

MT KEIRA SUMMIT PARK

VISION

Draft for Community Comment

May 2016



Acknowledgements

The Mt Keira Summit Park Vision has been prepared by TRC Tourism Pty Ltd (www.trctourism.com) for



Images used through this strategy are courtesy of Tourism Australia and Tourism Victoria.

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BACKGROUND

The Illawarra Escarpment is the most dominant topographic and scenic feature of the Illawarra, providing a unique visual backdrop to the city of Wollongong. Formed primarily by Hawkesbury Sandstone, the Escarpment crest forms an impressive line of cliffs with Mount Keira and Mount Kembla marking the two major topographic features rising out of this landform.

Mount Keira is important to the traditional Aboriginal custodians of the Illawarra with Dreamtime creation stories linked to the mountain and surrounding areas. It is also home to the heritage and stories of Europeans who travelled to the region and set down the foundations for the city's culture, history and lifestyle.

Mount Keira Summit Park (*the Summit Park*) is a 9.4 hectare area of land at the top of Mount Keira managed by the Wollongong City Council (WCC) as an annex to the Wollongong Botanic Garden. As part of the Illawarra Escarpment (a biodiversity 'hot spot'), the Summit Park also contributes to the protection of the Escarpment's high biodiversity and its function as a conservation corridor.

Outside the small section cleared for infrastructure, the Summit Park is covered by exposed Eucalypt forest with rainforest in the gullies. The park is rich in birdlife and small mammals such as wallabies, Brush Tailed Possum and Long Nosed Bandicoot. The Summit Park is surrounded by the Illawarra Escarpment State Conservation Area (IESCA) which is managed by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and other land which is privately owned.

The Summit Park is a special place for the Wollongong community. The Aboriginal community actively use the area for cultural practices and teaching. Other people enjoy the scenery and natural environment, picnic, and take in the outstanding view. It is also used for walking, cycling and for recreational events. Visitors to the region also stop to enjoy the spectacular views from Victoria Lookout across Wollongong and the Illawarra region.

Over the last few years there have been a number of changes to the Summit Park that have affected the way the community use it. For example Five Islands Lookout is closed due to slope instability and the former restaurant/function centre has also closed and the building removed.

By 2035, the population of the Illawarra region will be over half a million people. During this time Wollongong's status as a tourism destination will be strengthened with cruise ships arriving in November 2016. It is now time to develop a vision and plan for the *Summit Park* that revitalises existing infrastructure and brings a new lease of life to this special place.

The *Summit Park* has the potential to become a vibrant recreation and tourism hub providing experiences that enable visitors to learn about the region, Aboriginal culture and the outstanding landscape of the Illawarra.

The draft vision and principles contained in this document have been developed through consultation with the community and stakeholder groups between February and April 2016. The vision and planning principles embody and communicate the values the community discussed. They also provide a basis upon which future proposals can be assessed.

Together the vision and planning principles will inform master plan preparation and the Plan of Management and other actions associated with park development and management. Feedback on the draft vision and ideas contained in this document are welcome and can be made via the Wollongong City Council web page:

<http://haveyoursaywollongong.com.au/mt-keira-summit-park-community-vision>

Comments are welcome until 31 May 2016.

Draft VISION

A TRIP TO MT KEIRA
SUMMIT PARK WILL
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IT WILL BE A PLACE FOR
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PLANNING PRINCIPLES

The development of visitor experiences at Mt Keira Summit Park will be based on the following principles:



OBJECTIVES

The following overarching objectives have been established to guide the revitalisation of the Mt Keira Summit Park.

Provide a diversity of high quality visitor experiences that are distinctive to Wollongong, showcase the Escarpment's environmental and cultural values and define its identity and sense of place.

Foster deeper understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the cultural history, natural features, recreational and educational opportunities of the Summit Park and the Illawarra escarpment.

Preserve and enhance the significant cultural heritage of the area and ensure that the future uses of the park are environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.

Ensure that infrastructure is designed and developed in accordance with ecologically sustainable principles.

Involve the Aboriginal community, the tourism industry, NPWS and other stakeholders to develop experiences, infrastructure and investment opportunities that are compatible and integrated with experiences on offer within the Illawarra Escarpment State Conservation Area.

KEY ELEMENTS

Initial consultation with the community and stakeholders indicated that Mt Keira Summit Park needs to be revitalised, its values protected and a range of experiences provided for visitors and the community. The key elements that people indicated they wanted the vision to achieve are outlined below.



Protect and enhance views and values



Improve walking tracks and lookouts



Improve interpretation



Improve links with the State Conservation Area & Wollongong Botanic Garden



Improve access and parking



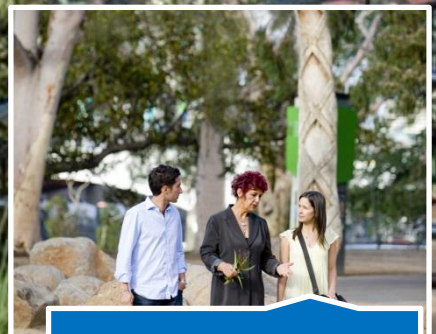
Develop a new café/restaurant



Improve sense of arrival



Improve toilets and picnic facilities



Create new visitor experiences

OPPORTUNITIES

Given the park's cultural significance, natural features, landscape setting and sense of place, the summit of Mt Keira has the potential to offer a unique and compelling experience for visitors.

A range of sustainable, predominantly cultural and nature-based tourism activities are considered to offer the greatest potential. This means that any uses and activities should be strongly connected with the park's cultural heritage and environmental values.

The vision can be achieved by creating iconic escarpment experiences to take advantage of the extensive views and form a focus for visitors. Some examples of possible uses include:

- An enhanced panoramic clifftop walk with magnificent views to Wollongong and the Illawarra region that links to the Five Islands Lookout
- A new Five Islands Lookout close to the location of the former lookout (now closed due to instability) which is an integral part of the cultural heritage interpretation of the region
- An upgraded easily accessible walking path to the new Five Islands Lookout
- Contemporary interpretation that presents Aboriginal connection to the mountain and landscape of the Illawarra region
- A Tree Top Walk featuring interpretation and outstanding views across the escarpment
- Unique dining experience at a new café/restaurant providing opportunities for small functions and events promoting regional produce of the Illawarra
- A native food garden for use in the restaurant/café and providing a source of interpretation for visitors.

It should be recognised that a variety of different activities and uses could occur in accordance with the vision.

The types of uses presented complement the list of broad uses contained in the Illawarra Escarpment State Conservation Area Draft Management Plan (2011). Further consultation and ongoing negotiations will be required with NPWS to establish the appropriateness of each potential activity as it relates to the State Conservation Area.



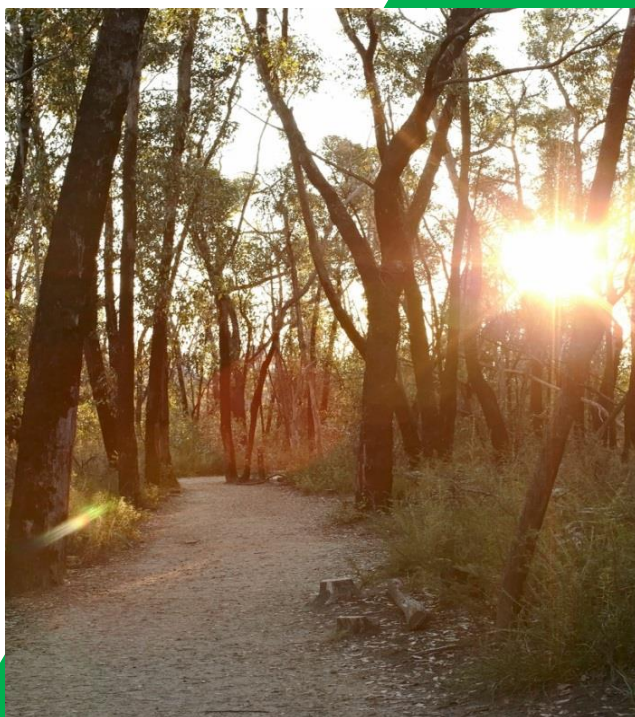
INTERPRETATION

The Mt Keira Summit Park is located in a richly layered cultural landscape linked to indigenous cultural heritage and European settlement. This vitality can be captured through the interpretation and conservation of its cultural and heritage values. Storytelling is part of Aboriginal life and should be used to help visitors understand the region. Some examples of how interpretation experiences could be realised include:

- high quality interpretive signage and digital media
- art and sculpture
- interpretive exhibits
- guided and self-guided tours
- links to interpretation of other tracks and trails in the State Conservation Area (walking track and mountain bike trails) in consultation with NPWS.

Interpretation at the Summit Park could also be strengthened by:

- use of Aboriginal language to identify key landscape features
- consistent use of Aboriginal interpretation across the park that reflects the values of the park, the Aboriginal Community and links to the Illawarra Escarpment. Designed by local artists it should be a symbol of the land, the seasons and Aboriginal culture used across all interpretation and merchandise
- providing opportunities for guided and self-guided walks and trails focused on Aboriginal heritage and environmental interpretation and appreciation
- providing a spatial network of interpretive signs informing visitors about key viewpoints and regional landscape features
- use of multi-lingual interpretation and a range of media to enhance visitor understanding of the Illawarra Escarpment and region
- interactive learning experiences linked to regional education and training programs offered by schools and vocational training and tertiary institutions such as the University of Wollongong.



RECREATION

Recreation at The Summit, both passive and active, is an essential part of discovering and learning about this special place. There is significant opportunity to build upon the existing passive and active recreational experiences for visitors and provide more activities, particularly those that link to the Illawarra Escarpment State Conservation Area. Examples of the types of recreational opportunities that could be offered include:

- walking on the Grade 1 and Grade 2 walking tracks (short and long, leisurely and active tracks)
- picnicking/sightseeing utilising upgraded BBQ and picnic facilities
- abseiling and rock climbing
- start and finish points for mountain biking and road cycling with links to the Illawarra Escarpment State Conservation Area.



EVENTS AND FESTIVALS

The scenic qualities of the Summit Park have attracted people to the site as a venue for many functions and events. These events encourage people to visit the park and the region and promote its diverse cultural, natural and recreational opportunities. The park has significant potential to host a small scale events and festivals that promote the park's natural, cultural and recreational values. Examples of festivals and events that may be suitable include:

- cultural festivals focusing on heritage, art, and food
- organised sporting events
- exhibitions
- weddings
- functions and receptions- breakfasts, lunches and dinners.

It will be important to adequately manage parking and access arrangements for events that do not detract from the amenity and natural and scenic qualities of the park and surrounding areas.



EDUCATION

Formal education opportunities from primary school to tertiary education levels, specific education programs and services, and informal opportunities for learning could be accommodated at the park. Examples of potential educational and training uses include:

- programs and events as part of the Wollongong Botanic Garden ie walking tours
- links with university or other education facilities – research and programs
- conferences (site visits)
- school programs
- training programs / seminars linked to the Botanic Garden.

WAYFINDING, ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

Ease of access to, from and within the Summit Park is essential to allow for ease of movement of visitors and transport modes. Examples of ways to enhance the access and circulation to and within the park include:

- an improved sense of arrival at the park entry to convey the character and values of the summit of Mt Keira
- improved wayfinding where relevant to enable visitors to navigate their way around the park and into the adjacent State Conservation Area
- information signage regarding safety and conditions where relevant
- safety features and lighting for occasional night time use of the park
- car and bus parking facilities in appropriate locations including overflow car parking on Queen Elizabeth Drive
- provision for public transport measures and shuttle services (drop off and pick up/taxi zones)
- the provision of facilities to support cycling such as bicycle racks, transporter bicycle carriage and bicycle hire.



DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

SERVICES

Utility services will need to be upgraded to service visitors to the park.

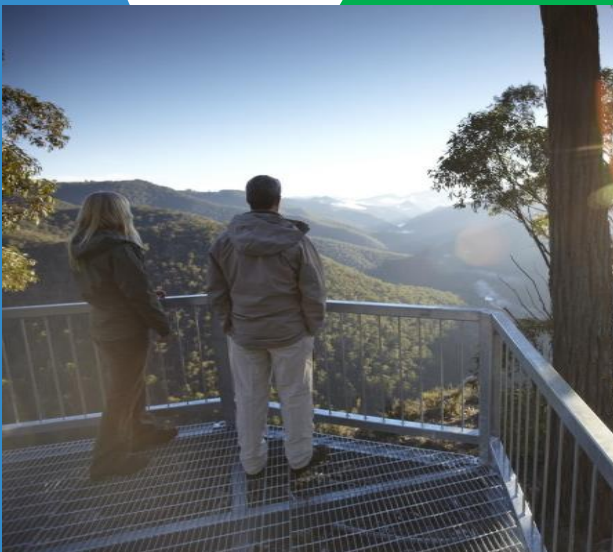
- Water supply - There is a limited water supply and shortage of potable water at the site. This situation will continue and therefore new facilities will need to be designed to respond to this shortage.
- Toilets - The current toilets at the site are connected to a septic system which will need to be upgraded. The disabled toilet facilities will need to be upgraded to ensure compliance with current standards.
- Electricity - Provision of power to the Summit Park is currently being resolved by Wollongong City Council and as a result there should be adequate power on the site to service visitor needs.
- Stormwater - Improved management of stormwater runoff from developed areas is required to contain runoff on the site and reduce the impacts on soils, cliffs and natural values of the area.



SITING AND DESIGN OF INFRASTRUCTURE

The key design guidelines for new and existing infrastructure should aim to enhance the landscape character of the surrounding environment and be based on sound ecologically sustainable principles and exemplary design:

- key views of the escarpment and its natural features should be identified and maintained
- outdoor structures, street furniture and signs should be visually coordinated
- new structures should be sensitively sited and designed, having regard to the landscape, heritage elements and view lines and vistas to and from the Summit Park
- siting, design and construction of structures should consider natural drainage patterns of the area and should not impact on the quality of water runoff.



IMPLEMENTATION

The vision for Mt Keira Summit Park will be delivered through a strong partnership between the Aboriginal Community, Wollongong City Council, the tourism industry, NPWS and other stakeholders.

Following feedback from the community on the draft vision the draft concept master plan and plan of management for the park will be developed. Consultation with the community will continue throughout the next stages of planning.

Feedback on the draft vision and ideas contained in this document are welcome and can be made via the Wollongong City Council web page until 31 May 2016:

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