



NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

NSW Parks Eco Pass

Handbook



Acknowledgement of Country

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

This resource may contain images or names of deceased persons in photographs or historical content.

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Artist and designer Nikita Ridgeway from Aboriginal design agency – Boss Lady Creative Designs, created the People and Community symbol.

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1. Introduction to operating in NSW national parks and reserves

1.1 NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service values

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is part of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (the department). Our key goal is to maximise the long-term wellbeing of New South Wales. We do this by protecting and improving the state's:

- prosperity
- environmental sustainability
- safety and security
- social inclusion and cohesion, and
- attractiveness as a place for recreation and relaxation.

We bring together the environment, economy, work and play, industry and recreation. This helps ensure that economic growth and job security consider the environment and character of our neighbourhoods and communities. We make decisions based on advice and analysis that are transparent, efficient and reflective of the diversity of New South Wales.

We strive to be a global leader in the planning and management of resources, environmental and socioeconomic security, financial affordability, land use and carbon emissions.

In our workplace, we value collaboration, humility, accountability and kindness and reflect the diversity of our communities.

By working together, we will make New South Wales a better place for all.

As an organisation, we share the NSW public sector values of integrity, trust, service and accountability. These values guide not only the actions and behaviours of NPWS staff, but also those of our trusted partners including Parks Eco Pass licence holders.

1.2 History of the Parks Eco Pass

We manage over 890 protected areas in New South Wales, covering over 7.5 million hectares and representing more than 9% of the land area of the state. This includes national parks, nature reserves, flora reserves, World Heritage areas, rainforests, beaches, alpine areas and sites of great cultural and historic significance.

These distinct and outstanding assets make New South Wales a highly desired visitor destination and the leading provider of nature-based visitor experiences. We are responsible for protecting the values of these special places while providing a wide range of experiences for all visitors. Nature-based tourism and recreation are major contributors to the NSW economy. As commercial operators, you play an invaluable role, in partnership with us, in promoting our parks and encouraging visitors to appreciate, understand and enjoy them. Currently, over 300 of you hold a Parks Eco Pass licence taking visitors into parks to participate in a wide range of activities from bushwalking, abseiling, cycling, surfing and kayaking to cultural or educational tours.

The Parks Eco Pass licensing program was launched in July 2009 to let people enjoy national parks sustainably. It allows us to maintain the natural and cultural heritage of our parks, while encouraging visitor enjoyment and appreciation of park values, and nurturing our nature-based tourism and recreation industry.

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We want to work with licensed operators who share our values, run professional operations and deliver enjoyable experiences. If you are fully invested in our parks, you will help us protect these valuable places for future generations to enjoy.

The visitor experience underpins every visit to NSW national parks. Every visit should be an unforgettable one that inspires and encourages visitors to keep exploring, learning, sharing and returning. Developing unique experiences, delivering authentic and high-quality services and providing relevant and compelling destination information are key to making NSW national parks a compelling and competitive visitor attraction.

High-quality experiences play a critical role in creating a positive image of New South Wales and us by inspiring visitors to explore our distinctive tourism product, including cultural heritage, high-quality produce, the natural environment and our people.

The Parks Eco Pass program is designed to streamline processes and ensure consistency in the licensing of commercial tour activities in national parks and reserves across New South Wales. It offers:

- one licence (obtained through one application), which lets your business operate all your licensed activities in more than one park
- a single fee structure for the whole state
- the ability to transfer your licence if you sell the business
- licence terms of up to 5 years
- a dedicated team and key contact point.

Licensing is designed to ensure the quality of activities are provided in parks and prevent harm to natural areas.

1.3 Parks Eco Pass reforms

The Parks Eco Pass reforms led to greater benefits to help you to re-establish your businesses and develop longer-term and mutually beneficial partnerships with us. The Parks Eco Pass reforms focused on understanding customer needs and developing a program to make it easier for businesses to work with us while ensuring we maintain natural and cultural values in NSW national parks.

Under the reformed program, we have improved licence assessment times, eliminated double handling, created transparent compliance measures and delivered greater benefits and support to you as you deliver visitor experiences in NSW national parks.

Due to the reforms, the Parks Eco Pass program includes:

- a licence package that provides value for money for you, including greater promotional support through our marketing channels
- a new licence fee structure and discounts
- the waiving of annual licence fees for Aboriginal businesses for the first 2 years to encourage and support new businesses to operate on Country
- new online resources to make it simpler and faster for you to start working with us to provide nature-based visitor experiences
- new measures to maintain high-quality visitor experiences compatible with natural and cultural environments

- a new complimentary Aboriginal cultural awareness training module to help you develop and deliver tours in a culturally sensitive way
- new selective licensing resources and opportunities for you to express your interest in offering innovative nature-based visitor experiences in areas where there will be a restricted number of licences issued.

1.4 Objectives of the Parks Eco Pass program

We worked in consultation with operators, industry and other interested groups to develop and refine the Parks Eco Pass program.

Our objectives were to:

- provide an efficient, equitable, consistent and customer-focused program
- encourage ecologically sustainable and culturally appropriate visitor use
- improve certainty to promote industry investment and security
- improve the perceived value of the program for you by incorporating a broad range of benefits
- promote best practice operating standards
- improve compliance and monitoring
- ensure organised groups are always appropriately and equitably managed
- recognise the partnership that exists between you and us in the promotion of our parks and in the enabling of visitors to appreciate, understand and enjoy them.

1.5 Who needs a Parks Eco Pass?

Any business entity, organisation or individual undertaking a 'commercial guided experience' associated with recreation, tourism and/or education in a NSW national park or reserve must hold a Parks Eco Pass licence.

It is the nature of the activity, rather than the organisation itself, that will determine whether a licence is required. Whether an activity is deemed commercial depends on a range of factors; for example, some not-for-profit organisations conduct tours and/or activities for financial return over and above base operating costs. In this situation, you would require a licence.

A commercial tour activity will include some or all the following elements:

- It has a principal commercial purpose or aim to profit.
- It is ongoing or regular.
- It has an entry, participation or membership fee that covers indirect expenses, as well as direct expenses.
- The activity, course, tour or transport is free of charge in conjunction with another commercial product or service.
- The activity is available to the public, rather than a specific membership group.
- A service (such as a guide or experience) is provided, and they are paid or compensated.

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Transportation services to, from and in a NSW national park, without a guided tour, are not licensed through the Parks Eco Pass program.

Private groups and individuals undertaking recreational or educational activities (and not conducting a business or commercial activity) do not require a licence. A 'commercial activity' is not occurring where an activity may be better described as a form of recreation, a hobby or a sporting activity where no profit is being made.

In summary, the following entities do not require a Parks Eco Pass licence:

- sport and recreation clubs
- groups and individuals that are not business entities who provide services to their members and do not receive financial reward beyond direct cost recovery (e.g. bushwalking clubs)
- hire vehicles/vessels accessing national parks and reserves where an itinerary (including a destination) or guided tour has not been specified in promotional material (e.g. a vehicle advertised as a 'bus for hire', 'car for hire' or 'campervan for hire')
- schools, TAFEs and universities where the activities are part of the curriculum
- public transport services, including taxis, booking agents or any other business entities in the tourism supply chain that do not access national parks and reserves
- those conducting a one-off event or a series of events in a year approved by us
- those with approval provided via an event or small-scale event process.

Note: some of the above entities may require a consent (outside of the Parks Eco Pass licence) for an organised activity.

All clubs, groups and organisations wishing to undertake activities that do not require a licence will still be expected to adhere to the same activity, environmental and safety standards (including the adventure activity standards) required of Parks Eco Pass licensed operators when undertaking outdoor adventure activities in NSW national parks and reserves. All groups should notify local park staff when they intend to visit a national park or reserve.

If you are unsure whether you require a licence or would like further information, please visit the Parks Eco Pass webpage or contact the NPWS Tourism Partnerships and Events Unit, Visitor Engagement & Revenue Branch, whose contact details are provided in Section 1.15.

[Parks Eco Pass program for commercial tour operators webpage](#)

1.6 How to use this handbook

You must ensure you are fully aware of, understand and are able to abide by all conditions attached to your Parks Eco Pass licence:

- Check the eligibility criteria before you apply for a licence.
- Review the matrix of activities provided in the Parks Eco Pass Activity and Location spreadsheet to determine if the activity you wish to conduct is permitted in the park or reserve you wish to operate in.
- Read the general licence conditions.
- Identify and read about any specific activities and location conditions relevant to your type of operation.

[Parks Eco Pass general licence conditions](#)

[Parks Eco Pass Activity and Location conditions spreadsheet](#)

1.7 Customer commitments

Our customer commitments outline the behaviours we both must commit to in order to establish a mutually trusting partnership.

Each of these commitments has been outlined below.



We will support you to develop your business

We will actively communicate with you and explain things clearly

We will support you to develop visitor experiences

We will listen to you and address any feedback



We will act like a partner

We will respond to you quickly

We will be transparent with how long things take

We will be easy to deal with

We will be reliable

We will act professionally



We will be fair

We will hold everyone to the same rules and apply them without bias

We will exercise a certain degree of flexibility when required

We will help you meet your obligations

We will pursue those who intentionally break the rules

We will acknowledge when we are wrong



What we expect from you

You need to be compliant with the conditions of your licence

You need to act in accordance with our values

You need to provide high quality experiences for our visitors

You need to meet your reporting obligations

You need to let us know when others are not being compliant

1.8 Applying for a Parks Eco Pass

If you are considering applying for a Parks Eco Pass, please visit the Parks Eco Pass webpage for the application form and instructions on materials you will need before you apply.

[Parks Eco Pass program for commercial tour operators webpage](#)

Before you apply you will need to call the NPWS Tourism Partnerships and Events Unit, Visitor Engagement & Revenue Branch to discuss your application. Once you have been approved for your Parks Eco Pass, this team will meet with you over the phone or in person to discuss your business and ensure you are fully aware of the obligations of being a licensed operator.

1.9 Eligibility criteria to attain or maintain a licence

The below eligibility criteria have been developed to focus on improving outcomes throughout the period of your Parks Eco Pass. These criteria must be satisfied to get and keep a Parks Eco Pass licence.

Table 1 Eligibility criteria

Process	Criteria
Pre-application	
Interview	Applicants must contact the NPWS Tourism Partnerships and Events Unit, Visitor Engagement & Revenue Branch for a pre-application discussion.
Online assessment	Applicants must complete an online assessment covering safety, conservation, important conditions, how to use the licence and handbook, fees, and the NPWS values.
In the application	
Public Liability Insurance	Applicants must provide a valid certificate showing a minimum of \$10m in Public Liability Insurance (PLI) with NPWS listed as an interested party. Further details are provided in section 2.5.
Business plan	Applicants must provide their business plan in the <u>business plan template</u> provided on the Parks Eco Pass program for commercial tour operators webpage.
Post-approval	
Induction meeting	The licensed operator must attend an induction meeting (via phone or in person) with the NPWS Tourism Partnerships and Events Unit, Visitor Engagement & Revenue Branch within three weeks of receiving their licence to discuss business planning, cultural interpretation, conservation, safety, risk assessments, and customer feedback.
Aboriginal cultural awareness training	New and existing licensed operators are to complete the specialist training within three months of obtaining or renewing their licence to ensure they are aware of the cultural significance of the land they are operating on.

- [Online assessment](#)
- [Business plan template](#)
- [Parks Eco Pass program for commercial tour operators webpage](#)

1.10 Licence length and terms

A Parks Eco Pass licence may be granted for a 1-, 3- or 5-year term.

1.10.1 Licence terms in Visitor Infrastructure Program

We have commenced work on a range of visitor infrastructure programs aiming to increase nature-based tourism in New South Wales, boost regional visitor economies and improve community wellbeing. These visitor infrastructure projects will greatly enhance visitor facilities and create new iconic experiences in NSW national parks, including new walking trails, accommodation and tourism partnerships.

Work has commenced on several of these visitor infrastructure projects. We are currently reviewing visitor experiences offered in the visitor infrastructure locations listed below.

Locations include:

- Mount Jerusalem National Park
- Nightcap National Park
- Whian Whian State Conservation Area.

We will be in contact with all current Parks Eco Pass licence holders about future licensing in the above parks.

It is important to note that upgrades under the infrastructure program may impact your currently licensed tour experience due to sections of the national park being closed for works.

Find out more on the:

[About the Visitor Infrastructure Program webpage.](#)

1.11 Selective licensing

Parks Eco Pass licences do not give you priority or exclusive rights to an activity or area within a national park or reserve. However, there are circumstances where we may consider it necessary to issue selective licences for an activity or location. We will restrict the number of licences for any activity or location for:

- visitor safety
- the protection of cultural and natural values
- sustainable management of park
- for the enhancement of the visitor experience.

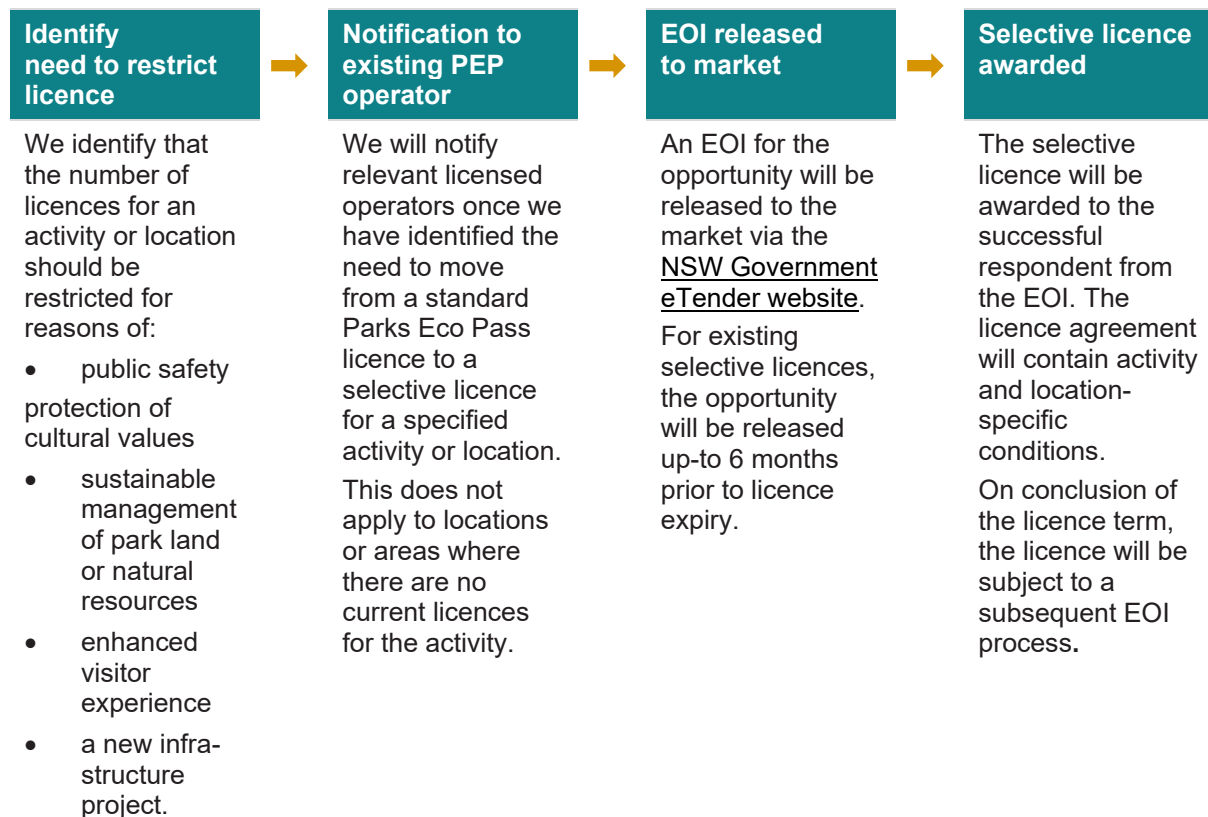
Selective licensing will also be prioritised for high-visitation parks with over one million visitors annually and high-value precincts with infrastructure under the:

Visitor Infrastructure Program.

By restricting the number of licences issued, we can help protect and safeguard the parks for present and future generations.

Where licences are restricted, the allocation of the licence must be open, fair and transparent. We will grant selective licences through a public, competitive market process known as an invitation for Expression of Interest (EOI).

The length and number of a selective licences allocated will depend on the management objectives for the location and/or natural resources. Selective licences will also have specific licence conditions relevant to the activity and location.



1.12 About your licence

1.12.1 Licence conditions

Licence conditions specify how, when and where certain activities can be undertaken. They are designed to:

- minimise the activity's impact on natural and cultural sites
- manage potential issues associated with public visitor use
- minimise risks to public safety.

There are 3 kinds of conditions:

- **General conditions** apply to all locations and all activities (for example, not feeding, handling or disturbing wildlife).
- **Location-specific conditions** address the specific needs of a park or reserve. We may use them to manage conflicts with other users or to protect natural and cultural values. An example of a site-specific condition may be a restriction on use at certain times of the year to ensure the protection of bird breeding habitats.
- **Activity-specific conditions** apply to a particular activity in all locations. Activity conditions (for example, no cycling in a particular area) aim to promote safe practices.

Find out more:

- [Parks Eco Pass general licence conditions](#)
- [Parks Eco Pass Activity and Location conditions spreadsheet](#)

1.12.2 Ensuring sustainability

Our role is to preserve and protect the natural and cultural values of national parks and reserves. In carrying out this role, we work with you to manage visitor impacts, especially at popular sites.

If you run a commercial activity, you should ensure the sustainable and culturally appropriate use of sites by suitably informing and educating your clients and always operating in a sustainable manner. You should:

- educate clients on how to interact with sites
- help build an understanding of natural and cultural heritage conservation management practices for your clients
- provide engaging and relevant interpretation and education
- respect historic places
- promote respect for Aboriginal culture and sites
- observe rules designed to protect conservation values and public safety
- encourage active involvement in conservation activities
- adopt minimal-impact practices for all activities
- report damage, illegal activities and potential problems to NPWS.

1.13 Renewing your licence

Licences for existing licensed operators will not be automatically renewed on expiry.

The application for and processing of your new licence will be straightforward where:

- you have reasonably complied with the conditions of an existing licence
- you have carried out and reported licensed activity during your licence term
- the proposed activity and the location of the activity remain unchanged and consistent with the relevant plan of management.

You will receive a reminder email with a link to renew your licence online. The NPWS Tourism Partnerships and Events Unit, Visitor Engagement & Revenue Branch may contact you to coordinate the renewal, which can include changes to locations and activities if required.

For licences that have been competitively allocated, NPWS will complete a review before starting a new competitive process. NPWS will give reasonable notice, understanding the need for certainty for industry and the time required to complete a competitive process.

1.14 Cancelling or transferring your licence

The holder of a 3- or 5-year or selective licence may apply to transfer it to a new business operator if there is a change in business ownership and the remaining portion of the licence term is greater than one year. One-year licences are not transferable.

A fee will be applicable to cover administration costs. To apply for a transfer in such circumstances, please contact the NPWS Tourism Partnerships and Events Unit, Visitor Engagement & Revenue Branch. Contact details can be found in section 1.15.

1.15 Key contacts

If you have any general questions about the Parks Eco Pass licence, including fees, conditions, activities or application processes, please contact the Tourism Partnerships and Events Unit, Visitor Engagement & Revenue Branch:

- Phone: (02) 9585 6082
- Email: park.businesses@environment.nsw.gov.au

2. Fees and reporting requirements

2.1 Annual licence fees

Annual licence fees are assessed and set by considering agency costs of managing the Parks Eco Pass program. As such they may increase annually in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) at the start of each financial year.

Annual licence fees will become due and payable each year on the anniversary date of the licence.

Table 2 Annual licence fees

Licence period	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
1-year licence	High-value park – \$550	High-value park – \$570.90	High-value park – \$584.05
	Low-value park – \$410	Low-value park – \$425.60	Low-value park – \$435.40
3-year licence	High-value park – \$410	High-value park – \$425.60	High-value park – \$435.40
	Low-value park – \$310	Low-value park – \$321.80	Low-value park – \$329.20
5-year licence	High-value park – \$385	High-value park – \$399.65	High-value park – \$408.85
	Low-value park – \$290	Low-value park – \$301.05	Low-value park – \$308.00

Table 3 Daily use fees

Fee type	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Daily use fee (per client)	High-value park – \$3.50	High-value park – \$3.65	High-value park – \$3.75
	Low-value park – \$3.00	Low-value park – \$3.15	Low-value park – \$3.25

Table 4 Selective licence fees (including GST)

Fee type	2022 to 2025	2025-26	2026-27
Fee per licence	\$1,200 per year	High-value – \$1,245.60	High-value – \$1,274.25
		Low-value – \$830.40	Low-value – \$848.50
Usage fees	Based on revenue generated through the licensed activity.		
		High-value park – 10%	
		Low-value park – 5%	

Table 5 Discounts and promotions

Benefit	Description
Discounts offered	Location-based discounts as shown in Table 2
	Term-based discounts as shown in Table 2
	No annual licence fee for Aboriginal-owned operators for the first 2 years
	10% discount for certified businesses
Promotional inclusions	NPWS promotional support including one tour listing per operator on the NPWS website and other NPWS promotional channels

2.2 Daily use fees and quarterly trip returns

The daily use fee is the fee we charge you for bringing a client onto NPWS managed lands. The daily use fee is set by considering agency costs of managing the Parks Eco Pass program.

Every quarter, you must submit a quarterly trip return report that includes the number of clients and which park(s) you entered for each month of that quarter (no specific date or activity is required). If your tour is undertaken over multiple days with the same clients, you are required to record and pay for each day you are on park and which park(s) you are in.

You must submit a quarterly trip return report to the NPWS Tourism Partnerships and Events Unit, Visitor Engagement & Revenue Branch via email no more than 21 days after the end of each calendar quarter. If no tours have been undertaken that quarter, you must email a nil tour return to the NPWS Tourism Partnerships and Events Unit, Visitor Engagement & Revenue Branch.

Daily use fees are payable at the end of each financial year. We will issue an invoice based on the quarterly data provided by licensed operators. Payment will be due 7 days after the invoice is issued.

Fees may be increased in line with the CPI at the start of the 2025–26 financial year.

For selective licences, please ensure you read your licence for the correct reporting requirements and fees. Please note that selective licence holders are required to provide visitation figures for visitor reporting purposes in the quarterly trip return report (selective licence usage report tab).

Quarterly trip return report

As a Parks Eco Pass licensed operator, you are not required to pay park entrance fees. However, you will be required to pay the scheduled fees for all other activities on park such as:

- camping
- entry to museums
- site or venue bookings
- discovery programs.

2.2.1 Camping fees

Any operators licensed for camping activities must pay campsite fees in addition to the daily use fees. All campsites must be booked through the NPWS camping and accommodation webpage. The licensed operator will be responsible for abiding by the terms and conditions that apply to online bookings for accommodation and campgrounds in NSW national parks.

- NPWS camping and accommodation webpage
- Terms and conditions

2.3 Use of fees

The revenue from fees that NPWS charges Parks Eco Pass operators to operate in a NSW national park or reserve contributes to maintaining and improving NPWS' visitor facilities and services such as tracks, trails, boardwalks, lookouts, toilets etc. The revenue is also used to keep Parks Eco Pass operators and visitors safe, provide accessible infrastructure for all to enjoy, and contribute toward our valuable nature conservation management activities.

2.4 High-value parks

To define what makes a park/reserve high value the following factors have been considered:

- parks subject to visitor infrastructure projects
- parks with an international attraction
- parks with high or very high visitation per annum.

Table 6 High-value parks and reserves

High-value parks/reserves
Arakoon National Park
Barunguba Montague Island Nature Reserve
Beowa National Park
Blue Mountains National Park
Bouddi National Park
Broughton Island (Myall Lakes National Park)
Budderoo National Park
Cape Byron State Conservation Area
Dorrigo National Park
Fingal Island (Tomaree National Park)
Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area
Glenrock State Conservation Area
Kamay Botany Bay National Park
Kosciuszko National Park
Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park
Lane Cove National Park
Morton National Park
Mount Jerusalem National Park
Mungo National Park
Murramarang National Park
Nightcap National Park
Royal National Park
Sea Acres National Park
South Solitary Island Historic Site
Sydney Harbour National Park
Tomaree National Park
Whian Whian State Conservation Area
Wollumbin National Park
Worimi Conservation Lands
Yuraygir National Park

2.5 Insurances

To obtain a licence to conduct commercial activities, you must have and maintain a public liability insurance (PLI) policy that meets the following requirements:

- The limit of the PLI cover must be a minimum of A\$10 million.
- The department must be named as an interested party as per the following exact text 'The Minister administering the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* on behalf of the State of NSW ABN 27 578 976 844.

3. Aboriginal cultural heritage

3.1 Aboriginal interpretation

3.1.1 General interpretation

An authentic Aboriginal tourism experience can only be developed and delivered by or in association with Aboriginal people. We are committed to ensuring that on-park Aboriginal tourism experiences are developed and delivered in a culturally sensitive way; that is, experiences respect the authenticity and integrity of local Aboriginal people and their culture, adhere to cultural protocols, and recognise that Aboriginal culture is the cultural intellectual property of Aboriginal people.

3.1.2 Detailed interpretation

To deliver detailed Aboriginal cultural and heritage interpretation, you must:

- engage an Aboriginal person/s to undertake the interpretation unless the appropriate representatives of the relevant Aboriginal community have given specific authorisation to the person delivering the detailed Aboriginal Cultural Heritage interpretation and have approved the content of that interpretation
- obtain a letter of support every time you renew your licence from an Aboriginal organisation that represents the local community (for example, a local Aboriginal land council, or a prescribed body corporate) for your delivery of Aboriginal cultural heritage interpretation
- only promote yourself as a provider of Aboriginal cultural heritage interpretation if you have engaged an Aboriginal person/s to deliver the content
- ensure it is culturally appropriate for photographs, videos, art, music and any other medium depicting Aboriginal sites, places, people or culture to be used for promotional purposes.

Licensed operators may only promote or identify themselves as providers of Aboriginal heritage interpretation information if they have engaged a member of the relevant Aboriginal community to undertake that interpretation or have obtained the necessary specific authorisation and approval as outlined above.

When these conditions are not able to be met, you can only provide general interpretation of Aboriginal cultural heritage.

General interpretation includes:

- the traditional name of a place and its meaning
- the traditional names(s) of the local Aboriginal communities
- NPWS signage.

3.2 Joint management agreements and Part 4A parks

Where an NPWS park or reserve is managed under a joint management agreement, the board of management of the park or reserve must review all applications and approve the licence. If an application relates to an NPWS park or reserve with a Part 4A Aboriginal Land agreement, unique consultative and approval procedures will apply.

The timing and requirements for how your application will be assessed by the appropriate board or committee varies in individual cases because each jointly managed park has its own management approach. Before you apply for your licence, please contact the NPWS Tourism Partnerships and Events Unit, Visitor Engagement & Revenue Branch and they will assist you with communications with the appropriate board and committees.

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It is important to note that applications for these licences in these jurisdictions may take up to 12 weeks longer than a standard licence.

For more information about joint management agreements, please visit the:

[Aboriginal joint management of parks webpage](#).

4. Permitted activities and conditions

Any commercial activity in a park or reserve must be permissible under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 and compatible with the park's plan of management.

Activity permissibility and conditions for a particular national park or reserve reflect the specific directions or needs of that park or reserve. They may be used to manage conflicts with other users or to protect natural and cultural values.

- [National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974](#)
- [National parks plans of management](#)

4.1 Activities permitted in parks and reserves

Not all activities are permitted in NSW national parks and reserves. A matrix for activity permissibility in each national park and reserve has been created to provide detail on what activities may be permitted, not permitted or not applicable to that particular park or reserve. It's important you check the 'Activity matrix permissibility' tab in the Parks Eco Pass Activity and Location conditions spreadsheet to determine if your proposed activity is permitted.

[Parks Eco Pass Activity and Location conditions spreadsheet](#)

4.2 Activity and location conditions

Location conditions reflect the specific needs of a park or reserve. They may be used to manage conflicts with other users or to protect natural and cultural values. An example of a site-specific condition may be a restriction on use during certain times of the year to ensure protection of bird breeding habitats.

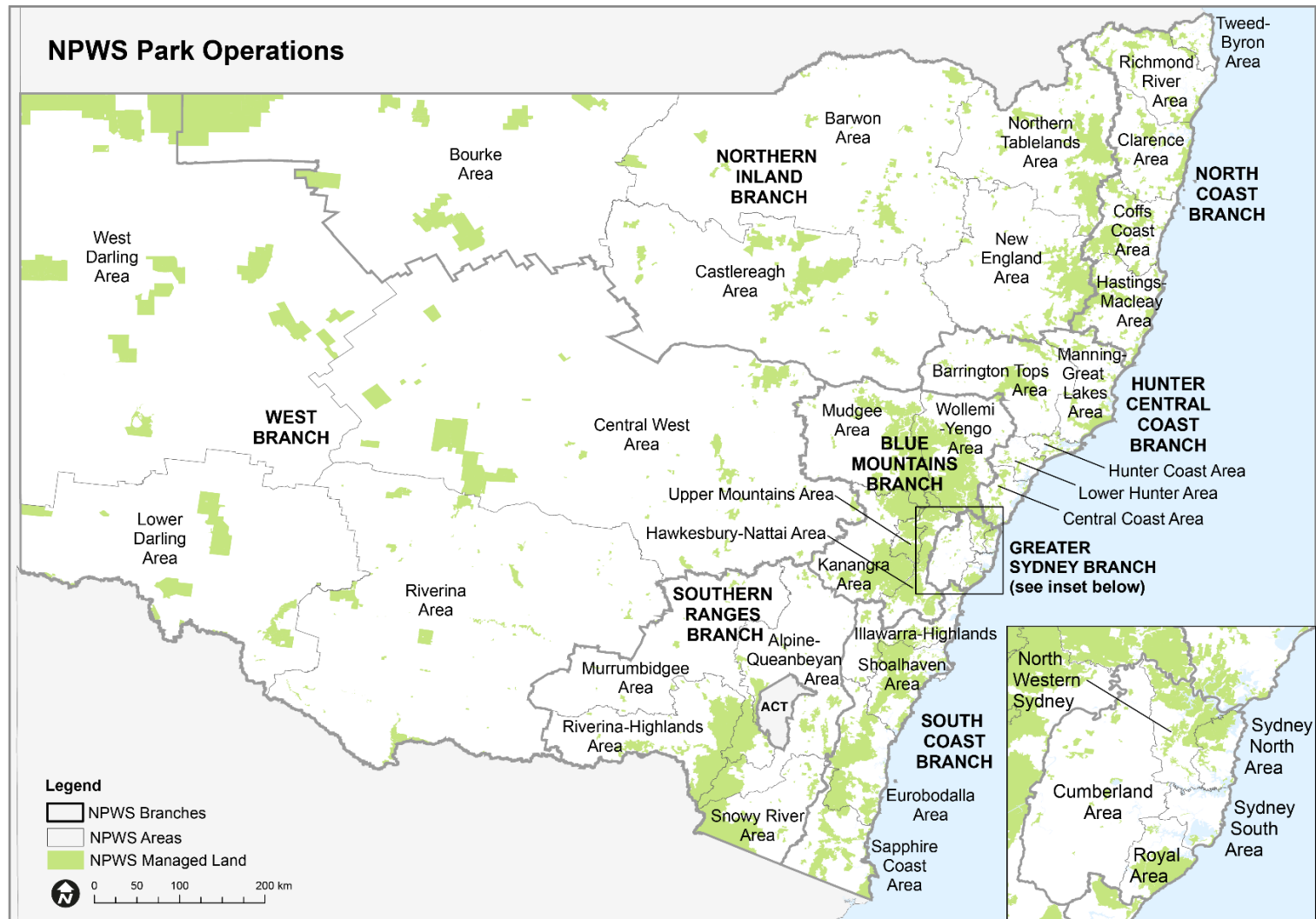
In addition to the general conditions and those specific to each location, there are several conditions that relate directly to the activities being conducted.

Activity conditions apply to a particular activity in all locations. Activity conditions are designed to promote safe practices and minimum standards for outdoor recreation activities. These conditions must be followed regardless of the location.

A list of activity and location conditions can be found in the:

[Parks Eco Pass Activity and Location conditions spreadsheet](#)

5. National Parks and Wildlife Service branches and areas map



6. Steps to apply for Parks Eco Pass licence



1. Get the information

Visit the Parks Eco Pass webpage for information about NPWS licensing requirements.



2. Pre-application meeting

Contact the NPWS Tourism Partnerships and Events Unit, Visitor Engagement & Revenue Branch on (02) 9585 6082 or at park.businesses@environment.nsw.gov.au to discuss your application, including details of activities and locations, and what support you might need in getting your business started.



3. Online assessment

Complete an online assessment covering safety, conservation, important conditions, how to use the licence and handbook, fees, and the NPWS values.

[Online assessment](#)



4. Business plan

Prepare a business plan in the template provided by the Tourism Partnerships and Events Unit, Visitor Engagement & Revenue Branch.

[Business plan template](#)



5. Public liability insurance

Obtain a public liability insurance (PLI) policy for a minimum value of A\$10 million. The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water must be named as an interested party as per Section 2.5.



6. Online application

Complete the [online application form](#), uploading a copy of:

- a. your business plan
- b. PLI certificate of currency
- c. online training result page
- d. any other relevant documents.



7. Licence execution

A licence agreement containing general, activity and site-specific conditions will be issued to the applicant for digital signature, to be returned to NPWS via email.

7. Miscellaneous

7.1 Accreditation

Licensed operators who are accredited gain a point of difference and market competitive advantage over those who are not accredited, which is particularly important given many operators access environmentally sensitive areas.

Accreditation is not mandatory when applying for a Parks Eco Pass. However, licensed operators that become certified with an accreditation body may be eligible for a 10% discount on their annual licence fee (fees will not be retrospectively reduced if you provide an accreditation certificate part way through your licence term).

Accreditation must be relevant to the activities that you are wishing to undertake. For example, if you are undertaking outdoor adventure activities, you must seek accreditation with a relevant outdoor industry body. If you are a tour operator, you must seek accreditation with a relevant tourism industry body. Applicants will need to obtain accreditation prior to lodging their licence application to be eligible for the 10% discount.

If accreditation is mandatory for your licensed activity, you will not be eligible for the 10% discount.

Only accreditation programs that meet NPWS requirements will be recognised. The following accreditation programs currently meet NPWS requirements.

- [Advanced Ecotourism EcoCertification Program](#)
- [Ecotourism EcoCertification Program](#)
- [Nature Tourism Eco Certification Program](#)
- [Australian Tourism Accreditation Program](#)
- [Australian Camps Association](#)
- [National Accommodation, Recreation, and Tourism Accreditation Incorporated](#)
- [Professional Fishing Instructors and Guides Association.](#)

7.2 Use of subcontractors

If a licensed operator engages a subcontractor to support their business operations, the subcontractors must adhere to all of your Parks Eco Pass licence conditions. Your Parks Eco Pass licence and relevant conditions must be provided and explained to each of your subcontractors before they operate in NSW national parks and reserves. The Parks Eco Pass licensed operator will be liable for any issues or compliance breaches that arise from a subcontractor operating within park. This could result in a suspension or termination of licence should any compliance issues arise.

Subcontractors are not permitted to book tours on behalf of the licensed operator. The licensed operator must take all bookings and report daily usage to NPWS.

If a subcontractor wants to take bookings for tours in NSW national parks and reserves, then they will be required to apply for a Parks Eco Pass licence.

7.3 NPWS Parks Eco Pass logo

When you are issued with a Parks Eco Pass licence, you will be provided with and encouraged to use the NPWS Parks Eco Pass logo on your promotional material (such as advertising brochures, websites, and signs). The use of the Parks Eco Pass logo is not permitted on any clothing.

Your use of the logo must comply with our guidelines (which will be included in your licence agreement) and include a statement identifying you as a licensed operator.

A template of the logo, including size specifications, may be obtained from the NPWS Tourism Partnerships and Events Unit, Visitor Engagement & Revenue Branch. You may not, however, use the Parks Eco Pass logo on vehicles or uniforms or use any other NPWS logo or brand in your promotional material.

You are not permitted to use the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service or NSW Government logo.

7.4 Operating in locations not on park

Licensed operators should be aware that to operate commercial activities in protected areas managed by Local Areas, the Commonwealth, or other state or territory governments, permits or licences may be required. Before planning a trip into a protected area, you should contact the relevant government authorities to ensure you obtain the appropriate permit or licence to conduct tours in the areas under their management.

7.5 Permission for specific events

A licensed operator may still need a consent for a specific event (commercial or otherwise) that differs from the activities specifically permitted under their licence.

The Tourism Partnerships and Events Unit, Visitor Engagement & Revenue Branch of NPWS manages events that trigger one or more of the criteria in Table 7.

Table 7 Triggers for management of events by the Tourism Partnerships and Events Unit, Visitor Engagement & Revenue Branch

Criterion	Trigger condition
Number of people	151 or more (except for school cross-country and school picnics – 300 or more)
Venue use	Exclusive use only
Park tenures	Crosses multiple NPWS areas
Event impact rating	Risk of high impact to environment and/or other park users
Whole-of-government event (e.g. NYE)	Yes

'Small scale events' are visitor-related organised group activities or gatherings involving fewer than 150 persons, requiring non-exclusive use and having low impact on park users and/or normal park operations. Small scale events are managed by Local Area teams.

For further details of consent requirements and to obtain an event consent:

- Phone: (02) 9585 6570
- Email: events.nationalparks@environment.nsw.gov.au

7.6 Park closures

All licensed operators must check the alerts for closures in NSW national parks before visiting a park and undertaking a licensed activity.

Alerts for NSW national parks

7.7 Industry support

There is free business advice and ongoing support offered to all operators in New South Wales (not just those licensed by NPWS) through Destination NSW. They can assist you with product development and marketing, including the:

- Destination NSW 'NSW First' program, which provides 'hands on' tourism development advice and fact sheets on pricing, marketing, networking, distribution channels, commission structures, public relations and how to become market-ready (i.e. website design, collateral, conducting familiarisations or 'famils')
- opportunity to be part of Destination NSW's Get Connected program. Get Connected is a free website membership program whereby tourism operators in New South Wales can register to showcase your tourism product on consumer websites visitnsw.com, sydney.com and australia.com.

For more information, visit:

- Destination NSW 'NSW First' program
- Destination NSW's Get Connected program
 - visitnsw.com
 - sydney.com
 - australia.com

For further information go to:

Destination NSW website or call (02) 9931 1111.

The NSW Government Working and business website has the Business Connect program, a part-subsidised business advisory service assisting small and medium enterprises to start and grow their business.

Visit Business Connect

7.8 More information

For further information on the Parks Eco Pass licence, please contact the Tourism Partnerships and Events Unit, Visitor Engagement & Revenue Branch, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water at:

Parks Eco Pass program for commercial tour operators

Appendix A: Definitions and key terms

In this handbook, unless the context otherwise requires the following definitions apply:

Aboriginal cultural tour means a tour that has Aboriginal cultural content or visits culturally sensitive sites.

Application is a request to licence a commercial activity in NPWS parks or reserves.

Client means a person attending a tour or activity of a licensed operator.

Commercial activity means an activity conducted on a commercial basis.

Commercial operator is a person or entity (includes companies and incorporated bodies) carrying out commercial activities within an NPWS park or reserve.

Conditions means the conditions set out in this handbook, the Activity and Location Conditions and in the Parks Eco Pass licence.

Delegate means a person delegated a function of the Minister under section 21(1) of the NPW Act, or a person to whom a function or functions of the CEO have been delegated under section 21(2) of the NPW Act, as the case requires.

Department means the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water and includes any agency or authority replacing the same.

Digital NSW Park Pass means the digital pass issued by the department to a motor vehicle registration for entry to a Fee-collecting Park(s).

Fee-collecting Park(s) means those Park(s) that require fees or charges payable for entry by persons by motor vehicle to a park (**Park Entry Fee**) and listed at NPWS Fee-collecting national parks or as amended from time to time.

Guide tag means the Parks Eco Pass identification tag to be carried by the licensed operator, issued to the licensee by the licensor.

Handbook means the Parks Eco Pass Operator Handbook and any amendments made from time to time.

Licence means a Parks Eco Pass licence and all schedules to and variations of the licence.

Licensed operator is a person or entity (includes companies and incorporated bodies) that holds a Parks Eco Pass licence with NPWS.

Minibus means a vehicle with fewer than 12 seats but more than eight (8) seats.

Minister means the Minister administering the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NSW), or a Delegate of the Minister.

NPW Act means the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NSW) as amended from time to time.

NPWS means the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Operations means the commercial operations that may be undertaken by an operator pursuant to the licence.

Parks Eco Pass is the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service program for licensing operators of commercial tours, and recreational and educational activities, in parks.

Secretary means the Secretary of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water and includes any person for the time being acting as such or in such alternative position or office as the licensor may notify from time to time.

Vehicle means any mode of transport including but not limited to cars, buses, vessels, horses, cycles or motorcycles.

Visitor means any person entering lands managed by NPWS who is not an employee of the department entering in the course of their duties.