable nature tourism development in parks and reserves may not be affordable to all park users, raising the issue of social equity and accessibility to the community.

The Taskforce recommends that to increase equity of access to parks and reserves managed under the NPW Act, plans of management should provide for a range of activities. However, all such activities should be appropriate to and respect the conservation values of particular sites.

5. **New South Wales needs an integrated approach to sustainable nature tourism comparable to those in other states and territories**

There is no clear responsibility for the delivery of sustainable nature tourism experiences in New South Wales and the current approach lacks integration and coordination amongst government agencies and industry. There is a lack of strategic positioning as an outstanding destination providing iconic sustainable nature tourism experiences, compared with other states such as Victoria and Western Australia. These states have prepared nature tourism strategies, identified lead and partner agencies responsible for delivery, and created supportive legislative, policy and planning frameworks to facilitate investment in nature tourism experiences.

A comprehensive and integrated approach to sustainable nature tourism is needed in New South Wales. It will be important for Tourism NSW and land and marine park managers to work in partnership to focus attention on developing sustainable nature tourism experiences for the agreed target markets in prioritised destinations. This approach is considered critical in guiding efficient allocation of limited resources, making significant improvements to key destinations and increasing the State's overall tourism competitiveness.

6. **The National Landscapes Program is a positive step towards planning for partnerships between conservation and sustainable nature tourism**

Successful nature tourism tends to follow the development of strong regional areas offering key attractions with both good access and support services.

The National Landscapes Program, developed by Tourism Australia and Parks Australia, has been designed to identify the best of Australia’s natural and cultural landscapes that are inspirational destinations transcending state borders and boundaries. National Landscapes are united by their topography, and their environmental or cultural significance (Tourism Australia 2008a). Four of the eight initially identified National Landscapes exist within New South Wales: the ‘Australian Alps’; ‘Australia’s Coastal Wilderness’; ‘Australia’s Green Cauldron’; and ‘Greater Blue Mountains’.
Tourism Australia will promote these regions as an important part of breaking down our large continent into sub regions, similar to Tuscany or Umbria in Italy. Planning for tourism in these regions requires land management agencies, including the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC), Marine Park Authority, Department of Lands, Forests NSW, local governments and the tourism industry, to cooperate and plan to deliver high quality and sustainable experiences.

The Taskforce recognises the benefit of focusing efforts on promoting and developing sustainable nature tourism opportunities within the National Landscape regions, as the program offers a strong cooperative model of planning and a unique marketing opportunity.

7. Government and industry need to adapt to changing travel patterns and visitor needs if they are to continue to attract people to visit parks and reserves

One critical finding of many visitor satisfaction surveys worldwide, Australia included, is that the majority of visitors to parks and reserves prefer minimal infrastructure consisting of a limited number of visitor facilities such as walking tracks, lookouts, and maps and directional signs for independent park exploration.

Recent research undertaken by Tourism Victoria (2008) supports this finding, however the preferred level of infrastructure depends on the type of nature tourism participant. The research suggests that nature based visitors can be divided into two types: ‘skilled in nature’ and ‘comfort in nature’ (Tourism Victoria 2008).

Skilled in nature tourism participants tend to have a high level of interest and knowledge of the activity; actively seek out physical challenges; are prepared to stay in more remote locations with limited or no facilities; will travel to destinations solely to undertake the activity; and are more likely to be self-guided. Skilled in nature participants represent 15 per cent of nature tourism visitors and overall are lower yield (Tourism Victoria 2008). Such visitors are likely to already be committed to nature conservation goals.

Comfort in nature tourism participants have a more casual interest but do seek out immersive experiences in the natural environment that provide learning opportunities (Tourism Victoria 2008). These participants will undertake activities for shorter durations; many lack the skills to undertake the activities without a guide; require appropriate accommodation and facilities; and make up a large proportion (85%) of the market for nature tourism. They seek out a broader range of tourism experiences, including food and wine and cultural heritage. Comfort in nature participants are a higher yielding market (Tourism Victoria 2008).

To remain relevant, Government and industry need to adapt to changing travel patterns and visitor interests if they are to continue to attract people to parks and reserves. This will mean enhancing existing facilities and experiences, as well as providing new facilities and experiences to meet the range of visitor expectations.
8. To improve the quality of the nature based experience and adapt to changing visitor needs it will be important to consider enhancing and developing new nature based experiences either adjacent to, or where appropriate, in national parks and reserves

New South Wales is facing competition from destinations within Australia and overseas that have, or are developing, high quality nature tourism facilities and experiences in outstanding locations, many of which are in national parks. New Zealand has long been renowned for its iconic walks and hut accommodation, such as the Milford Sound walk. In Australia, Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania have or are developing multi-day walking activities with small, sensitively designed and located accommodation facilities (e.g. Bay of Fires, Tasmania, Ningaloo Reef Retreat, Western Australia and Cape Conran, Victoria). Such facilities meet the needs of many travellers who have limited time and capacity for traditional camping.

In order to address product gaps and increase New South Wales’ competitiveness, it is necessary to expand the range of nature based experiences on offer. In identified regions, this should include the creation of a small number of flagship walks and trails incorporating small, well designed ecotourism and visitor facilities, observation sites, improved guiding, interpretation and the development of special events to appeal to a broad range of visitors.

Some submissions expressed the desire for some facilities, such as accommodation, to be kept off park and catered for in adjoining towns, whilst others suggested that carefully designed facilities on park can provide a range of benefits. The Taskforce believes that visitor facilities should be considered on a case by case basis, but with a clear requirement that as the park and reserve system is a large part of the attraction, it should benefit.

9. Investment in sustainable nature tourism experiences and/or visitor facilities can involve a partnership approach between government and the private sector

The private sector has expressed an interest in contributing to the development of sustainable nature tourism products and experiences, however private operators have incurred significant financial losses through planning and approval processes that take years to determine whether a project will be approved. The sector can only invest time and money in projects where the approvals process is efficient and financially viable results are possible.

The industry is seeking greater certainty on where and what tourism projects are likely to be approved in order to make investment decisions and is seeking a commitment from Government to support sustainable nature tourism.

The NPW Act in particular is ambiguous about allowable activities. Ambiguity is not in the interest of any stakeholder group and can create protracted and costly debates and legal actions. Examples of uses where the Act could provide greater certainty, clarity or remove inconsistencies include proposals for facilities and activities related to:

- art and performance exhibitions
- food and wine experiences (e.g. Indigenous cuisine tours)
- festivals, events and other gatherings
- mental health, physical therapy and wellness activities
- education services
- conservation volunteering opportunities
- private functions and uses such as weddings and group bookings
• other activities which enhance the enjoyment of visitors in their natural surrounds.

Some submissions to the Taskforce expressed the view that Government should be the primary investor in parks and reserves managed under the NPW Act and considered commercial activities to be incompatible with nature conservation.

Other submissions recognised that the Government’s ability to adequately maintain and enhance visitor facilities and infrastructure is constrained by available public funds in demand for many purposes, and suggested alternative funding mechanisms. One model is the establishment of partnerships with the private and not-for-profit sectors which can result in public good such as enhancing conservation while providing economic and social benefits, diversifying revenue streams to parks, and recognising Traditional Owners.

The Taskforce has concluded that limited private sector investment in sustainable nature tourism facilities on public land is appropriate and should continue where it is consistent with legislative objectives, minimises environmental impact and provides a net benefit for the park system.

10. Government, industry and the community would benefit from an agreed understanding on the range of options and the environmental impact of different types of sustainable nature based accommodation in parks and reserves

Some stakeholders are concerned that sustainable nature tourism development, such as accommodation, if located in national parks will inevitably result in further demand for infrastructure and therefore represents the ‘thin edge of the wedge’ leading to inappropriate development and other impacts which would undermine the conservation priority.

The Taskforce acknowledges that while there are examples around the world of where inappropriate development of natural areas for tourism has resulted in negative impacts, there are also many examples of low impact accommodation currently operating in Australia and elsewhere in the world that have no greater impact than traditional visitor facilities. Furthermore, some stakeholders suggest that providing a range of accommodation options for visitors, other than camping, allows greater community access, builds support for parks and provides a more immersive experience.

The Taskforce believes that large scale developments such as major resorts and hotels, theme parks, cinemas and golf courses are not appropriate in parks and reserves managed under the NPW Act. It supports the 2008 IUCN Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories which make clear that tourism is an appropriate use of parks subject to conservation values being protected.

However, it also believes that a total ban approach to all accommodation options in all parks and reserves is too absolute and at odds with what is common practice in many parts of the world. The Taskforce considers that Government, industry and the community would benefit from the development of an agreed understanding on the range of accommodation options including huts, standing camps and cabins, and their relative environmental impacts. Agreement on preferred styles, sizes and designs that aim to minimise potential environmental impacts would also greatly assist.
11. **More effective and integrated marketing and promotion will enhance the competitive position of New South Wales as a sustainable nature tourism destination**

Integrating and coordinating marketing and promotional activities of Tourism NSW and public land and marine park management agencies will strengthen consistency of messaging and imagery and better present New South Wales as a premier nature tourism destination.

Effective marketing and promotion can encourage visitation across a region consistent with management objectives for the particular sites involved. It can also help manage visitor expectations, activities, site choices and on-site behaviour.

Strategic marketing can further increase public support for parks and reserves, educating the general public and the media about conservation issues and enhancing visitor satisfaction by establishing realistic visitor expectations.

**Recommendations**

1. **Clear strategy and leadership**

The NSW Government should commit to sustainable nature tourism as a priority in the new NSW Tourism Industry Plan with defined roles for Tourism NSW and public land management agencies. The plan should be supported by a memorandum of understanding between the Parks and Wildlife Group of DECC and the Tourism NSW component of the Department of State and Regional Development. The current draft MoU should be finalised as soon as possible.

Along with targeting completion and substantial implementation of nature tourism elements of the NSW Tourism Industry Plan, a primary objective of the next 2–3 years should be to maintain the New South Wales market share of international and domestic visitors who visit national parks and other reserves.

In the 3–5 year planning horizon New South Wales should aim to increase total visitor nights for travellers engaging in a nature tourism activity in proportion with the State Plan visitor night target.

2. **Focusing on iconic experiences**

Destination and product development, marketing and promotion should be focused on a select number of key areas (product enhancement focal points) that offer iconic sustainable nature tourism experiences. The key areas for these experiences are presented in Figures 1 and 2 and are considered to be:

- Sydney and surrounds (2–3 hours from CBD) including the Blue Mountains
- Areas within 2–3 hours drive of major domestic and international airports (Ballina, Gold Coast, Coffs Harbour and Canberra). These regions include the National Landscape areas (Australian Alps, Green Cauldron, Blue Mountains and Coastal Wilderness) and World Heritage areas.

Opportunities for product development in these locations in or adjacent to parks, other public lands or private lands, with appeal to target markets and the broader community may include:

- iconic day and overnight walks and multi-use trails
- new and enhanced visitor experiences and facilities such as observation towers, canopy flyers and outdoor dining facilities, tours, interpretation and events
- new and enhanced visitor accommodation such as huts, cabins and standing camps.
The tourism opportunities in these key locations should be the focus of regional planning efforts. Additionally these key locations should be the focus of NSW Government regional development and infrastructure programs.

3. Clarifying legislation

The objects of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NPW Act) should remain unchanged to underscore the pre-eminence of nature conservation as the primary purpose for national parks and reserves.

The Taskforce recognises however, that sustainable tourism is a valid use of national parks throughout the world and is supported by the IUCN Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories 2008. To help provide clarity on what is permissible under the NPW Act, the expression ‘sustainable visitor use and enjoyment’ should be replaced with ‘sustainable visitor use, tourism, recreation and enjoyment’. The Taskforce recommends the World Tourism Organisation definition of sustainable tourism as an appropriate standard.

4. On-park accommodation and facilities

The DECC visitor accommodation and facilities policies should be reviewed to clarify where and what low key, low impact sustainable nature tourism facilities, including accommodation, are appropriate in national parks and reserves. The review should address equitable, but appropriate community access.

5. Leasing and licensing policy

The DECC leasing and licensing policy should be reviewed to clarify acceptable and preferred public-private partnerships, taking account of the findings of a recent review commissioned by DECC. Performance models should be used that ensure there is a net benefit to the park system and that visitor derived revenue is retained for park management purposes.

6. Tour operator licensing

The proposed new DECC licensing system for commercial tour and activity operators in parks and reserves managed under the NPW Act should provide greater business security and improved public access to park facilities and assets. It should also engage operators in a partnership arrangement that results in them serving as advocates for conservation values.

7. Access and equity

The Parks and Wildlife Group of DECC currently manages a range of tourism products from annual park passes to camping sites and accommodation. To improve access, fairness, cost recovery, visitor management and proper pricing, the Taskforce recommends DECC:

- Review fees for DECC accommodation against cost recovery, competitive neutrality and comparable industry rate benchmarks to ensure DECC is neither under nor over pricing product
- Consider adopting a state wide reservation system for campsites and accommodation that would allow online bookings and provide management information on visitor usage patterns and accommodation occupancy
- Incorporate commission into product pricing structures to enable wholesale and retail networks to package, distribute and retail DECC product
8. **Guided wilderness experiences**

The Taskforce acknowledges that in developing iconic walks and other nature tour experiences, access to wilderness areas may be part of the experience. Overseas and less experienced visitors may need a guide for safety, and specialist equipment for self-reliant activities such as walking, cycling or canoeing in remote areas. Currently self-reliant walking, cycling or canoeing with a paid guide is precluded under the wilderness provisions of the NPW Act. The Act should make provision for the Minister to issue permits for guided self-reliant activities by small groups in wilderness areas. The Minister should seek advice from the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council on what guided activities may be appropriate for any particular wilderness area being considered. Such activities might be provided by licensed tourism operators, not-for-profit, community or independent groups, but such operations must be consistent with activities currently permissible for individual users and should not involve vehicle access or provision of any additional facilities. Any tourism operator seeking a permit should also meet all the requirements for licences under the Act.

9. **Legislation regarding leases and licences in some reserves**

The current anomaly in the leasing and licensing provisions of the NPW Act should be addressed to allow for leases, licences and franchises to be granted on lands that are state conservation areas, regional parks, karst conservation reserves or Aboriginal areas and Aboriginal lands reserved as state conservation areas, or regional parks reserved under Part 4A of the Act.

Consideration should also be given to allowing activities which are currently permissible in nature reserves, such as scientific research and education, to be conducted by a licensed third party. For example, an amendment would make it clear that a scientific bird-watching group which charges fees to its clients is permissible in nature reserves. The amendment would only allow activities to be conducted which are consistent with the objects of the NPW Act and the management principles for nature reserves.

10. **Section 151 of the NPW Act**

Action should be taken to address the significant ambiguity in the wording of Section 151 of the NPW Act which results in a lack of clear guidance on what is permissible.

The wording of Sections 151 (1) and 151B of the NPW Act should be reviewed with the intention of making a single Section 151 the approval instrument for both new building proposals and adaptive reuse of existing buildings on park and providing greater clarity on what is permissible under the Act by way of leases and licences.

Established mechanisms under the Act for public disclosure of lease arrangements should be retained.

11. **Proactive identification of sites**

With community input through regional planning and subsequent plan of management processes, Tourism NSW should work with DECC, Department of Lands, Forests NSW and other agencies to proactively identify and assess areas for new sustainable nature based visitor experiences. Government land agencies should obtain pre-approval for any new attractions and experiences that fall within their control before seeking expressions of interest from private sector partners. This is similar to schemes operating in Western Australia and being developed in the Northern Territory.
12. **Nature tourism off park**

The Taskforce endorses a regional planning approach to sustainable nature tourism including tourism development on private land outside parks and recognises that there are opportunities for nature based tourism development which can facilitate visitation to parks and reserves. The Taskforce recommends the NSW Government take positive steps to encourage such development.

The Taskforce acknowledges the recent decision by the NSW Planning Minister to assist tourism development outside parks by enabling ecotourism proposals of more than $5 million to be considered by Joint Regional Planning Panels.

The Taskforce recommends the NSW Government review environmental zones E2, E3 and E4 in the NSW Standard Instrument for Principal Local Environmental Plans. The review should consider appropriate nature tourism use on private land outside Zone E1 (national parks and nature reserves).

The NSW Government should also consider extending the land tax exemption granted to agricultural use to also apply to nature tourism land use outside parks and reserves.

13. **Linking plans of management and regional tourism planning**

Plans of management play a vital role involving the public in shaping the management of protected areas. To facilitate nature tourism, regional tourism plans for the focus regions identified in this report should be prepared cooperatively by Tourism NSW, land management and partner agencies with community, local government and industry input.

Regional tourism plans would provide a cross-tenure context for formal statutory plans such as forest and park plans of management, marine park zoning plans and local environmental plans. Tourism components of statutory plans should be reviewed to consider the outcome of the regional plans. Any review of plans for parks and reserves would be undertaken through the normal statutory process.

To ensure a regional perspective, the option of developing a single integrated plan covering all the parks and reserves in a bioregion or subregion should be trialled in a region such as that encompassing the Green Cauldron National Landscape and Gondwana World Heritage Area.

From time to time proposals may emerge which are in accord with regional tourism planning but may not have been anticipated in an existing plan of management for a particular park. The plan of management amendment process should have explicit timeframes added to ensure timely and efficient consideration of such proposals while retaining all established mechanisms for public consultation.

14. **Marketing and promotion**

Increased funding should be allocated for marketing and promotion efforts to continue to attract visitors to all parks and reserves and other public lands. These efforts should include more effectively integrating and coordinating programs of Tourism NSW, all land management agencies, Tourism Australia and Regional Tourism Organisations.

15. **Online information**

Online accessibility of nature tourism information should be enhanced by developing ‘visitnsw.com’ into a fully integrated and comprehensive portal providing visitors with access to a full range of information including attractions, commercial operators offering guided tours and other experiences, notes and maps for all relevant public lands as well as route planning tips.
16. Research and monitoring

The consistency and distribution of research and monitoring of visitor holiday and recreation preferences across government agencies should be improved to assist planning.

17. Capacity building

The tourism knowledge and skills of land managers (particularly those operating or managing commercial tourism attractions and services) and tourism partners should continue to be improved through training and development. Similarly strong efforts should be made to ensure all operators have a thorough understanding of the objectives of the park/s and the specific plan of management of the area of their operation.

18. Quiet enjoyment of undeveloped settings

In providing a diversity of nature tourism settings and opportunities appropriate to the land tenure and style of use there should be adequate consideration given to current ‘unstructured’ minimal impact activities and quiet enjoyment of undeveloped settings.

19. Events

DECC and other land managers should continue to work with Events NSW to develop a calendar of regular events suitable to parks and reserves such as the recently announced Island Hopping event in Sydney Harbour National Park.

20. Net benefit to the park system

Tourism, recreation and visitor use of parks and reserves should be managed to ensure a net benefit to the park system. The Taskforce recommends that DECC:

- aims to recover the costs of visitor infrastructure maintenance by reviewing current entrance and user fees, but retains low cost options for park uses that require minimal infrastructure
- uses tourism leases and licences to provide greater revenue for parks by providing experiences for which visitors are prepared to pay more
- engages tourism providers to achieve park education objectives through enhanced interpretation, education and guided experiences
- utilises tourism to achieve park conservation and visitor objectives by including the provision of in kind services such as the control of invasive species, research, monitoring and track maintenance in leases and licences
- expands volunteer tourism opportunities to assist conservation efforts
- uses tourism to advance voluntary contributions, donations and bequests to the park foundations.

The Taskforce believes these contributions from visitors, volunteers and tourism are appropriate and continue to benefit the parks system.
# Table of contents

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** ........................................................................................................ iii  
**DEFINITIONS** .................................................................................................................... xviii  
**ACRONYMS** ....................................................................................................................... xviii  

1.0 **INTRODUCTION** ........................................................................................................ 1  
1.1 Taskforce on Tourism and National Parks in New South Wales ................................. 2  
1.2 Scope ............................................................................................................................... 2  
1.3 Methodology .................................................................................................................. 2  
1.4 Guiding principles .......................................................................................................... 3  
1.5 Public submissions .......................................................................................................... 4  

2.0 **OVERVIEW OF PARKS AND RESERVES AND OTHER PUBLIC LANDS** .......... 5  
2.1 DECC managed parks and reserves ........................................................................... 5  
2.2 Forests NSW .................................................................................................................. 8  
2.3 Crown land reserves and state parks ........................................................................... 9  
2.4 National Landscapes ..................................................................................................... 9  
2.5 Functions and benefits of NSW parks and reserves ................................................... 11  
2.6 Conservation benefits of sustainable nature tourism ............................................... 12  

3.0 **THE REGULATORY AND PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR PARKS AND RESERVES** ... 14  
3.1 Legislation ...................................................................................................................... 14  
3.2 Planning ......................................................................................................................... 15  
3.3 Public land management policies ................................................................................. 21  

4.0 **MANAGING FOR SUSTAINABILITY** ........................................................................ 23  

5.0 **VISITATION TO PARKS AND RESERVES** ................................................................ 24  
5.1 International visitors ...................................................................................................... 24  
5.2 Domestic overnight visitors ......................................................................................... 25  
5.3 Domestic day visitors .................................................................................................... 25  
5.4 Local residents .............................................................................................................. 26  
5.5 Key motivations for visiting protected areas ............................................................... 26  
5.6 Factors inhibiting visitation ........................................................................................... 28  

6.0 **VISITOR INFRASTRUCTURE IN PARKS AND RESERVES** .................................. 29  
6.1 Sydney, Greater Blue Mountains, Illawarra and surrounds ......................................... 30  
6.2 South East New South Wales ....................................................................................... 32  
6.3 Northern New South Wales ......................................................................................... 34  
6.4 Western New South Wales ........................................................................................... 35  
6.5 NSW State forest reserves ........................................................................................... 36  
6.6 NSW Crown land reserves and state parks ................................................................ 37
7.0 PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DELIVERY OF OPPORTUNITIES AND EXPERIENCES IN PARKS AND RESERVES .............................................................. 39
  7.1 Private industry/commercial operations ........................................... 39
  7.2 Commercial tours and activities .................................................. 43
  7.3 DECC Discovery programs and Aboriginal cultural tourism .............. 44
  7.4 Volunteer programs .................................................................. 45

8.0 FINANCING VISITOR FACILITIES AND SERVICES .......................... 47
  8.1 Limitations of the existing financial arrangements to fund visitor facilities and services .......................................................... 47
  8.2 Partnership agreements ................................................................ 48

9.0 MARKETING AND PROMOTION .................................................... 50
  9.1 DECC marketing framework ...................................................... 50
  9.2 Tourism NSW marketing framework ............................................. 51
  9.3 Tourism Australia marketing framework ....................................... 52

10.0 KEY ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH TOURISM AND PARKS AND RESERVES .... 53
  10.1 Public submissions to the Taskforce on Tourism and National Parks in New South Wales .......................................................... 53

11.0 ISSUE ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS ............................................... 60
  11.1 Overview ........................................................................ 60
  11.2 Growth potential for sustainable nature tourism in New South Wales ........ 60
  11.3 Building support for ongoing protection through nature tourism .......... 61
  11.4 Presenting a network of sustainable nature tourism opportunities on public land in New South Wales .................................................. 62
  11.5 Maintaining equity and access to public lands .............................. 62
  11.6 The National Landscapes approach to nature tourism ................. 63
  11.7 Adapting to changing visitor expectations .................................. 63
  11.8 Improving and enhancing the nature tourism experience in key destinations .... 64
  11.9 Private sector investment in sustainable nature tourism ............... 65
  11.10 Clarifying the regulatory framework for nature tourism in parks and reserves managed under the NPW Act ........................................... 66
  11.11 A planning and policy framework to facilitate sustainable nature tourism investment .................................................. 70
  11.12 Improved delivery of nature tourism in New South Wales .............. 74
  11.13 Greater coordination and more effective marketing and promotion .... 75
  11.14 Maximising conservation benefits from sustainable nature tourism .......... 76

12.0 RECOMMENDATIONS ................................................................. 77

REFERENCES .................................................................................. 82

APPENDICES .................................................................................... 89
Definitions

**Domestic day visitor**: someone who travels for a round trip distance of at least 50 kilometres, is away from home for at least four hours, and who does not spend a night away from home as part of their travel.

**Local resident**: someone who has travelled a round trip of less than 50 kilometres to visit a park.

**Sustainable tourism**: tourism which leads to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems.

**Tourism**: the travel of people outside of their usual environment and those activities undertaken that typically attract some form of commercial fee by a supplier.

Acronyms

**BVMP**: Branch Visitation Management Plan
**CVA**: Conservation Volunteers Australia
**DECC**: Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW
**EPA Act**: Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (NSW)
**EPBC Act**: Environmental Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwlth)
**IUCN**: International Union for the Conservation of Nature
**MoU**: Memorandum of Understanding
**NPW Act**: National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NSW)
**NPWS**: National Parks and Wildlife Service (now Parks and Wildlife Group, DECC)
**NSW DPI**: NSW Department of Primary Industries
**NTP**: National Tourism Partnership
**POEO Act**: Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 (NSW)
**SHNP**: Sydney Harbour National Park
**TOR**: Terms of Reference
1.0  Introduction

Tourism is described as the travel of people outside of their usual environment and those activities undertaken that typically attract some form of commercial fee by a supplier. Subsequently, there are associated social, environmental and economic benefits which arise from this activity. Sustainable tourism is defined as tourism which leads to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems (Shah et al 2002). Sustainable nature tourism includes activities, experiences and guest services which attract visitors to natural areas. Natural areas include formally designated national parks and reserves and marine protected areas but also other lands with high natural values such as public lands managed for fisheries, forestry or water catchments, local government lands, private wildlife reserves, private properties and farms.

Much of the sustainable nature tourism occurring in New South Wales is founded on experiences offered in State Government parks and other reserves that are protected for their natural, cultural, and social value. These parks and reserves represent some of the State’s most defining features, setting it apart from other Australian states and territories. They exude a wealth of natural, cultural and social values and boast some of the most spectacular scenery Australia has to offer. They include World Heritage areas; national parks and nature reserves; marine parks and ancient cave systems; rugged and remote wilderness areas; popular regional parks; beaches, aquatic reserves, and alpine areas. Some of these areas are now recognised as Australia’s most inspirational destinations, with New South Wales having four out of the eight National Landscapes identified under the Commonwealth National Landscapes Program.

National parks and reserves in New South Wales provide a suite of opportunities for tourism and recreation and are used by local residents, domestic tourists and international visitors with well over 22 million visits each year (Young & Rubicam 2007). The majority of visits are made by local residents, reinforcing the importance of parks to communities as a place for active or passive recreation and enhancing wellbeing. They are equally important for providing opportunities for Aboriginal communities to connect with Country.

For domestic and international tourists, national parks and reserves present exciting opportunities to experience the natural and cultural heritage of New South Wales. Popular national parks for domestic and international tourists include the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage area, the ski fields of Kosciuszko National Park, Cape Byron, Lord Howe Island, Mungo National Park and much of the Sydney Harbour foreshore.

State forests (managed by Forests NSW, a public trading enterprise within the NSW Department of Primary Industries) and state parks (maintained by the NSW Department of Lands) also provide a suite of opportunities for visitors. Popular State forest recreation areas include the Watagan Mountains on the Central Coast; Chichester State forest in the foothills of the Barrington Tops, the predominantly planted State forests of the Southern Highlands and Central West near Bathurst and Orange; the spotted gum forests near Batemans Bay and Australia’s only metropolitan State forest, Cumberland State forest (Forests NSW 2008a). Many of the most popular state parks are located within six hours drive of Sydney and include Burraginjuck Waters State Park; Coffs Coast State Park; Grabine Lakeside State Park and Lake Burrendong State Park.

Together, these areas contribute to the vast array of nature based recreation and tourism opportunities available in New South Wales and play an important role in the State’s tourism industry. They also generate significant economic and social benefits for the people of New South Wales.

In November 2006, the NSW Government released the State Plan: A New Direction for NSW to set clear priorities for Government action and guide decision-making and resource allocation.
The State Plan also establishes goals and targets for the delivery of Government services. The Plan seeks to encourage more people to use parks, sporting and recreational facilities and to participate in the arts and other cultural activities. It has a specific target to increase the number of visits to State Government parks and reserves by 20 per cent by 2016. The State Plan also seeks to increase business investment in New South Wales and has a target to increase tourist visitation by 10 million visitor nights by 2016.

In order to meet this target, increasing attention must be given to the provision of a diverse range of nature tourism opportunities that result in high quality, rewarding experiences for international and domestic tourists and local residents. Such opportunities do not always happen spontaneously. They need to be deliberately constructed with careful attention to planning, policy, promotion, investment and building the capacity of business and communities to deliver sustainable nature based opportunities, without compromising the conservation values of these areas.

1.1 Taskforce on Tourism and National Parks in New South Wales

In May 2008 the Taskforce on Tourism and National Parks in New South Wales was established by the NSW Government. The Taskforce was engaged to provide advice on practical methods to expedite the realisation of NSW State Plan objectives and report on opportunities for an enhanced level of sustainable nature and cultural based tourism on NSW public lands, particularly national parks and reserves. It was stressed that proposals must be compatible with the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage values of those areas. The Taskforce was asked to:

- identify ways to promote and protect the State’s biodiversity and cultural heritage values through appropriate use of its national parks and reserves
- create a platform whereby visitor numbers and tourism expenditure can be increased
- identify ways to increase management resources and conservation benefits from tourism in national parks and reserves.

The Terms of Reference and information on Taskforce membership are contained in Appendix 1. This report summarises the key issues, opportunities and recommendations of the Taskforce.

1.2 Scope

At present the majority of sustainable nature tourism activities and opportunities in New South Wales occur in national parks and reserves managed by the Parks and Wildlife Group (PWG) of the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC). While the Terms of Reference and the majority of submissions received have particularly focused the Taskforce’s attention on national parks and reserves, consideration has also been given to other public lands and their potential opportunities for sustainable nature tourism and visitation including State forests, state parks and Crown lands and marine reserves.

1.3 Methodology

Recent data on national and international tourism and studies relating to tourism and protected area management have informed the work of the Taskforce and the preparation of this report. Between June and November 2008 the Taskforce met with representatives from a range of organisations to examine and discuss a diversity of issues relevant to the Terms of Reference.

Written submissions were invited between 21 June and 29 August 2008 from interested individuals and organisations. To coincide with the public submission period, the Taskforce Terms of Reference were uploaded onto DECC and Tourism NSW websites. Submissions were received by post and sent electronically to the Taskforce for analysis and consideration in light of the Terms of Reference. The submissions received were considered in the preparation of this report.
The Taskforce was further informed by the review into tourism in New South Wales conducted by Mr John O’Neill AO. The final report of that review was released in April 2008 and included consideration of marketing, infrastructure, regulatory and planning issues. Tourism in NSW parks and reserves was also discussed in that final report, with some recommendations relating specifically to increasing tourism to parks and reserves. The Taskforce considered the recommendations contained in the O’Neill Report (2008) during its discussions and notes that a number of public submissions stated their objection to some of the recommendations contained within it.

1.4 Guiding principles

All observations in this report are based on the following set of principles, the first and foremost being that the primary purpose of parks and reserves managed under the NPW Act is to protect and enhance natural and cultural heritage values and therefore the protection and sustainable management of NSW parks and reserves must remain at the forefront. The other principles are:

- The rights and responsibilities of Aboriginal communities must be respected as the primary custodians and interpreters of their heritage.
- Visitors can enjoy, experience and appreciate parks and reserves while park and reserve values are conserved and protected.
- Facilities and services associated with visitors are managed to ensure that they are environmentally sustainable and culturally appropriate.
- Tourism and other visitor uses are useful tools for promoting awareness of conservation needs and park and reserve values.
- Information and interpretation are integral to visitor understanding and appreciation of the natural and cultural values of parks and reserves in making informed choices about recreation opportunities.
- Visitation is planned regionally, taking into account visitor opportunities across all land tenures.
- A range of opportunities is provided for visitors to experience the diversity of natural and cultural heritage values found in NSW parks and reserves.
- Equitable opportunities are provided for all to enjoy NSW parks and reserves, including people with disabilities or from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Visitor facilities and services are managed to a standard of excellence that takes into account national and international benchmarks.
- Marketing of parks and reserves and other communication regarding parks and reserves is culturally sensitive and consistent with conservation of the parks system’s natural and cultural values.
- Tourism and visitation to NSW parks can significantly contribute to regional and local economies and local communities.
- Consultation is the key to identifying the environmental, social and economic expectations of communities and visitors.
- Partnerships help to ensure the best outcomes for conservation and visitor enjoyment, and provision of ecologically sustainable and culturally appropriate services and facilities.
- Access to Country is important for Aboriginal people to maintain and teach culture, and maintain identity and community wellbeing.
- Commercial visitor operations within parks and reserves must be subject to consistent and clear conditions to protect conservation values.
1.5 Public submissions

A total of 293 submissions were received from a range of individuals, groups and organisations. A schedule of all submissions received is presented in Appendix 2a. All submissions received are publicly available on the DECC website <www.environment.nsw.gov.au>.

In addition to submissions received the Taskforce Chair and other members met with key conservation group representatives from the National Parks Association (NPA) and the Nature Conservation Council (NCC). The NPA and NCC requested the opportunity to present their submission to the Taskforce and were also granted the opportunity to submit a supplementary written submission for Taskforce consideration following their presentation.

The Taskforce consider a submission to be any written documentation received at the advertised address, or which was clearly intended to be a submission and was addressed to the Taskforce, the Minister for the Environment or the Minister for Tourism. Written comments in the form of a letter, facsimile, email, or submission forms from user-groups, businesses, individuals, clubs and non-government and government agencies were considered individual submissions for the purpose of this report. All forms of letters (individually signed pre-composed letters) and petitions (submissions with multiple signatures) were also accepted and considered as a single submission. Verbal comments were not considered in the review of submissions.

All submissions were handled in accordance with the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998, and the NPWS Guide for Privacy and Handling Submissions (2002) was utilised for the collection, use, storage and disclosure of all personal information contained in the submissions.

Submission analysis procedures

A standardised framework was developed within which submissions were collected, reviewed and stored, in order to ensure:

- all submissions were recorded and logged and located easily if required
- all submissions were dealt with consistently
- the analysis process reduced individual bias as a number of staff were required to undertake the qualitative analysis of submissions.

Each submission was date stamped; allocated a unique submission number; photocopied; and acknowledged by letter or email. The submission number, letter type and the issues identified were recorded in the database for each submission (refer to appendix 2a).

Comments made in submissions were assessed entirely on the cogency of points raised. No subjective weighting was given to any for the reason of its origin or any other factor which would give cause to elevate the importance of one submission above another.

The public submissions to the Taskforce were reviewed in three stages:

1. Public submissions were summarised to allow analysis and the summaries entered into a database. To ensure a high standard of summary and analysis, the summary methodology was based on issues raised in the submissions. A summary of the submissions received is presented in Appendix 2b. Each submission is summarised by listing the issues raised and information provided. Each submission has been coded with the relevant Taskforce Term(s) of Reference.

2. A schedule of key issues raised in the submissions was prepared and is presented in Appendix 2c. A total of 64 key issues were identified with each one having been raised by between two and 90 individual submissions. For example, a total of 16 individual submissions raised the issue that mountain bike riders/cyclists are generally willing to volunteer to help maintain tracks in national parks, while 69 individual submissions raised the issue of locating visitor infrastructure outside parks, in surrounding communities.

3. Following the analysis of all submissions received by the Taskforce, the issues were considered and discussed by the Taskforce in the preparation of this report.
2.0 Overview of parks and reserves and other public lands

Public lands are set aside in New South Wales for the benefit of the public. The public benefits include the protection of natural and cultural values, sustainable resource use (in the case of State forests) and the provision of public recreation, enjoyment and education. The importance and priority of these objectives vary according to the particular category of land. New South Wales has a vast system of public lands, including parks and reserves reserved under the NPW Act, State forests, State parks and Crown land. There are also large tracts of private lands that offer excellent sustainable nature based experiences for visitors. Together these areas offer visitors a wide range of recreation and tourism opportunities and provide a solid foundation for the development of strong nature tourism industry in New South Wales.

As illustrated in Figure 3, these areas range from highly protected natural areas through to modified environments such as regional parks and historic sites. Wilderness areas and nature reserves are considered highly natural areas, whereas historic sites are typically highly modified. All these areas are an integral part of the wide range of recreation and tourism opportunities available in New South Wales.

*Figure 3: The spectrum of public land used for recreation and tourism*

2.1 DECC managed parks and reserves

The Parks and Wildlife Group within DECC manages a network of protected areas including more than six million hectares of national parks and reserves. The protected area system aims to:

* protect the full range of habitats and ecosystems, plant and animal species, and significant geological features and landforms found across the state*

* protect the largest and most diverse collection of cultural heritage on public land, including places, objects and features of significance to Aboriginal people, as well as rural, vernacular and working heritage*

* protect other areas important to people, such as places of scenic beauty, landscapes and natural features of significance, wilderness areas, wild rivers, water catchments, popular places for nature based recreation, and icons and sites of national significance.*
Approximately 6.5 million hectares of land are reserved under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act), representing 8 per cent of the NSW land area with 46 DECC managed parks containing declared wilderness (DECC 2007). There are eight reserve classifications in New South Wales set aside under the NPW Act. These include: national parks; nature reserves; historic sites; regional parks; state conservation areas; karst conservation reserves; Aboriginal areas; and marine parks. Table 1 highlights the breakdown of reserve types in New South Wales and the number of each type and total hectares.

*Table 1: DECC park and reserve numbers and land areas*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statewide</th>
<th>Number of parks</th>
<th>Proportion of total parks (%)</th>
<th>Area (ha)</th>
<th>Proportion of total area (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National park</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>5,016,580</td>
<td>74.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature reserve</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>881,861</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State conservation area</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>440,691</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Conservation Area Zone 3 State Conservation Area</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>185,452</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Conservation Area Zone 1 National Park</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>121,302</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Conservation Area Zone 2 Aboriginal Area</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>21,618</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal area</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>11,717</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional park</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>7,289</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karst conservation area</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>4,565</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine park</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>345,100</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic site</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3,066</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aquatic Reserve</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>805</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>7,041,228</td>
<td>Na</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DECC 2008 (accurate at August 2008)

Note 1: *Community Conservation Area Zone 1 National Park* is land that was reserved for State forests, Crown land and NPW Minister land, which has since become land described or referred to as a national park.

Note 2: *Community Conservation Area Zone 2 Aboriginal Area* is land that was reserved for State forests, which has since become land described or referred to as an Aboriginal area.

Note 3: *Community Conservation Area Zone 3 State Conservation Area* is land that was reserved for State forests and Crown land which has since become land described or referred to as a state conservation area.

Note 4: As a percentage of NSW coastal waters

All parks and reserves under the NPW Act are managed according to objectives relating to the conservation of natural and cultural values as set out in Part 1 Section 2A, which include ‘fostering public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of nature and cultural heritage and their conservation’. The management principles for each reserve category determine what activities are allowable. These principles are set out in Part 4 Division 2 Section 30E–30K (see Appendix 17).
Furthermore, most parks and reserves are designated an IUCN reserve category as highlighted in Table 2. The IUCN categories for each reserve often reflect their categorisation under the NPW Act, however this is not always the case. The largest number of reserves (304) are classified Category IA (Strict Nature Reserve) followed by 211 reserves designated as Category II (National Park). Although most parks and reserves have been allocated an IUCN category they are managed in accordance with the NPW Act and other relevant State and Commonwealth legislation. The diversity of DECC-managed parks and reserves is further exemplified in the series of maps contained in Appendices 3–14.

Table 2: DECC parks with a dedicated IUCN category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IUCN Category</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category IA (Strict Nature Reserve)</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category IB (Wilderness)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category II (National Park)</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category III (Natural Monument)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category IV (Habitat/Species Management Area)</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category V (Protected Landscape/Seascape)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category VI (Managed Resource Protected Area)</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks with no designated IUCN Category as of 2007</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DECC 2007

National parks protect and conserve areas containing outstanding or representative ecosystems, natural or cultural features or landscapes or phenomena that provide opportunities for public appreciation and sustainable visitor use. As illustrated in Table 1, there are a total of 185 national parks in New South Wales making up 74.9 per cent of the total protected land area.

Nature reserves protect and conserve areas containing outstanding or representative ecosystems, natural or cultural features or landscapes or phenomena that provide opportunities for public appreciation and inspiration and sustainable visitor use. Nature reserves differ from national parks in that they do not have a management principle to provide for visitor use. There are 396 nature reserves in New South Wales representing 13.2 per cent of the total protected land area.

Historic sites are reserved under the NPW Act to protect and conserve areas associated with a person, event or historical theme, or containing a building, place, feature or landscape of cultural significance. There are 15 historic sites in New South Wales totalling a very small proportion of the total land area (0.05%).

Regional parks protect and conserve areas in a natural or modified landscape that are suitable for public recreation and enjoyment. There are 14 regional parks in New South Wales constituting 0.1 per cent of protected areas.

State conservation areas protect and conserve lands that contain significant or representative ecosystems, landforms or natural phenomena and places of cultural significance that are capable of providing opportunities for sustainable visitor use and enjoyment; the sustainable use of buildings and structures or research; and that are capable of providing opportunities for uses permitted under other provisions of the Act. The 109 state conservation areas in New South Wales make up 6.6 per cent of the total protected land area.
Karst conservation areas are reserved to protect and conserve areas, including subterranean land, containing outstanding or representative examples of karst landforms and natural phenomena. Table 1 identifies that there are four karst conservation areas in New South Wales. Aboriginal areas protect and conserve areas associated with a person, event or historical theme, or containing a building, place, feature or landscape of natural or cultural significance to Aboriginal people, or of importance in improving public understanding of Aboriginal culture and its development and transitions. There are currently 14 Aboriginal areas in New South Wales.

Marine parks are declared under the Marine Parks Act 1997. There are six marine parks in New South Wales covering 345,000 hectares or about 34 percent of coastal waters. Marine parks include representative areas of marine and estuarine waters permanently set aside to conserve the biological diversity of our marine plants and animals. They aim to maintain ecological processes, support ecologically sustainable uses, and provide opportunities for public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment. Marine park zoning plans conserve important natural and cultural values, while providing for a range of sustainable uses including beach activities, swimming, surfing, commercial and recreational fishing, scuba diving, whale and dolphin watching, water sports, research and other activities. Marine parks are declared over existing land tenures which means they can co-exist with national parks and nature reserves.

Aquatic reserves are established under the Fisheries Management Act 1994 to conserve the biodiversity of fish and marine vegetation and consistently to protect fish habitat and threatened species, and to facilitate educational activities and scientific research. There are 12 aquatic reserves in NSW ranging from 2 to 1400 hectares. Of these ten are located within the Sydney metropolitan area.

2.2 Forests NSW managed State forests

There are almost 2.5 million hectares of planted and native State forests across NSW. These State forests are sustainably managed by Forests NSW, a Public Trading Enterprise (PTE) within the NSW Department of Primary Industries.

Forests NSW primary objective is providing a sustainable supply of timber to processing industries, in conjunction with a range of other values including the protection of biodiversity and cultural heritage values and the maintenance of soil and water values and community amenities for current and future generations, all within the framework of running a profitable business for the people of New South Wales.

One of the most significant community benefits that State forests provide is the opportunity to participate in a wide range of nature-based recreational, sporting, tourism and training pursuits. Forests NSW plays an important role in meeting the targets identified in the NSW State Plan in particular for economic development of regional areas, the environment and public access to parks and recreational facilities.

Forests NSW sustainable recreation, sport, tourism and training strategy called “Living, working, playing…forests – 2005-2009” (Forests NSW, 2005), outlines Forests NSW management objectives to:

- provide access to State forests for current user groups, as appropriate, without limiting the options that future generations may have for forest based recreation, sport, tourism and training in state forests
• develop partnerships with stakeholders, government agencies, businesses and community groups, which encourage the safe and appropriate use of State forests for recreation, sports, tourism and training experiences and opportunities
• communicate, educate and promote Forests NSW as the provider of forest based recreation, sport, tourism and training opportunities and the recreation, sporting, tourism and training uses that may be undertaken in State forests, to the broader community
• implement efficient and consistent management and administration of State forests for recreational, sporting, tourism and training uses
• improve our understanding of the benefits and impacts of nature based recreation, sports, tourism and training and promote to the community the benefits that can be achieved through these activities in state forests and adapt management practices accordingly.

There are around 700 State forests across the State, many of which offer recreation facilities including camp grounds, picnic areas, walking trails and an extensive network of forest roads open to visitors. The importance of State forests as nature based recreation areas was raised as an important issue by 38 submissions to the Taskforce. Further information on visitor opportunities and experiences in State forests is discussed in Chapter 4, while Appendix 3 identifies State forests within 200 kilometres of Canberra, Sydney, Coffs Harbour and Ballina airports.

2.3 Crown land reserves and state parks

The Crown reserve system is the oldest system of land management in New South Wales. Land has been reserved in New South Wales for public purposes since colonial times. Crown reserves are land set aside on behalf of the community for a wide range of public purposes including environmental and heritage protection; recreation and sport; open space; community halls and special events (Department of Lands 2008). Reserves are established under the Crown Lands Act 1989 to protect and manage important community land. There are currently 33,000 Crown reserves with a total area of 2.5 million hectares across New South Wales. This equates to approximately 3 per cent of the State’s total land area (NSW Department of Lands 2008). Appendix 3 identifies Crown land reserves within 200 kilometres of Canberra, Sydney, Coffs Harbour and Ballina airports.

NSW state parks are managed by community trust boards on behalf of the Department of Lands. At present there are 14 state parks across New South Wales. State parks provide visitors with access to some of the State’s most beautiful and pristine locations for recreational activities. State parks offer locations for activities such as picnics, barbecues, camping, swimming, water sports and bushwalks in a natural setting. Further information on visitor opportunities and experiences on NSW Crown land and in state parks is discussed in Chapter 6. The diversity of recreation opportunities on public lands such as Crown land reserves and state parks was recognised by 38 public submissions.

2.4 National Landscapes

The National Landscapes Program was announced at the Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE08) in June 2008, together with the first eight National Landscapes. The National Landscapes Program was implemented as a consequence of those elements of the 2003 Tourism White Paper that recommended a partnership between tourism and protected area management. To achieve this, Tourism Australia and Parks Australia have come together to identify landscapes which capture the essence of Australia and offer distinctive natural and cultural experiences (Tourism Australia 2008a).
The National Landscapes Program is designed to identify the best of Australia’s natural and cultural landscapes – inspirational destinations that transcend municipal and state boundaries. A National Landscape goes beyond individual national parks or iconic visitor attractions. National Landscapes are united by their topography, and their environmental or cultural significance (Tourism Australia 2008a).

Each landscape must meet certain criteria for selection. These include a commitment to:

- protecting Australia’s distinctive natural and cultural assets for our future
- aligning to Brand Australia and National Landscape values
- sustainability
- ongoing leadership and management
- cooperative regional planning and appropriate infrastructure
- building and sharing knowledge.

Four of the eight initially identified National Landscapes exist within New South Wales. They include:

- Australian Alps – stretching from Canberra through the Brindabella Range to the Snowy Mountains and into eastern Victoria
- Australia’s Green Cauldron – stretching from Byron Bay to the Gold Coast and west towards the Great Dividing Range
- Australia’s Coastal Wilderness – covering the south coast of NSW including Green Cape
- Greater Blue Mountains – spanning more than one million hectares of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

It is anticipated that over the next two years a total of 16 National Landscapes will be announced.

Each of the National Landscapes captures a diversity of environmental and cultural assets and crosses multiple tenures, providing product development and marketing opportunities not only for DECC, but for other tourism businesses and land managers such as the NSW Department of Lands and Forests NSW.

The National Landscapes Program involves master planning at the regional level involving park agencies, local government and tourism organisations. These groupings form the steering committees which drive (and oversee) subsequent destination branding, tourism master planning and delivery of the ‘experience’. The role of central agencies is to support this involvement in a policy and resources context.

The Taskforce recognises the benefit of focusing on sustainable nature tourism opportunities in parks and reserves within the identified National Landscapes as the program offers a unique marketing opportunity for New South Wales in which the State may benefit from Commonwealth promotion of these four exceptional NSW regions. The value of promoting parks and reserves within National Landscapes was also identified in eight public submissions. The submissions expressed the view that the National Landscape areas should become the priority for the development of sustainable nature tourism opportunities and related resource allocation for parks and reserves.
2.5 Functions and benefits of NSW parks and reserves

NSW parks and reserves impart a multiplicity of environmental, economic and social benefits and values. The importance of parks and reserves and the conservation of their natural and historic values was an issue raised by over 93 public submissions received by the Taskforce. Many national and international conservation strategies are founded upon protected areas set aside to maintain functioning natural ecosystems, to act as refuges for species and for the maintenance of ecological processes that cannot survive in most intensely managed landscapes and seascapes. These benefits and values were highlighted by 23 public submissions as the consequence of adequately funded and well managed national parks.

Reserves are critical in maintaining air and water quality as vegetation purifies water, traps sediment, recycles nutrients, stabilises slopes and slows runoff, to improve the quality of water for human consumption, agriculture and power generation. Reserves also buffer against the impacts of climate change as they contain large areas of native forests which remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it for generations. Of the public submissions, 19 recognised these essential functions of parks and reserves. Urban parks also play an essential role in the cooling of cities by breaking up reflected heat from hard surfaces (Parks Forum 2008).

Parks and reserves are an important part of Australia’s culture and for many they represent a spiritual link to the land. Reserves often protect areas associated with a person, event or historical theme or contain a building, place, feature or landscape of cultural significance. These places may be of significance to Aboriginal people or important in improving public understanding of Aboriginal culture and its development and transitions. The cultural and Aboriginal historic significance of protected areas was identified by over 23 submissions, many of which also emphasised the importance of conserving these special places.

Nature plays a vital role in human health and wellbeing and parks and reserves play a significant role by providing access to nature for individuals. Research shows that visiting a park for recreation and relaxation can help to lower stress levels and blood pressure, boost immunity, promote healing, improve mental wellbeing and enhance quality of life (DECC 2008a). To encourage people to visit national parks and experience the social, physical and mental health benefits of being in the natural environment, DECC has adopted the national Healthy People Healthy Parks initiative.

As highlighted in 12 submissions, protected areas are important education and scientific resources where people can learn about the natural, cultural and other values of such areas through programs run by park managers in addition to casual observation and exploration. Furthermore, school groups use reserves for a broad range of environmental education activities.

Importantly, reserves are a key drawcard for the State’s tourism industry. Natural attractions such as scenery, landscapes and wildlife are important tourist destinations in urban, rural and regional areas. Many tourism experiences in rural and regional locations include a selection of natural, cultural and service-related attractions.

Evidently, local, regional and State economies benefit from the injection of the nature/cultural based tourism dollar as identified in 21 public submissions. The tourism industry further generates employment opportunities for local communities with flow-on economic benefits.
2.6 Conservation benefits of sustainable nature tourism

It has long been accepted that tourism can be a useful and effective tool for conservation and management of protected areas (IUCN 2002). If well managed, tourism may provide the financial and political support needed to ensure the sustainability of the values preserved in protected areas. Tourism may also lead to a greater understanding of those values, which in turn can foster public and political support for their protection and for additional areas being protected. This important benefit was discussed in 12 submissions. The feasibility of tourism as a conservation tool itself is based on an understanding of the tourism products visitors seek, the appropriateness of these for a specific area, and the capacity to provide high quality experiences.

The contemporary approach to sustainable nature tourism involves the provision of experiences, as opposed to destinations. This concept enables limited resources to be directed to a focused objective of creating experiences rather than a particular destination such as a national park trying to be all things to all people.

The Terms of Reference require the Taskforce to consider the benefits of tourism in contributing to conservation, including case studies and development models for successful tourism activities in protected areas in Australia and overseas. To achieve this a series of case studies, discussed in Appendix 15, have been selected to highlight examples of successful tourism activities and initiatives in protected areas. No two case studies have adopted the same approach to tourism in protected areas and it is evident that although each activity differs in its approach, there are distinct similarities or key factors that have resulted in conservation benefits for protected areas. The case studies further enable the NSW Government to learn from best practice and benefit from the experiences of other protected areas across Australia and around the world. The key messages from these case studies are:

**Shared visitation and tourism goals and objectives**

The conservation benefits of clear goals and objectives that are shared by government and industry include their ability to guide the management of tourism, control tourism activities and possible environmental impacts, and provide a sound basis for protected area tourism planning and management. There are IUCN (2002) guidelines in place to assist with the development of appropriate protected area objectives (see Appendix 15).

**Sound planning framework**

A sound planning framework for the tourism industry to work within is an essential factor in ensuring tourism has a minimal impact on protected areas and results in overall conservation benefits. A clear planning framework can establish conservation expectations of the tourism industry. Case studies that illustrate the conservation benefits of a planning framework include Landbank Western Australia (Tourism Western Australia 2008) and the Victorian and Western Australian nature tourism strategies (Tourism Victoria 2008; Tourism Western Australia 2004) (refer to Appendix 15).

**Public–private collaboration – fostering partnerships between conservation and tourism**

By offering visitors the opportunity to experience natural areas, tourism generates employment and economic prospects which in turn provide an incentive for the reservation of lands for conservation purposes (Australian Conservation Foundation 1994). Demonstrating the economic value that protected area tourism may bring to a region can foster public and political support for conservation of additional natural areas (IUCN 2002). This has been the experience of South Africa National Parks and more specifically, demonstrated in the Madikwe Game Reserve (refer to Appendix 15). An Australian example exemplifying the benefits of fostering partnerships between conservation and tourism is the MaMu Canopy Walk in Queensland where a partnership has been established between the Queensland Government and the local Aboriginal people.
**Industry certification, standards, systems and codes of practice**

Well managed tourism operations can benefit conservation by improving the protection of key visitor sites, introducing performance standards, accreditation systems and codes of practice to regulate tourism operations. The conservation benefits of industry standards and systems are evidenced through the successful existence of various certification schemes including the Ecotourism Australia ECO Certification Program; the Tourism in Protected Areas Initiative in Queensland; the Public Land Tour Operator and Activity Provider Licence Reform Project in Victoria and the Climate Action Australia Certification Scheme (refer to Appendix 15).

**Industry support and involvement in conservation activities**

A potentially significant conservation benefit is the tourism industry’s ability to assist Government and conservation organisations in undertaking conservation projects and ongoing monitoring programs in protected areas. This benefit is illustrated in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority case study (refer to Appendix 15).

**Tourism generated revenue fed back into conservation activities**

Through appropriate and sustainable development, tourism can generate additional revenue to support conservation initiatives and management of natural areas. Relevant case studies include the implementation of the tourism management strategy in Tasmania, the New Zealand commercial operations strategy and the Kangaroo Island, South Australia environmental fund (refer to Appendix 15).

**Visitor education and community programs**

Tourism opportunities in natural areas can contribute to raising awareness about the ecological, cultural, social and other unique values of the natural environment and why conservation is essential. A community that values its natural environment will be more inclined to support the continued conservation efforts of the government and other organisations and groups. Case studies which exemplify these conservation benefits include the Bush Rangers Program, Western Australia; the DECC Discovery program; Environmental education shaping national values in Costa Rica; Brambuk, Grampians National Park, Victoria; Mamu Rainforest Canopy Walk, Queensland; and the Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk, Western Australia (refer to Appendix 15).

**Conservation tourism and volunteer tourism**

Conservation or volunteer tourism can have numerous benefits for protected areas, for instance the generation of additional support for conservation and revenue for conservation activities, fostering understanding and appreciation of nature and conservation values, and assistance with conservation activities. Relevant case studies include Montague Island Tours; Conservation Volunteers Australia; International Student Volunteers; Earthwatch Institute (Australia); and ‘I to I’ (refer to Appendix 15).

**Effective marketing and promotion**

By marketing a protected area it is likely that more tourists will visit it, thereby generating additional revenue for conservation activities, increasing visitor awareness of protected area values and enlisting support for the continued conservation of the natural environment. Two relevant case studies are the Parks Canada and Parks Victoria websites (refer to Appendix 15).
3.0 The regulatory and planning framework for parks and reserves

3.1 Legislation

In New South Wales a complex regulatory system exists to guide the ongoing management of parks and reserves that are managed by the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC), Forests NSW, part of the NSW Department of Primary Industries (State forests) and the Department of Lands. There are several key Acts that guide the management of lands for their natural, cultural and social values:

- National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NPW Act)
- Wilderness Act 1987
- Marine Parks Act 1997
- Fisheries Management Act 1994
- Forestry Act 1916
- Crown Lands Act 1989
- Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EPA Act)

The importance of legislation was discussed in over 20 submissions, most of which expressed their opposition to legislative amendments that might weaken or remove the protection of parks and reserves.

National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974

Under the NPW Act the Director-General of DECC is responsible for the care, control and management of all national parks, historic sites, nature reserves, Aboriginal areas and state game reserves. State conservation areas, karst conservation reserves and regional parks are also administered under the Act. The Director-General is also responsible under this legislation for the protection and care of native fauna and flora, and Aboriginal places and objects throughout New South Wales.

Wilderness Act 1987

Under the Wilderness Act, DECC is responsible for the investigation, protection and management of wilderness in New South Wales.

Marine Parks Act 1997

This Act provides for the protection and management of marine areas and allows the Governor to declare marine parks, which can include the sea and tidal waters and land adjacent to or periodically covered by, such waters. DECC administers this Act jointly with the Department of Primary Industries. A key concept established by the Act is the zoning of marine parks to manage activities. Regulations for the management, protection and conservation of marine parks can be made under the Act, including regulations relating to zoning plans.

Fisheries Management Act 1994

Aquatic reserves are managed in accordance with the Fisheries Management Act which aims to conserve, develop and share the fisheries resources of NSW for the benefit of present and future generations.
Forestry Act 1916 and the Forestry Regulation 2004

State forests are managed in accordance with the objectives of the Forestry Act 1916 and its regulations to:

• conserve and utilise timber
• provide adequate supplies of timber for building, commercial, industrial, agricultural, mining and domestic purposes
• preserve and improve the soil resources and water catchment capabilities
• encourage the use of timber derived from trees grown in the State
• promote and encourage recreation
• conserve native flora and fauna
• provide natural resource environmental services.

Crown Lands Act 1989

Crown reserves are land set aside on behalf of the community for a wide range of public purposes including environmental and heritage protection, recreation and sport, open space and other uses.

Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979

All infrastructure and other developments within parks and reserves require approval under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EPA Act).


Responsibilities under the Act are allocated between DECC, local councils and other public authorities. The Act has a scheme for the making of policy instruments called Protection of the Environment Policies and activities listed in Schedule 1 to the Act require a licence. Licences can provide protection against prosecution for water pollution if the licence conditions are complied with. The Act provides for the issuing of three types of environment protection notices: clean-up, prevention and prohibition notices. The Act has a three tier regime of offences. Tier 1 offences are the most serious; Tier 2 offences consist of all other offences under the Act and regulations and Tier 3 offences which are not separate offences. These are Tier 2 matters that have been designated in the regulations as being capable of being dealt with by way of penalty notice.

3.2 Planning

The planning framework consists of a statewide plan; departmental plans; park specific plans of management; broad strategies; and park management policies, which combine together to establish a framework within which parks and reserves are managed across New South Wales. The importance of strategic planning was raised through numerous submissions to the Taskforce with a regional planning approach supported by 10 submissions and two encouraging DECC to undertake master planning for parks and reserves.
Planning at the State level

The NSW State Plan

The NSW State Plan released in November 2006 is a broad statewide strategic document focusing on five areas of NSW Government activity:

- rights, respect and responsibility – the justice system and services that promote community involvement and citizenship
- delivering better services – key services to the whole population including health, education and transport
- fairness and opportunity – services that promote social justice and reduce disadvantage
- growing prosperity across New South Wales – activities that promote productivity and economic growth, particularly in rural and regional areas
- environment for living – planning for housing and jobs, environmental protection, arts and education.

Planning for tourism and visitation to NSW parks and reserves is addressed in the State Plan under two of the identified activity areas: environment for living and growing prosperity across New South Wales. The State Plan establishes goals and identifies priorities for Government action over the next 10 years, while targets have been set where possible. The goals, priorities and targets under these two activity areas which are related to planning for tourism and visitation to parks and reserves are identified in Tables 3 and 4 below.

Table 3: ‘Environment for living’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Priorities</th>
<th>Targets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practical environmental solutions</td>
<td><strong>E4</strong>: Better environmental outcomes for native vegetation, biodiversity, land, rivers and coastal waterways</td>
<td>Meet NSW Government targets for protection of our natural environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved urban environments</td>
<td><strong>E8</strong>: More people using parks, sporting and recreational facilities and participating in the arts and cultural activity</td>
<td>Increase visits to State Government parks and reserves by 20% by 2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: ‘Growing prosperity across New South Wales’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Priorities</th>
<th>Targets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW open for business</td>
<td><strong>P1</strong>: Increase business investment</td>
<td>Increase business investment in NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increase tourist visitation to NSW by 10 million visitor nights by 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stronger rural and regional economies</td>
<td><strong>P6</strong>: Increase business investment in rural and regional NSW</td>
<td>Set and achieve regional business growth targets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other State Plan priorities of relevance include R4 ‘increased participation and integration in community activities’. The targets for R4 include to:

- increase the proportion of the total community involved in volunteering, group sporting and recreational activity, or group cultural and artistic activity by 10 per cent by 2016
- halve existing gaps in the participation rates of low income, non-English speaking and Aboriginal communities in volunteering, group sporting activities and group cultural and artistic activities compared to the total NSW population by 2016.

Volunteering has become the principle focus of this priority in recognition that other priorities such as E8 seek to address the recreational and cultural targets.
State Tourism Masterplan
The New South Wales Tourism Masterplan was initially developed in 1995 and subsequently revised in 2002. It was the first tourism industry plan of its kind in Australia and involved all government agencies working together to establish an environment conducive to business delivering employment generation and sustainable development of tourism. More recently, the NSW Tourism Strategy developed in response to the O’Neill Review identified the need for a co-ordinated Tourism Industry Plan to boost tourism performance in NSW.

The new Tourism Industry Plan, to be developed during 2009, will mesh with the State Plan’s goals, priorities and targets to increase the State’s domestic and international visitation through a collaborative approach between Government and industry to optimise NSW tourism supply and demand. As such it will provide a clear planning direction for tourism and visitation to NSW parks and reserves. It will also look to better position the State in nature and cultural tourism. The Tourism Industry Plan will examine supply and demand issues likely to confront the State as a visitor destination and outlines how both government and industry will partner and work to position the State to achieve its potential and deliver ongoing benefits to the community.

Planning for Visitation in NSW Parks and Reserves
‘Living Parks’ is a sustainable visitation strategy for NSW parks and reserves and provides broad strategic direction and principles for visitor management. The strategy sets statewide priorities and identifies actions to achieve them. A statewide action plan contained within Living Parks details how priority actions will be delivered at the State, regional and local level.

The Living Parks strategy provides a framework for managing the sustainable and culturally appropriate use of NSW parks. The document aims to enhance the experience of park visitors and improve community awareness of the natural and cultural heritage values of the State’s parks. The strategy delivers the NSW Government’s promise to produce an ecotourism plan for NSW parks. It represents the Government’s commitment to conservation and protection of unique natural and cultural values whilst ensuring sustainable and culturally appropriate visitation to parks and reserves.

Living Parks affords opportunities to establish new partnerships between DECC, the private sector and other public sector agencies, Aboriginal communities and the general community. The strategy further establishes a framework to facilitate sustainable investment in NSW parks, provide benefits for local and regional economies and opportunities for Aboriginal involvement in visitor management. The implementation of Living Parks seeks to protect and conserve the natural and cultural values of protected areas and ensure that diverse, high quality opportunities for visitors remain and are enhanced for the future.

Living Parks supports the State Plan action areas and priorities by fostering sustainable investment in protected areas and generating local and regional economic benefits and opportunities for Aboriginal involvement. Living Parks aims to achieve the following:

- protection and conservation of park values
- enhanced visitor experiences
- ecologically sustainable and culturally appropriate visitor use
- excellence in visitor management
- enhanced community health and wellbeing
- economic benefits for communities.
In addition to working with the State Plan, Living Parks builds on the State Tourism Masterplan and sets in place a broad strategic direction and principles for visitor management. It sets statewide priorities and desired outcomes, and identifies actions to achieve them. Living Parks is to be delivered through a statewide implementation plan supported by Branch Visitation Management Plans (BVMPs). The implementation plan will detail how DECC intends to deliver the priority actions in Living Parks at the State, regional and local level. Several public submissions to the Taskforce registered their support for Living Parks and recommended that the report be used as a guide for the tourism industry when developing visitation plans within national parks. The submissions further suggested that the Government must fund and resource the recreational approach to parks and reserves as detailed in Living Parks.

Branch Visitation Management Plans and recreation strategies

Branch Visitation Management Plans (BVMPs) respond to the Living Parks strategy and the NSW State Plan. When adopted they will direct internal arrangements to guide growth and resource allocation towards visitation in national parks. The BVMPs respond to the targets and actions highlighted in State Plan Priority E8 to increase park patronage by 20 per cent by 2016. Other relevant State Plan priorities include: Priority P1 – increase tourist visitation to New South Wales by 10 million visitor nights by 2016; Priority R4 – increase the proportion of the total community involved in volunteering, group sporting and recreational activity, or group cultural and artistic activity by 10 per cent by 2016; and Priority S8 – increase customer satisfaction with Government services.

BVMPs and the development of associated internal management arrangements are guided by the following visitation management goals:
1. Park values (natural, cultural and social) are protected and conserved
2. People are encouraged to visit parks
3. People appreciate and understand parks and their values
4. Visitors have a diverse range of opportunities to enjoy parks
5. Excellence in visitor management is achieved.

Upon finalisation BVMPs will impart extensive information on visitor statistics; current visitor opportunities; strategies and initiatives to increase visitation; recommendations to manage for sustainability and compatibility; and an in-depth discussion on marketing, informing visitors and the utilisation of partnerships.

Plans of management

Plans of management are legislative instruments that implement the conservation, tourism and other management objectives for an individual park or reserve. The NPW Act requires that a plan of management be prepared for every gazetted reserve in New South Wales as soon as practicable, with a prescribed consultation process.

A plan of management describes the legislative and policy framework and management purposes and principles, and imparts explanatory information about a particular reserve. The plan outlines reserve values and management directions and discusses the conservation of natural and cultural heritage within the reserve, including geology and landform, native flora and fauna and Aboriginal and historic heritage. Park protection is also discussed, including important management issues such as soil erosion, water quality and catchment management, introduced species and fire management.
The plan of management further details visitor and tourism, education and scientific opportunities together with research and monitoring on park and other uses. The plan’s implementation is set out highlighting a series of desired outcomes and high, medium and low priority strategies for the reserve. The plan of management also specifies what activities may or may not occur on the respective park or reserve.

Where an activity or development is prohibited in a park, permissibility may only be granted through an amendment to the respective plan of management. The Taskforce is aware of the tourism industry concern that nature and cultural based tourism proposals on park are subject to an additional and extended approvals process, as a plan of management must be amended prior to a proposal being considered by other approval authorities.

The importance of the plan of management preparation process and the role of the plan of management in identifying parks for increased tourism was an issue raised in 11 submissions. The submissions also called for the continued open and transparent approach to plan preparation and the continued involvement of the community in this process. Several submissions also recommended that DECC plans of management provide more clarity on suitable visitor facilities and infrastructure and what commercial development is permitted. Opposition was expressed in several submissions to ‘fast tracking’ of the approval process for on park development.

The Crown Lands Act 1989 also provides for the preparation of plans of management for Crown reserves in consultation with the community. These plans may be initiated by reserve trusts, the Department of Lands, or the Minister for Lands (Department of Lands 2008: Online).

Following preparation, a draft plan of management for a Crown reserve is placed on public exhibition for not less than 28 days. Public comments are taken into account before the Minister considers adopting the plan. Plans of management, once gazetted, become regulatory instruments which bind the reserve trust and can give statutory authority to other types of plans, such as conservation management plans for heritage components (Department of Lands 2008: Online).

**Marine park zoning and operational plans**

The Marine Parks Act 1997 requires the Marine Parks Authority to prepare a zoning plan for each marine park to ensure the conservation of biodiversity, maintenance of ecological processes and appropriate provision for sustainable use. The zoning plan outlines what activities can be undertaken in different areas of the marine park, primarily through the application of four types of zones: sanctuary, habitat protection, general use and special purpose zones which provide varying levels of protection and use.

The development of a zoning plan involves extensive community and stakeholder group consultation. A draft zoning plan is developed in consultation with the stakeholder based marine park advisory committee and is subject to a three month public exhibition period. Marine park zoning plans now subject to statutory review initially 5 years after commencement and then every 10 years to ensure they continue to secure the objectives of the Marine Parks Act.

The Marine Parks Act also requires development of an operational plan for each marine park. The objective of an operational plan is to identify and define a scheme of the strategies, actions and activities that are proposed to be undertaken by the Authority (including arrangements with other agencies) to operate a marine park, consistent with the zoning plan and objects of the Act. For example operational plans may detail proposed community education and compliance activities and research and monitoring programs.
Aquatic reserve management plans

Management plans establish the objectives of the aquatic reserve, enable the taking of fish or marine vegetation from aquatic reserves to be regulated or prohibited and may otherwise provide for the management, protection and development of aquatic reserves. Management plans may not be developed for all aquatic reserves and the need is established on a case by case basis taking into consideration amongst other factors the size of the reserve, management issues, conservation needs and uses.

The process for developing aquatic reserve management plans involves input from user groups and the broader community as well as state and local government agencies. Draft management plans are publicly exhibited and comments from the community must be considered before a plan is finalised.

Aboriginal partnerships

In the NSW Aboriginal Affairs Plan Two Ways Together, the Government recognises that Aboriginal people have rights as the first peoples of Australia in addition to citizenship rights. These include maintaining culture, language and identity and self-determination. The Government is committed to reducing the social disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal people, while strengthening their capacity to practice culture and self determination.

The NSW Government acknowledges Aboriginal connection to land, its cultural significance and its role in the spiritual, cultural and economic wellbeing of Aboriginal people in NSW. The Government recognises that Aboriginal culture is based on Country, and access to Country is a significant factor in the wellbeing of Aboriginal people, allowing for the maintenance and renewal of culture. Through the national park and reserve estate, DECC manages a significant area of land which is of significance to Aboriginal people.

DECC engages in park management partnerships with Aboriginal people in recognition of their rights and as part of its commitment to strengthening their capacity to practice culture and self determination. DECC also enters into these partnerships so as to facilitate the best possible management of the parks of NSW.

Park management partnerships acknowledge that Aboriginal communities and DECC have overlapping interests in land management and protection. DECC’s natural and cultural heritage conservation objectives in many ways coincide with those of Aboriginal people as custodians of their traditional Country.

DECC is therefore committed to pursuing meaningful engagement and involvement of Aboriginal people in park management.

Planning at the national level

The Australian Government’s Tourism White Paper: A Medium to Long Term Strategy for Tourism outlines a range of measures, underpinned by structural reform and additional resources, to position Australia as a world leader in tourism goods and services. In regards to nature tourism, the paper highlighted:

• the importance of Australia’s unique natural and cultural environment as a major attraction for visitors
• protection of Australia’s natural and cultural assets as a cornerstone of sustainable tourism development
• the need to increase industry take-up of environmental best practice strategies and provide benefits to the industry.
The forthcoming *Tourism Action Plan on Climate Change* will assess the impact of climate on the tourism industry, review best practice in Australia and abroad and develop adaptation strategies. A taskforce comprised of State and Commonwealth government and industry representatives has been appointed under the auspices of a Council of Australian Governments to develop this action plan.

### 3.3 Public land management policies

**DECC-managed land**

The management of protected areas under the care and control of DECC is further guided by a series of park management policies. The aim of park management policy is to:

- guide appropriate conduct in national parks and reserves to protect native plants, animals and ecosystems
- balance the needs of conservation with the needs of visitors and of businesses operating in national parks and reserves
- clarify the responsibilities of DECC, businesses operating in reserves, neighbours and visitors.

Examples of policies in place to guide park management include:

- visitor facilities policies – guide the type and style of development on park
- Discovery programs policy – for DECC Discovery walks, talks and tours which provide educational and recreational experiences to park visitors
- neighbour relations policy – promotes constructive relations between DECC and its neighbours
- vehicle access policy – relates to the use of cars, trail bikes, four-wheel drive vehicles and other forms of transport in parks and reserves
- visitor safety policy – describes the DECC approach to visitor safety in national parks and reserves
- walking tracks policy – explains how DECC will plan and construct walking tracks in national parks and reserves.

A comprehensive list of all DECC policies can be found on the DECC website: <www.environment.nsw.gov.au>.

**State forests**

A range of policies are in place with regard to the management of State forests in NSW. A comprehensive list of Forests NSW policies is located on the agency’s website: [http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/forests](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/forests) and further information about the business is available in key documents such as Forests NSW Annual Report, Social, Environmental and Economic Report and Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management Plans, also available online.

With regard to recreation and tourism, native and planted State forests provide a wide range of opportunities for responsible recreation, sport, tourism and training within the context of sustainable multiple-use forest management and Government forest policy. To manage these recreation and tourism activities, Forests NSW has in place a strategy called “Living, working, playing…forests 2005–2009” (refer Section 2.2). This strategy is available on Forests NSW website.

In addition to State policy, NSW forests are also subject to the National Forest Policy. Through the National Forest Policy, the State and Commonwealth governments recognise that Australia’s forests provide a broad range of economic and social opportunities including recreation and tourism opportunities.
Crown Reserves

The Crown reserve system is the oldest and most diverse system of land management in NSW. It promotes the co-operative care, control and management of Crown reserves by the community with assistance from the Department of Lands, other government agencies and reserve users.

Lands has developed a Trust Handbook with the aim of assisting management, staff and board members to manage their reserves. The handbook contains general information and guidelines as well as regulatory requirements associated with the management of Crown reserves. The handbook can be found on the Lands website: www.lands.nsw.gov.au/crown_land/trusts/trust_handbook
4.0 Managing for sustainability

The importance of managing protected areas sustainably, and in particular visitation and tourism activities in these areas, is an issue that was raised by numerous public submissions.

Eight submissions mentioned the importance of park managers adopting a ‘triple bottom line’ approach with any commercial tourism on park, based on the principles of ecological sustainability and in support of nature based management. Furthermore, 21 public submissions expressed support for increased, sustainable visitation to national parks as long as conservation remains paramount, while 16 identified tourism activities they perceived to be good examples of sustainable/suitable tourism opportunities and their perceived conservation benefits. Several submissions also noted their support for further research on sustainable tourism models.

Managing for sustainability is a key component of the overall protected area management system, particularly for DECC. Their park management program is central to managing for sustainability, and aims to define DECC’s values and objectives for park management, and integrate park policy, planning, operations, monitoring, evaluation, reporting and feedback. Ultimately the park management program sets out how to manage protected areas for the long term conservation of biodiversity and cultural heritage values. DECC, and in particular Parks and Wildlife Group, staff are highly trained to undertake the various aspects of park management to ensure the ongoing protection of park and reserve values.

Monitoring and evaluation are an important part of the park management system and are critical in managing for sustainability. DECC seeks to monitor and evaluate the condition of and pressures on protected areas and to ascertain how effectively these areas are being managed. In New South Wales this information is collected through the State of the Parks program, an integral part of the park management program. The specific aims of the program are to:
1. Improve understanding of the condition of and pressures on individual parks
2. Evaluate how well DECC manages against objectives and planned outcomes
3. Inform planning and decision-making at all levels of management from individual parks right up to corporate planning
4. Assist in the allocation of funding and resources
5. Support effective communication of DECC’s management performance to communities.

The fundamental principle for New South Wales parks and reserves, upon which all other land management decisions are based, is their ongoing conservation and sustainable management. The national park brand has significant marketing value for the tourism industry but will only have currency if the conservation values of parks are secured and enhanced.
5.0 Visitation to NSW parks and reserves

In New South Wales tourism is one of the State’s most significant industries, however it has been losing its market share of international visitors to Australia and in recent years has experienced a decline in both domestic overnight visitors and day trips. The New South Wales share of the total Australian visitor market has fallen from 32.7 per cent to 32.1 per cent, and its share of leisure and events visitors has fallen from 31.3 per cent to 29.3 per cent (O’Neill 2008).

Despite the overall downturn in New South Wales tourism numbers, visitation to national parks remains popular and continues to grow. Evidently national parks are an important focus for Australia’s tourism industries with nature and culture based tourism the fastest growing sector in the Australian tourism market. In New South Wales, national parks and marine parks receive over 22 million visitors annually. This number continues to grow as more people are motivated by the enjoyment and experience of nature (Parks Forum 2008).

Visitors to New South Wales parks and reserves can be divided into the following categories: international visitors, domestic overnight visitors, domestic day visitors and local residents. Table 5 identifies the total number of visitor trips across New South Wales for each of these categories and of these the total number of visits to national parks.

Table 5: NSW visits to national parks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Total no. in group in NSW</th>
<th>No. of visits to national parks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International visitors</td>
<td>2 million trips</td>
<td>1.4 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic overnight visitors</td>
<td>23.8 million trips</td>
<td>1.6 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic day visitors</td>
<td>41.8 million trips</td>
<td>1.7 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local residents</td>
<td>6.7 million residents</td>
<td>17.3 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>22 million</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Young & Rubicam 2007

As illustrated in Table 5, local residents undertake the largest number of visits to national parks each year at 17.3 million of the 22 million visits. The second largest number of visits is undertaken by domestic day visitors, closely followed by domestic overnight visitors and international visitors.

5.1 International visitors

International tourism to New South Wales has increased over the last five years, reflecting the growth in international tourism to Australia more broadly. Australia’s natural heritage is a key motivation for international tourists to visit Australia, with nearly half indicating that a desire to experience Australia’s nature, landscapes and wildlife was the single most important factor influencing their decision to visit.
International tourists are most attracted to parks that offer peak experiences, including significant, well-known sights and close encounters with wildlife, such as the Blue Mountains and Sydney Harbour. Of international visitors in the younger adult age groups (20–34), females, fully independent travellers and visitors from European, North American and North-East Asian groups displayed a greater tendency to visit national parks than other international visitors (Griffin & Vacaflores 2004).

A majority of international visitors visit national parks located within or close to Sydney, followed by Northern and Southern New South Wales. While the tourism industry is extremely volatile, making long term predictions difficult, it is likely that international tourism to Australia will continue to grow. However, while international visitors have a high visitation rate, on the whole they are a small percentage of the overall visitation mix to national parks.

5.2 Domestic overnight visitors

New South Wales has four of the top ten destinations for domestic overnight visitors in Australia (Sydney, NSW North Coast, South Coast and Hunter). Despite the overall downturn in New South Wales tourism numbers, visitation to national parks remains popular and continues to grow. It is estimated that 90 per cent of Australians have participated in a nature based activity in the last five years and between 2001 and 2007 there was a significant increase in visitors to national parks and protected areas (TRA 2008).

As Table 6 shows, domestic overnight tourists tend to visit national parks across the whole State, with a particular focus along the coast. National parks and reserves in Sydney and surrounds are the most popular destinations, followed by parks and reserves in Northern New South Wales and then Southern New South Wales. Peak travel months coincide with school and public holidays, reflecting both the importance of family holidays and favourable weather conditions for coastal or snow holidays in the domestic market.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSW visitation</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>% of total visitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sydney and surrounds</td>
<td>10,000,000</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern NSW</td>
<td>5,400,000</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern NSW</td>
<td>4,800,000</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western NSW</td>
<td>3,000,000</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>23,200,000</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Young & Rubicam 2007

5.3 Domestic day visitors

Day visitors (or same day visitors) are those who travel for a round trip distance of at least 50 kilometres, are away from home for at least four hours and do not spend a night away from home as part of their travel. As illustrated in Table 7 the participation in outdoor or nature activities is fairly high for Central, Northern and Southern New South Wales, however quite low for Western New South Wales. Table 7 further demonstrates that when visiting a national park, day trippers tend to visit parks within close proximity of Sydney, for example, parks within the Sydney Basin, Blue Mountains, Central Coast and Hunter regions and the Illawarra.
Table 7: Day visitors and participation rates in activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>Day visitors</th>
<th>Participation in outdoor/nature activities</th>
<th>Participation rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sydney and surrounds</td>
<td>25,754,000</td>
<td>4,987,000</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>9,054,000</td>
<td>2,210,000</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>8,193,000</td>
<td>2,039,000</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>2,940,000</td>
<td>188,000</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Young & Rubicam 2007
Note: Outdoor/nature comprises going to the beach, visiting national parks, bushwalking, rainforest walks, visiting botanical or other public gardens, marine mammal watching, visiting the outback and farms.

5.4 Local residents

Visitation data clearly indicates that local residents make up the largest group of clientele for DECC parks and reserves. A local is defined as someone who has travelled a round trip of less than 50 kilometres to visit a park (Young & Rubicam 2007). Visitation from local residents is most significant around Sydney, the Hunter and the Illawarra with residents in these areas more likely to visit national parks than residents in regional New South Wales. Visits from local residents are often associated with family outings on weekends and public holidays; however more people are now visiting parks for their personal health and wellbeing.

As highlighted in Table 8, there are often high levels of repeat visitation from local residents, suggesting that they find their visits satisfying and develop a certain degree of attachment to their local park or reserve. Encouraging such attachments is vital for ensuring ongoing community support for the parks and reserves. Table 8 identifies the number of visitors per segment (very frequent; frequent; infrequent and lapsed/never) based on a total ‘local visitor’ base of 6,770,000 (Young & Rubicam 2007).

Table 8: Local visitor repeat visitation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Pattern of local visitor repeat visitation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very frequent</td>
<td>1,692,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent</td>
<td>2,301,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrequent</td>
<td>1,286,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lapsed/never</td>
<td>1,489,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Young & Rubicam 2007

5.5 Key motivations for visiting protected areas

There are many reasons why people choose to visit a particular park or reserve or a protected area in general. Griffin and Vacaflores (2004) identify enjoying or experiencing the natural environment as the predominant motives for visiting national parks. Sightseeing, rest and relaxation, and experiencing the tranquillity of a natural setting are also highly rated (Griffin & Vacaflores 2004).

People visit New South Wales parks and reserves typically to enjoy and experience nature. Other popular reasons include rest; relaxation or urban respite; tranquillity; recreation; sightseeing; and socialising. Visitors expect a range of settings, experiences, facilities and services reflecting a vast range of outdoor interests. Some visitors seek solitude or adventure with few facilities, or an attractive outdoor setting for a picnic; others may choose a guided tour. Some visitors seek
a cultural experience, whether it be learning about the cultural values of a park or meeting and participating in cultural traditions.

Research undertaken by Tourism Victoria (2008) shows that visitors are seeking more engaging sustainable nature tourism experiences centred on a destination’s natural and cultural heritage. Critical components of engaging sustainable nature tourism experiences include:

- high levels of guided and signed interpretation
- evidence of a ‘return’ to the environment through sustainable practices
- environmentally sustainable design
- creating ‘a sense of place’ which is a unique connection to the destination’s natural and cultural environment built into products and infrastructure interacting with ‘locals’
- offering value-added products including high quality hospitality and services
- linking sustainable nature tourism experiences with other tourism sectors.

One critical finding of many visitor satisfaction surveys worldwide, Australia included, is that the majority of visitors to national parks prefer minimal infrastructure. Visitors want a limited number of walking tracks, look-outs and visitor facilities, and maps and directional signs for independent park exploration. Recent research undertaken by Tourism Victoria (2008) supports this finding; however the preferred level of infrastructure depends on the type of sustainable nature tourism participant.

The research suggests that nature based visitors can be divided into two types: ‘skilled in nature’ and ‘comfort in nature’ (Tourism Victoria 2008). Skilled in nature tourism participants tend to have a high level of interest and knowledge of the activity; actively seek out physical challenges; are prepared to stay in more remote locations with limited or no facilities; will travel to destinations solely to undertake the activity; and are more likely to be self-guided. Skilled in nature participants represent 15 per cent of nature tourism visitors and overall are lower yield (Tourism Victoria 2008).

Comfort in nature tourism participants have a more casual interest but do seek out immersive experiences in the natural environment that provide learning opportunities (Tourism Victoria 2008). These participants will undertake activities for shorter durations; many lack the skills to undertake the activities without a guide; require appropriate accommodation and facilities; and make up a large proportion (85%) of the market for nature tourism. They seek out a broader range of tourism experiences, including food and wine and cultural heritage. Comfort in nature participants are a higher yielding market (Tourism Victoria 2008).

These findings are reinforced by public submissions received by the Taskforce. Seventeen submissions suggested increasing Aboriginal cultural tourism opportunities in parks and reserves. Nine submissions recommended encouraging greater access to national parks for all, while the need to improve information on visitor opportunities for those people with access requirements was also raised. Fourteen submissions called for improved signage in parks to improve accessibility and sustainable nature tourism experiences. The importance of sustainable practices was highlighted in eight submissions which recommended DECC aim for the ‘triple bottom line’/ sustainability in parks and reserves, while 21 submissions supported increased sustainable visitation to national parks.
Several public submissions also discussed motivations for visiting protected areas. Motivations identified included the availability of guided tours and educational programs, Aboriginal and cultural on park experiences, exposure to nature and access to recreation activities in a natural setting.

The submissions reflected support for visitor infrastructure to be located outside of parks, in surrounding communities. Some submissions recommended focusing on improving existing infrastructure in parks and considering the adaptive reuse of existing buildings rather than providing new infrastructure.

5.6 Factors inhibiting visitation

To date, limited research has been conducted on factors inhibiting visitation to parks and reserves. Griffin and Vacaflores (2004) identify the following as potential inhibitors of visitation to protected areas:

- lack of time due to family and work commitments
- perceived high costs associated with visiting national parks
- lack of awareness and knowledge about national parks
- accessibility and mobility issues
- perceptions of national parks being dangerous or risky places
- lack of appeal or preference for other leisure activities
- perceptions that parks are not appropriately set up to meet personal or social needs of visitors.

Concern was expressed in submissions that additional sustainable nature tourism development in parks and reserves may not be affordable to all park users and thus may potentially inhibit visitation. This view relates to the issue of social equity and accessibility of parks and reserves.
6.0 Visitor infrastructure in parks and reserves

Sustainable nature tourism infrastructure is designed to attract visitors to natural areas by presenting and preserving an area’s natural and cultural values, and includes:

- basic visitation facilities such as access roads, parking and picnic areas, walking tracks, signage, shower and toilet facilities
- interpretation facilities such as displays, stationary and mobile viewing platforms, visitor centres, picnic and hospitality facilities
- other facilities such as boat ramps, moorings, tents, huts, cabins, standing camps, ecolodges and ecoresorts.

Infrastructure should enhance the visitor’s experience, interpretation and understanding of an area’s environmental and cultural values. Furthermore the design, materials, construction, scale, operation and impact of sustainable nature tourism infrastructure should be sympathetic to the natural and cultural values of the particular area and appropriate to its specific environmental and conservation needs.

Sustainable nature tourism does not include transient accommodation, such as motels, which are not designed to attract visitors by presenting natural areas. Infrastructure in high conservation value areas should be limited to that which avoids detrimental impacts, minimises danger and discomfort, while enhancing the experience of visitors.

NSW parks and reserves contain a range of visitor facilities including:

- over 20,000 kilometres of national parks estate public access roads
- walking tracks and trails
- large numbers of diverse buildings including purpose-built information centres, retail outlets and accommodation
- historic heritage assets such as convict-built roadways and buildings, lighthouses, homesteads, pastoral stations, industrial archaeological sites, former mining sites, forestry sites and military structures
- Aboriginal and historic sites
- day use areas, camping grounds, lookouts, vessel moorings, pontoons and other structures.

There is a great diversity of exemplary visitor facilities and opportunities within parks and reserves across the State, spanning from Sydney, the Greater Blue Mountains, Illawarra and surrounds, to South East, Northern and Western New South Wales. Further adding to the list of nature based activities on offer in New South Wales are the host of popular activities and facilities available in forests, state parks and on Crown land.

Over 72 public submissions to the Taskforce expressed their support for the provision of visitor and tourism infrastructure off park in adjacent or nearby towns. The submissions emphasised the economic and environmental benefits of locating visitor infrastructure off park. Several submissions also put forward the notion that it is more cost effective to improve and better manage existing facilities and infrastructure on park than to provide additional new facilities, and to consider adaptive reuse of existing buildings on park. Of the submissions, 36 raised the issue that investment in well managed national parks has economic, social and ecological benefits, while 15 submissions stated that adequate funding supply should be guaranteed to ensure the management and maintenance of national parks.
The submissions further indicated mixed views regarding the provision of recreation activities on park, with some submissions recommending increased access for on park activities, while others urge prohibition. Activities commonly cited as inappropriate for national parks include horse riding, four-wheel driving, mountain bike riding, BMX and trail bike riding. There was also significant support for many of these activities and encouragement to increase access for certain visitor activities and opportunities in parks and reserves, for example mountain bike riding and cycling; horse riding; conservation hunting; dolphin and whale watching and kayaking tours; rogaining; scenic drives; and caravan, camping and motor home holidays.

Six submissions recommended visitor opportunities be located in parks and reserves that are accessible by public transport where practicable, while other submissions suggested restricting activities to the edges of parks to ensure minimal infrastructure is required. Numerous submissions were concerned about the location of ‘hard roofed’ and luxury accommodation facilities on park. Several submissions requested that DECC increase the number of camping areas available, while unauthorised camping in sensitive areas is also raised as an issue in another submission.

Finally, submissions also discussed the need to improve track design and the maintenance of tracks and trails on park for mountain bike usage while several submissions requested access to parks be limited for private vehicles access. An additional suggestion made by two submissions is for DECC to invest in smart card or toll technology at park entrances to enable salary budgets to be redirected to other activities and management requirements.

6.1 Visitor opportunities and experiences in parks and reserves in Sydney, Greater Blue Mountains, Illawarra and surrounds

This area comprises Sydney and its surrounds, the Central Coast/Hunter Ranges and the greater Blue Mountains areas. DECC has a large portfolio of national parks, reserves and historic heritage assets within this region. Within Sydney, DECC manages large tracts of the Sydney Harbour foreshore, Royal NP, Ku-ring-gai Chase NP and Lane Cove NP, and Cabbage Tree Bay (Manly) and Bronte-Coogee Aquatic Reserves which are very popular with local residents and tourists alike. The majority of visitors to parks and reserves in these areas are residents, as opposed to tourists, with over 98 per cent of visits in 2004 estimated to be made by residents.

This region encompasses the Greater Blue Mountains National Landscape made famous for the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area which is Australia’s most accessible wilderness, stretching over one million hectares. The Blue Mountains are an inspiring and diverse mix of rainforest, canyons, tall forests and heathlands. The Greater Blue Mountains are a place of extraordinary wild beauty, where the blue haze of World Heritage listed eucalypts is splashed across golden sandstone.

It is an ancient land of 350 million year old cave systems, serpentine slot canyons and the prehistoric Wollemi Pine. Traditional Country of six Aboriginal language groups and Australia’s cradle of conservation and bushwalking, this accessible wilderness is on Sydney’s doorstep.

Passive recreation pursuits remain the most popular activities undertaken in Sydney’s major parks.

Park visitors spend the most time walking (26%), relaxing (15%), picnicking or barbecuing (10%), children playing (8%) and enjoying the natural environment (5%). These areas received almost 60 per cent of total visitor nights in New South Wales in 2006–07. Sydney alone received over 50 per cent of total visitor nights. Compared to regional New South Wales, Sydney sources a much greater proportion of its visitors from overseas: 69 per cent of visitor nights in Sydney were by international visitors. In
contrast, regional New South Wales averages only 12 per cent of visitor nights from overseas visitors. This area is a well established, recognised and mature tourist destination with a diverse range of visitor experiences on offer.

Visitor opportunities available in parks and reserves in Sydney, Greater Blue Mountains and surrounding areas (Appendix 6) include:

- over 240 picnic sites
- around 170 places with access to waterways
- 10 aquatic reserves
- around 160 sites with cultural or historic interest
- over 160 lookout points
- over 72 camping or accommodation sites
- around 30 function venues
- 10 cafes/kiosks
- 6 visitor centres.

While some of these assets are already well utilised, other assets that are currently less well known have the opportunity to become future tourist attractions. Many of the parks contain important cultural and historic heritage that with appropriate capital investment has the potential to attract significant tourist numbers.

It is noted that increased visitation to Botany Bay, and in particular La Perouse, for its natural and cultural heritage significance, is supported by two submissions.

The Grand Stair Case, Blue Mountains

DECC has recently completed a $7 million upgrade and restoration of key sections of the historic walking track network throughout the Blue Mountains National Park. The grand staircase, Australia’s largest outdoor staircase comprising 173 stone cut steps up 90 metres of cliff face, was restored and reconstructed with the help of specialist stone masons to retain its heritage character. Several creek and waterfall crossings were secured and upgraded by installing large sandstone stepping stones capable of withstanding seasonal flooding and increased visitor numbers. The Talus Slope Stairs were stabilised and upgraded by building a 250 metre long timber retaining wall to stabilise and secure the talus slope below the stairs.

The Greater Blue Mountains Drive

The Greater Blue Mountains Drive is a new touring opportunity covering 1200 km of major roads to link Sydney with the World Heritage landscapes of the Blue Mountains and the regions that surround it. Branching off the core loop are 18 Discovery Trails which explore the back roads and take tourists among the mountains, valleys, national parks and other regional attractions. The Drive provides a variety of opportunities: walking tracks, quiet country drives and picnics, relaxing holidays, bicycle rides, just cruising and sightseeing, or a myriad other experiences that lie beyond the car park.
6.2 Visitor opportunities and experiences in parks and reserves in South East New South Wales

This area includes the South Coast, Far South Coast, Snowy Mountains and South West Slopes of New South Wales. Most visitors to the region are domestic rather than international visitors. The area is a popular domestic holiday destination.

The area contains some of the State’s most iconic landscapes, including two out of eight National Landscapes: the Australian Alps, including Kosciuszko National Park, and the South East coastal wilderness, including Green Cape Lighthouse. The region has a wonderful variety of landscapes and ecosystems including marine parks such as the Jervis Bay Marine Park, karst landscapes with spectacular limestone caves, and alpine wilderness with an extensive network of walking tracks and alpine huts. The area also has a rich historic heritage including whaling stations, Yarrangobilly House and a network of lighthouses. Much of the historic heritage has the potential to be conserved and adaptively reused in a sensitive manner to provide accommodation and link in with regional walking trails. Visitor opportunities available in parks and reserves in this part of New South Wales include:

- 272 walks
- 37 water access points
- 104 lookouts
- 171 picnic areas
- 7 visitor/education centres
- 7 snow sport facilities
- 10 café/kiosks
- 8 function venues
- 132 cultural/historic sites.

The Australian Alps represent another visitor opportunity. Stretching from Canberra through the Brindabella Range to the Snowy Mountains of New South Wales and along the Great Divide through eastern Victoria, Australia’s alpine and sub-alpine environments are unique and special. Encompassing broad mountain plateaus, rolling ridges and steep valleys, glacial lakes, clear mountain springs and waterfalls, the Australian Alps are best explored on foot or by 4WD. The Australian Alps have a rich and diverse Aboriginal and European cultural heritage, and magnificent outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities. They contain the head waters of some of Australia’s most important rivers. Kosciuszko National Park houses the only alpine resorts in New South Wales and provides opportunities for snow sport activities. There is a range of on park commercial accommodation, mostly within Kosciuszko National Park and Murramarang National Park, as well as a range of camping areas.

South East New South Wales also has exceptional coastal wilderness, often referred to as Australia’s Coastal Wilderness. This region provides authentic year-round experiences relating to landscapes, natural history and living culture. Australia’s Coastal Wilderness encompasses stunning coastal and wilderness walks, rich with diverse flora and fauna.

Visitor opportunities in South East New South Wales were discussed in a large number of submissions, with 16 submissions highlighting the multitude of tourism opportunities available at Kosciuszko National Park as well as the perceived existing constraints on them. Opportunities exist for current stand-alone walking trails to be connected together to form long-distance walking or bike riding trails.
One submission proposed the construction of a Kosciuszko Alpine Exploration Park to provide educational, scientific and training facilities for tourists. A much discussed idea is the development of the Thredbo to Bullocks Flat multi-use trail project. Constraints identified in this region include the absence of summer transport to Kosciuszko National Park and the need for greater recognition of tourism and recreation activities within the park’s plan of management.

Montague Island Tours

Montague Island Nature Reserve is located off the south coast of NSW approximately nine kilometres southeast of Narooma within the Batemans Marine Park. The 82 hectare island is an important seabird nesting habitat and seal haul out site that contains significant historic buildings associated with the Montague Island Lighthouse. The nature reserve is the second largest island off the NSW coast and has been classified by the National Trust as a Landscape Conservation Area for its scenic, scientific and historic values. The lightstation buildings are listed on the Register of the National Estate due to their architectural quality.

Montague Island is a popular ecotourism and education facility with its large populations of easily viewed wildlife and interesting historic features. The island offers a unique destination and combination of features close to popular coastal tourism areas around Narooma and within reasonable distance of the major population centres of Sydney, the Illawarra and Canberra. Montague is one of three lighthouses in NSW open to the public while ecotourism on the island contributes significantly to the local economy.

Recognising that ecotourism can promote support for conservation and generate funds for conservation programs, DECC through its Discovery program runs a number of guided activities on Montague Island, including a guided tour of the island. Tours take four hours and include a boat charter around the island allowing participants the opportunity to see the island’s fur seal colony and at certain times of the year humpback and southern right whales, dolphins and a variety of seabirds including penguins and sooty oystercatchers. The tour further includes an inspection of the island’s historic lighthouse buildings.

A second Discovery activity is the ‘overnight tour experience’ which allows participants to stay overnight in the refurbished head keepers quarters and assist parks staff with habitat management or research. Participants are often involved in penguin habitat restoration, weed removal, the planting of native seedlings and species monitoring.

Source: DECC 2008a

The Australian Alps – ‘Earthkeepers’

Kosciuszko National Park offers NSW’s only alpine experience. It is thus an important resource for many schools as a living example of an alpine environment. Numerous educational school programs are run in the national park, one such program being ‘Earthkeepers’.

Earthkeepers is an educational program run by DECC to provide school students with a learning adventure to captivate and motivate them. The goal of the program is to produce students who possess some basic ecological understandings, good feelings about the earth and its environment and will undertake to live their life more lightly and share their insights and behaviours with others.

To become ‘Earthkeepers’ students must earn four keys and unlock four boxes representing ‘knowledge’, ‘experience’, ‘yourself’ and ‘sharing’. A mysterious figure known as ‘E.M.’ provides the motivation and magically ties together the hidden meanings behind the ‘keys’.

The program includes a sensory awareness walk, four concept building activities, a bushwalk following a sketch map and diary, time for solitude and a loud game show. Almost all activities are undertaken in the natural environment and students are always actively involved. Learning is reinforced through student workbooks and students are given incentives to adopt minimal impact lifestyles (e.g. using less water, fuel, paper). The program also includes post excursion activities.
6.3 Visitor opportunities and experiences in parks and reserves in Northern New South Wales

The Northern Region includes the North Coast, Mid-north Coast, Northern Tablelands and Hunter regions of northern coastal New South Wales. The region is becoming a popular destination for domestic tourists and retirees due to its attractive climate and variety of landscapes. The North Coast region in particular is a developing area for both residential and holiday purposes. The North Coast is also an attractive international tourist destination.

Due to the stunning natural and cultural values of the area, Northern New South Wales is identified as Australia’s Green Cauldron and recognised as the fourth National Landscape in New South Wales. One iconic feature is the presence of the world’s second largest shield volcano erosion crater. Stretching from Byron Bay to the Gold Coast and west towards the Great Dividing Range, this vast caldera shelters a huge diversity of rare flora and fauna, subtropical rainforests and has a breathtaking rim of mountain ranges.

World Heritage-listed Mount Warning has special meaning for Indigenous communities. Activities in the area include bushwalking and touring in rainforests, and diving/snorkelling with marine life where the caldera meets the coast.

DECC has acquired a large number of parks within the region in recent years. The majority of these parks have no real visitor infrastructure but contain a range of other built infrastructure including historic heritage lighthouses, cottages, homesteads and significant industrial archaeological sites associated with former mining, transportation and forestry industries.

These parks typically also have amazing natural heritage assets such as access to pristine beaches, beautiful coastal views and World Heritage-listed rainforests that make them attractive tourist destinations in their own right. Much of the historic heritage has the potential to be adaptively reused to provide accommodation, visitor centres and cafes or function venues. In addition to camping sites there are built accommodation opportunities on park including nine beach/coastal houses and cabins; three lighthouse keepers’ cottages; ten cabins, huts and houses in escarpment and tableland settings; and three historic homesteads in escarpment and western slopes settings. Visitor opportunities available in Northern New South Wales (Appendix 7) include:

- 480 walks
- 277 picnicking facilities
- 157 camping/overnight opportunities
- 164 lookouts
- 412 offering access to tracks and trails
- 10 visitor centres
- 7 kiosks
- 21 function venues
- 140 mountain bike riding opportunities
- 50 horse riding opportunities.
Cape Byron Lighthouse keeper’s cottage refurbishment

The Cape Byron State Conservation Area lies within the ‘Australia’s Green Cauldron’ National Landscape, which contains the Cape Byron Lighthouse which has stood on the most easterly point of the Australian mainland for a century. The rugged headland is surrounded by rainforest gullies and subtropical waters, and is a great spot for watching turtles, dolphins and migrating humpback whales in Cape Byron Marine Park. A four-year, $2.5 million project has been recently completed which involved the provision of niche accommodation and upgraded visitor services and facilities to improve visitor experiences. The historic Cape Byron Lighthouse keeper’s cottages were conserved, upgraded and refurbished to provide accommodation for visitors. Accessibility to the site has also been improved and walking tracks have been upgraded around the lighthouse precinct improving visitor safety and reducing erosion.

6.4 Visitor opportunities and experiences in parks and reserves in Western New South Wales

The Western Region encompasses everything west of the Great Dividing Range including the Northern Plains, Upper Darling, Western Rivers and Far West regions of New South Wales. The region is much less frequented by tourists than the coastal regions. However, the region has many attractions including extensive Aboriginal cultural sites, a rich pastoral history and a diverse array of landscapes and ecosystems, including the Willandra Lakes World Heritage area. Parks which are major visitor attractions include:

- Mungo National Park, Sturt National Park (Far West Region)
- Mt Kaputar National Park (Northern Plains Region)
- Warrumbungle National Park (Northern Plains Region)
- Mt Canobolas State Conservation Area (Western Rivers Region)
- Hill End Historic Site (Western Rivers Region).

These parks offer iconic or culturally significant features that often lead visitors to travel considerable distances to experience them.

Popular experiences include the ‘outback’ in the Far West, and cultural heritage experiences such as the World Heritage-listed Willandra Lakes region in Mungo National Park. Experiencing Aboriginal culture is also a significant attraction. The dramatic volcanic landscapes in the Warrumbungle and Mt Kaputar national parks are their major drawcards. There is a range of on park accommodation facilities and camping is provided in 40 sites with a spread across all levels of development.
Discovery activities in Warrumbungle National Park

When travelling through Western NSW Warrumbungle National Park is a popular tourist destination. To cater for visitors to the park, DECC runs a series of Discovery activities fostering greater understanding and appreciation for the park’s natural, Aboriginal and historic heritage conservation values. Activities on offer in the park include:

- Tara Cave Walk – the DECC Indigenous Discovery ranger takes visitors to the cave to learn about bush tucker and the traditional lifestyles of the first inhabitants of the area
- Looking at the big picture tour – Discovery rangers take visitors to explore some of the astronomy sites at Siding Spring Mountain and to learn about the importance of this area to astronomy research and the natural environment
- Aboriginal Art for kids – the DECC Aboriginal Discovery ranger shows children aged 5–12 years how to make their own Aboriginal artwork using natural ochre. Children learn about the different motifs Aboriginal people use in their art and make their own hand stencils and learn to throw a boomerang
- Kids environmental games – Discovery rangers take children aged 5–12 years into the national park to play games with educational messages about the environment and biodiversity
- Tracks and Traces – encourages visitors to become ‘bush detectives’ and solve the mystery of the endangered species. Learn how to identify habitats of birds and animals. Children learn about things that will tell them where to find a koala, a glider or a kangaroo. They also learn about protecting environments for safe habitat for fauna and birdlife
- Morning Tea with the Birds – involves a short walk through a variety of woodland habitat that shows visitors the diversity and abundance of birdlife in the Warrumbungles
- Night Stalk – Discovery rangers take visitors to explore the bush at night and learn about the habits of the creatures of the night.

6.5 Visitor opportunities and experiences in NSW State forests

A range of recreation facilities are maintained by Forests NSW in State forests across NSW. Some of the popular recreational activities that can be enjoyed in State forests include four-wheel driving, mountain bike riding, horse riding, camping, trail bike riding, bushwalking, picnicking and bird watching. Camping is the main form of accommodation in State forests, however there are some forest cabins available. Further information about the recreation and tourism opportunities in State forests is available on the website www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/forests.

State forests are an important part of the NSW State Plan’s strategy of improving biodiversity and encouraging more people to use parks and public spaces. In 2007, the following recreational facilities were available in State forests (Forests NSW 2007):

- 63 roadside rest areas/picnic areas and 100km of bike tracks
- 15 forest drives
- 36 forest walks
- 16 lookouts
- 61 camping areas
- 16 camps/huts/cottages
**Cumberland State Forest – Australia’s only Metropolitan State Forest**

Cumberland State Forest is a 40 hectare State forest located in Sydney’s north-western suburbs. Originally cleared for agriculture, the site was gazetted as a State forest in 1939 and today is a 70 year old natural regrowth forest and arboretum providing a dynamic environment within which the principles of ecologically sustainable forest management can be demonstrated, in conjunction with day use recreation, education and commercial activities associated with the onsite nursery and café.

Forests NSW offers visitors a range of programmed weekend and school holiday activities encouraging exploration of Cumberland State Forest. The activities are designed for all age groups and interests.

Popular children’s programs include the opportunity to join in on a forest trek as a ‘mini ranger’, while bush regeneration and guided walks are popular activities for adults.

The information centre (ph: 1300 655 687) on site offers education opportunities and information about forest management. The centre has displays and reference books, free publications, forest maps for sale and statewide recreation information and a range of timber handcrafts in the forest shop (Forests NSW 2007).

---

### 6.6 Visitor opportunities and experiences on NSW Crown land reserves and state parks

In New South Wales many popular recreation areas are Crown reserves: Hyde Park and Bondi Beach in Sydney are two famous examples. There are three major walking tracks and two small trails for visitors to enjoy on NSW Crown lands. The Hume and Hovell Walking Track extends over 440 kilometres between Yass and Albury. Walkers can follow in the famous footsteps of Hamilton Hume and William Hovell and walk the entire track, or simply enjoy one or two day trips (Department of Lands 2008a).

The Great North Walk is a 250 kilometre walk from Sydney to Pokolbin and has numerous entry and exits points allowing walkers to enjoy the scenery for as long or as little as they please. The Bicentennial National Trail traverses New South Wales on its passage between Cooktown in northern Queensland and Healesville near Melbourne in Victoria. The two smaller trails are the Wiradjuri Walking Track which is a 30 kilometre trail around the city of Wagga Wagga and the infamous Six Foot Track, a 45 kilometre route linking Katoomba with Jenolan Caves which winds through some of the most stunning native bushland in New South Wales (Department of Lands 2008a).

State parks, like Crown land reserves, are managed by the Department of Lands and offer a variety of visitor opportunities and experiences such as picnics, barbecues, camping, swimming, fishing and water sports and bushwalks in natural settings. Accommodation facilities are available in five state parks.
Coffs Coast State Park

Located 10 minutes south of Coffs Harbour on the North Coast of NSW, Coffs Coast State Park boasts beautiful beaches, foreshores, estuaries and wetlands which are perfect for surfing, swimming and boating (Department of Lands 2008, Department of Lands 2008b).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilities</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Picnic areas</td>
<td>• Snorkelling or diving in the Solitary Islands</td>
<td>• Non-powered camp sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marine Park</td>
<td>• Powered sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Visit the seasonally patrolled Park Beach and</td>
<td>• Ensuite sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sawtell Beach</td>
<td>• Ocean view villas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Water sports such as surfing, swimming,</td>
<td>• Cabins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sailing, jet skiing and scuba diving</td>
<td>• Non-ensuite cabins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Whale watching from May to October</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Picnics and barbecues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Canoeing or fishing in Bonville Creek</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Go-carting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sailing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sky diving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Boat ramps</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pool, including children’s pool</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Beach access</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Village green</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Amenities blocks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[38] Taskforce on Tourism and National Parks in NSW Report 2008
7.0 Public and private delivery of opportunities and experiences in parks and reserves

New South Wales parks and reserves currently offer a multiplicity of experiences catering to the needs of a wide range of park visitors. Examples of opportunities on offer include guided park tours and education programs such as the highly popular Discovery program; Aboriginal, cultural and historic heritage experiences; recreation activities; camping and other accommodation experiences; and conservation volunteer opportunities. These opportunities are provided by DECC, volunteers or by the private industry under commercial arrangement with DECC.

DECC spends over $42 million annually on providing visitor services and building or maintaining visitor infrastructure. In 2007–08, DECC received over $34.8 million in revenue from various sources including day use and annual pass fees, camping fees, licence fees and lease rentals, and revenue from caravan parks, residences and cabins. Of the $34.8 million, $7.2 million revenue was raised from accommodation, including camping. These funds are utilised to offset the costs associated with providing these facilities and wherever possible, expand or improve DECC accommodation on offer.

7.1 Private industry/commercial operations

Although DECC provides and operates most visitor facilities in its areas, some are established and run by the private sector. Property and leasing management is a function of park management concerned with the provision of compatible and desirable facilities, services and amenities for visitor use and enjoyment, under arrangements with commercial operators. DECC controls these activities through legally enforceable leases, licences and contracts. These agreements also ensure that any operations within the national parks system are compatible with DECC’s key goal of preservation and conservation.

DECC generally categorises its commercial lease activities as ‘major’ or ‘minor’, according to the amount and scale of capital outlay, development, patronage and other infrastructure. Ski resort complexes, restaurants, hotel accommodation, caravan parks and holiday cabins, lodges (ski clubs and commercial establishments) and apartments are classed as major commercial arrangements. Minor commercial arrangements would include tea rooms, picnic facilities, craft shops, recreational transport activities and basic kiosks. DECC manages a large number of commercial leases and licences that offer visitor facilities and services. The bulk of commercial leases are located in Kosciuszko National Park and predominantly cover ski resorts and ancillary services, commercial lodges, hotels and ski clubs. Leases from Kosciuszko National Park generate over 80 per cent of the total revenue from lease/licence operations. The range of commercial activities provided is presented in Table 9.

In the case of developments or operations requiring considerable capital investment the usual practice is to grant a lease. Leases confer to the lessee an ‘estate’ in the land for a determined period. Leases can also be assigned and used as an ‘interest’ for the purpose of securing finance for the lease in question.

Licences and contracts confer permission or a right to conduct a particular business activity on a park, but unlike a lease, a licence or contract does not confer any ‘estate’ in the land. Licences and contracts are usually granted for operations requiring little or no capital investment. Such tenures are also generally granted for shorter terms.
The granting of leases/licences/contracts/easements is enabled by specific provisions in the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974.

Opportunities for commercial activities in a national park or protected area come about in a number of ways. Leases and other business opportunities can be offered through a public process, for instance through expressions of interest/tender, or they may be initiated by a business that approaches DECC seeking permission to run a particular operation. Many times however, as part of the expansion of the reserve system, DECC inherits existing commercial activities or heritage buildings suitable for commercial operation. DECC controls numerous buildings of historic and cultural significance, and a small percentage of commercial lessees make use of DECC’s policy of adaptive reuse of their heritage buildings. If an operator wishes to lease a heritage site or building within a protected area, special attention must be given to protecting and maintaining its historic and cultural values.

DECC also actively seeks opportunities for either reuse or adaptive reuse to ensure the continued maintenance of historic heritage assets as well as providing new and interesting visitation opportunities. Reuse or adaptive reuse is most successful where the historic and cultural integrity of the site are maintained, however in many cases significant investment and expertise is required to make a reuse or an adaptive reuse opportunity commercially viable.

Table 9: Purpose of tenures held in the NSW parks system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lease and licence types</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kosciuszko – Accommodation/ski lifts – Leases</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– includes hotels, commercial lodges, apartments, ski clubs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other DECC areas – Leases</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– includes marinas/boatsheds, cafe/kiosk, caravan parks, field studies centres, hotels, residences (Hill End)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licences/contracts – All DECC areas</td>
<td>582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– cabins, moorings, kiosk/cafe, bed and breakfast, radio/telecommunication facilities, encroachments, vendors,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easements (formally acquired including Head Deed of Easement with TransGrid which cover several hundred powerlines statewide through the park network)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total</strong></td>
<td>835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial tour/Outdoor recreation licenses</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Parks Permits (for charter fishing, scuba diving, whale and dolphin watching)</td>
<td>200 (approx)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (approx)</strong></td>
<td>1235</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DECC 2008b

Note: The above figures do not include sub-lease arrangements or other occupancies that do not generate revenue (mainly pre-existing inherited easements which have not been formalised under the NPW Act).

Table 10 specifies the period of time for which commercial concessions have been granted. As shown above, most (38%) of the commercial leases/licences have been granted tenure of between 21 and 30 years. It should be noted that this figure relates to the fact that most leases exist in Kosciuszko National Park, where the leases have historically been granted for this time period.
### Table 10: Length of concessions held in the NSW national parks system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Contract</th>
<th>Easem’t</th>
<th>Lease</th>
<th>Licence</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1–10 years</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11–20 years</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21–30 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31–40 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41–50 years</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;50 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminable at will</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perpetual</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>223</strong></td>
<td><strong>541</strong></td>
<td><strong>835</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DECC 2008b

Numerous submissions discussed leasing and licensing arrangements on park and make suggestions to improve this system, with nine submissions recommending commercial operations be subject to stringent standards and a code of conduct to ensure environmental protection is maintained.

Many submissions stated that commercial sector involvement on park must not compromise nature conservation, while one said that leasing requirements for commercial activities should provide for financial sustainability.

Another submission suggested there is scope for private operation of facilities currently offered for ‘free’ by the Government, further commenting that the Government should encourage private land holders to establish wildlife and recreation parks. The establishment of a central DECC/NPWS policy was also suggested by one submission so that current and future business ventures have equal and consistent access to operating in national parks. Another submission recommends DECC adopt an online management system for operator fees including daily fees and annual fees. This system could also allow operators to record visitor numbers. This would enable DECC to ensure operators are not exceeding permit numbers and would reduce operator and DECC processing times and costs.

New provisions were introduced to the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NPW Act) in 2001 to ensure a consistent and well-defined approach to commercial uses in national parks, so that any commercial use will not detract from public use of the park, will not become the main focus of the park, and will not impact on the park’s integrity.

Section 151 of the NPW Act provides for leases and licences for new structures and existing buildings in national parks and historic sites provided they are in accordance with the principles of sections 30E–30K of the Act and the plan of management for the park.

Section 151B[1] of the NPW Act was an amendment designed to enhance the leasing and licensing powers of the Minister for the adaptive reuse of existing buildings or structures, by removing the need for a nexus with the objectives of the Act. Leases for the adaptive reuse of existing structures or buildings (but not the erection of new buildings) may be granted under Section 151B (2) for a broader range of visitor facilities that are consistent with the purposes set out in Section 151B (12). Section 151 B (5) (a) and (b) provides that the grant of a lease can only occur after the purpose of the lease and the location of the building or structure have been identified in a plan of management. Other procedural requirements set out in the section must also be met.
Leases for buildings and structures including but not limited to conference centres, function centres, art galleries and theatres, etc. are not permissible under Section 151 (1) of the NPW Act, however, they may be granted for these purposes under Section 151 B (2). Therefore if a visitor opportunity was a mix of a new development permitted under S.151 and adaptive reuse of an existing building for purposes consistent with Section 151 B (12), two separate approval processes would need to be followed before the Minister could grant a lease under the Act.

DECC has utilised the Section 151B (2) adaptive reuse provisions to improve commercial confidence and enhance business opportunity on park and overcome the limitations and potential legal challenges if a lease is granted under Section 151 (1) and the lessee wishes to hold functions or other exclusive uses. Leases under Section 151B (2) have been granted in Sydney Harbour National Park for the Nielsen Park Kiosk, Athol Hall, Fort Denison, and the Quarantine Station, and are proposed for the Bobbin Inn within Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park and the Audley Dance Hall within the Royal National Park. However, achieving permissibility through the plan of management process can be a lengthy procedure, taking up to two years.

In addition, Section 151B (3) of the NPW Act allows the granting of licences to use or occupy land in a reserve, and any existing building or structure, for any purpose, but only if the land is a modified natural area and the licence term does not exceed three consecutive days. A modified natural area is defined in the Act as ‘an area of land where the native vegetation cover has been substantially modified or removed by human activity (other than activity relating to bushfire management or wildfire) and that is identified in a plan of management as not being appropriate for or capable of restoration’. These licences, while restricted to three days in modified areas, do not require a direct nexus to the objectives of the Act and may be used for concerts, functions and events.

The major difficulty with the application of Section 151B (3) of the Act occurs if the plan of management has not been updated to specifically define modified natural areas. This results in potentially suitable park and reserve sites being unable to be used as venues for special events and functions.

The NPW Act does not currently allow for licences and franchises to be granted for commercial activities for state conservation areas, regional parks, karst conservation reserves or Aboriginal areas. It also restricts the granting of leases and licences to occupy or use Aboriginal lands reserved as state conservation areas or regional parks under Part 4A of the NPW Act. This has arisen due to drafting errors in previous amendments to the Act. This legislative anomaly also provides a barrier to the development of Aboriginal enterprises on Part 4A lands jointly managed under the provisions of the NPW Act.

The NPW Act makes the granting of a licence for trade, business or occupation permissible only in national parks and historic sites. By omission, the granting of a licence for such activities is taken to be not permissible in nature reserves. This effectively prohibits any research, monitoring and educational group activities being undertaken in nature reserves when carried out by third parties under a licence or contract arrangement. Precluding these activities in nature reserves on this basis is anomalous and contrary to the management principles for this reserve category.

[1] Section 151 B applies to national parks, historic sites, state conservation areas, regional parks and karst conservation reserves but does not include nature reserves.
The existing provisions of the Act prohibit the granting of any licence for trade, business or occupation in wilderness areas. This effectively prohibits commercially operated outdoor activities such as bushwalking, cycling and canoeing. These types of activities are not in themselves prohibited within wilderness areas and may legally be pursued by individuals or non-commercial recreation groups, such as schools and bushwalking clubs.

Thirty-one public submissions expressed their support for private industry involvement in sustainable nature tourism or ecotourism development on park where compatible with conservation values. The submissions further suggested keeping tourism activities and infrastructure low key with minimal impact on park values.

### 7.2 Commercial tours and activities

Commercial activities contribute significantly to the range of recreational opportunities available to park visitors, some of which would otherwise not be offered.

DECC licenses commercial recreation and tour operators who offer guided tours, instructional or educational courses and other leisure activities in national parks and reserves, to ensure a balance between conservation and commercial recreational use. They offer guided tours, instructional or educational courses and other leisure activities. Activities offered include bushwalking, camping, four-wheel driving, observing wildlife, fishing, rock climbing and abseiling, cross-country skiing, coach and bus tours, outdoor education activities, boating activities and bird watching. In addition, there are around 200 permits authorising activities such as commercial charter fishing, scuba diving, vessel tours, dolphin and whale watching in New South Wales marine parks.

Under the current system, the PWG issues approximately 200 licences a year. There is only one class of licence, generally for a one year term, and the licences are issued by the regional offices.

A review of the licensing of commercial activities in New South Wales’ national parks and reserves to develop an efficient and effective licensing system is currently underway and is seen as a vital step in supporting the growth of a dynamic and sustainable nature-based tourism and recreation industry and increasing visitation.

The objectives of the review are to develop, in consultation with industry and other interested groups, a new system that:

- is more efficient, equitable, simple and customer focused
- improves certainty for industry investment and security
- encourages higher operating standards
- encourages ecologically sustainable and culturally appropriate visitor use
- improves enforcement of and compliance with legislation
- encourages all organised groups to be appropriately and equitably managed.

Commercial activity licences are an important way of controlling the increasing demand for high quality services in DECC parks and reserves, while financial contributions from commercial operators help meet the cost of managing natural and cultural resources. Most importantly, licences enable DECC to manage and monitor parks and reserves so they are ecologically sustainable, and native plants and animals are conserved. Several public submissions recommended that DECC provide support and assist commercial operators currently on park.

Commercial tours and activities also operate within State forests under a permit system managed by Forests NSW.

![Salmon Beach, Lord Howe Island World Heritage Area (Photo courtesy of Tourism NSW)](image)

Salmon Beach, Lord Howe Island World Heritage Area (Photo courtesy of Tourism NSW)
Several submissions raised the issue that access to parks by members of the public should not be affected by commercial activities or private business activities. Related to this, 25 submissions expressed the opinion that commercial activities could alienate public enjoyment of a park or reserve if commercial interests restricted access to particular areas.

As a natural attraction, national parks should be managed sustainably and not ‘loved to death’. Kosciuszko National Park was cited in numerous submissions as an example of a park that experiences commercial development pressure.

A significant number of submissions also raised concern that commercial tourism in wilderness areas threatens the integrity and primary purpose of these areas as nature conservation sanctuaries and may lead to economic pressure from the tourism industry to permit expanded infrastructure within them. The submissions further expressed concern that commercial access eventually demands supporting infrastructure such as roads, cars, accommodation and development such as retail outlets and toilet facilities. One submission suggested that a three year trial be implemented to explore appropriate use of commercial groups in declared wilderness areas.

7.3 DECC Discovery programs and Aboriginal cultural tourism

DECC runs a community discovery program. Discovery walks, talks and tours provide visitors to national parks with an insight into the unique values of the park. Developed and led by specialist Discovery rangers, the activities are designed to educate participants about the environment and its values. Discovery activities include:

- spotlight walks
- canoe tours in estuaries and freshwater environments
- night-time poetry and stories in historic sites
- coastal walks
- 4WD vehicle tours
- springtime wildflower walks
- snorkelling tours in marine parks
- walks through ancient landscapes.

Discovery activities have a broad target market from young children to senior citizens. Most activities run during holiday periods, however select activities operate throughout the year. Tours and activities can be tailored for individuals or groups. Examples of Discovery program activities taking place in Sydney Harbour National Park include:

- Fort Denison heritage tour
- Middle Head forts tour
- Shark Island ferry service
- Defence of Sydney (North Head fortress tour).

Discovery is further designed to enhance participants’ understanding of the culture and traditional lands of Aboriginal communities around the State.

Through the Aboriginal Discovery program, Aboriginal people conduct professional guided tours around parks and reserves. The guides interpret their cultural heritage, celebrating the close connections between Aboriginal people and their traditional lands (DECC 2008c).
In 2007–08, DECC’s Aboriginal Discovery program delivered 1070 tours and employed 47 Aboriginal Discovery rangers across the State. These tours covered a diversity of Aboriginal perspectives including bush tucker; bush medicine and rock art tours; weaving and didgeridoo workshops; Animal Dreaming; astronomy and whale watching tours; and both Men’s and Women’s Business tours. Importantly, Aboriginal Discovery tours are linked with the Discovery school programs.

Six public submissions to the Taskforce recognised the importance of Aboriginal heritage and conservation and the importance of promoting Aboriginal cultural tourism on park, while increasing employment and Aboriginal involvement in heritage management and tourism. An additional 17 submissions identified the necessity of providing Aboriginal people with opportunities to maintain links to their country and to manage the land according to Aboriginal knowledge. The submissions further identified the need to promote Aboriginal heritage in tours, for example in the current tours on Montague Island.

### 7.4 Volunteer programs

DECC has a significant and diverse volunteering program in place involving approximately 3800 volunteers annually. Volunteers work on a wide range of projects including:

- bush regeneration
- leading guided tours
- meeting and greeting visitors
- assisting in the recovery of threatened plants and animals
- conducting flora and fauna surveys
- restoring historic buildings
- maintaining walking tracks
- providing advice on the management of national parks
- assisting in recording and the maintenance of Aboriginal culture and heritage
- assisting in weed and feral animal control
- assisting with scientific research.

Volunteer programs are structured in a variety of ways both to meet the needs of volunteers and contribute to conservation, including:

- ongoing or community based programs
- corporate programs
- short term, project based programs.

DECC works with a wide variety of partner organisations in the provision of volunteer services. These include:

- Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA)
- National Parks Association (NPA)
- NSW Wildlife Council
- Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife
- Kosciusko Huts Association
- Earthwatch
- State Emergency Service and Rural Fire Service
- Four-Wheel Drive Association
- various ‘Friends of’ groups.
Volunteer opportunities on Montague Island Nature Reserve and projects undertaken by Conservation Volunteers Australia exemplify conservation tourism opportunities that benefit protected areas across Australia.

Like DECC, Forests NSW also offers volunteer opportunities in the forest estate. In 2006–07, 18 volunteer programs with 154 participants took place in State forests with an additional 5,500 participants engaged in educational events and programs run by Forests NSW, primarily at Cumberland State Forest (Forests NSW 2007).

Forests NSW key volunteer programs are:

- The Cumberland State Forest Volunteer Program in Sydney (West Pennant Hills). This is an ongoing program that focuses on bush regeneration activities.
- The “Friends of Strickland” program in Strickland State Forest, near Narara on the Central Coast. Major projects currently underway include bush regeneration and the construction of a circuit walking trail.
- Forests NSW and Conservation Volunteers Australia partnership “Communities in Forests”, which aims to maximise the involvement of communities and volunteers in conservation management projects in State forests across NSW. The “Communities in Forests” program consists of an annual program of 10 weeks of volunteer teams to be targeted at around key sites.
- The Memorandum of Understanding between Forests NSW and the NSW and ACT Four-Wheel Drive Association regarding the Association undertaking volunteer activities in State forests.

Support for an increase in volunteering opportunities in parks and reserves was observed in public submissions. Numerous mountain bike and cycling enthusiasts, horse riders and hunters offered to volunteer their time to assist in the management of different aspects of parks and reserves.
8.0 Financing visitor facilities and services

An important benefit of sustainable tourism is that it can generate additional revenue for the parks system to invest in visitor infrastructure and services, as well as contribute to important conservation activities. These funds provide an opportunity for park management agencies, such as the DECC, to target investment to develop new products and experiences or to upgrade infrastructure and services in key visitation destinations, to expand their appeal.

DECC’s assets include a wide range of visitor infrastructure and facilities. There is a significant and increasing deferred maintenance liability relating to visitor facilities and historic heritage assets. Risk exposures associated with public and staff safety are directly related to the maintenance of these assets. As a result, DECC currently prioritises maintenance in accordance with associated risk implications and emerging and strategic issues, including deferred maintenance liabilities.

8.1 Limitations of the existing financial arrangements to fund visitor facilities and services

A park use fee applies to 47 parks across New South Wales (less than 10 per cent of all the protected areas). Fees for camping, Discovery tours and museum entry are also applied. A schedule of fees and charges is presented in Appendix 18.

DECC’s existing pricing structure for visitor facilities and services has been influenced by a number of principles:

- achieving cost recovery
- user pays system
- decentralised system of fee and price setting for many products as well as local retention of revenue
- recognition of DECC’s role in building awareness and understanding of conservation in the community.

The existing structure has limited DECC’s capacity to widely promote its products or experiences, strengthen its distribution network or reinvest revenue into corporate priorities. The key issues include:

- the current product offer does not necessarily reflect market needs or respond to changing consumer preferences
- the internal business model does not readily facilitate targeted investment in the development of new tourism products and priority destinations as revenue is retained locally
- the range of existing products and the associated matrix of pricing points limit third-party point of sale opportunities. Non-commissionable products are not attractive to a wholesale or retail distribution network
- inconsistent pricing arrangements exist across the State, for example locally determined consent fees and the de-centralised bus and coach use fee pricing regime
- commercial tour operator fees are generally only a very small percentage of the overall price of commercial tours and are structured on the principle of cost recovery.

DECC acknowledges that not all of its products will generate tourism revenue. Some products, such as its traditional educational tours, are expected to continue to operate on a cost recovery basis in recognition of the important role of DECC in building awareness of conservation in the community.
It is further noted that numerous submissions requested the Government remain the primary funding source for national parks and that increased Government funding be allocated to nature conservation. One submission expressed that it is unjust for the tourism sector to gain an economic advantage by exploiting protected areas that are owned by the public without having contributed to their purchase.

8.2 Partnership agreements

DECC’s ability to adequately maintain visitor infrastructure is constrained by its budget allocation. To meet the maintenance requirements DECC needs to consider the implementation of innovative funding mechanisms. One option is the establishment of partnerships with the private sector.

Partnerships between DECC and the private sector or not-for-profit organisations enable tourism to contribute to park conservation, and conservation of natural assets to contribute to park tourism. Essentially the private sector brings capital, expertise in providing visitor opportunities and new revenue streams to park agencies. This enables DECC to improve the delivery of sustainable nature tourism and concentrate its expertise and funding on delivering conservation objectives.

Partnership agreements between the public and private sectors can be used to deliver a wide range of tourism and conservation outcomes, including:

- conservation services such as weed and pest control, bush regeneration, monitoring and other land management programs
- visitor experiences such as guided walks, diving expeditions, glow worm night trails, wildlife safaris, caving, bird watching, boat trips, conservation volunteering, study tours and other innovative visitor experiences
- accommodation experiences such as tented safari camps, demountable cabins, huts, tree houses and ecologdes, and reuse/adaptive reuse of existing buildings such as historic farm and mining structures, government stations and former lighthouse keepers cottages
- research into sustainability of operations and carrying capacity to ensure best practise for wildlife experiences such as dolphin watching
- visitor management and services such as marketing, visitor information, signage, interpretation, merchandising, cleaning, waste services, maintenance, parking and entrance gates
- parks visitor infrastructure such as power, water, sewerage, roads, trails, bridges, pontoons, moorings, car parks, visitor centres, visitor rides, canopy walks and zip lines, ski lifts, cable cars, scenic rail, walking tracks and lookouts.

Infrastructure developed through a partnership should enhance visitors’ experience, interpretation and understanding of an area’s environmental and cultural values.

The current basis of DECC’s partnership/relationship with the private sector is more of a ‘landlord/lessee’ model than a model of ‘risk sharing’ as proposed by the Tourism Transport Forum’s BTP model (2007). DECC currently adopts the standard model of negotiating acceptable market related ‘commercial returns’, consistent with Government policy and reflective of the commercial rights offered for the use of a public asset.

DECC could emphasise the non-financial aspects of the partnership/relationship to encourage greater private sector involvement. This could include joint/collaborative marketing initiatives; park management and conservation project joint initiatives; prompt attention to lessee issues and contract management matters; assistance with issues affecting the lessee involving other government agencies; and general communication issues with government.
The benefits of establishing partnerships were identified in several public submissions to the Taskforce. South African National Parks (SANParks) is a good example of how natural tourism partnerships can benefit conservation. By establishing partnerships SANParks has generated additional revenue to fund the expansion of protected areas.

As well as partnerships with the private sector, there is great value in encouraging partnerships with other government bodies. The benefits of such partnerships were raised in many submissions emphasising the importance of DECC working cooperatively with local government. The submissions suggested that cooperative working relationships establish innovative activities which in turn will increase visitation to national parks. There is support for sites to be managed and promoted with joint partnerships between DECC and marketing bodies such as Tourism NSW. One submission further recommended that councils sell national park passes at their information centres.

There was support from 12 public submissions for a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between DECC and Tourism NSW. Several submissions suggested the inclusion of other bodies in the MoU, for instance to acknowledge the capacity of visitors to become volunteers that contribute to park management, or Commonwealth Government departments and/or Aboriginal people.

**Case Study: Tourism partnerships benefit conservation in South Africa**

South African National Parks (SANParks) was established in 1998 and today is an autonomous entity in the ecotourism industry, however initially it failed to deliver tourism products efficiently. SANParks realised that it did not have the skills, incentives, and access to capital required to maximise tourism opportunities.

Deciding that it would not run commercial ventures, but instead focus on its core function of biodiversity management, SANParks developed the concept of ‘commercialisation as a conservation strategy’. Part of this strategy was the concession of exclusive rights to commercial use of lodge sites together with the surrounding parkland. Since the strategy’s implementation SANParks has ‘concessioned’ 12 lodges, 19 shops, 17 restaurants and 4 picnic sites to private partners.

The 20-year concession contracts for lodges (with no right of renewal or first refusal on expiration) include environmental and social obligations and penalties for non-compliance. The concessionaires pay SANParks an annual fee calculated as a percentage of the turnover bid during the tender process. SANParks is now independent from government funding for more than 75 per cent of its operating revenue (Tourism & Transport Forum Australia 2007).

Due to the success of SANParks the national government increasingly views national parks as a tool for economic development and has stepped up its annual financial commitment to SANParks. The increase in public funds and the additional revenue from partnerships has enabled SANParks to expand protected areas by five percent since 1998. SANParks recognises that through the additional public funds available for the purchase of additional conservation lands, it is achieving its national mandate of conserving an ecologically sustainable and representative sample of South Africa’s biodiversity and landscapes. It is further acknowledged that these areas are generally better conserved in larger systems that in turn offer greater socio economic opportunities to their regional economies (SANParks 2007).
9.0 Marketing and promotion

Effective marketing and promotion can influence tourism and visitation to national parks and reserves and other public lands in a number of ways. It can encourage visitation across a region in a manner consistent with management objectives and intent. It can also help in the management of visitors by influencing their expectations, activities, site choice and on-site behaviour.

Strategic marketing can further increase public support for parks and reserves, and encourage or discourage specific markets to a park. It can educate the general public and the media about conservation issues and enhance visitor satisfaction by establishing realistic visitor expectations regarding the range of sustainable tourism opportunities available.

Marketing can be utilised to establish an appropriate sustainable tourism market, using effective target marketing to achieve this. Target markets are groups within the prospective total market of visitors to and within New South Wales that are more likely to be interested in sustainable tourism experiences. The use of target markets is not a means to exclude other groups. Target markets help focus the efforts of government and industry to grow sustainable tourism experiences that will cater to the forecast growth in visitation, boost visitor satisfaction, and provide the maximum economic returns for the State.

Public submissions to the Taskforce identified the need to improve existing national park marketing and promotion and put forward a series of ways to achieve this.

Thirty-two submissions recommended increasing the promotion and marketing of national parks (including interpretation) at a national and international level. The submissions also suggested focusing on parks with special features, and significant historic sites.

The submissions further recognised that the identification of target markets needs to be undertaken in partnership with national and state tourism authorities and aligned with the state tourism strategy.

9.1 DECC marketing framework

To strengthen its approach to planning and marketing for visitation and achieve success in sustainable tourism, DECC has identified four key areas for focus:

• developing more products and experiences and refreshing existing products and offerings to ensure they appeal to target markets and demographics
• strengthening existing and building more partnerships with business, government and community
• undertaking more strategic marketing and promotion
• generating more revenue for future investment in the park system.

In order to address these focus areas and ensure the development and implementation of more effective and strategic marketing and promotion, DECC is committed to:

• understanding its visitors and target markets
• taking a strategic approach in key destinations around the State
• improving the appeal of the national parks offer by focusing on the total visitor experience, i.e. ensuring visitors are offered an integrated experience that draws together the full range of products and services, from interpretation through to accommodation.

To attract nature and cultural tourism participants, a range of tools and channels are currently used by DECC to promote national parks and reserves in New South Wales, including the internet, guides and brochures, public relations, advertising and events.

As an action out of the Living Parks – Sustainable Visitation Strategy, DECC has developed a promotions plan for national parks that identifies a core set of visitor types grouped according to the experiences they are seeking.
This broad segmentation provides a framework for the development of specific communication and marketing strategies and approaches for each group, while providing a platform from which to build over time a more robust and comprehensive understanding of the motivations, needs, preferences and types of national park audiences.

The six categories include:
- Family, Friends and Community
- Outdoor Pursuits
- Nature Lovers
- Natural Wonders
- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage
- Health & Wellbeing.

DECC is working in association with Tourism NSW and Tourism Australia to identify, develop and promote experiences within key destinations to key target markets as outlined further below.

### 9.2 Tourism NSW marketing framework

Tourism NSW has three core strategic areas of focus in its marketing of New South Wales:

- **Marketing Sydney within Australia**
  Tourism NSW promotes Sydney with two significant campaigns each year, supported by ongoing publicity for the city and its precincts, products and events. These campaigns offer tactical promotion and publicity opportunities for the tourism industry and other partners.

- **Marketing New South Wales within Australia**
  To break down the complexity of the State’s diverse product offer for consumers, Tourism NSW has split New South Wales into ‘intuitive holiday zones’. Each holiday zone has a distinctive flavour and is a pillar of *Brand NSW*.

  DECC’s promotional regions (as opposed to its operational regions), are deliberately closely aligned with the Tourism NSW holiday zones, to ensure consistency in the promotion of the State’s nature based opportunities, and more easily integrated regional marketing and campaign partnerships.

- **Marketing New South Wales overseas**
  Tourism NSW works with the travel trade industry overseas to develop an awareness of, and generate interest in, NSW products, people and places.

For marketing purposes, Tourism NSW uses a series of Traveller Types (or target markets) based on two research projects. In 2000, See Australia conducted a study into ‘holiday mindsets’ based on a ‘state of mind’ rather than specific demographics alone, and established five holiday mindsets. In 2004 Roy Morgan produced a segmentation designed to match the See Australia segments. The Roy Morgan holiday mindsets were called the Australian Travel Segments. The two segment models are profiled in the table below.

#### Table 11: Tourism NSW target markets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Holiday mindsets</th>
<th>Australian travel segments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pampadours</td>
<td>Luxury Travellers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compatriots</td>
<td>Family Travellers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True Travellers</td>
<td>Adventure Travellers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanderers</td>
<td>Touring Travellers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groupies</td>
<td>Peer Group Travellers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tourism NSW 2008
Tourism NSW is also driving the development of strategies and resources for tourism businesses operating in special interest markets, including:

- Aboriginal tourism
- accessible tourism
- backpacker tourism
- business tourism
- nature in tourism
- food and wine tourism
- cruise tourism
- surf tourism.

Several of these special interest markets overlap DECC’s niche markets, providing opportunities for Tourism NSW and DECC to align strategic marketing activities and approaches, and collaboratively build the capacity of tourism operators and the development of new sustainable tourism opportunities to help grow these markets.

9.3 Tourism Australia marketing framework

Analysis and research undertaken by Tourism Australia has identified three main target consumer groups for strategic marketing focus. They include:

- the Global Experience Seeker (in all markets except Australia and New Zealand)
- the New Zealand Experience Seeker
- the Australian Experience Seeker

These three groups are slightly different but share a similar mindset and a common set of values, attributes and motivations that extend beyond holiday and travel. Research insights show they are higher yielding target markets with a greater propensity to enjoy what Australia has to offer.

Tourism Australia has developed a set of authentic Australian Experiences that aim to distinguish Australia as a destination and appeal directly to the Experience Seeker. To achieve this, Tourism Australia and its industry partners must work together to identify, package and promote the very best of Australia’s tourism opportunities. The seven key Australian Experiences are:

- Aboriginal Australia
- Nature in Australia
- Outback Australia
- Aussie Coastal Lifestyle
- Food and Wine
- Australian Major Cities
- Australian Journeys.

Most of these experiences incorporate landscapes, nature based products and cultural experiences, thus providing unique opportunities for DECC to tap into and leverage national and international marketing opportunities in collaboration with Tourism Australia and other tourism industry partners.
10.0 Key issues associated with tourism and parks and reserves

Recent research and public submissions received by the Taskforce have highlighted a number of issues that require consideration and action in order to meet the NSW State Plan targets.


In particular, the O’Neill report (2008) highlighted the following issues specially relating to nature tourism in New South Wales:

- inadequate funding for DECC to develop and maintain visitor infrastructure
- restrictions on (properly accredited) guided tours in wilderness areas and the need to remove such restrictions, in keeping with the philosophy that where individuals are allowed to visit, commercial operators should be allowed to provide guided tours
- limited accessibility to regions for interstate and international visitors
- regulatory impediments in the planning system are a constraint on the creation of new properties
- need for more State Government funded advertising promoting New South Wales and its tourist destinations
- limited current use of the internet as a channel in forming tourism decisions
- that the ability of New South Wales to achieve State Plan targets will largely depend on its success in capturing its share of the forecast strong growth in international travel.

10.1 Public submissions to the Taskforce on Tourism and National Parks in New South Wales

The 293 submissions to the Taskforce were received from individuals, government agencies, non-government authorities, park user groups, tourism operators and other organisations. A range of issues were discussed in the submissions. The ten most commonly raised issues are summarised in Table 12, together with the number of submissions which raised each issue. For further information on public submissions refer to Appendix 2.

In total 64 key issues were raised in the submissions. A more detailed discussion of the key issues is provided below under the relevant Terms of Reference.
### Table 12: Most common issues raised in submissions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Number of submissions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature conservation is the primary objective of national parks</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locate visitor infrastructure outside of parks in surrounding communities – this will have economic, social and environmental benefits</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilderness areas to remain undisturbed, i.e. free from infrastructure and commercial activities</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation opportunities in natural areas available in State forests, private lands and other public lands</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support and encourage a partnership approach, i.e. with the Aboriginal community, conservation organisations, community volunteers, tourism operators, local councils</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No changes to legislation that weaken or remove the current protection of parks and reserves</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase promotion/marketing of national parks including interpretation</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government should be primary funding source for national parks</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for private conservation/ecotourism development</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce the restrictions on mountain bike riding/cycling</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Term of Reference 1: Objectives and targets

- Nature conservation must remain the primary objective of national parks. Any development or commercialisation must be a secondary priority and support nature conservation.
- Wilderness area objectives should remain primarily for the conservation of biodiversity. Such areas should be free from any commercial activities, infrastructure and large visitor numbers.
- There should be no legislative changes that weaken or remove the current level of protection for parks and reserves. Any attempt to loosen legislative protection of national parks will severely threat the environmental integrity of the reserve system and the future of biodiversity in New South Wales.
- Protected areas are important for climate resilience and counterbalancing climate change impacts. The Government must adopt the precautionary principle to ascertain the appropriateness of specific types of recreation, which can be assessed according to the impact they have on the natural environment, wildlife and other human visitors.
- Commercialisation of national parks will alienate individuals’ enjoyment of parks and reserves and will result in commercial interests restricting access to particular areas. As a natural attraction, national parks should be sustainably managed and not ‘loved to death’.
- Commercialisation of national parks will lead to the degradation of natural areas and may result in financial returns taking precedence over nature conservation.
- Approved commercial sector involvement in national parks must not compromise nature conservation in regards to their operations. Commercial activities can only exist in national parks where development results in minimal environmental impact, provides positive economic benefit and enhances the experience of nature for the visitor.
- A primary concern of expansion of commercial activities in national parks relates to the opportunity for organisations with development agendas that do not give primary importance to nature conservation, which may lead to private companies providing funding to park managers through leases and licences that will unduly influence management decisions. A key concern is the potential that commercial precincts will compromise the national park’s capacity to support nature.
• Heritage conservation is important to the management of national parks and includes issues such as developing legislation and management principles which require sustainable use to be compatible with heritage conservation

• Recognition of Aboriginal heritage and conservation is important as well as increasing employment and involvement of Aboriginal people in heritage management. Aboriginal heritage should be identified and maintained with the use of visitor information centres

• Tourism development and infrastructure located outside of national parks should aim for the ‘triple bottom line’ objective, which will result in social, environmental and economic benefits for parks and surrounding towns and communities

• Promotion of national parks should commence with those located within nominated National Landscape areas and should form the basis for resource allocation for the development of nature tourism opportunities

• High impact recreation activities such as horse riding, dog walking and four wheel driving are detrimental to nature conservation and require costly maintenance by park managers. High impact forms of recreation should be off limits in wilderness areas, and are better suited to other land tenures such as State forests and private lands

• The Taskforce and future tourism developers should work within existing legislation, conservation objectives and plans of management currently in place. Tourism developers need access to plans of management to assist in their planning and to ensure that visitor and environmental impacts are sustainable

**Term of Reference 2: Public lands, planning and partnerships**

• Recreational opportunities such as four wheel driving, horse riding, dog walking and quad bike riding are not suitable for national parks or wilderness areas and are best suited to other natural areas such as State forests, private lands and other public lands

• There is strong support and encouragement for a partnership approach to management of national parks. Potential partners in park management could include: the Aboriginal community; conservation organisations; community volunteers; tourism operators; tourism industry representatives; local councils; and marketing bodies. Finally, a regulatory body would be required to monitor developments in national parks to ensure continued protection

• There is strong support for Aboriginal involvement at all levels of tourism management within national parks and other land tenures. Aboriginal tourism opportunities should be identified, researched and encouraged as a means of employment and an opportunity for the Indigenous community to maintain links to Country and manage the land according to their knowledge

**Term of Reference 3: Research and information**

• Further research on national parks is supported with information required on visitor numbers, visitor motivations and uses within parks, sustainable tourism models and most importantly impacts of tourism and increased visitation the conservation values of parks

• There is support for the sustainable visitation strategy, *Living Parks*. It is suggested that the strategy be used as a guide for the tourism industry when developing visitation plans within national parks. The Government must also fund and resource the recreational approach to national parks which is detailed within the strategy
Term of Reference 4: Legislative, regulatory and structural constraints

- Strong support for the Government remaining the primary funding source for national parks, due to the benefits they provide: clean air; clean water; safe refuge for native flora and fauna; intact water tables; carbon capture and climate resilience. Funding should not play hostage to the tourism industry.
- To maintain the management and maintenance of national parks, continual funding supply should be guaranteed.
- Investment in well managed national parks has economic, social and ecological benefits.
- Encourage greater access to national parks for all stakeholders through: increased access to wilderness areas for commercial tour operators, developing an interpretive program, maintaining and developing fire trails so they can be accessed by a wider range of people, reinstating the school holiday program within national parks and by keeping park entry fees low so they remain accessible to everyone.
- Commercial tourism in wilderness areas threatens the integrity and primary purpose of these areas as nature conservation sanctuaries and may lead to economic pressure from the tourism industry to permit expanded infrastructure within them. Commercial access will not end with access, it will eventually demand supporting infrastructure such as roads, thus cars, accommodation infrastructure and supporting development such as retail outlets, toilet facilities etc.
- There is a strong need to improve national park signage on route and within the parks. A partnership strategy involving DECC working with the RTA and local councils to install directional signage would assist in tourists/visitors finding and enjoying parks.

Term of Reference 5: Opportunities

- Propose kayaking as a potential visitor activity within national parks. Kayaking is an environmentally sustainable activity to showcase the biodiversity of Australian parks.
- Recommends the NSW Government review current legislation to ensure consistency between tourism organisations and operators for whale and dolphin watching tours.
- Proposes volunteer hunting as a management tool for pest control and maintaining the natural habitat within national parks. This would result in economic benefits as hunters are tourists who improve conservation, camp in national parks and spend money in regional towns.
- Allow horse riding in national parks and wilderness areas. Suggests that horse riders can act as ‘roving rangers’ who can report on dumped cars, fallen trees along trails and illegal activities. Recommends that recreational horse riding should be promoted and encouraged by DECC through publications, online and through visitor centres.
- Mountain bike riding/cycling is a growth sport within national parks. Cycling is the 4th most popular physical activity in Australia and in 2007, 1.47 million bicycles were sold in Australia.
- Reduce the restrictions on mountain bike riding/cycling in national parks and wilderness areas to increase visitation to parks.
- Mountain bikers/cyclists are willing to assist and volunteer to help maintain off road trails within national parks. Suggests opening up single trails to sustainable recreational cycling to increase tourist visitation and increase national park use.
- Create and promote long walks/trails within national parks, 3–5 days in length. Connect the current series of stand alone walks into a longer more ‘iconic’ walk.
• Support for private conservation or ecotourism development in national parks that is demonstrated to be compatible with conservation values of each park. Agreement that tourism activities and infrastructure must remain low key, blend with the existing environment and have minimal impact. Requests that more support be given to commercial operators currently in national parks

• To minimise environmental impacts and as a cost-saving measure, it is suggested that existing facilities within national parks be managed. Commercial tourism operators should be focusing on national parks which have existing facilities

• Commercial tourism operations should be reviewed and only allowed access to national parks based on stringent standards and a code of conduct to ensure environmental protection is maintained. Proposes that all tourism operators within national parks be eco-accredited

• Kosciuszko National Park (KMP) has a multitude of tourism opportunities available as well as existing constraints to these operations. Opportunities exist for current stand-alone walking trails to be connected together for walking or bike riding trails. It was suggested to build a Kosciuszko Alpine Exploration Park to provide state of the art facilities for education and training, scientific activities to cater for year round tourists. A much discussed idea is the development of the Thredbo to Bullocks Flat multi-use trail project as an example of DECC response to increasing visitor experiences. Constraints include the fact that there is no summer public transport to KNP, and a need for higher recognition of tourism and recreation to occur within PoMs

• Encourage master planning for the delivery of ‘experiences’ at the landscape scale. Must be undertaken with a coalition of key players, with parks and tourism representatives in a forefront role

• There is a need to identify national parks’ target market. Identification of target markets needs to be in partnership with national and state tourism authorities and aligned with state tourism strategies, e.g. Tourism NSW should identify the profile of the ideal nature tourist target market to increase visitation

• To increase visitation to national parks, there is an immediate need to improve planning and maintenance of tracks and trails for all users

• The following are tourism activities identified as good examples of sustainable and suitable tourism opportunities and their perceived conservation benefits:
  • Stromlo Forest Park, Canberra; The seven stanes network, Scotland; and Whistler Mountain Bike Park, Canada demonstrate sustainable management of cycling can increase visitation, user satisfaction and appreciation of an area
  • Walking track along Coffs Creek in Coffs Harbour is an example of sensitive development which improves access and use of public land in the heart of a tourist centre and provides a natural experience without impacting on a national park
  • Examples of successful communities and governments working together to provide managed trail networks and cycling facilities:
    – Stromlo Forest Park (ACT)
    – Thredbo (NSW)
    – Manly Dam (NSW)
    – Blue Mountains (NSW), e.g. Oaks Trail
    – Otway Ranges (VIC)
    – City of Mitchem (SA)
  • An example of ecofriendly development is Jemby-Rinjah Lodge, an accommodation and education facility located in the Blue Mountains
• Examples of successful visitor centres include Dorrigo WHA Visitors Centre, Mareeba Wetlands Visitor Centre. A visitor centre on South Coast of New South Wales would be useful
• Cradle Mountain, Tasmania provides an example of accommodation and infrastructure for tourists situated outside the park
• The Bibbulmun Track, Western Australia has low impact camping, foot traffic only with a range of accommodation in towns along the way
• Nairobi National Park in Kenya and Kazuma Pan National Park in Zimbabwe attract visitors who are accommodated outside the parks
• Good examples of long term commercial leases for holiday parks in national parks include Murramarang Resort and Myall Shores Holiday Park
• Good examples of tourism accommodation is the Lane Cove River Tourist Park, a poor example is the Jenolan Caves contract for private management
• Earthwatch conduct activities which involve creating a balance between conservation and visitation
• The Grand Pacific Drive is a prime example of working collaboratively with neighbouring regions through strong commercial partnership
• Cascade Trail, in KMP is an example of multi-use trails which have been successful in meeting the needs of both mountain bikers and bush walkers

Term of Reference 6: Ticketing and pricing
• Support national park fees to remain low to ensure they are accessible to all. Visitation will increase if visitors perceive the price to be affordable.

Term of Reference 7: Licensing and accreditation of tour operators
• For local economic benefits and minimisation of impacts in national parks, it is suggested that visitor infrastructure should be located outside of parks, in surrounding communities
• Focus on improving existing infrastructure in national parks and consider the adaptive reuse of existing infrastructure. Recommends the establishment of an adaptive reuse program incorporating a review of current activity and a 5 year heritage investment program including an identified funding stream or allocation to be made available to support adaptive reuse projects for historic buildings on DECC estate. Suggests following the DECC Adaptive Reuse Guidelines and implementing an adaptive reuse team to expedite major projects
• Increased access to national parks will ultimately raise public awareness and appreciation of the environment and conservation
• Support increased, sustainable visitation to national parks, as long as conservation is paramount in visitation management and tourism development
• Support improved facilities to cater for caravans and motor homes in national parks. This could be achieved through a nationwide park pass and improved parking facilities for those with caravans
• There is a strong need to improve public transport to national parks to cater for projected increased visitation. A prime issue relates to the suggestion for a winter bus service to transport staff and tourists in an out of the ski resorts of Kosciuszko National Park
• Improve information, both online and on site, on visitor opportunities for those people with access difficulties. People with access requirements (those with young families, people with disabilities and elderly people) account for approximately 30 per cent of Australia’s population, yet there is little support or consistent information to encourage their visitation to national parks
• Improve the DECC website so information is more easily accessible and include information such as: points of interest which can be downloaded to GPS systems, quality information on each national park and reserve, identified regional driving trails, identified camping areas and identified walks and provide links with accommodation providers in local areas surrounding national parks. A good example is the Parks Victoria website

• Increase promotion and marketing of national parks (including interpretation) at a national and international level. Focus on parks' special features, interest and significant heritage sites. Identification of target markets needs to be in partnership with national and state tourism authorities and aligned with state tourism strategies

• Regional planning approach for national parks is heavily supported, which may include master planning. Proposes National Landscapes/statewide strategy needs to form the basis for resource allocation

• Support continued open and transparent community consultation, including the Indigenous community, through the PoM process, and reiterates the importance of PoMs in place prior to identification of park for increased tourism. There should be no fast tracking of developments on park or special provisions for tourism industry

• Support memorandum of understanding (MoU) in relation to national park management. MoU must be developed to acknowledge the capacity of visitors to become volunteers that contribute to park management. Support MoU except with regard to any proposals to amend the NPW Act and regulations to reduce conservation objectives of Act. Support MoU between agencies to increase visitation that ensures appropriate conservation and biodiversity values remain protected. Proposes that MoU includes Federal and State departments

Term of Reference 8: Training for guides and visitor services

• Recognise there is a need for DECC staff training to increase and improve, e.g. require all DECC guides to undertake a training and accreditation program before being allowed to work in national parks, training to work with tourism industry professionals and customer service based training. This will increase the value of a national park experience for the visitor

• There needs to be a chance for park managers to include tourism related and volunteering material within education opportunities, e.g. DECC should consult with educational institutions to create a Research Centre for Excellence in Tourism and National Park Management. Create more visitor centres at varied locations within national parks to represent diversity of bioregions and provide for interpretation, guidance and enjoyment for visitors. Develop ‘Ranger on a Disk’ whereby visitors can download self guided tours onto their personal MP3 players

Other issues (not covered by a Term of Reference)

• Strong disagreement with the O’Neill Report recommendations and findings regarding national parks, particularly that national parks are not doing enough to support the tourism industry and need to be opened up to more development to generate more revenue. This would adversely impact on nature conservation and wilderness values
11.0 Issue analysis and findings

11.1 Overview
The review of research and background information (Chapters 1–9) along with the comments presented in the public submissions (Chapter 10) provide valuable insights on the issues and opportunities associated with nature tourism in New South Wales.

This section aims to address the most critical issues considered by the Taskforce to be impeding the growth of sustainable nature tourism and constraining achievement of the objectives set out in the NSW State Plan.

The Taskforce has identified the most critical issues as:

- lack of an integrated and comprehensive approach to developing a sustainable nature tourism sector in New South Wales
- product gaps and undersupply of experiences to cater to existing and emerging nature tourism markets
- limited coordination and focus on planning, development and management of key nature tourism destinations
- lack of an integrated policy and planning framework to optimise private nature tourism investment in product gaps
- the financial sustainability of enhancing or maintaining existing visitor facilities and services, and/or providing new ones
- lack of easily accessible information that showcases nature tourism products and experiences available in New South Wales to potential visitors.

11.2 Growth potential for sustainable nature tourism in New South Wales

In New South Wales tourism is one of the State's most significant industries, however it has been losing its market share of the Australian tourism market in recent years. Despite the overall downturn, visitation to national parks remains popular and continues to grow. National parks are an important focus for Australia’s tourism industry with sustainable nature tourism the fastest growing sector in the Australian tourism market.

Planning for sustainable nature tourism at a statewide level is undertaken by a number of NSW Government agencies and at a local level by local councils. The approach is traditionally destination based. Public land managers have recently increased their efforts to attract new visitors, in line with the NSW State Plan, however there is no strategic or coordinated approach. There is a lack of strategic positioning of New South Wales as an outstanding destination providing iconic nature tourism experiences against its key competitors such as Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania. As a result New South Wales is falling behind other states and territories in its approach to sustainable nature tourism.

To reverse this trend it will be important for Tourism NSW and land managers to work in partnership to focus their attention on developing sustainable nature tourism experiences for the agreed target markets in prioritised destinations around New South Wales. This approach is considered critical in guiding efficient allocation of limited resources, making significant improvements to key sustainable nature tourism destinations and increasing the State's overall tourism competitiveness.
To reposition New South Wales as a competitive player in this area, the NSW Government should commit to sustainable nature tourism as a priority in the new NSW Tourism Industry Plan with defined roles for Tourism NSW and public land management agencies. The plan should be supported by a memorandum of understanding between the Parks and Wildlife Group of DECC and the Tourism NSW component of the Department of State and Regional Development. The current draft MoU should be finalised as soon as possible.

Along with targeting completion and substantial implementation of nature tourism elements of the NSW Tourism Industry Plan, a primary objective of the next 2–3 years should be to maintain the NSW market share of international and domestic visitors who visit national parks and other reserves.

In the 3–5 year planning horizon New South Wales should aim to increase total visitor nights for travellers engaging in a nature tourism activity in proportion with the State Plan visitor night target.

### 11.3 Building support for ongoing protection through nature tourism

It has long been accepted that sustainable nature tourism can be a useful and effective tool for conservation and management of protected areas (IUCN 2002). If well managed, nature tourism may provide the financial and political support needed to ensure the sustainability of the values preserved in protected areas. Sustainable nature tourism may also lead to a greater understanding of those values, which in turn can foster public and political support for their protection and for additional areas being protected.

Individuals and community and conservation groups have worked tirelessly over many decades to create an enviable system of public spaces, reserves and protected areas in New South Wales. Increasing support for their ongoing protection will only be achieved if these places remain relevant to the community. Numerous submissions received by the Taskforce acknowledge that sustainable nature tourism and visitor opportunities help to enhance people’s understanding and appreciation of nature and encourage support for continued conservation of our protected area system. It is important that visitors from all backgrounds have the opportunity to experience nature and gain an appreciation of its unique natural and cultural experiences.
11.4 Presenting a network of sustainable nature tourism opportunities on public land in New South Wales

Public lands are set aside in New South Wales for the benefit of the public. The public benefits include the protection of natural and cultural values, sustainable resource use (in the case of State forests) and the provision of public recreation, enjoyment and education. The importance and priority of these objectives vary according to the particular category of land. New South Wales has a vast system of public lands, including parks and reserves reserved under the NPW Act, marine protected areas, State forests, state parks and Crown land. There are also large tracts of private lands that offer excellent sustainable nature based experiences for visitors. Together these areas offer visitors a wide range of recreation and tourism opportunities and provide a solid foundation for the development of a strong nature tourism industry in New South Wales.

Some submissions suggested that additional recreational activities could be better catered for in national parks such as mountain bike and cycling tracks, conservation volunteering opportunities, hunting, four-wheel driving and horse riding. The Taskforce considers that some of these activities could be provided for, but some are likely to have a detrimental impact on the conservation values of some sites. Therefore, all activities should be considered within the context of their impact on the environment and the legislation under which they are managed.

The fundamental purpose for establishing parks and reserves under the NPW Act is the ongoing protection and enhancement of conservation values. Sustainable nature tourism can only be successful for reserves established under the NPW Act if the conservation values are maintained or enhanced by the activities undertaken. The national park ‘brand’ has marketing value for the tourism industry but the essence of that brand is naturalness and beauty and therefore it will only have currency if the conservation values of parks and reserves are secured and enhanced.

11.5 Maintaining equity and access to public lands

Concern was expressed in some submissions that additional sustainable nature tourism opportunities may not be affordable to all, thus raising the issue of social equity and accessibility to parks and reserves. Others argue that nature tourism can actually improve the equity of access to parks and reserves for those who do not have the necessary skills, physical fitness or age to safely undertake nature tourism activities without a guide.

Some visitors seek an easy, safe, comfortable and brief experience of nature, perhaps in a large group or with a guide, while others prefer wild places away from any sign of development. Some visitors are prepared to pay for the experience while others are seeking low cost options.

The public land network in New South Wales supports a range of styles of nature tourism, and sound planning ensures that a variety of different settings cater for different types of opportunities to connect with nature across a wide range of landscapes including rainforest, alpine, coast and desert.

The Taskforce has concluded that managing the public land system to support a range of opportunities can improve the equity of access for all segments of the community, from those who seek low cost opportunities to those who are prepared to pay more for the experience.

Sustainable nature tourism planning should ensure that across any region there is no net loss of opportunities for ‘unstructured’, low cost, minimal impact enjoyment of undeveloped settings in parks, and that all sites do not progressively reach higher levels of development, use and visitation.
The Taskforce also acknowledges that in planning all impacts have to be considered not just direct ecological footprint, but impacts such as noise from traffic, power boats, generators or bus airconditioning, visual impacts such as reflective roofs, powerlines, parking areas and experiential impacts such as large groups using previously small group camping areas or trails.

11.6 The National Landscapes approach to nature tourism

The National Landscapes approach discussed in Chapter 2 involves cross-jurisdictional cooperation between tourism/councils and conservation agencies to identify the essential values (or brand) of a region, and plan on how to present these values to the visitor regardless of tenure across an “experiences landscape”. It offers a new model for planning that should be considered by the Government for the development of nature tourism in New South Wales. The ‘experiences’ concept makes it imperative that all players in the nature tourism industry are planning together.

The National Landscapes program illustrates that the most effective regional groups are partnerships undertaken at the regional level of park agencies, local government and tourism organisations (Leaver 2007). These groupings form the steering committees which drive (and oversee) subsequent destination branding, tourism master planning and delivery of the ‘experience’. The role of central agencies is to support this involvement in a policy and resource context.

The Taskforce recognises the benefit of focusing on sustainable nature tourism opportunities within the identified National Landscapes as the program offers a unique marketing opportunity for New South Wales and is a positive step towards planning for partnerships involving conservation and sustainable nature tourism.

The value of the National Landscapes approach was also recognised in a number of public submissions. The submissions expressed the view that the National Landscape areas should become the priority for the development of sustainable nature tourism opportunities and related resource allocations.

The Taskforce recognises the value of engaging community conservation organisations in their planning.

11.7 Adapting to changing visitor expectations

Visitors are demanding more engaging sustainable nature tourism experiences centred on a destination’s natural and cultural heritage. Critical components of successful sustainable nature tourism experiences include:

- high levels of guided and signed interpretation
- evidence of a ‘return’ to the environment through sustainable practices
- environmentally sustainable design
- creating ‘a sense of place’ which is a unique connection to the destination’s natural and cultural environment built into products and infrastructure
- interacting with ‘locals’
- offering value-added products including high quality hospitality and services
- linking sustainable nature tourism experiences with other tourism sectors

One critical finding of many visitor satisfaction surveys worldwide, Australia included, is that the majority of visitors to national parks prefer limited and low key infrastructure. Visitors want a limited number of walking tracks, look-outs and visitor facilities, and maps and directional signs for independent park exploration.
Recent research undertaken by Tourism Victoria (2008) supports this finding, however the preferred level of infrastructure depends on the type of nature tourism participant. Some visitors tend to have a high level of interest and knowledge of the activity; actively seek out physical challenges; are prepared to stay in more remote locations with limited or no facilities; will travel to destinations solely to undertake the activity; and are more likely to be self-guided. The majority of visitors undertake activities for shorter durations; many lack the skills to undertake the activities without a guide; are looking for appropriate accommodation and facilities; and prefer a broader range of low key experiences, including food, wine and cultural heritage. New South Wales has a lack of nature based tourism experiences offering a high level of interpretation and/or high quality service and accommodation, to engage visitors and connect them with the environment.

To remain relevant, Government and industry need to adapt to changing travel patterns and visitor interests if they are to continue to attract people to parks and reserves. This will mean enhancing existing facilities and experiences, as well as providing new facilities and experiences to meet the range of visitor expectations.

The Taskforce is of the view that to enhance planning and adapt to changing visitor expectations improvements in the consistency and distribution of research and monitoring of visitor holiday and recreation preferences across government agencies is required.

11.8 Improving and enhancing the nature tourism experience in key destinations

New South Wales is facing competition from destinations within Australia and overseas that have, or are developing, high quality nature tourism facilities and experiences in outstanding locations, many of which are located in national parks. For example, Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania have, or are developing, multi-day walking activities with well designed and located permanent accommodation facilities (Bay of Fires, Tasmania), demountable ecolodges (Ningaloo Reef Retreat, Western Australia), and safari camps (Cape Conran, Victoria).

The areas with strongest potential for the development of new or enhanced nature tourism products are those with the State’s most spectacular parks and reserves, providing ‘iconic’ and ‘best of’ park experiences within 2–3 hours drive of major domestic and international airports in Sydney, Ballina, Gold Coast, Coffs Harbour and Canberra (see Appendices 3–14 for product enhancement focal points). These areas include National Landscapes (Australian Alps, Green Cauldron, Blue Mountains and Coastal Wilderness) and World Heritage areas.

For example, Sydney Harbour National Park (SHNP) is well positioned to enhance the experience of domestic and international visitors and showcase Sydney as a city of unique natural and cultural beauty. But SHNP requires additional infrastructure to better meet visitor needs such as interpretive signage and improved walking trails. These facilities will encourage domestic and international tourists to experience the Harbour and perhaps extend their stay in Sydney.

Opportunities in areas surrounding Sydney include the Blue Mountains, Hunter Valley, Illawarra and Southern Highlands (refer to Appendices 5, 6 and 9). There may also be additional opportunities to recognise, develop, market and promote some new and existing nature and cultural based tour and fly/drive products in Western New South Wales (see Appendix 8).

In order to address product gaps and increase the State’s competitiveness, it is necessary to expand the range of nature based experiences on offer in these regions of New South Wales. This should include the creation of a small number of flagship walks and trails incorporating small, well designed ecolodges and visitor facilities, observation sites, improved guiding, interpretation and the development of special events, as well as accommodation options for a broad range of visitors.
There are mixed views about whether these facilities should be located in parks and reserves managed under the NPW Act. Some submissions expressed the desire for some facilities, such as accommodation to be kept off park and catered for in adjoining towns, whilst others suggested that carefully designed facilities ‘on park’ can provide a range of benefits.

The Taskforce believes that visitor facilities in parks should be considered on a case by case basis, but with a clear requirement that the park and reserve system should benefit.

In providing a diversity of nature tourism settings and opportunities appropriate to the land tenure, style of use, and the interests of local, domestic and international visitors, there should be adequate consideration and weight given to current ‘unstructured’ minimal impact enjoyment of undeveloped settings.

11.9 Private sector investment in sustainable nature tourism

The private sector has expressed an interest in contributing to the development of sustainable nature tourism products and experiences, however private operators have incurred significant financial losses through planning and approval processes that take years to determine whether a project will be approved. The sector can only invest time and money in projects where the approvals process is efficient and financially viable results are possible.

Alternatively many submissions to the Taskforce expressed the view that the Government should be the primary investor in parks and reserves and do not consider commercial activities compatible with nature conservation.

The Taskforce believes that the Government’s ability to adequately maintain and enhance visitor facilities and infrastructure is constrained by available public funds, in demand for many purposes. Alternative funding mechanisms are considered necessary.

The Taskforce does not support the sale of protected areas for tourism purposes (privatisation) or the establishment of a government business enterprise to manage park tourism assets on a commercial basis (commercialisation).

The Taskforce understands that revenue received from nature tourism activities will never replace government funding as the primary source of revenue for park agencies, but can make a major contribution to generating real increases in park funding.

It considers that the establishment of partnerships with the private and not-for-profit sectors can potentially offer the funding needed to upgrade existing, develop new, and maintain visitor infrastructure. There are a number of examples where partnerships between the private and public sectors have successfully contributed to visitor infrastructure in New South Wales and elsewhere in Australia.

Common themes for each of these successful partnerships is that they result in public good, including enhancing conservation, providing economic and social benefits, diversifying revenue streams to parks, and recognising Traditional Owners.

The Taskforce has concluded that limited private sector investment in sustainable nature tourism facilities by way of partnerships is appropriate and should continue where it is consistent with legislative objectives, minimises environmental impact and provides a net benefit to the park and reserve system.
11.10 Clarifying the regulatory framework for sustainable nature tourism in parks and reserves managed under the NPW Act

Some submissions expressed concern about the need for greater certainty if the private sector is to invest in sustainable nature tourism opportunities in New South Wales. It has been suggested that the existing legislative, policy and planning requirements can be confusing, costly and time consuming. These concerns are centred on the NPW Act and DECC policies. Other submissions expressed the view that the legislative and policy framework does not require change to enable the private sector to provide nature tourism opportunities in New South Wales.

The industry is seeking greater certainty on where and what tourism projects are likely to be approved in order to make investment decisions and is seeking a commitment from Government to support sustainable nature tourism.

The NPW Act in particular is ambiguous about allowable activities. Examples of uses where the Act could provide greater certainty, clarity or remove inconsistencies include proposals for facilities and activities related to:

- art and performance exhibitions
- food and wine experiences (e.g. Indigenous cuisine tours)
- festivals, events and other gatherings
- mental health, physical therapy and wellness activities
- education services
- conservation volunteering opportunities
- private functions and uses such as weddings and group bookings
- other activities which enhance the enjoyment of visitors in their natural surrounds.

The limitation on proposed sustainable nature tourism arises from the current drafting of the Act, which either directly constrains the relevant proposed use or is unclear in a matter of statutory interpretation. Accordingly, there is scope for reform to provide greater certainty in relation to the type and extent of sustainable nature tourism permitted. This needs to be done in a way that safeguards conservation values.

Objectives and management principles

All parks and reserves protected under the NPW Act have a primary conservation objective by definition. Appreciation and sustainable visitor use is a management objective of some reserve categories as outlined in Appendix 17.

The objects of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NPW Act) should remain unchanged to underscore the pre-eminence of nature conservation as the primary purpose for national parks and reserves.

Where organised visitor use such as sustainable nature tourism is not specifically mentioned as a management objective of a reserve category, opportunities for private sector investment in infrastructure or activities remain unclear. Where visitor use is a management objective, visitation is often viewed as a public good not to be restricted by user pays (Tourism & Transport Forum Australia 2007). The visitor use objective may also be interpreted as requiring a strong nexus to the natural and cultural values of the park and not extending to raising revenue that may benefit the management of the park.
The Taskforce recognises however, that sustainable tourism is a valid use of national parks throughout the world and is supported by the IUCN Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories 2008. To help provide clarity on what is permissible under the NPW Act, the expression ‘sustainable visitor use and enjoyment’ should be replaced with ‘sustainable visitor use, tourism, recreation and enjoyment’. The Taskforce recommends the World Tourism Organisation definition of sustainable tourism as an appropriate standard. The most widely accepted definition of sustainable tourism is that of the World Tourism Organisation. The WTO defines sustainable tourism as:

“tourism which leads to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems.”

In addition the WTO describes the development of sustainable tourism as a process which meets the needs of present tourists and host communities whilst protecting and enhancing needs in the future (Shah 2002).

New structures and existing buildings

As outlined in Chapter 3, two separate sections of the NPW Act provide for leases and licences for new structures (section 151) and existing buildings (section 151 or 151B, depending on the proposed use), however the sections that address the provision of visitor facilities provides uncertainty. This is a significant barrier which could be overcome by simplifying the legislation to provide clarity whilst ensuring the conservation objectives of the Act are retained.

To minimise this uncertainty, particularly in relation to development applications for new developments and adaptive reuse on park, the Taskforce has considered the need to review the wording contained within sections 151 and 151B of the NPW Act. A revised s151 would relate to all the permissible activities already contained within s151B but be applicable to both adaptive reuse of existing buildings and for new building developments. This would:

- remove an apparent inconsistency between the purposes for which existing buildings and new developments can be utilised
- reduce uncertainty for new tourism developments by making it clear that other uses such as conference and event centres (for example, for holding wedding receptions), art galleries and theatres may be permissible as part of a development proposal. This has the added benefit of communicating the potential range of opportunities available for adaptive reuse
- address the development application process for those proposals involving both new development and adaptive reuse of an existing building on the same site. Currently, the legislation requires that two separate applications would need to be lodged for the same proposal, under section 151 and section 151B.

Regional parks and state conservation areas

The NPW Act does not currently allow for licences and franchises for commercial activities to be granted for state conservation areas, regional parks, karst conservation reserves or Aboriginal areas. It also restricts the granting of leases and licences to occupy or use Aboriginal lands reserved as state conservation areas or regional parks under Part 4A of the NPW Act.

This has arisen due to drafting errors in previous amendments to the Act. This legislative anomaly also provides a barrier to the development of Aboriginal enterprises on Part 4A lands jointly managed under the provisions of the NPW Act.
Nature reserves

The NPW Act makes the granting of a licence for trade, business or occupation permissible only in national parks and historic sites. By omission, the granting of a licence for such activities is taken to be not permissible in nature reserves. This effectively prohibits any research, monitoring and educational group activities being undertaken in nature reserves when carried out by third parties under a licence or contract arrangement. Precluding these activities in nature reserves on this basis is anomalous and contrary to the management principles for this reserve category.

Wilderness

Wilderness areas are those lands that have been least modified and influenced by humans. These values were recognised in a large number of submissions received. Wilderness areas assist in the achievement of State Plan Goals (E4, E8) and are a critical component of a comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve system in New South Wales. They are essential in the amelioration of climate change impacts on biodiversity and provide unique self-reliant recreational opportunities.

Currently self-reliant walking, cycling or canoeing with a paid guide is precluded under the wilderness provisions of the NPW Act.

These types of activities are not prohibited within wilderness areas and may legally be pursued by individuals or non-commercial recreation groups, such as schools and bushwalking clubs.

The situation in New South Wales is inconsistent with arrangements in Victoria and Queensland. In Victoria and Queensland commercial activity in wilderness is permitted where the activities are appropriate for the appreciation and understanding of wilderness (Victoria) or are in accordance with the management principles and plan for the wilderness areas (Queensland).

The Taskforce has considered the submissions on this issue and has concluded that a sensible case can be made for guided experiences in wilderness areas and that the concerns expressed in the submissions can be addressed through sound management. It considers that the opportunity for guided experiences in wilderness is consistent with the Wilderness Act 1987, which requires DECC to promote public understanding and appreciation of wilderness. The Taskforce considers the major benefits of allowing guided experiences in wilderness areas to be:

- improved visitor safety through trained guides
- equitable access to public lands
- improved conservation through minimising environmental impacts.

Therefore it has concluded that in developing iconic walks and other nature tour experiences, access to wilderness areas may be part of the experience. Overseas and less experienced visitors may need a guide for safety, and specialist equipment for self-reliant activities such as walking, cycling or canoeing in remote areas. Currently self-reliant walking, cycling or canoeing with a paid guide is precluded under the wilderness provisions of the NPW Act. The Act should make provision for the Minister to issue permits for guided self-reliant activities by small groups in wilderness areas. The Minister should seek advice from the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council on what guided activities may be appropriate for any particular wilderness area being considered. Such activities might be provided by licensed tourism operators, not-for-profit, community or independent groups, but such operations must be consistent with activities currently permissible for individual users and should not involve vehicle access or provision of any additional facilities. Any tourism operator seeking a permit should also meet all the requirements for licences under the Act.
Plans of management

Plans of management play a vital role, involving the public in shaping the management of protected areas. Under Section 81 and 81A of the NPW Act, all activities in parks including private sector involvement through leases and licences, must be carried out in accordance with the plan of management (PoM). PoMs are adopted, amended or cancelled by the Environment Minister after public notice, consultation, consideration and advice from the relevant regional advisory committee and the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council established under the Act. Lease and licence holders have no specific consultative rights on PoMs under the Act. PoMs are currently independent of any regional or tourism master planning process.

Should a new nature tourism proposal not be in accordance with the current PoM but be considered appropriate, DECC would have to amend the current PoM. This is a highly prescriptive process under the Act and can take up to two years.

Each reserve in New South Wales has its own plan of management and there is a relatively low degree of consistency between plans of management across the State. This, coupled with the extensive procedural requirements for making and amending plans of management, makes it difficult to adapt a uniform tourism strategy for land reserved under the Act.

It is important that opportunities for sustainable nature tourism are systematically considered in the context of regional tourism plans or master plans for National Landscape areas. The outcomes of these processes should then be considered when plans of management are being drafted or where a PoM already exists, the need for amendments should be considered. Planning for nature tourism will be all the more meaningful if it is undertaken on a wider, regional basis rather than considering individual parks or reserves in isolation, or responding to a particular tourism proposal after a PoM has been prepared.

To facilitate nature tourism, regional tourism plans for broader regions including iconic parks and National Landscape areas should be prepared by land management and partner agencies with community, local government and industry input.

Regional tourism plans would provide a cross-tenure context for formal statutory plans such as forest and park plans of management and local environmental plans. Tourism components of statutory plans should be reviewed to consider the outcome of the regional plans. Any review of plans for parks and reserves would be undertaken through the normal statutory process.

To ensure a regional perspective, the option of developing a single integrated plan covering all the parks and reserves in a bioregion or subregion should be trialled in a region such as that encompassing the Green Cauldron National Landscape and Gondwana World Heritage Area.

From time to time proposals may emerge which are in accord with regional tourism planning but may not be provided for in an existing plan of management for a particular park. The plan of management amendment process should have explicit timeframes added to ensure timely and efficient consideration of such proposals while retaining all established mechanisms for public consultation.
11.11 A planning and policy framework to facilitate sustainable nature tourism investment

Planning

The Taskforce recognises that potential investors in nature tourism products and infrastructure are no longer prepared to invest time and money into projects where the approvals process renders it overly difficult to achieve financially viable end results. In short, the process is part of the problem. This issue is not confined to New South Wales. The Victorian and Western Australian governments have established processes to address this perceived investment barrier. These processes involve identifying a land parcel and subjecting it to existing environmental, heritage protection and tourism planning processes, and presenting proposals to the market ‘unencumbered’, with most regulatory approvals for the site having been identified and finalised. This approach has been cited as a positive step towards government and private sector partnerships with community involvement and a means of facilitating viable and innovative business. Further information on the potential participants and the benefits of the scheme are outlined in Appendix 16.

To help meet the demands of nature/cultural tourism in New South Wales and as a practical method to expedite the realisation of NSW State Plan objectives, with community input through regional planning and subsequent plan of management processes, Tourism NSW should work with DECC, Department of Lands, Forests NSW and other agencies to proactively identify and assess areas for new sustainable nature based visitor experiences. Necessary approvals for new attractions, experiences and accommodation should be obtained before seeking partners from the private sector to invest in opportunities, similar to schemes operating in Western Australia and being developed in the Northern Territory.

The NSW initiative would assist in the identification of tourism sites on public land across the State considered ‘investor ready’ by facilitating the approvals processes required for tourism accommodation and ancillary tourism activities including cultural centres, visitor centres and other similar tourism related activities. Similar to ‘Landbank’, as outlined in Appendix 16, the NSW initiative would consider tourism sites across the State, a select number of which may be within NSW protected areas but the majority of which would be outside protected areas. Opportunities might also exist in the development of model local environmental plans (LEPs) to ensure that zonings are readily adaptable for the development of tourism related sites.

While pursuing the proactive approach embodied in the proposed initiative, there is a need to ensure that Government agencies do not incur considerable up-front expenses in making sites ‘investor friendly’ only to find that the tourism sector has little or no interest in using the site/s for the intended purpose. A balance would need to be struck to ensure that:

- a degree of certainty of need exists prior to the Government embarking on actions to complete preparatory work to make a site available
- the uses of potential sites are flexible enough to allow for a range of tourism related opportunities
- any risk in preparing a site to be ‘investor ready’ is shared between the tourism industry and Government.

Long term strategic planning would be a critical component to the success of the initiative through the establishment of partnerships with key players striving towards the achievement of outstanding tourism and conservation outcomes. Through identifying potential nature tourism sites, the initiative would encourage regional planning, including the appropriate provision of access and infrastructure in balance with natural and cultural conservation outcomes on public land. The initiative would further seek to enhance the value of tourism to the regional economy and the role of protected areas in that economy.
NSW planning system reforms

The review into tourism in New South Wales conducted by John O’Neill (2008) identified the State’s current planning processes as a significant barrier to tourism, and highlighted the NSW planning system reforms as the likely solution to this. An independent Planning Assessment Commission has been established to determine approximately 80 per cent of projects currently dealt with by the Minister for Planning. The reforms allow for the establishment of new Joint Regional Planning Panels composed of two council representatives and three State government appointees who will decide ‘regionally significant’ projects, including residential projects worth more than $50 million and commercial projects worth more than $20 million.

The Taskforce acknowledges the recent decision by the NSW Planning Minister to assist tourism development outside parks by enabling ecotourism proposals of more than $5 million to be considered by Joint Regional Planning Panels.

The Taskforce endorses a regional planning approach to sustainable nature tourism including tourism development on private land outside parks and recognises that there are opportunities for nature based tourism development which can facilitate visitation to parks and reserves. The Taskforce recommends the NSW Government take positive steps to encourage such development.

The Taskforce recommends the NSW Government review environmental zones E2, E3 and E4 in the NSW Standard Instrument for Principal Local Environmental Plans. The review should consider appropriate nature tourism use on private land outside Zone E1 (national parks and nature reserves).

The NSW Government should also consider extending the land tax exemption granted to agricultural use to also apply to nature tourism land use outside parks and reserves.

Policy framework

The Taskforce recognises that certain Government policies may be perceived as a potential barrier for the development of partnerships which have shared sustainable tourism and conservation objectives. Improvements to policies will advance opportunities for the creation of a small number of quality nature tourism facilities, including flagship walks with roofed accommodation, ecolodges and park visitor facilities around the natural attractions of New South Wales.

Accommodation and other visitor infrastructure

The DECC Accommodation Policy adopted in 1989 and modified in 2002 is viewed by the Taskforce as preventing case by case consideration of minimal impact, sustainable nature based accommodation in or adjacent to national parks and other public land. The existing policy lacks clarity and consistency on the types of accommodation which are permissible.

Other states and territories, such as Victoria and Tasmania, are developing quality tourism accommodation in national parks. Both these states are developing multi-day walking activities with roofed accommodation. For example, Parks Victoria now offers visitors Wilderness Retreats which are elevated, safari-style tents supported by a modular steel frame which does not require footings. The accommodation has minimal impact on park values and complements the environment (Parks Victoria 2008).

There is concern from some stakeholders that sustainable nature tourism will result in inappropriate development with negative impacts on reserves and their conservation values. There is a subsequent push to limit the nature and style of visitor facilities to prevent potential impacts. For example, there is concern that some types of permanent or semi-permanent accommodation (demountable cabins, safari tents) would cause unacceptable impacts and therefore temporary accommodation (camping) is preferable.
To date there has been no comparative analysis to determine the most appropriate type and style of nature based visitor accommodation for NSW parks and reserves.

Government, industry and the community would benefit from an agreed understanding on the range of options and environmental impacts of nature based accommodation. Agreement on preferred styles, sizes, and designs to minimise the potential environmental impacts of such facilities would also greatly assist.

The DECC visitor accommodation and facilities policies should be reviewed to clarify where and when low key, low impact sustainable nature tourism facilities, including accommodation, are appropriate in national parks and reserves.

The review should address equitable, but appropriate community access. A revised policy should ensure that accommodation and tourism facilities are designed to support visitation to natural areas by enhancing the visitor experience and enjoyment through presenting and preserving an area’s natural, cultural and historic values. This does not include residential or transient accommodation, such as motels, which are not designed to attract visitors by presenting the area’s values.

In determining the location, grading and approval of accommodation and facilities, DECC should assess their environmental, social and economic sustainability and viability on a case by case basis, giving consideration to:

- the impact on the natural, cultural and historical values of the individual site and surrounding area, including the impact of structures on-site and any infrastructure needed to supply the site
- appropriate design of accommodation and tourism facilities in sympathy with the area’s values including materials, construction, height, scale and perspective
- providing accommodation, tourism facilities and experiences which attract visitors and deepen visitors’ understanding, enjoyment and appreciation of the area’s values
- providing a mix of accommodation and tourism offerings across the park system which appeals to a broad range of visitor interests, comfort levels, confidence in nature and demographic and socio-economic groups
- enable visitors and tourism to make an economic, social or environmental contribution to conserving the area’s values
- the impact on other users of the park system.

Where, through the plan of management process, accommodation is considered appropriate the plan of management for that park should identify potential sites using a grading system addressing environmental, cultural, historic and social impacts. The following grading system is a possible model:

1. Accommodation without utilities except toilets and basic shelters:
   a. areas for accommodation without hard roof structures such as camp grounds
   b. removable/semi-permanent accommodation such as standing camps and demountable cabins
   c. caravan and campervan parking
   d. permanent roofed accommodation such as huts
2. Accommodation with remotely provided utilities such as solar power, portable gas, generators, water tanks and on-site sewage treatment:
   a. areas for accommodation without hard roof structures such as camp grounds
   b. removable/semi-permanent accommodation such as standing camps and demountable cabins
   c. caravan and campervan parking
   d. hard roofed permanent accommodation such as huts, cabins, lodges and eco-resorts

3. Accommodation with site connections to mains power, water and sewerage utilities:
   a. areas for accommodation without hard roof structures such as camp grounds
   b. removable/semi-permanent accommodation such as standing camps and demountable cabins
   c. caravan and campervan parking
   d. hard roofed permanent accommodation such as huts, cabins, lodges and eco-resorts.

The plan of management would nominate the grade/s applying to each visitor accommodation site, such as Grade 1.a., or a range of grades such as Grades 1 to Grade 3.b. Identification and grading of accommodation sites in a plan of management (and the approval of licence or lease for use of those sites) would be in accordance with the accommodation and facilities policy.

**Leasing and licensing policies**

Research conducted by Nielsen, Wilson and Buultjens (2008) examined the relationships between DECC and lessees and reported on how these relationships can be improved. They suggest that DECC review its policies to ensure:

- a strategic, coordinated and organisation-wide approach is taken to the identification and development of lease arrangements
- the sourcing and selection of potential lessees is facilitated in a manner which is clear, inviting and encouraging, and provides applicants with good insight into the nature of partnerships with DECC
- partnerships with lessees are publicly and openly recognised and promoted, on an ongoing basis
- lessees’ simple requests are responded to in a timely and efficient way, so that their businesses can continue to operate in a professional manner
- DECC is proactive in strategically predicting lessees’ more complex requests and provides a clear structure for their resolution
- DECC capitalises on their lessees’ skills, knowledge and services, and utilises these assets
- the personal commitment of lessees to their businesses is recognised, and their long term business goals facilitated.

In line with the research findings by Nielsen, Wilson and Buultjens (2008) the DECC leasing and licensing policy should be reviewed to clarify acceptable and preferred public–private partnerships, taking account of the findings of the recent review commissioned by DECC mentioned above. Performance models should be used that ensure there is a net benefit to the park system and that visitor derived revenue is retained for park management purposes.
Commercial tour operator licensing

DECC is finalising a review of its existing licensing system aimed at encouraging visitation and ensuring community, visitor and operator expectations are better met. The proposed new system will establish a more efficient, equitable and simple licensing system. It will improve certainty for industry investment and security by simplifying the licence application process and licence conditions, and extending the duration of licence terms. The new system will further improve performance, professionalism and standards by clarifying minimum requirements for all operators regarding certification, reporting and monitoring. The system will enable licensees to forward sell into the international market place. It will also seek to improve enforcement and compliance, offering a range of benefits to operators who are licensed, such as promotion and marketing opportunities with DECC and Tourism NSW.

The proposed new DECC licensing system for commercial tour and activity operators in parks and reserves managed under the NPW Act should provide greater business security and improved public access to park facilities and assets. It should also engage operators in a partnership arrangement that results in them serving as advocates for conservation values. Consideration should be given to simplifying all existing licensing systems for nature tourism operators operating across all public lands, including marine protected areas in New South Wales where possible. This may include adopting consistent application processes, licence agreements, and accreditation requirements. The system will need to reflect the legislative requirements and management objectives of each agency but aim to achieve a single process for operators conducting nature tourism activities across different tenures.

11.12 Improved delivery of nature tourism in New South Wales

Most nature tourism operators in New South Wales are small business owners, some of whom have no formal business or marketing background. Many have no prior experience in the tourism industry. Tourism NSW and DECC can assist these operators in a number of areas including environmental awareness and sustainability, business planning, marketing, website development, product development, packaging and clustering product, product pricing, tourism distribution systems, and utilising market research. Engagement with industry organisations should support where ever possible industry standards, training and accreditation processes.

Enhancing the tourism skills of land managers is equally important. Increasing staff competencies in tourism management and customer service will raise the overall quality of the visitor experience and is a powerful tool to enhance visitor appreciation of conservation values.

Many of the issues and solutions identified in this review require DECC and Tourism NSW to work together. The need for a memorandum of understanding (MoU) has been discussed; however the content of the MoU is to be determined.

The Taskforce considers that an MoU between the two agencies should be modelled on a similar cooperative arrangement that exists between Tourism Australia and Parks Australia. The following items should be included:

- defining the expertise that each partner will bring to the table – Tourism NSW will bring understanding of branding, marketing, operator business needs, research, industry trends and private investment mechanisms and requirements. DECC will bring the practical realities of operation in challenging environments (such as access costs, water supply, energy supply, waste minimisation and disposal, communications, staff needs) and the identification and management of key environmental constraints and issues.
management of constituencies – each sector has a strong constituency. Each member can advise the partnership on the management of these constituencies towards the common purpose. There may be merit in the MoU being underpinned by an advisory body representing the range of relevant interests

whole of government approach – the MoU should provide the capacity to bring the joint focus of two Ministers to bear on a tourism/parks matter. For example, it could be a planning issue, an infrastructure issue, or a social policy issue

executive commitment – the MoU should set out how the senior executives of the agency partners become committed to the partnership. It should function at an operational level with reference to a regular formal Heads of Agency oversight.

11.13 Greater coordination and more effective marketing and promotion

Effective marketing and promotion practices can influence visitation to public lands in several ways, as explained in Chapter 9.

When visitors decide to research a holiday they will most likely rely on the internet as their major source of information. The internet is an essential component of any marketing strategy and the effective use of the web may positively influence visitation patterns on park. Numerous public submissions received expressed their concern over the current DECC website and the apparent need for immediate improvement.

Although current nature based marketing strategies recognise partnerships are a key component of any attempt to increase visitation on park, the Taskforce perceives that there is still scope to better brand NSW iconic nature based experiences. Improved branding would in turn increase visitation through the establishment of closer and more solid partnerships with Tourism Australia, Tourism NSW and Regional Tourism Organisations.

The Taskforce acknowledges the need to integrate public land web based information on the VisitNSW website to give potential visitors access to a full range of visitor information from accommodation, attractions, licensed tour providers, and route planning, to recommended locations for special interests such as geology or bird watching.

Furthermore, the Taskforce considers that it would be useful to evaluate the development of a nature and culture based website portal to present regionally–based, across tenure experiences to potential visitors. The portal could also act as a ‘one stop shop’ for information on accommodation options and food experiences available on park and in nearby towns or urban areas. Excellent examples of user friendly and comprehensive websites are the Parks Victoria (2008) and Parks Canada (2008) websites.

The Taskforce further considers that increased funding should be allocated for marketing and promotion efforts to continue to attract visitors to all public lands where there is a demonstrated net benefit for conservation and management. These efforts should include more effectively integrating and coordinating programs of Tourism NSW, all land management agencies, Tourism Australia and Regional Tourism Organisations.
11.14 Maximising conservation benefits from sustainable nature tourism

Tourism can be a useful and effective tool for conservation and management of protected areas (IUCN 2002). When well managed, tourism may provide the financial and political support required to ensure that sustainability of the values is preserved in protected areas. Tourism may also lead to a greater understanding of those values, which in turn can foster public and political support for their protection and for additional areas being protected.

The Taskforce emphasise that tourism, recreation and visitor use of parks and reserves should be managed to ensure a net benefit to the park system. The Taskforce recommends that DECC:

- aims to recover the costs of visitor infrastructure maintenance by reviewing current entrance and user fees, but retains low cost options for park uses that require minimal infrastructure
- uses tourism leases and licences to provide greater revenue for parks by providing experiences for which visitors are prepared to pay more
- engages tourism providers to achieve park education objectives through enhanced interpretation, education and guided experiences
- utilises tourism to achieve park conservation and visitor objectives by including the provision of in kind services such as weed control and track maintenance in leases and licences
- expands volunteer tourism opportunities to assist conservation efforts
- uses tourism to advance voluntary contributions, donations and bequests to the park foundations.

The Taskforce believes these contributions from visitors, volunteers and tourism are appropriate, provided the benefits and revenue raised are fully hypothecated to the park system.
12.0 Recommendations

The issues analysis and findings outlined in Chapter 11 of this report provide the basis for the following recommendations:

1. Clear strategy and leadership

The NSW Government should commit to sustainable nature tourism as a priority in the new NSW Tourism Industry Plan with defined roles for Tourism NSW and public land management agencies. The plan should be supported by a memorandum of understanding between the Parks and Wildlife Group of DECC and the Tourism NSW component of the Department of State and Regional Development. The current draft MoU should be finalised as soon as possible.

Along with targeting completion and substantial implementation of nature tourism elements of the NSW Tourism Industry Plan, a primary objective of the next 2–3 years should be to maintain the New South Wales market share of international and domestic visitors who visit national parks and other reserves.

In the 3–5 year planning horizon New South Wales should aim to increase total visitor nights for travellers engaging in a nature tourism activity in proportion with the State Plan visitor night target.

2. Focusing on iconic experiences

Destination and product development, marketing and promotion should be focused on a select number of key areas (product enhancement focal points) that offer iconic sustainable nature tourism experiences. The key areas for these experiences are presented in Figures 1 and 2 and are considered to be:

- Sydney and surrounds (2–3 hours from CBD) including the Blue Mountains
- Areas within 2–3 hours drive of major domestic and international airports (Ballina, Gold Coast, Coffs Harbour and Canberra). These regions include the National Landscape areas (Australian Alps, Green Cauldron, Blue Mountains and Coastal Wilderness) and World Heritage areas.

Opportunities for product development in these locations in or adjacent to parks, other public lands or private lands, with appeal to target markets and the broader community may include:

- iconic day and overnight walks and multi-use trails
- new and enhanced visitor experiences and facilities such as observation towers, canopy flyers and outdoor dining facilities, tours, interpretation and events
- new and enhanced visitor accommodation such as huts, cabins and standing camps.

The tourism opportunities in these key locations should be the focus of regional planning efforts. Additionally these key locations should be the focus of NSW Government regional development and infrastructure programs.

3. Clarifying legislation

The objects of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NPW Act) should remain unchanged to underscore the pre-eminence of nature conservation as the primary purpose for national parks and reserves.

The Taskforce recognises however, that sustainable tourism is a valid use of national parks throughout the world and is supported by the IUCN Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories 2008. To help provide clarity on what is permissible under the NPW Act, the expression ‘sustainable visitor use and enjoyment’ should be replaced with ‘sustainable
visitor use, tourism, recreation and enjoyment’. The Taskforce recommends the World Tourism Organisation definition of sustainable tourism as an appropriate standard.

4. **On-park accommodation and facilities**

The DECC visitor accommodation and facilities policies should be reviewed to clarify where and what low key, low impact sustainable nature tourism facilities, including accommodation, are appropriate in national parks and reserves. The review should address equitable, but appropriate community access.

5. **Leasing and licensing policy**

The DECC leasing and licensing policy should be reviewed to clarify acceptable and preferred public–private partnerships, taking account of the findings of a recent review commissioned by DECC. Performance models should be used that ensure there is a net benefit to the park system and that visitor derived revenue is retained for park management purposes.

6. **Tour operator licensing**

The proposed new DECC licensing system for commercial tour and activity operators in parks and reserves managed under the NPW Act should provide greater business security and improved public access to park facilities and assets. It should also engage operators in a partnership arrangement that results in them serving as advocates for conservation values.

7. **Access and equity**

Parks and Wildlife Group of DECC currently manages a range of tourism products from annual park passes to camping sites and accommodation. To improve access, fairness, cost recovery, visitor management and proper pricing, the Taskforce recommends DECC:

- Review fees for DECC accommodation against cost recovery, competitive neutrality and comparable industry rate benchmarks to ensure DECC is neither under nor over pricing product
- Consider adopting a state wide reservation system for campsites and accommodation that would allow online bookings and provide management information on visitor usage patterns and accommodation occupancy
- Incorporate commission into product pricing structures to enable wholesale and retail networks to package, distribute and retail DECC product.

8. **Guided wilderness experiences**

The Taskforce acknowledges that in developing iconic walks and other nature tour experiences, access to wilderness areas may be part of the experience. Overseas and less experienced visitors may need a guide for safety, and specialist equipment for self-reliant activities such as walking, cycling or canoeing in remote areas. Currently self-reliant walking, cycling or canoeing with a paid guide is precluded under the wilderness provisions of the NPW Act. The Act should make provision for the Minister to issue permits for guided self-reliant activities by small groups in wilderness areas. The Minister should seek advice from the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council on what guided activities may be appropriate for any particular wilderness area being considered. Such activities might be provided by licensed tourism operators, not-for-profit, community or independent groups, but such operations must be consistent with activities currently permissible for individual users and should not involve vehicle access or provision of any additional facilities. Any tourism operator seeking a permit should also meet all the requirements for licences under the Act.
9. Legislation regarding leases and licences in some reserves

The current anomaly in the leasing and licensing provisions of the NPW Act should be addressed to allow for leases, licences and franchises to be granted on lands that are state conservation areas, regional parks, karst conservation reserves or Aboriginal areas and Aboriginal lands reserved as state conservation areas, or regional parks reserved under Part 4A of the Act.

Consideration should also be given to allowing activities which are currently permissible in nature reserves, such as scientific research and education, to be conducted by a licensed third party. For example, an amendment would make it clear that a scientific bird-watching group which charges fees to its clients is permissible in nature reserves. The amendment would only allow activities to be conducted which are consistent with the objects of the NPW Act and the management principles for nature reserves.

10. Section 151 of the NPW Act

Action should be taken to address the significant ambiguity in the wording of Section 151 of the NPW Act which results in a lack of clear guidance on what is permissible.

The wording of Sections 151 (1) and 151B of the NPW Act should be reviewed with the intention of making a single Section 151 the approval instrument for both new building proposals and adaptive reuse of existing buildings on park and providing greater clarity on what is permissible under the Act by way of leases and licences.

Established mechanisms under the Act for public disclosure of lease arrangements should be retained.

11. Proactive identification of sites

With community input through regional planning and subsequent plan of management processes, Tourism NSW should work with DECC, Department of Lands, Forests NSW and other agencies to proactively identify and assess areas for new sustainable nature based visitor experiences. Government land agencies should obtain pre-approval for any new attractions and experiences that fall within their control before seeking expressions of interest from private sector partners. This is similar to schemes operating in Western Australia and being developed in the Northern Territory.

12. Nature tourism off park

The Taskforce endorses a regional planning approach to sustainable nature tourism including tourism development on private land outside parks and recognises that there are opportunities for nature based tourism development which can facilitate visitation to parks and reserves. The Taskforce recommends the NSW Government take positive steps to encourage such development.

The Taskforce acknowledges the recent decision by the NSW Planning Minister to assist tourism development outside parks by enabling ecotourism proposals of more than $5 million to be considered by Joint Regional Planning Panels.

The Taskforce recommends the NSW Government review environmental zones E2, E3 and E4 in the NSW Standard Instrument for Principal Local Environmental Plans. The review should consider appropriate nature tourism use on private land outside Zone E1 (national parks and nature reserves).

The NSW Government should also consider extending the land tax exemption granted to agricultural use to also apply to nature tourism land use outside parks and reserves.
13. Linking plans of management and regional tourism planning

Plans of management play a vital role involving the public in shaping the management of protected areas. To facilitate nature tourism, regional tourism plans for the focus regions identified in this report should be prepared cooperatively by Tourism NSW, land management and partner agencies with community, local government and industry input.

Regional tourism plans would provide a cross-tenure context for formal statutory plans such as forest and park plans of management, marine park zoning plans and local environmental plans. Tourism components of statutory plans should be reviewed to consider the outcome of the regional plans. Any review of plans for parks and reserves would be undertaken through the normal statutory process.

To ensure a regional perspective, the option of developing a single integrated plan covering all the parks and reserves in a bioregion or subregion should be trialled in a region such as that encompassing the Green Cauldron National Landscape and Gondwana World Heritage Area.

From time to time proposals may emerge which are in accord with regional tourism planning but may not have been anticipated in an existing plan of management for a particular park. The plan of management amendment process should have explicit timeframes added to ensure timely and efficient consideration of such proposals while retaining all established mechanisms for public consultation.

14. Marketing and promotion

Increased funding should be allocated for marketing and promotion efforts to continue to attract visitors to all parks and reserves and other public lands. These efforts should include more effectively integrating and coordinating programs of Tourism NSW, all land management agencies, Tourism Australia and Regional Tourism Organisations.

15. Online information

Online accessibility of nature tourism information should be enhanced by developing ‘visitnsw.com’ into a fully integrated and comprehensive portal providing visitors with access to a full range of information including attractions, commercial operators offering guided tours and other experiences, notes and maps for all relevant public lands as well as route planning tips.

16. Research and monitoring

The consistency and distribution of research and monitoring of visitor holiday and recreation preferences across government agencies should be improved to assist planning.

17. Capacity building

The tourism knowledge and skills of land managers (particularly those operating or managing commercial tourism attractions and services) and tourism partners should continue to be improved through training and development. Similarly strong efforts should be made to ensure all operators have a thorough understanding of the objectives of the park/s and the specific plan of management of the area of their operation.

18. Quiet enjoyment of undeveloped settings

In providing a diversity of nature tourism settings and opportunities appropriate to the land tenure and style of use there should be adequate consideration given to current ‘unstructured’ minimal impact activities and quiet enjoyment of undeveloped settings.
19. Events

DECC and other land managers should continue to work with Events NSW to develop a calendar of regular events suitable to parks and reserves such as the recently announced Island Hopping event in Sydney Harbour National Park.

20. Net benefit to the park system

Tourism, recreation and visitor use of parks and reserves should be managed to ensure a net benefit to the park system. The Taskforce recommends that DECC:

- aims to recover the costs of visitor infrastructure maintenance by reviewing current entrance and user fees, but retains low cost options for park uses that require minimal infrastructure
- uses tourism leases and licences to provide greater revenue for parks by providing experiences for which visitors are prepared to pay more
- engages tourism providers to achieve park education objectives through enhanced interpretation, education and guided experiences
- utilises tourism to achieve park conservation and visitor objectives by including the provision of in kind services such as the control of invasive species, research, monitoring and track maintenance in leases and licences
- expands volunteer tourism opportunities to assist conservation efforts
- uses tourism to advance voluntary contributions, donations and bequests to the park foundations.

The Taskforce believes these contributions from visitors, volunteers and tourism are appropriate and continue to benefit the parks system.
References


DECC—see Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW.


Griffin, T and Vacaflores, M 2004, A Natural Partnership: Making National Parks a Tourism Priority, Project Paper 1 The Visitor Experience, prepared on behalf of Tourism and Transport Forum Australia.


Leaver, B 2007, Submission to the Taskforce on National Parks and Tourism (Submission Number 43), 15 July 2007.

Lyons, KD and Wearing, S 2002, Journeys of Discovery in Volunteer Tourism, Cabi, United Kingdom.


Nielsen, N, Wilson, E and Buultjens, J 2008, From Lessees to Partners: Exploring Relationships Between NSW NPWS and Private Visitor Facility Providers, CRC for Sustainable Tourism Pty Ltd.


Taylor, G 2008, [personal communication], Project Manager, Tourism Western Australia [11 July, 2008].


Tourism Australia 2008a, National Landscapes, viewed 29 September 2008 and available online at: <www.tourism.australia.com/Marketing.asp?lang=EN&sub=0449>

Tourism Australia 2008b, A Uniquely Australian Invitation The Experience Seeker, viewed 26 September 2008 and available online at: <www.tourism.australia.com/content/australian_experiences/2007/experience_seekers.pdf>


Tourism Research Australia 2008, Domestic Overnight Leisure Travel, Recent Trends and Challenges, Tourism Australia, Canberra.


Tourism Victoria, 2008a, Wilderness Retreats Cape Conran, viewed 18 November 2008 and available online at: <http://www.visitvictoria.com/displayobject.cfm/objectid.09B14BC6-93BB-4B80-8534BBF730F39041/>

Tourism Western Australia 2008, Landbank, viewed 4 July 2008 and available online at: <www.tourism.wa.gov.au/INVESTMENT_OPPORTUNITIES/LANDBANK/Pages/Landbank.aspx>

Tourism Western Australia, 2008a, Sal Salis Ningaloo Reef, viewed 26 November 2008 and available online at: <http://www.westernaustralia.com/au/Pages/ Accommodation.aspx?n=Sal_Salis_Ningaloo_Reef&pid=9002533>


Young & Rubicam Brands 2007, A Marketing and Communications Strategy to Promote NSW Parks, prepared for the Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW.
Appendicies

Appendix 1: Terms of reference
Appendix 2: Submission Report
Appendix 3: NSW public lands within 200 km of Canberra, Sydney, Coffs Harbour and Ballina airports Map
Appendix 4: NSW key product enhancement focal points Map and Sydney and Surrounds Key Product Enhancement Map
Appendix 5: South Coast and Highlands NSW Map
Appendix 6: Sydney and Surrounds Map
Appendix 7: North Coast NSW Map
Appendix 8: Western NSW Map
Appendix 9: World Heritage areas in NSW Map
Appendix 10: National Heritage Sites in NSW DECC reserves Map
Appendix 11: DECC reserves within 200 km of Canberra Airport Map
Appendix 12: DECC reserves within 200 km of Sydney Airport Map
Appendix 13: DECC reserves within 200 km of Coffs Harbour Airport Map
Appendix 14: DECC reserves within 200 km of Ballina Airport Map
Appendix 15: Conservation benefits of sustainable nature tourism case study
Appendix 16: Landbank Western Australia case study
Appendix 17: Reserve category management principles
Appendix 18: Fees and charges applying national parks and reserves
Appendix 19: List of all public lands within 200km of Canberra, Sydney, Coffs Harbour and Ballina airports
Appendix 20: List of DECC reserves within 200km of Canberra, Sydney, Coffs Harbour and Ballina airports