

LENNOX HEAD ABORIGINAL AREA

PLAN OF MANAGEMENT

National Parks and Wildlife Service

Part of the Department of Environment and Conservation (NSW)

July 2006

This plan of management was adopted by the Minister for the Environment on 6th July 2006.

Acknowledgments

This plan of management is based on a draft plan prepared by staff of the Northern Rivers Region of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

For additional information or enquires about any aspect of the plan, contact the NPWS Richmond River Area Office at 75 Main Street (PO Box 856), Alstonville NSW 2477 or by phone on (02) 6627 0200.

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

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FOREWORD

Lennox Head Aboriginal Area is located on the Far North Coast of NSW, within the village of Lennox Head. The reserve is 0.3 hectares in size and was gazetted in 1972 to protect the cultural heritage values of the Ceremonial Ring.

The Ceremonial Ring was a special place used by the Bundjalung Aboriginal people to initiate boys of the tribe. The Ceremonial Ring consists of a raised ring on sandy ground and is among one of the best preserved coastal ceremonial grounds in NSW. While the Ceremonial Ring may not have been used in recent times for initiation ceremonies, it is of significant cultural heritage value to the local Aboriginal community and provides opportunities for cultural activities. It is also listed on the Register of the National Estate.

A draft plan of management for Lennox Head Aboriginal Area was placed on public exhibition from 8 April until 18 July 2005. The exhibition of the draft plan attracted 6 submissions that raised 4 issues. All submissions received were carefully considered before adopting this plan.

Sand Ceremonial Rings are uncommon in north-eastern New South Wales. This plan provides for the protection of the Ceremonial Ring within Lennox Head Aboriginal Area.

This plan of management establishes the scheme of operations for Lennox Head Aboriginal Area. In accordance with section 73B of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, this plan of management is hereby adopted.

Bob Debus
Minister for the Environment

1. MANAGEMENT CONTEXT

1.1 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

The management of Aboriginal areas in NSW is in the context of a legislative and policy framework, primarily the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act), the NPW Regulation, the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* (TSC Act) and the policies of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). Section 72AA of the NPW Act lists the matters to be considered in the preparation of a plan of management. The policies arise from the legislative background and internationally accepted principles of park management. They relate to nature conservation, Aboriginal and historic heritage conservation, recreation, commercial use, research and communication.

Other legislation, international agreements and charters may also apply to management of the area. In particular, the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EPA Act) requires the assessment and mitigation of the environmental impacts of any works proposed in this plan.

A plan of management is a statutory document under the NPW Act. Once the Minister has adopted a plan, no operations may be undertaken within Lennox Head Aboriginal Area except in accordance with the plan. The plan will also apply to any future additions to Lennox Head Aboriginal Area. Where management strategies or works are proposed for the Lennox Head Aboriginal Area or any additions that are not consistent with the plan, an amendment to the plan will be required.

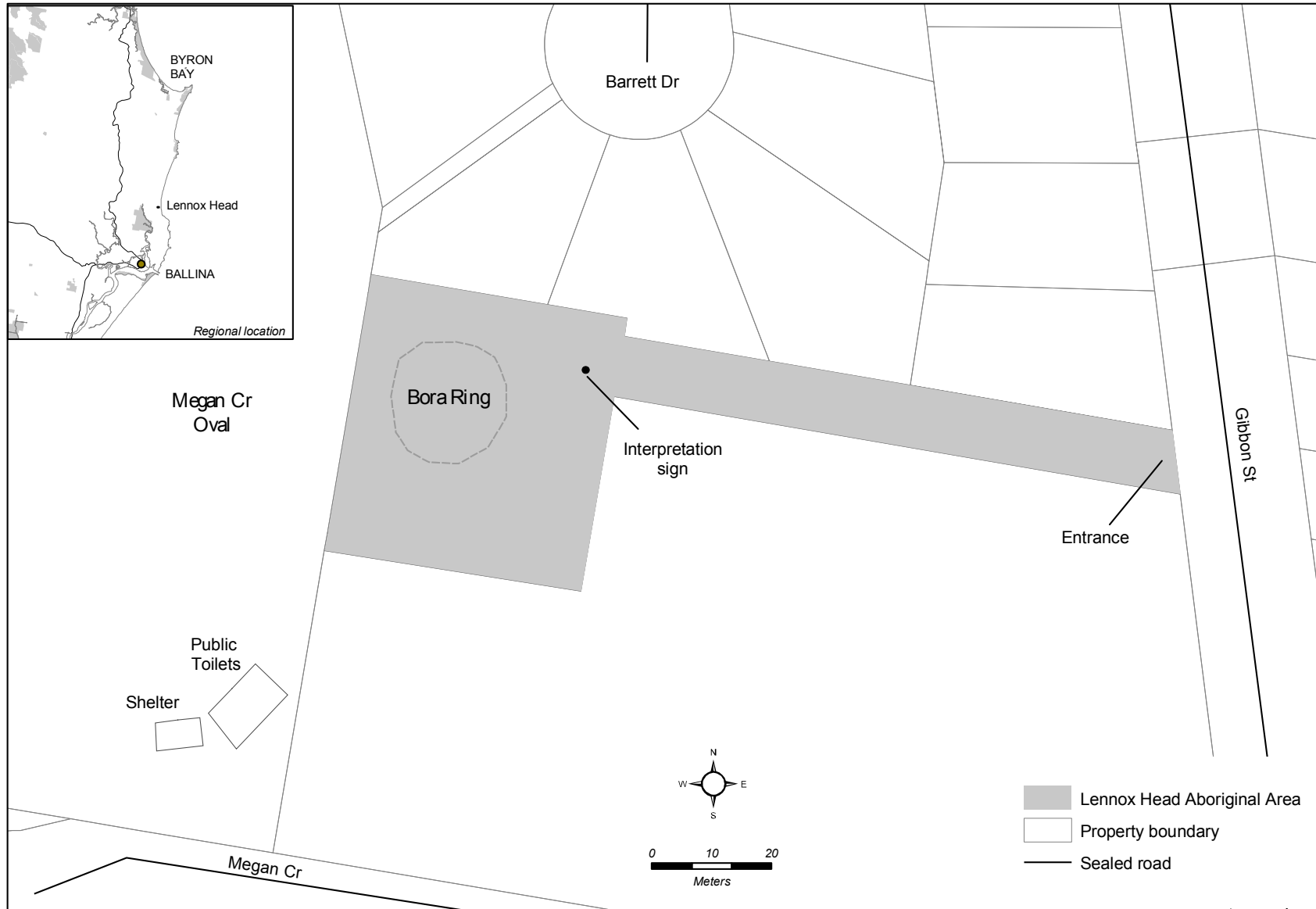
1.2 MANAGEMENT PURPOSES AND PRINCIPLES

Aboriginal areas are reserved under the NPW Act (Section 30K) to 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.

Under the Act, Aboriginal areas are managed to:

- conserve natural values, buildings, places, objects, features and landscapes of cultural value to Aboriginal people in accordance with the cultural values of the Jali Aboriginal People to whose heritage the buildings, places, objects, features or landscapes belong;
- conserve natural and other cultural values;
- allow use of the Aboriginal area by Aboriginal people for cultural purposes;
- promote public appreciation and understanding of the area's natural and cultural values and significance where appropriate; and
- provide for appropriate research and monitoring, in accordance with the cultural values of the Aboriginal people.

Lennox Head Aboriginal Area (0.3ha)



2. LENNOX HEAD ABORIGINAL AREA

2.1 LOCATION, GAZETTAL AND REGIONAL SETTING

Lennox Head Aboriginal Area (referred to as the “Aboriginal area”) is located on the Far North Coast of NSW, within the village of Lennox Head (see map).

The Aboriginal area is 0.3 hectares and was gazetted in October 1972 to protect the cultural heritage values of the Ceremonial Ring. It is one of eleven Aboriginal areas in NSW.

Other reserves managed by NPWS in the area include Broken Head Nature Reserve (approximately 7.5kms to the north) and Ballina Nature Reserve (approximately 2.4kms to the southwest).

The Aboriginal area is bounded by Megan Crescent Oval, residential housing and vacant land zoned for residential development. The Aboriginal area is located within the area covered by the Jali Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) and is within the Bundjalung Nation area. It also falls within the Ballina Shire Council Local Government Area.

2.2 LANDSCAPE

Natural and cultural heritage and on-going use are strongly inter-related and together form the landscape of an area. Much of the Australian environment has been influenced by past Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal land use practices, and the activities of modern day Australians continue to influence bushland through recreational use, cultural practices, the presence of introduced plants and animals and in some cases air and water pollution.

The geology, landform, climate, plant and animal communities of the area, plus its location, have determined how it has been used by humans. The Aboriginal area protects an area of significant cultural heritage importance to the local Bundjalung Aboriginal community and was used in the past as an initiation site.

Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people place cultural values on natural areas, including aesthetic, social, spiritual, recreational and other values. Cultural values may be attached to the landscape as a whole or to individual components, for example to plant and animal species used by Aboriginal people. This plan of management aims to conserve both natural and cultural values. For reasons of clarity and document usefulness natural and cultural heritage, non-human threats and on-going use are dealt with individually, but their inter-relationships are recognised.

2.3 NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Landform, Geology and Soils

The Aboriginal area is located on a flat area of Quaternary beach and dune sands approximately 700m west of Seven-Mile Beach. The soils within the Aboriginal area are erosion prone if disturbed. Several perennial streams are situated in close proximity to the site but there are no watercourses within the Aboriginal area. A retaining wall on the adjacent sports oval has been constructed to prevent erosion of the bank.

Native Plants and Animals

Vegetation in the Aboriginal area has been disturbed by past land clearing and the majority of the area is now grassed. Most existing native vegetation in the Aboriginal area has been planted by NPWS using species endemic to the area. Some natural regeneration of native species has also occurred, including regeneration of scattered coastal banksia (*Banksia integrifolia*) and understory species such as midgenberry (*Austromyrtus dulcis*) and *Dianella* spp.

It is unlikely that the Aboriginal area provides any significant habitat for wildlife due to its small size, past disturbance and simple vegetation communities. No rare or threatened plant or animal species are known to occur.

Concerns have been raised by some adjoining residents regarding trees from the Aboriginal area overhanging their properties and associated safety and home maintenance issues.

Aboriginal Heritage

The low-lying coastal swamps and plains of the Richmond River provided a rich source of food for Aboriginal people. According to Bundjalung tradition, the ancestral Three Brothers first settled the area and landed on the beach at Lennox Head (approximately 700m east of the Aboriginal area). One of the brothers, Yarbirri, thrust a spear into the sand, fresh water ran, and when the tide is low it is said that you can still see a rusty stain (Burnum, 1988).

The Ceremonial Ring within the Aboriginal area was a special place used by the Bundjalung Aboriginal people to initiate boys of the tribe. The Ceremonial Ring consists of a raised ring on sandy ground and is among one of the best preserved coastal ceremonial grounds in NSW. There is a small gap in the ring through which a narrow path would have led to a smaller ring no longer visible (Flood, 1990).

The Ceremonial Ring is listed on the Register of the National Estate. Sand Ceremonial Rings are uncommon in north-eastern New South Wales. Well-preserved examples such as this one must therefore be protected to ensure their inherent values are preserved (Buchan, 1977).

While the Ceremonial Ring may not have been used in recent times for initiation ceremonies, it is of significant cultural heritage value to the local Aboriginal community and provides opportunities for cultural activities.

Local oral history indicates that a very small earth circle was once located on the adjacent sporting fields (Gutteridge, Haskins and Davey 1992). The Register of the National Estate database identifies extensive surface scatter of midden material outside the fenced area of the Aboriginal area but the extent can no longer be determined due to disturbance. There is also evidence of patches of midden and some artefacts in drainage ditches north of the fenced area.

Aboriginal communities have an association and connection to the land. The land and water biodiversity values within a landscape are central to Aboriginal spirituality and contribute to Aboriginal identity. Aboriginal communities associate natural resources with the use and enjoyment of foods and medicines, caring for the land, passing on cultural knowledge and strengthening social bonds. Aboriginal heritage and nature are

inseparable from each other and need to be managed in an integrated manner across the landscape.

Historic Heritage

In the early 1840's cedar cutting in the Richmond River area led to opening up of the area for agriculture including dairying and the first sugarcane plantation in northern NSW.

The small village of Lennox Head was established as a town after the sale of rural land adjacent to the beach in December 1922. For many years it was an isolated but very popular holiday area for families of farmers, businessmen and professional people from the inland towns who were lured by the excellent fishing and the relaxed atmosphere and village life by the sea (Wilson 2003).

The Richmond River Historical Society were instrumental in the protection and dedication of the Lennox Head Aboriginal Bora Ring in 1972. Another local community group, the Lennox Head Heritage Committee, also played a significant role in the site being registered on the National Estate Register.

There are no historic heritage sites known within the Aboriginal area.

2.4 VISITOR USE AND EDUCATION

Pedestrian access to the Aboriginal area is off Gibbon Street. Visitation to the Aboriginal area is relatively low. There are no facilities other than identification, interpretation and regulatory signage at the Gibbon Street entrance of the area. The interpretation sign describes the cultural heritage significance of the Ceremonial Ring and requests visitors to respect the sensitivity of the site.

Recreation activities not consistent with the appreciation or study of cultural values are generally considered inappropriate uses of Aboriginal areas. As an Aboriginal area, use and recreation activities should focus on the education of visitors and appreciation of cultural heritage.

A number of areas nearby provide for a diverse range of recreation opportunities and facilities. These include: Megan Crescent sports oval; Lake Ainsworth Sport and Recreation Centre; Lake Ainsworth Caravan Park; Seven-Mile Beach coastal reserve; Skennars Head Playing Fields; and Williams Reserve. Toilets and a shelter are located 20 metres to the south of the Aboriginal area on Megan Crescent.

2.5 THREATS TO THE VALUES OF THE ABORIGINAL AREA

Visitor Impacts

A fence marks the boundary of the Aboriginal area but does not prevent pedestrian access to the Ceremonial Ring. Ceremonial Rings on sandy soils are fragile and the wall of the ring has been flattened and spread by natural weathering and visitation. Some damage has also occurred to the wall through visitors walking on it. In addition, for cultural reasons it is inappropriate for visitors to walk over the Ceremonial Ring.

There are minor incidences of litter in the Aboriginal area but it is not considered a major problem.

Isolation and fragmentation of the Aboriginal Area

The natural and cultural values of the Aboriginal area have been impacted by past disturbance in the area. The natural values are further diminished by its isolation from other areas of remnant vegetation and the small size of the Aboriginal area.

Future residential development of adjoining land may increase the level of pedestrian access in the Aboriginal area. Currently pedestrians use the adjacent vacant land as a short cut through to Megan Crescent and the adjacent sporting oval. Residential development could also potentially impact on the midden remains and other material that may occur outside the Aboriginal area although the extent of impact, if any, has not been determined. Because of the small size of the Aboriginal area, provision of a grassed buffer within the boundary of any development on the adjoining land would be desirable.

Fire

The NPWS regards fire as a natural phenomenon and one of the continuing physical factors influencing the Australian environment. Inappropriate fire regimes have been identified as a key threatening process affecting the biological diversity of NSW.

There have been no recorded wild fires within the Aboriginal area since its gazettal in 1972.

A recent review of fire management throughout the NPWS has resulted in a modified approach to fire management based on the level of complexity involved. In regard to the Aboriginal area, the NPWS considers that it is appropriate to include the specific fire management strategies for the Aboriginal area in this plan of management. Programs are also submitted to the District Bush Fire Management Committees.

NPWS uses a system of bushfire management zones for bushfire management in NPWS reserves. These zones are compatible with the system adopted by the Bushfire Coordinating Committee for use in District Bushfire Management Committee (DBFMC) bushfire risk management plans.

NPWS has assessed the Aboriginal area for fire management planning purposes and has zoned the reserve as a Land (Heritage) Management Zone (HMZ). The primary fire management objectives within this zone are to prevent the extinction of all species that are known to occur naturally, and to protect culturally significant sites. The Aboriginal area has been designated as a HMZ because of the sensitivity of the Aboriginal Ceremonial Ring.

The Aboriginal area is a small area containing only fragmented clumps of remnant shrubs isolated by mown grass. There is no potential for managing for appropriate fire regimes in this remnant vegetation.

The remnant vegetation poses little threat to adjoining properties. The Aboriginal area is isolated from other vegetated lands by cleared playing fields and urban development. The likelihood of fire spreading into or from the Aboriginal area is very low.

Maintenance of existing mown areas and the response capabilities of the combat agencies are adequate for the level of residual risk. The Ceremonial Ring is sensitive to disturbance by earthworks and therefore earthworks are not to be undertaken in fire

management within the Aboriginal area. Similarly, routine mowing maintenance must ensure that the surface of the Ceremonial Ring is not damaged.

NPWS maintains cooperative arrangements with surrounding landowners and Rural Fire Service brigades and is actively involved in the Ballina Bush Fire Management Committee. Cooperative arrangements include approaches to fuel management, support for neighbours fire management efforts and information sharing.

Introduced species

Introduced garden plants and some dumping of garden refuse has occurred, particularly along the northern boundary of the Aboriginal area adjacent to the residential area. The small size of the reserve, its proximity to urban areas and past clearing and disturbance of native vegetation in the Aboriginal area has contributed to the establishment of introduced species

Although the Aboriginal area is small, twenty-five introduced species have been identified, including the Groundsel bush (*Baccharis halimifolia*) which is a noxious weed under *the Noxious Weeds Act 1993*. Whilst this species is identified as a priority species for control, other introduced species of concern include ground asparagus (*Protasparagus aethiopicus*), climbing asparagus (*Protasparagus plumosus*), glory lily (*Gloriosa superba*) and winter senna (*Senna pendular var glabrata*). These species are 'Environmental weeds' proposed for declaration as such under the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993*. (FNCW 2001).

There are no records of introduced fauna occurring in the Aboriginal area, however, cats, dogs, foxes and cane toads may traverse the area despite its lack of vegetation cover.

3. MANAGEMENT ISSUES AND STRATEGIES

Current Situation	Desired Outcomes	Strategies	Priority
<p>Soil and water conservation</p> <p>Soils in the Aboriginal area are highly erodible if disturbed. Some damage has occurred to the wall of the Ceremonial Ring through natural weathering and visitor access. There are no known flooding problems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil erosion is minimised and soil profiles are undisturbed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular monitoring of any visitor impacts will be undertaken. Ameliorative actions will be taken as required in consultation with the local Aboriginal People. • All maintenance works (including grass mowing) will be undertaken in a manner and with equipment that minimises impacts on the Ceremonial Ring. 	<p>High</p> <p>High</p>
<p>Native plant and animal conservation</p> <p>Vegetation in the Aboriginal area has been highly modified by clearing.</p> <p>NPWS has undertaken some native revegetation works. Some natural regeneration of native species has also occurred. Native vegetation around the Ceremonial Ring is cleared and overhanging branches trimmed to protect cultural heritage values and adjacent houses.</p> <p>There is scope for only minor regeneration of native vegetation for natural landscape amenity purposes due to the Aboriginal areas small size and priorities for cultural heritage and fire management.</p> <p>No rare or threatened plant or animal species are known to occur.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native vegetation is allowed to regenerate where it does not threaten cultural heritage values or conflict with fire management objectives. • Any tree hazards identified are dealt with in accordance with agency guidelines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a mown area along the northern boundary fence of 1-2 metres, in and around the Ceremonial Ring and along the pedestrian access from Gibbon Street. • Undertake tree hazard assessments to determine an appropriate course of action to protect the Ceremonial Ring and adjoining homes (refer Cultural heritage and Fire management). 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

Current Situation	Desired Outcomes	Strategies	Priority
<p>Cultural heritage</p> <p>The Ceremonial Ring is of cultural significance to the Bundjalung Aboriginal community and is on the Register of the National Estate. The Ceremonial Ring is fragile and susceptible to damage from pedestrian traffic, soil disturbance and falling branches from overhanging trees. A cleared area is maintained by mowing around the Ceremonial Ring to protect the site from encroaching vegetation and overhanging tree branches are trimmed. For cultural reasons it is not desirable for visitors to walk over the Ceremonial Ring.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cultural heritage significance of the Aboriginal area to the local Aboriginal community is recognised, protected and where appropriate interpreted. • Aboriginal people are involved in management of the cultural heritage values in the Aboriginal area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage use of the Aboriginal area by Aboriginal people for cultural purposes consistent with the NPW Act and policy. • Precede all new ground disturbance work by an assessment for cultural features. • Maintain interpretative signposting about Aboriginal cultural heritage values, sensitivity of the Ceremonial Ring and appropriate access (refer Visitor use). • Manage visitor access to minimise impacts on cultural heritage values, in particular the Ceremonial Ring (refer Visitor use). • Consult and involve the Jali Local Aboriginal Land Council, the Bundjalung Elders and other relevant Aboriginal people in the management and interpretation of the Aboriginal area. • Trim tree branches likely to fall on the Ceremonial Ring and maintain a cleared area around the site to ensure vegetation does not encroach. • Encourage further research into the Aboriginal heritage values in consultation with the Jali LALC and Bundjalung Elders (refer Research). 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing/ High</p> <p>High</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

Current Situation	Desired Outcomes	Strategies	Priority
<p>Introduced species</p> <p>There are a large number of introduced plant species in the Aboriginal area, including several declared noxious species.</p> <p>No introduced fauna species have been recorded in the Aboriginal area but some are likely to traverse the area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced species in the Aboriginal area are eradicated. • The cultural heritage values are maintained and enhanced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A site works plan will be prepared and control priorities and methods identified to ensure that weed control activities are undertaken appropriately. • Use 'best practice' techniques and suitably trained regenerators to undertake weed control. • Brief supervisors of these works to ensure that the cultural heritage values are not adversely affected. • Annually monitor and treat any new infestations of pest species. • Liaise with neighbours about the impacts of introduced garden plants on natural values. • Increase community awareness of the need to control domestic animals. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Low</p> <p>Low</p>
<p>Fire management</p> <p>There is a very low bushfire potential due to low fuel levels on the Aboriginal area and adjoining lands. The Aboriginal area has been designated as a HMZ because of the sensitivity of the Ceremonial Ring. The Ceremonial Ring is sensitive to any soil disturbance. There is no opportunity for managing fire regimes for remnant vegetation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire is excluded from the Aboriginal area. • Life, property and natural and cultural values within and adjacent to the Aboriginal area are protected from fire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage the Aboriginal area as a HMZ where fire is excluded. • Ensure earthworks are not undertaken in any fire suppression for the Aboriginal area. • Maintain reduced fuel loads by mowing existing grassed areas along a 1-2m buffer along the boundary adjacent to adjoining homes. • Promote and support cooperative responses to fire through the Bush Fire Management Committee. 	<p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

Current Situation	Desired Outcomes	Strategies	Priority
<p>Visitor use</p> <p>Visitor use of the Aboriginal area is low and the only facilities provided are interpretation and regulatory signage. A post and rail fence designates the boundary of the Aboriginal area.</p> <p>For cultural reasons it is not desirable for visitors to walk over the Ceremonial Ring. The walls of the Ceremonial Ring are also susceptible to damage from foot traffic.</p> <p>Development of adjacent lands may result in increased pedestrian access where the Aboriginal area may be used as a thoroughfare to local commercial and sporting facilities. There are minor incidences of littering.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor use remains low and is consistent with the appreciation or study of cultural heritage values. • Visitor use does not impact on the values of the Aboriginal area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational use of the Aboriginal area will not be promoted and no visitor facilities will be provided other than existing interpretative and regulatory signage (refer below). • Promote understanding and appreciation of the cultural heritage values of the Aboriginal area through interpretation signage, educational activities, and contact with local community organisations, residents and individuals as appropriate. • Minimise visitor impacts by promoting the cultural sensitivity and fragility of the Ceremonial Ring through signage, education and interpretation activities. This will include promotion of a 3 metre set back for pedestrians from the Ceremonial Ring and requests that visitors do not walk on, or across the site. • Prohibit camping, vehicle use, horse riding, cycling and fires in the Aboriginal area. • Permit organised group educational visits, subject to limits on numbers and other conditions necessary to minimise impacts. Encourage Aboriginal people's involvement in interpretation of the values of the Aboriginal area. • Maintain the fence around the boundary of the Aboriginal Area. • Liaise with Ballina Shire Council about provision of pedestrian access and a buffer outside the Aboriginal area concurrent with any future development on adjacent lands. 	<p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>High</p>

Current Situation	Desired Outcomes	Strategies	Priority
<p>Research</p> <p>Local oral history and research has provided information on the Aboriginal cultural heritage values of the Ceremonial Ring and surrounding cultural landscape.</p> <p>Further research may contribute additional knowledge of cultural heritage values.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research enhances understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal cultural heritage values. • Research has minimal impact on values of the Aboriginal Area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake and/or encourage research to improve knowledge and management of cultural heritage values. 	<p>High</p>

High priority activities are those imperative to achievement of the objectives and desired outcomes. They must be undertaken in the near future to avoid significant deterioration in natural, cultural or management resources.

Medium priority activities are those that are necessary to achieve the objectives and desired outcomes but are not urgent.

Low priority activities are desirable to achieve management objectives and desired outcomes but can wait until resources become available.

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