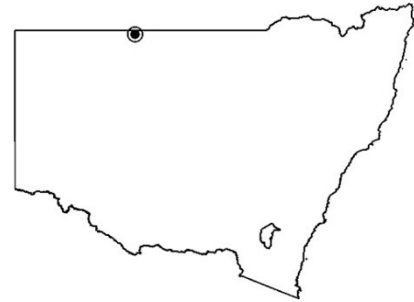




Cuttaburra National Park

Statement of management intent



Acknowledgement of Country

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) acknowledges that Cuttaburra National Park ('the park') lies within Paroo River and Warrego River Country, with historical and ongoing cultural significance for Aboriginal people.

Introduction

The park was established following the acquisition of Comeroo, Maranoa and Muttawary stations, former western lands leases, described as lot/deposited plan 3758/766171, 3761/766174, 6026/768883, 6210/769062, 6270/769125, 6209/769061 and 6211/769063 and former Crown roads. The purchase was funded by the NSW Government with support from The Nature Conservancy Australia, which brokered generous co-funding contributions from the Wyss Foundation and the Holdfast Collective, Patagonia's non-profit shareholder.

This statement of management intent outlines the values, issues and key management directions and describes the management intent for Cuttaburra National Park. This statement, together with relevant NPWS policies, will guide the management of the park until a plan of management has been prepared. The NPWS *Managing parks prior to plan of management policy* states that parks without an adopted plan of management will be managed consistent with the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* and other relevant legislation, existing park management policies, and other relevant manuals, procedures and guidelines.

Management principles

Under Section 30E of the National Parks and Wildlife Act, national parks are reserved to identify, 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 or tourist use and enjoyment. Cuttaburra National Park will be managed in accordance with the following principles:

- conserve biodiversity, maintain ecosystem function, protect geological and geomorphological features and natural phenomena and maintain natural landscapes
- conserve places, objects, features and landscapes of cultural value
- protect the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations
- promote public appreciation and understanding of the national park's natural and cultural values
- provide for sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment that is compatible with the conservation of the national park's natural and cultural values
- provide for the sustainable use (including adaptive re-use) of any buildings or structures or modified natural areas having regard to the conservation of the national park's natural and cultural values
- provide for appropriate research and monitoring.

Context

Cuttaburra National Park (37,723 ha) (see Figure 1) was reserved on 13 September 2024. It is located in the far north-west of New South Wales and was named after Cuttaburra Creek which runs through the park for 20 km, and the surrounding Yantabulla Swamp Cuttaburra Basin. The park is located off the Dowling Track (Hungerford–Bourke Road), approximately 165 km north-west of Bourke and 96 km south-east of Hungerford.

Cuttaburra National Park and nearby Brindigabba National Park (35 km to the north-west) secure connectivity for conservation across more than 100,000 ha when combined with adjacent conservation lands. The adjacent Yantabulla and Naree properties have in-perpetuity private land conservation agreements with the Biodiversity Conservation Trust. South Endeavour Trust and Bush Heritage, respectively, own the properties and both are managed by Bush Heritage. The other closest national park is Currawinya National Park, 100 km north-west in Queensland.

Comeroo Station previously ran a commercial camping, basic accommodation and camel tour enterprise in addition to their agricultural business.

The park is located within the administrative areas of the Western Local Land Services and Bourke Shire local government area, and in an unincorporated area between Tibooburra and Nulla Nulla local Aboriginal land councils.

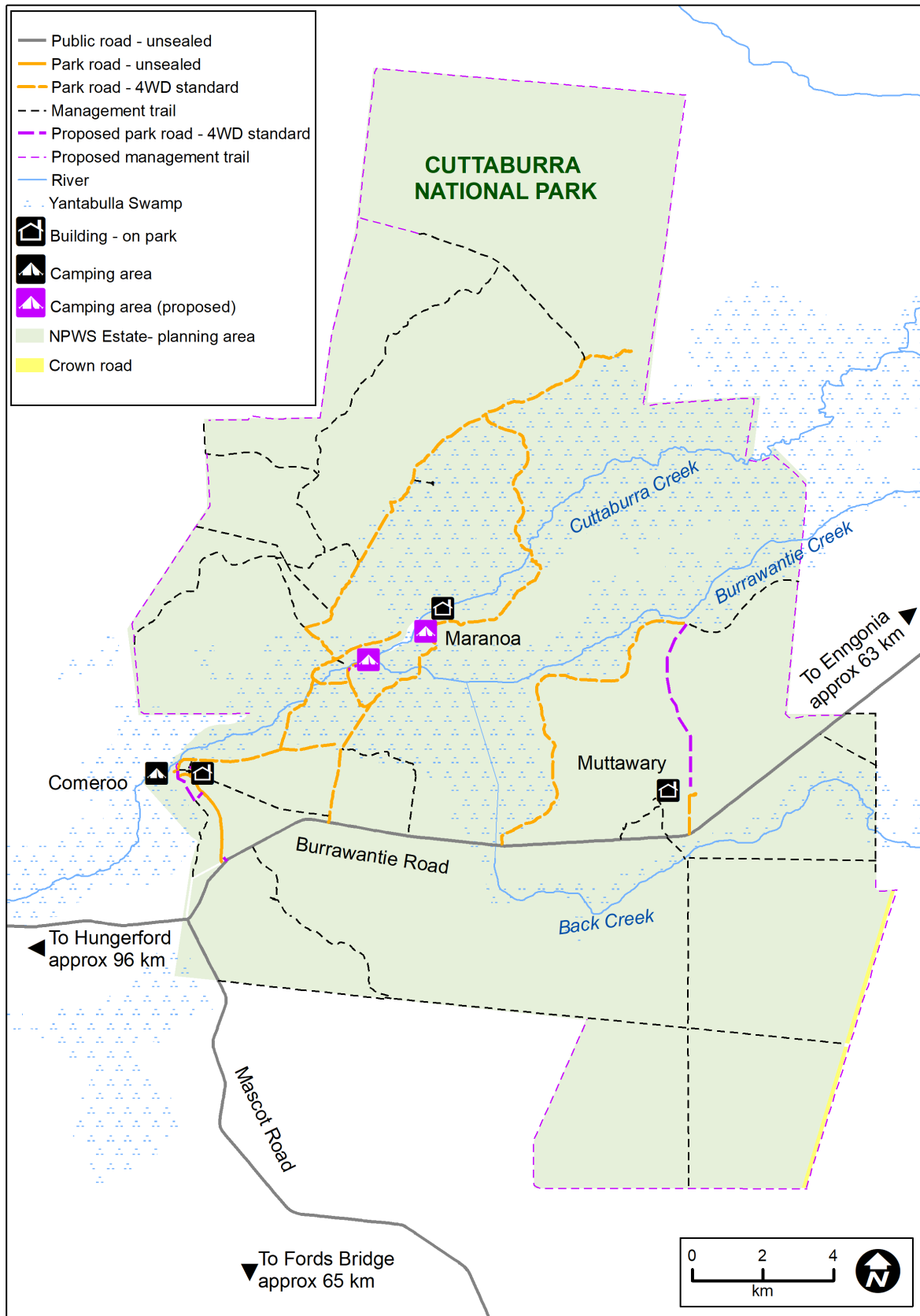


Figure 1 Cuttaburra National Park

Values

- Cuttaburra National Park features a diversity of habitats including alluvial floodplains and swamps with permanent waterholes, ephemeral wetlands, grasslands, woodlands and shrublands. It also includes sensitive mound spring areas and broilga breeding grounds.
- Importantly, more than one-quarter of the park forms part of Yantabulla Swamp Cuttaburra Basin, a mosaic of channels and wetlands. Half the park is included in the Paroo Floodplain and Currawinya Important Bird Area as declared by Birdlife International in recognition of its importance in conserving global bird populations.
- The Cuttaburra Basin, including Yantabulla Swamp, forms part of the Paroo and Warrego floodplains in the Murray–Darling’s northern basin. The Cuttaburra Basin provides important connectivity between the Warrego and Paroo river systems during large floods.
- The park is within the Cuttaburra–Paroo, West Warrego and Warrego Sands subregions of the Mulga Lands bioregion. The bioregion is characterised by a persistently dry, semi-arid climate with sporadic and unreliable rain.
- The park is classified within 4 Mitchell landscapes. The park is dominated by Paroo–Warrego tablelands and downs in the north, dissected through the centre of the park by Paroo–Warrego channels and floodouts, with areas of Paroo–Warrego sandplains and Paroo–Warrego linear dunes in the south.
- Dedicated vegetation surveys and mapping completed in 2024 identified 30 distinct vegetation communities, assigned to 28 plant community types. The most abundant plant community types include:
 - heather bush-mulga shrubland
 - poplar box woodland
 - coolabah open woodland
 - yapunyah woodland.
- Two threatened ecological communities were identified during the vegetation surveys: Coolabah-Black Box Woodland, and Artesian Spring Ecological Community. The survey recorded 292 plant species, including 2 endangered species: desert cow-vine (*Ipomoea diamantinensis*) and a spurge (*Phyllanthus maderaspatensis*). These species, although common in northern Australia, are rare in New South Wales and are found in ephemeral inter-drying areas.
- A fauna survey conducted in March 2024 identified 158 native species, including 109 birds, 22 reptiles, 13 frogs and 14 native mammals. Twelve species are listed as threatened in New South Wales:
 - eastern fat-tailed gecko (*Diplodactylus platyurus*)
 - hooded robin (south-eastern subspecies) (*Melanodryas cucullata cucullata*)
 - broilga (*Grus rubicunda*)
 - black-breasted buzzard (*Hamirostra melanosternon*)
 - southern whiteface (*Aphelocephala leucopsis*)
 - pied honeyeater (*Certhionyx variegatus*)
 - Hall’s babbler (*Pomatostomus halli*)
 - grey-crowned babbler (eastern subspecies) (*Pomatostomus temporalis temporalis*)
 - pink cockatoo (*Lophochroa leadbeateri*)
 - stripe-faced dunnart (*Sminthopsis macroura*)
 - little pied bat (*Chalinolobus picatus*)
 - yellow-bellied sheath-tail-bat (*Saccolaimus flaviventris*).

- Cuttaburra National Park is part of a rich Aboriginal cultural landscape. The park and surrounding lands are likely to have extremely high Aboriginal heritage conservation values. Aboriginal occupation and use of what is now the park is likely to have been widespread and a range of items of potential Aboriginal heritage value have been observed. Further archaeological and cultural heritage surveys are likely to identify more Aboriginal cultural heritage sites, places and artefacts across the park.
- The park includes a range of infrastructure associated with the former pastoral stations. A heritage assessment concluded the pastoral history of the stations has local significance and is an important part of the local heritage, however no individual building has particular significance.
- The park provides opportunities for well-prepared and self-reliant visitors. The park has 20 km of Cuttaburra Creek frontage. During periods of high flow the entire creek is continuous, however during dry periods water retracts to permanent waterholes at Maranoa and Cumeroo and smaller billabongs.

Issues

- Part of Burrawantie Road, north-east of the intersection with Mascot Road and managed by Bourke Shire Council, does not align with the gazetted park boundaries.
- A Crown road reserve along the south-east boundary was not included in the park when gazetted (see Figure 1).
- No easement is required to access the property and no easement has been granted for a third party across the national park.
- Aboriginal people who have cultural association to Country at Cuttaburra may include Budjiti, Parunti, Kurnu-Baakandji, Muruwari, Kooma and Kunja peoples. Many Aboriginal people today have links to the former stations where their families lived and worked.
- There is limited understanding about the Aboriginal cultural values of the park given the relatively recent acquisition of the property.
- The park has been named 'Cuttaburra National Park' after the dominant geographic feature, in accordance with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service *Park names policy*.
- Given the distance from Bourke an operational base and staff accommodation are required to effectively manage the park. Current housing does not meet National Parks and Wildlife Service tenancy standards for staff. The location of housing has historically been above floodwaters, although they become isolated which further supports the establishment of an operational base that can be resilient and safe during these periods.
- Asbestos is present at some of the existing buildings or ruins sites and will require ongoing monitoring or removal to manage any health and safety risks.
- Feral animals such as goats, pigs, wild dogs and feral cats are present as well as localised weed infestations. Buffel grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*), a highly invasive grass species, is present in the park, particularly around Comeroo Homestead and Maranoa Waterhole. It has been planted to control dust and is heavily grazed by horses and stock, however once they are removed the grass will need to be actively managed.
- There is an expectation that a variety of visitor experiences will be provided in the park because Comeroo Station operated as a commercial tourism operation with camping, hard-roofed accommodation and tours. There are limitations to tourism due to the inaccessibility of unsealed council roads when wet. While this is a common issue for outback tourists it does make travelling in the area unreliable. The Cuttaburra Creek crossing also prevents access to the northern parts of the park when in flow.

- The Warrego River and Cuttaburra Creek are key arid zone systems that intermittently support huge numbers of wetland-dependent fauna, including breeding waterbirds. Commercial harvesting of yabbies is not supported within the park.

Key management directions

Any activities proposed by this statement of management intent are subject to an appropriate level of environmental and cultural assessment, for example, a conservation risk assessment, review of environmental factors or environmental impact statement.

- Investigate options for crossing Cuttaburra Creek and, where feasible, construct crossings subject to environmental and planning assessment approvals.
- Continue to work with Bourke Shire Council to formalise the alignment of the park boundaries with the constructed Burrawantie Road.
- Investigate addition of the Crown road reserve along the south-east boundary to the park.
- Consult widely with the Aboriginal community to better understand connection to Country and opportunities for interpretation.
- Undertake additional investigations and Aboriginal site surveys to add to the knowledge base for the park and better assist park managers to protect values and address threats to those values.
- Consult with the Aboriginal and wider community in relation to the name of the park. The process will continue to be in accordance with the National Parks and Wildlife Service *Park names policy*.
- Work with the Aboriginal and local community on future management, including protecting cultural sites and reflecting the previous pastoral history in the park. For example, the station names could be incorporated into precinct or campground names.
- Establish an operations base within the existing Comeroo Homestead precinct.
- Manage health and safety risks associated with asbestos present in buildings and ruins. Existing buildings with structural issues may be demolished and replaced, subject to appropriate approvals and funding. Buildings that have been identified for demolition include Comeroo Homestead, Grandma's House, a shelter at the existing campground and a lodge and associated buildings at Maranoa Waterhole.
- Retain some pastoral infrastructure to provide park visitors with a visible, tangible link to the former use of the property.
- Implement fire management strategies and bushfire risk management plan treatments consistent with strategic fire management planning and relevant legislation. The landscape has a relatively low fire risk and fire management activities will focus on boundary breaks and reducing threats to assets, such as Comeroo Homestead (prior to its demolition), Comeroo and Maranoa woolsheds and visitor infrastructure. Ecological burning will be restricted in the first 10 years to allow time for vegetation recovery following removal of grazing.
- Conduct feral animal control and weed control in accordance with National Parks and Wildlife Service policies and procedures with a view to reducing and maintaining feral animal and weed densities at a level that ensures, to the greatest extent practicable, no significant ecological impact. Work, including fencing, will be undertaken in cooperation with park neighbours where practicable and will complement the Western Local Land Service's regional strategic pest animal plan and weed management plan.
- Conduct ongoing feral animal management, such as aerial shooting, aerial baiting and ground baiting, to maintain low numbers of feral animals, such as pigs, goats, feral cats and wild dogs.

- Implement targeted control programs to prevent further spread of buffel grass, even though eradication is unlikely to be achieved.
- Control infestations of castor oil plant (*Ricinus communis*) and Noogoora burr (*Xanthium occidentale*) around waterholes and watering areas during wet periods.
- Install fencing along the boundaries of the park in accordance with the *Boundary fencing policy* and feral animal management plans. Replacement boundary fence applications should be supported as resources allow to help prevent stock incursions and the movement of goats into the park.
- Provide opportunities for Aboriginal people to access Country, and to maintain, renew or develop cultural practices and associations.
- Provide opportunities for Aboriginal people to be involved in park management, including the collection and management of information about cultural sites and values, the protection and interpretation of cultural sites, and the non-commercial cultural use of wild resources, such as the collection of medicinal plants and bush tucker, subject to National Parks and Wildlife Service policies and licences as appropriate.
- Facilitate further targeted surveys of threatened species and monitor changes to vegetation condition with the removal of grazing.
- Proposed visitor experiences include scenic drives, an unmarked walking route along Maranoa Waterhole, pontoon and watercraft facilities. Basic camping and day use facilities will be provided at 2 proposed campgrounds along Cuttaburra Creek and an existing campground at Comeroo (see Figure 1). All new and upgraded facilities will be subject to environmental, planning and Aboriginal cultural heritage assessments and approvals and funding.
- Provide public access through the park on existing park roads (see Figure 1) and consider identification of scenic drives. Public access on management trails may be allowed during open days, National Parks and Wildlife Service guided tours or by consent.
- Temporarily close park roads and management trails during and after wet conditions where necessary, or gate or close vehicle trails where access is damaging the park, or if a trail poses a risk to public safety.
- Construction of new park roads or management trails may only be in emergencies.
- Assess water infrastructure across the park.
- Consider:
 - commercial filming and photography, which may be allowed subject to written consent
 - commercial tours, events and functions, which may be allowed under a licence.
- Commercial fishing, including harvesting of yabbies within the park will not be supported.
- Do not issue access permits to drive on non-public roads for the purpose of commercial fishing in the park.
- Encourage the community to contribute to the ongoing conservation of the park by promoting and raising public awareness of its special values.
- Prepare a plan of management to set out the ongoing management objectives for the park. The plan of management is a statutory document under the National Parks and Wildlife Act, which will be available for public comment.

More information

For additional information or enquiries about any aspect of this park or this statement, contact the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Bourke Office on 02 6830 0200 or at npws.bourke@environment.nsw.gov.au

The following links also provide more information:

- [NPWS Managing parks prior to a plan of management policy](#)
- [NPWS Fire management strategies](#)
- [NPWS Boundary fencing policy](#)
- [NPWS Park names policy](#)
- [National Parks and Wildlife Act \(No 80\) 1974](#)
- [Local Land Services regional pest animal plans](#)
- [Local Land Services regional weed plans](#)
- Birdlife International, [Paroo Floodplain and Currawinya Important Bird Area](#)

Disclaimer: This is a statement of management intent to guide the management of the park prior to the development of a plan of management. Any statements made in this publication are made in good faith and do not render the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water liable for any loss or damage. Provisions in the final plan of management may vary from those identified in this document as a result of new information and community consultation. The map in this statement is intended to show the park's location and basic features only and is not suitable for use when navigating to or exploring within the park.

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