



NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

Third and fourth review of state conservation areas

Report of the third and fourth 5-year review of state conservation areas under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*



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This resource may contain images or names of deceased persons in photographs or historical content.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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Environment and Heritage
Department of Climate Change,
Energy, the Environment and Water
Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124
Phone: +61 2 9995 5000 (switchboard)
Phone: 1300 361 967 (Environment and Heritage enquiries)
TTY users: phone 133 677, then ask for 1300 361 967
Speak and listen users: phone 1300 555 727, then ask for 1300 361 967
Email: info@environment.nsw.gov.au
Website: www.environment.nsw.gov.au

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Summary

State conservation areas (SCAs) cover 895,000 hectares, or around 11.7% of the NSW national parks system. SCAs protect natural and cultural heritage values and provide for recreation and public enjoyment. Unlike national parks and other reserve types, SCAs allow for exploration and extraction of mineral and energy resources.

Section 47M of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act) requires the status of each SCA to be reviewed every 5 years. The review is to give reasons as to why each area of land within an SCA should or should not be reserved as a national park or nature reserve under section 47MA NPW Act.

This report documents the findings of the combined third and fourth review of SCAs. The review considers whether existing land reserved as an SCA should remain as an SCA because it may be needed for mineral or energy exploration or extraction, either now or in the future.

This report examines 142 SCAs that existed at October 2017 and 8 SCAs established between then and July 2023.

The report finds that:

- 52 SCAs (either whole or in part) do not need to remain reserved as SCAs because they are no longer needed for mineral or energy exploration or extraction
- these 52 SCAs are therefore available to be considered for reservation as national park or nature reserve under section 47MA NPW Act
- one other SCA also no longer needs to be retained, but would be more appropriately reserved as a regional park (this requires legislative amendment as section 47MA NPW Act can only be used to change an SCA to a national park or nature reserve)
- the remaining 97 SCAs considered in the review should remain as SCAs as they are or may still be needed for mineral and energy related purposes, or for other reasons.

Final decisions on reserving any of the 52 SCAs as national park or nature reserve under section 47MA NPW Act will be made taking account of relevant reserve category, boundary, park management and other matters set out in this report.

Introduction

Background

State conservation areas (SCA) are a category of reserve under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (the NPW Act). SCAs protect natural and cultural heritage values and provide recreational opportunities. SCAs also provide for mineral resource exploration and mining, and petroleum resource exploration and production (referred to in this report as 'mineral or energy exploration or extraction'). SCAs are the only reserve category under the NPW Act where these activities may occur.

Because SCAs accommodate this range of uses, they form an important category in the national parks system. SCAs provide an opportunity for lands to be reserved under the NPW Act that might otherwise not have been available for conservation and public appreciation because of their mineral or energy values.

The dual purposes of SCAs are not likely to be required for all SCAs indefinitely. For example, existing mining operations may cease in an SCA and the land rehabilitated, or exploration activities may determine that mineral values are not present in an SCA. The statutory 5-year review of SCAs provides the mechanism to consider whether land should continue to be reserved as an SCA, or if it may be reserved as national park or nature reserve (or other reserve category under the NPW Act).

History of the state conservation area category

SCAs were introduced as a reserve category under the NPW Act in 2002. This amendment to the NPW Act also changed all existing 'state recreation areas' to SCAs.

A new class of reserve, called the Community Conservation Area (CCA), was created in 2005 under the *Brigalow and Nandewar Community Conservation Area Act 2005*. The CCA is divided into 4 zones, with Zone 3 being reserved under the NPW Act as SCAs and therefore included in this review. Of the 150 SCAs considered by this review, 23 are classified as CCA Zone 3 SCAs.

Current context

The commencement date for the third review was October 2017 (being the third 5-year period from the inclusion of SCAs as a reserve category in the NPW Act). At that date, there were 142 SCAs covering about 727,000 hectares.

The fourth review was due to commence in October 2022 and has been combined with the third review. A total of 8 new SCAs were added to the reserve system between October 2017 and July 2023.

The combined third and fourth review therefore assessed 150 SCAs in total, covering about 828,000 hectares.

These SCAs are distributed across New South Wales. They protect a diverse array of natural and cultural heritage values in landscapes ranging from coastal scrub and rainforest to rangelands. They include habitat for threatened species and places of historic and Aboriginal cultural heritage significance. SCAs are also popular visitor destinations, supporting recreational activities, local economies and tourism operators.

Previous reviews

First 5-year review

This first review of SCAs commenced in October 2007, 5 years after the SCA category was introduced in the NPW Act.

The review was published in 2008 and recommended that land within 10 SCAs be reserved as national park or nature reserve. As a result, 6 whole SCAs and parts of 4 SCAs totalling around 4,100 hectares were reserved as national park or nature reserve in 2010.

Second 5-year review

The second 5-yearly review examined SCAs that existed at October 2012 and was completed in 2014. The review found the SCA category was no longer needed for 7 whole SCAs and parts of 2 SCAs, an area of 35,864 hectares. These lands were subsequently reserved as national park or nature reserve.

Subsequent actions

One additional SCA was recategorised since the second 5-year review, namely Murrumbidgee Valley SCA, which was reserved as a national park in 2016.

Other state conservation area reviews

In January 2011, 11 SCAs were created in the central and west of New South Wales under the *National Park Estate (South Western Cypress Reservations) Act 2010*.

The mineral and energy values of these SCAs were reviewed within one year of their creation to determine whether they should remain as SCAs or be reserved under another category. This review was separate to the 5-yearly review of all other SCAs.

The review recommended that 10 of the SCAs remain as SCAs, and one SCA become a national park. As a result, Goulburn River SCA was added to Goulburn River National Park in January 2012.

The third and fourth 5-year review process

Purpose of the review

The purpose of this review is set out in section 47M NPW Act:

- to review the status of land within SCAs
- to give reasons as to why each area of land within an SCA should or should not be reserved as a national park or nature reserve under section 47MA NPW Act.

This review considers 150 SCAs that existed as of July 2023 and was undertaken in consultation with the Minister administering the *Mining Act 1992*.

Method

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS, within the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water), and Geological Survey of NSW (within the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development) have worked together to develop and apply an assessment method for the current review that makes best use of available, up-to-date data.

The combined third and fourth 5-year review was informed by comprehensive statewide datasets held by Geological Survey of NSW. These datasets have continuously improved since the previous SCA reviews through ongoing exploration and geological surveys. They provide strong and reliable evidence of areas that have geological potential and prospectivity significance. This has enabled a more strategic, landscape-scale approach to be applied during the current review.

This review applies a 3-step decision-making process that identifies whether the dual-purpose SCA category is still required for each SCA. The process is described below and summarised in Figure 1.

Step 1 – Titles assessment

This step considers the extent to which any existing mineral or energy titles apply to land within the SCA (such as exploration licences). Under section 47MA of the NPW Act, any parts of an SCA covered by title **cannot** be reserved as national park or nature reserve.

For the current review, if titles:

- cover more than 25% of an SCA, then the dual-purpose SCA category is generally still required for the whole SCA
- cover 25% or less of land in an SCA, then the area covered by title must remain as SCA, while the remaining area without any titles can be further assessed to determine if the SCA category is still necessary.

In previous reviews, if any part of an SCA was affected by title then it was recommended to remain as SCA. The 25% threshold applied in this review enables more SCAs to be considered for partial reservation as national park or nature reserve.

Step 2 – Geological potential assessment

Where no titles exist in an SCA, an assessment of the geological potential of the SCA for minerals and energy at a landscape scale was undertaken. This included consideration of regional scale information (typically referred to as 'orogenic', which generally relates to the

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process of mountain formation by folding of the earth's crust) and local scale (referred to as 'camp', being a finer scale of information).

Spatial GIS modelling procedures were developed and applied by Geological Survey of NSW to determine separate mineral and energy potential ratings (from low to very high) for each SCA. These were based on relevant criteria, attributes and geoscientific datasets.

In general, and subject to Step 3:

- SCAs rated low potential were identified as being available to be reserved as national park or nature reserve
- SCAs of moderate potential were assessed further during Step 3
- SCAs rated high or very high potential were identified as needing to remain as SCA.

During the review process, Geological Survey of NSW was able to further assess SCAs for natural hydrogen and geothermal energy potential based on improvements in exploration technologies. Subject to Step 3, SCAs deemed to have hydrogen or geothermal potential were also considered as needing to be retained.

Step 3 – Review

The results of Steps 1 and 2 were reviewed by Geological Survey of NSW and NPWS to check accuracy and consistency, and identify any relevant site-specific information. Factors considered included mineral energy information, and park management and conservation information as outlined below.

Mineral and energy information

- Other known geological features, significant mining interests or resources not captured by the GIS modelling and datasets in Step 2
- Future resource supply issues
- Resource allocation/access needs adjacent to exploration and mining title areas
- Buffer requirements to access title areas
- Uncertainties in geological knowledge of an area
- Constraints to exploration or mining including:
 - limited access
 - urban interfaces
 - feasibility of extraction.

Park management and conservation information

- Aboriginal, community or stakeholder views and interests
- Threatened entities and iconic or unique values, including Ramsar, and state or World Heritage
- Implications for park and visitor management of changing SCA to a national park or nature reserve.

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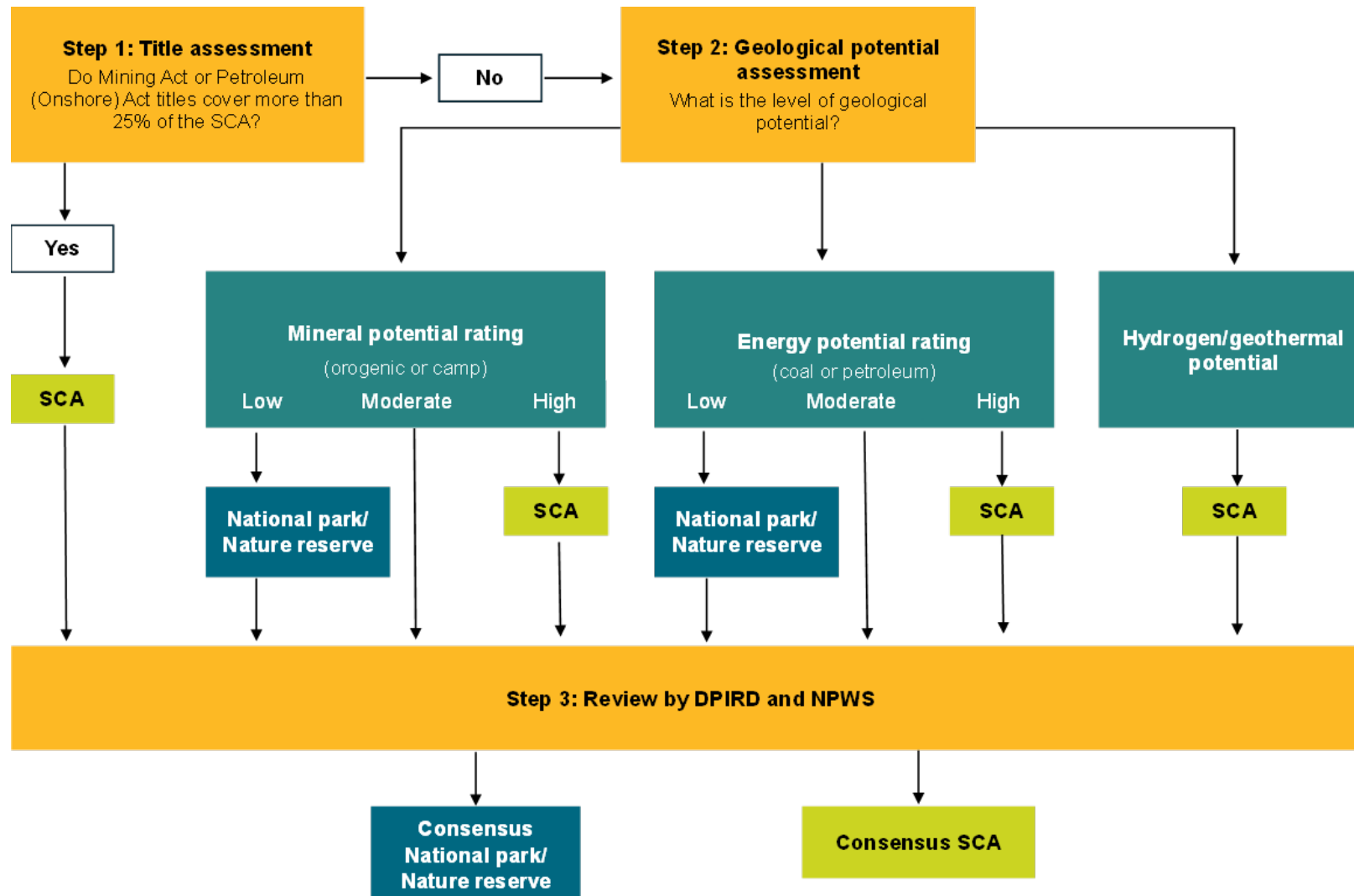


Figure 1 Summary of the assessment method

Implementing review findings

This review report identifies SCAs that are available to be considered for reservation as national park or nature reserve (or other reserve category) because they are no longer needed for mineral or energy exploration or extraction. By itself, this report does not have the effect of changing the reserve status of SCAs.

The mechanism for reserving an SCA as national park or nature reserve is via gazette notice in accordance with section 47MA NPW Act. Any proposal to change an SCA to another type of reserve category under the NPW Act requires legislative amendment.

Before any SCAs are reserved as national park or nature reserve in accordance with section 47MA NPW Act (or to another reserve category by legislative amendment), the following matters will be considered:

- the most appropriate reserve category (e.g. nature reserve or national park)
- any relevant mining or energy-related authorisations that may apply at the time of the proposed change of reserve category (e.g. titles that would prevent the SCA being reserved to national park or nature reserve)
- confirmation of final boundaries
- other relevant requirements that may apply to the land (including Aboriginal joint management arrangements or native title matters).

This means that not all SCAs identified by this review as available to be considered for reservation as national park or nature reserve (or other category), may ultimately be so reserved. In addition, some SCAs may take longer than others to change to another reserve category because of issues identified during consideration of the above matters.

SCAs that are not able to be reserved as national park, nature reserve or other category as an outcome of this SCA review will be re-assessed during the next scheduled review required under section 47M NPW Act, using the best available information at the time.

Findings

State conservation areas available to be reserved under another category

The third and fourth 5-yearly review has found that 41 whole SCAs and parts of another 11 SCAs – totalling approximately 98,062 hectares – are no longer needed as SCAs and are available to be reserved as national park or nature reserve under section 47MA NPW Act.

These SCAs have been identified after applying the 3-step review process outlined above. In summary, these SCAs (or parts of SCAs):

- are not affected by existing mining or petroleum titles (Step 1)
- are not considered to have sufficient geological potential to warrant retention as SCAs (Step 2)
- have been reviewed against available supporting information on matters related to mineral and energy issues, and park management and conservation considerations (Step 3).

Table 1 lists the SCAs available to be considered for reservation as national park or nature reserve under section 47MA NPW Act. Indicative maps are provided in Appendix A.

As noted above, final decisions on whether to proceed with changing the reserve category of these SCAs will be taken after considering a range of matters.

Table 1 State conservation areas available to be considered for reservation as national park or nature reserve (whole or part)

SCA name	Extent	Area (hectares)
1. Banyabba	Whole	3,565.74
2. Barrakee	Whole	174.00
3. Barrington Tops	Part	3,466.00
4. Barwon	Whole	5,284.30
5. Bents Basin	Whole	48.11
6. Bindarri	Part	314.00
7. Black Bulga	Whole	1,554.00
8. Boonanghi	Whole	1,242.00
9. Bulahdelah	Whole	138.00
10. Bundjalung	Whole	4,870.00
11. Bungawalbin	Whole	1,834.00
12. Burragorang	Whole	17,643.12
13. Carrai	Part	4,201.00
14. Chaelundi	Part	502.00
15. Chambigne	Whole	760.00
16. Chatsworth Hill	Whole	510.00
17. Columbey	Whole	250.00

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SCA name	Extent	Area (hectares)
18. Corymbia	Whole	495.00
19. Cottan-Bimbang	Whole	105.00
20. Curracabundi	Part	734.00
21. Everlasting Swamp	Whole	462.75
22. Gandangara	Whole	6.95
23. Gir-Um-Bit	Whole	174.50
24. Glenrock	Whole	550.49
25. Gurrang	Whole	111.24
26. Illawarra Escarpment	Part	1,240.00
27. Jackywalbin	Whole	661.00
28. Karuah	Whole	74.00
29. Kooyong	Whole	753.00
30. Kumbatine	Whole	386.00
31. Lachlan Valley	Whole	4,265.00
32. Lake Macquarie	Part	478.00
33. Lawrence Road	Whole	440.04
34. Macquarie Pass	Whole	79.69
35. Maroomba	Whole	1,895.00
36. Maroota Ridge	Whole	260.00
37. Mount Hyland	Whole	293.00
38. Mount Pikapene	Whole	17.00
39. Mummel Gulf	Whole	1,162.00
40. Munmorah	Part	205.00
41. Nattai	Whole	3,383.00
42. Nombinnie	Part	13,241.00
43. Talawahl	Whole	136.00
44. Toonumbar	Whole	128.00
45. Werakata	Part	340.00
46. Whian Whian	Whole	2,439.00
47. Wollumbin	Whole	368.00
48. Worimi	Whole	1,042.50
49. Yango	Part	82.86
50. Yarrungully	Whole	354.50
51. Yerranderie	Whole	12,192.00
52. Yuraygir	Whole	3,150.00

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The SCA category is also no longer required for Colymea SCA. However, following consideration of conservation values, current uses and community interest, the national park or nature reserve category is not suitable for this SCA.

In view of this, Colymea SCA may be considered for reservation as a regional park (Table 2). This will require a future legislative amendment as gazette notices under section 47MA NPW Act can only be used to change an SCA to national park or nature reserve.

Table 2 State conservation areas available to be considered for reservation to another category

Current category	Future indicative category	Area (hectares)
1. Colymea SCA	Colymea Regional Park	1,674.00

State conservation areas that should remain

All other 97 SCAs (Table 3) should remain as SCAs (except Walgun Cape Byron SCA) because:

- they are subject to exploration or mining titles and cannot be reserved as national park or nature reserve under section 47MA of the NPW Act, and/or
- they were assessed as having geological prospectivity significance, and/or
- geoscientific data and/or specialist knowledge indicates they may have potential prospectivity significance and further investigation is required.

Walgun Cape Byron SCA was assessed as having no significant geological prospectivity values. However, it is identified to remain as an SCA because it is managed by the Cape Byron Trust and the NPW Act does not provide for trust management of a national park or nature reserve.

Table 3 Reserves recommended to remain as State conservation areas

SCA name	SCA name
1. Abercrombie River	16. Butterleaf
2. Adelyne (CCA Zone 3)	17. Camerons Gorge
3. Avondale	18. Cascade
4. Balowra	19. Cataract
5. Bargo	20. Cobbora (CCA Zone 3)
6. Bargo River	21. Combaning
7. Bedooba	22. Coneac
8. Beni (CCA Zone 3)	23. Cooleburba
9. Berlang	24. Copeland Tops
10. Biddon (CCA Zone 3)	25. Currys Gap
11. Bingara (CCA Zone 3)	26. Dharawal
12. Bobbiwaa (CCA Zone 3)	27. Durrigere (CCA Zone 3)
13. Brigalow	28. Garawarra
14. Bullawa Creek (CCA Zone 3)	29. Gardens of Stone
15. Bungonia	30. Goodiman (CCA Zone 3)

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SCA name		SCA name	
31.	Goonoo (CCA Zone 3)	65.	Paroo-Darling
32.	Goonoowigal (CCA Zone 3)	66.	Parr
33.	Goulburn River	67.	Pilliga (CCA Zone 3)
34.	Gumbaynggirr	68.	Pilliga East (CCA Zone 3)
35.	Gundabooka	69.	Pilliga West (CCA Zone 3)
36.	Guy Fawkes River	70.	Queens Lake
37.	Gwydir River (CCA Zone 3)	71.	Sugarloaf
38.	Gwydir Wetlands	72.	Tallaganda
39.	Jilliby	73.	The Cells
40.	Keverstone	74.	Tilligerry
41.	Killarney (CCA Zone 3)	75.	Tingha Plateau (CCA Zone 3)
42.	Kindee Creek	76.	Toorale
43.	Kybeyan	77.	Torrington
44.	Lake Innes	78.	Trinkey (CCA Zone 3)
45.	Langidoon-Metford	79.	Tuggerah
46.	Leard (CCA Zone 3)	80.	Tumblong
47.	Livingstone	81.	Ukerbarley
48.	Macanally	82.	Upper Nepean
49.	Majors Creek	83.	Walgun Cape Byron
50.	Medowie	84.	Warialda (CCA Zone 3)
51.	Merriwindi (CCA Zone 3)	85.	Warrambool
52.	Monga	86.	Washpool
53.	Morton	87.	Watsons Creek
54.	Mount Canobolas	88.	Wereboldera
55.	Mount Grenfell	89.	Werrikimbe
56.	Mugii Murum-ban	90.	Wollemi
57.	Mullengandra	91.	Wombat Creek
58.	Mullion Range	92.	Wondoba (CCA Zone 3)
59.	Mungo	93.	Woodsreef (CCA Zone 3)
60.	Mutawintji	94.	Woomargama
61.	Nuggetty	95.	Yanga
62.	Nymboi-Binderay	96.	Yanununbeyan
63.	Nymboida	97.	Yurammie
64.	Oxley Wild Rivers		

As identified in Table 1, 11 SCAs are identified as available for partial reservation as national park or nature reserve, with the remainder to stay as SCA. To avoid double-counting, these SCAs are not listed in Table 3.

Appendix A: Maps of whole state conservation areas available for reservation as national park or nature reserve

Note: areas shown on the maps as “SCA recategorisation” are the lands available to be considered for reservation as national park or nature reserve.

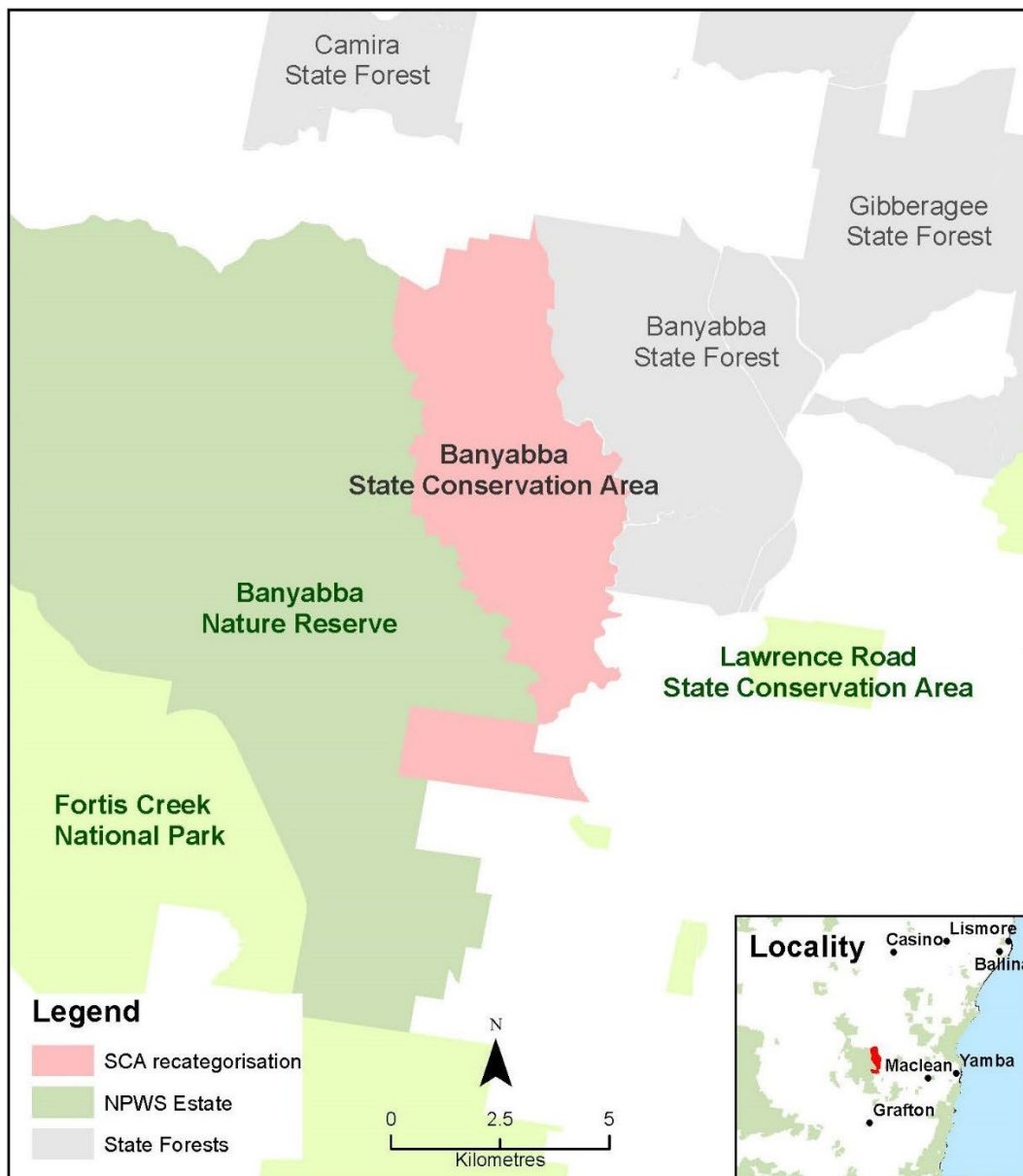


Figure 2 Banyabba State Conservation Area

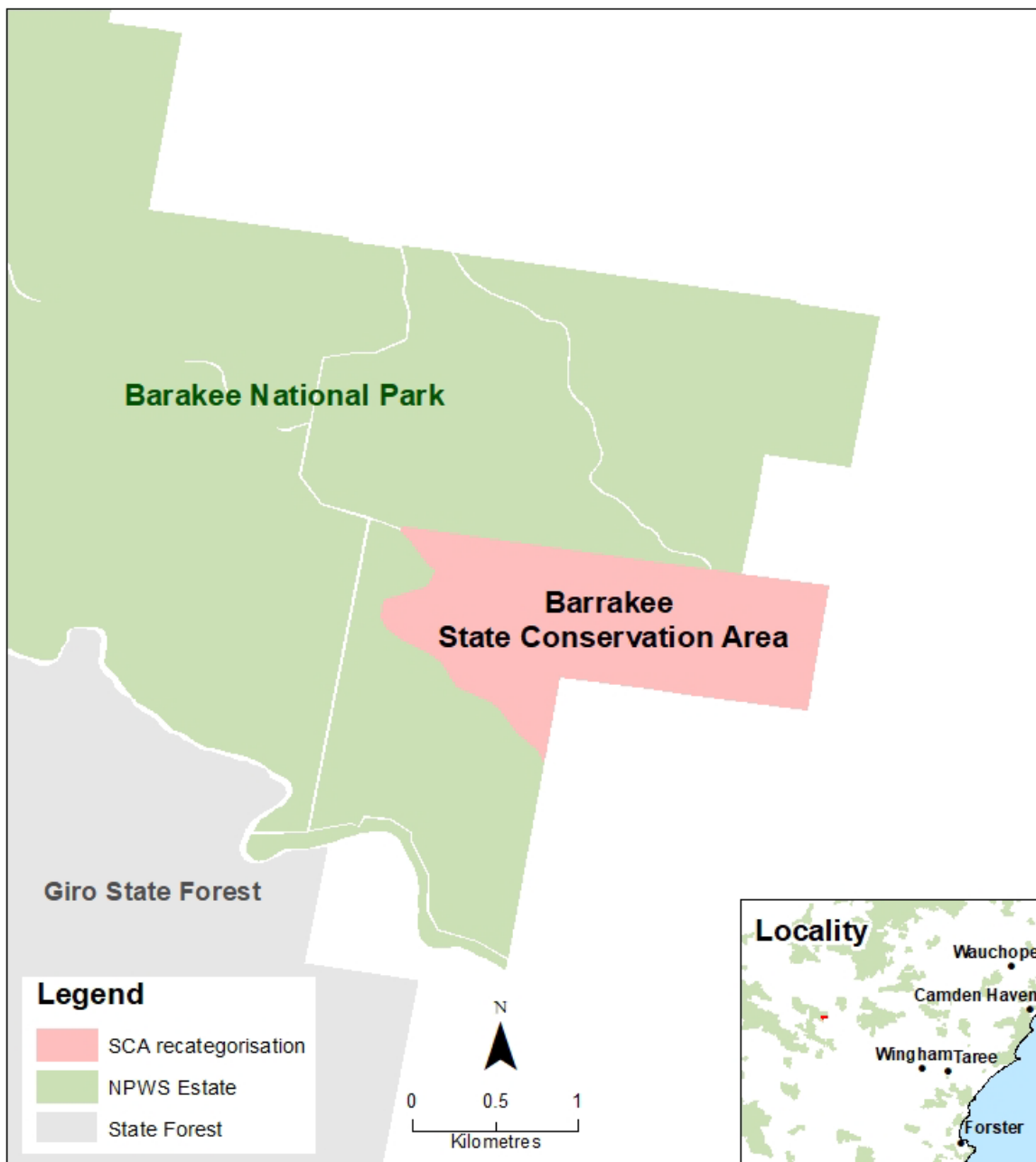


Figure 3 Barrakee State Conservation Area

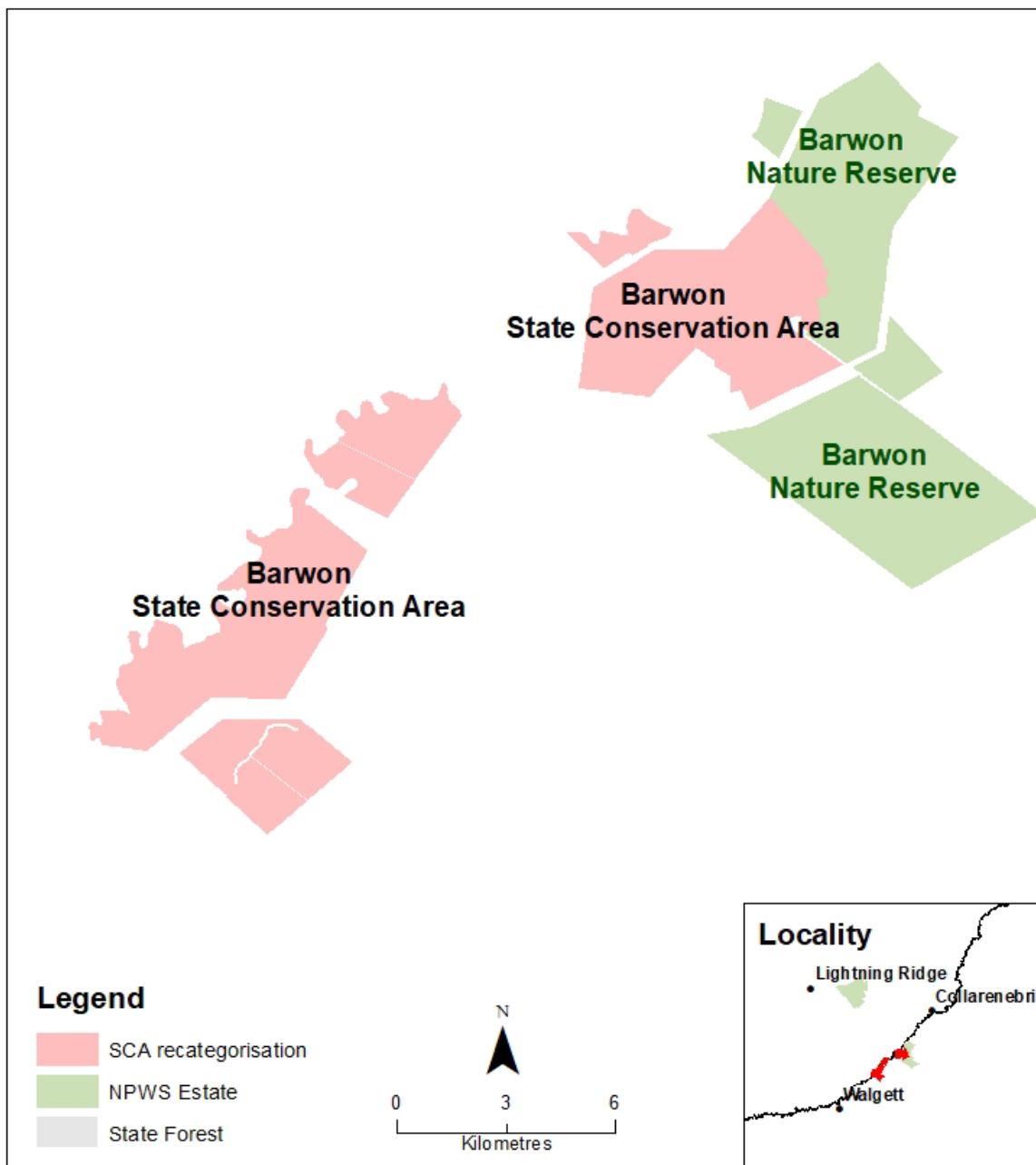


Figure 4 Barwon State Conservation Area

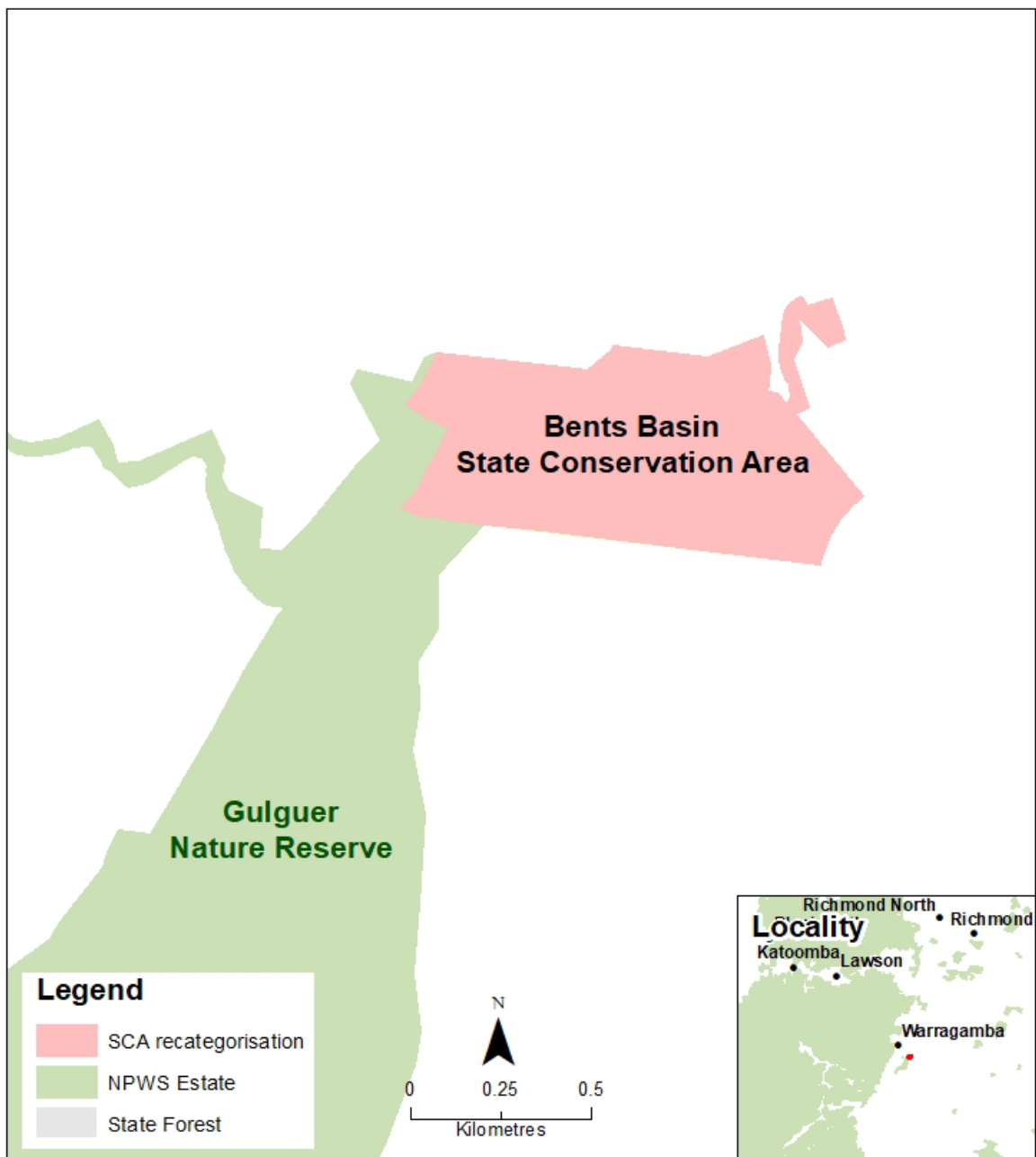


Figure 5 Bents Basin State Conservation Area

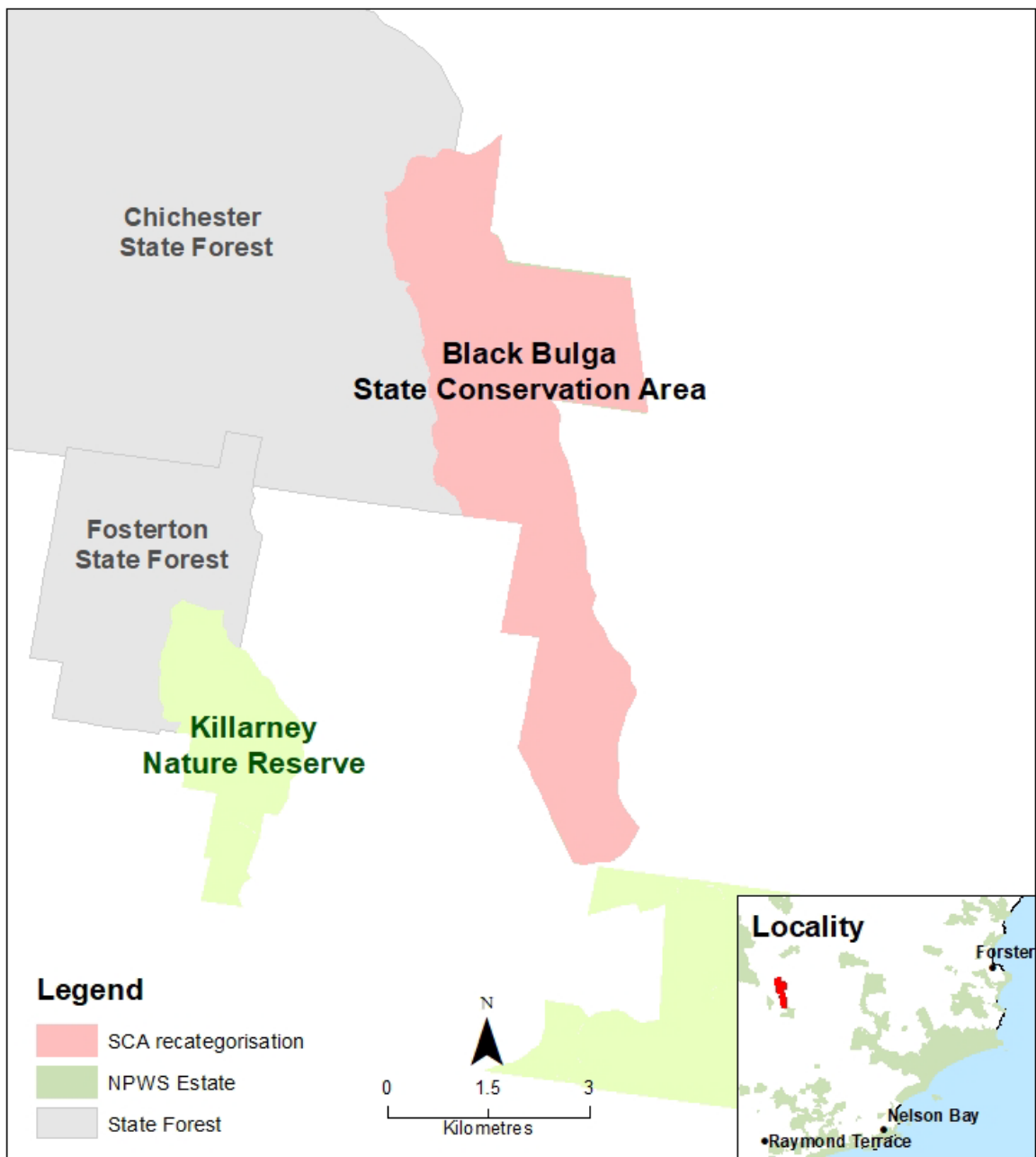


Figure 6 Black Bulga State Conservation Area

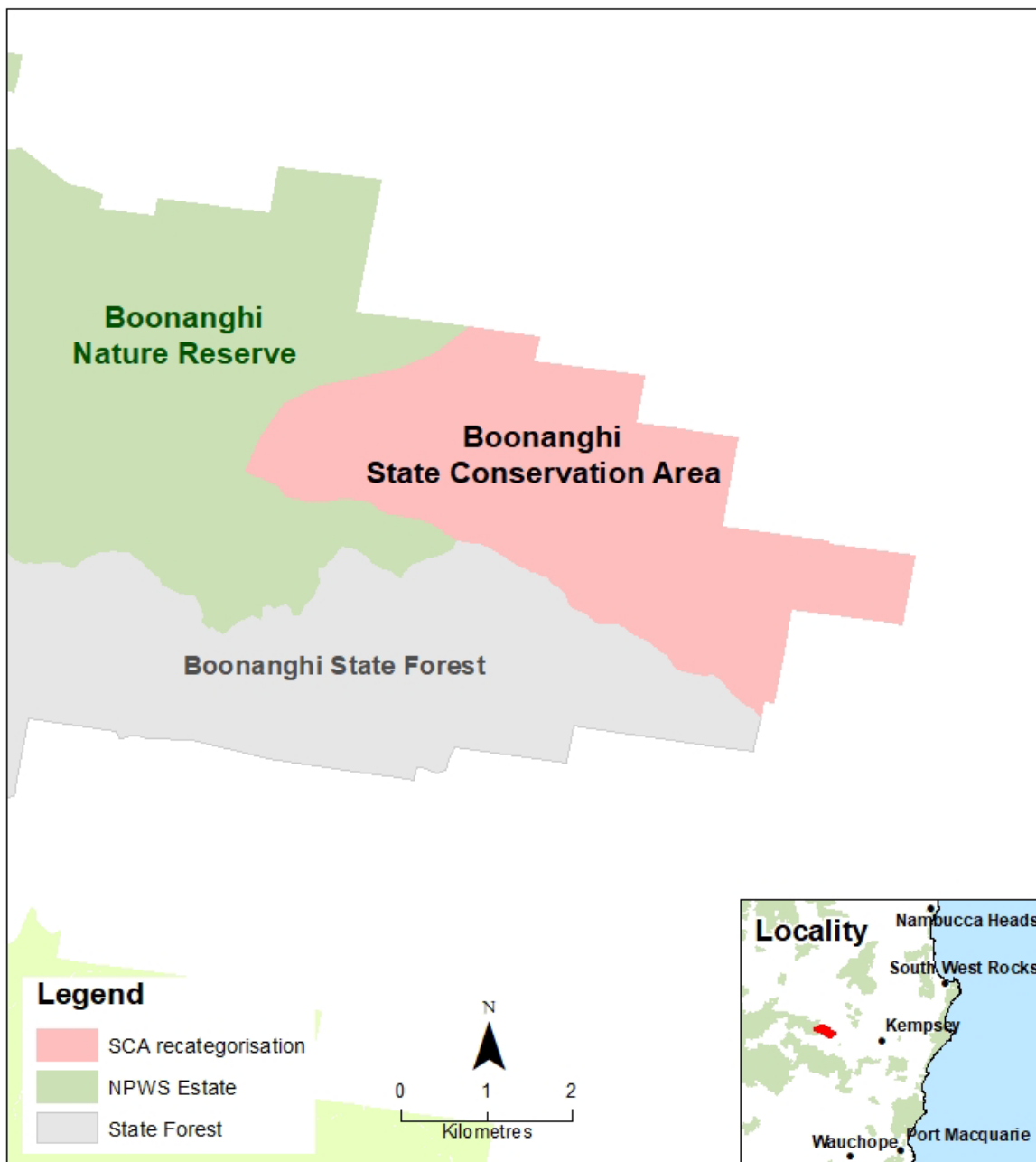


Figure 7 Boonanghi State Conservation Area

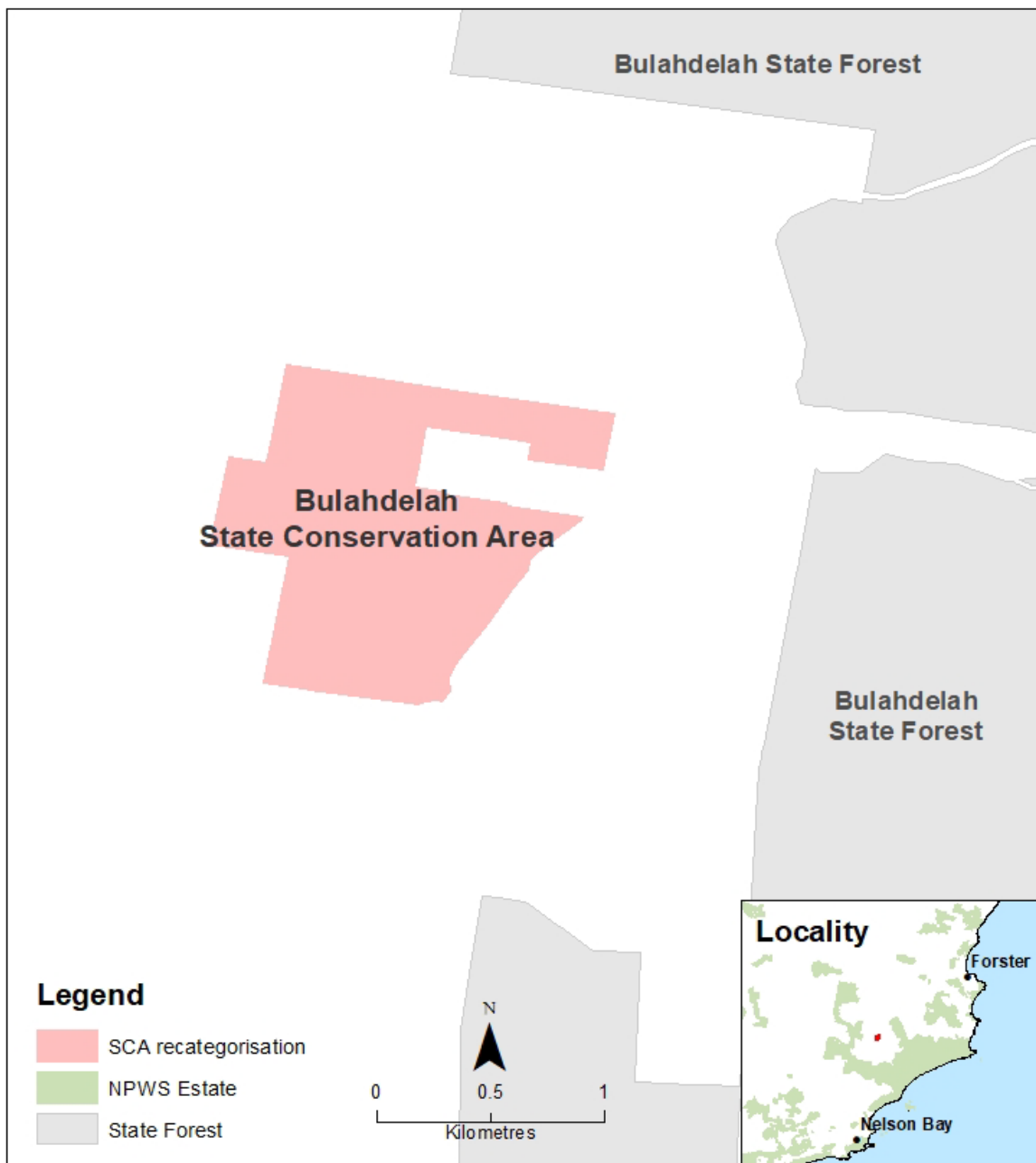


Figure 8 Bulahdelah State Conservation Area

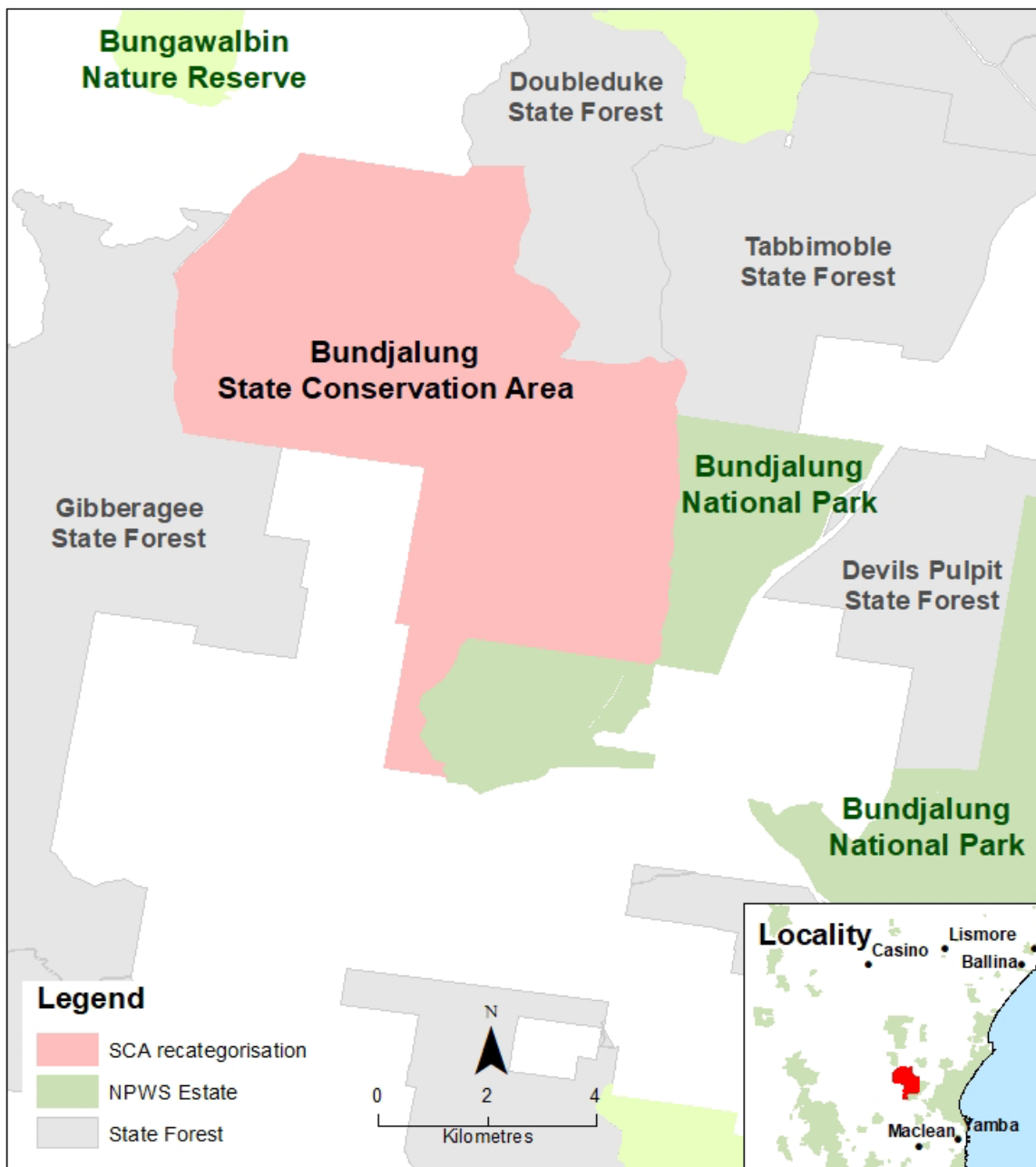


Figure 9 Bundjalung State Conservation Area

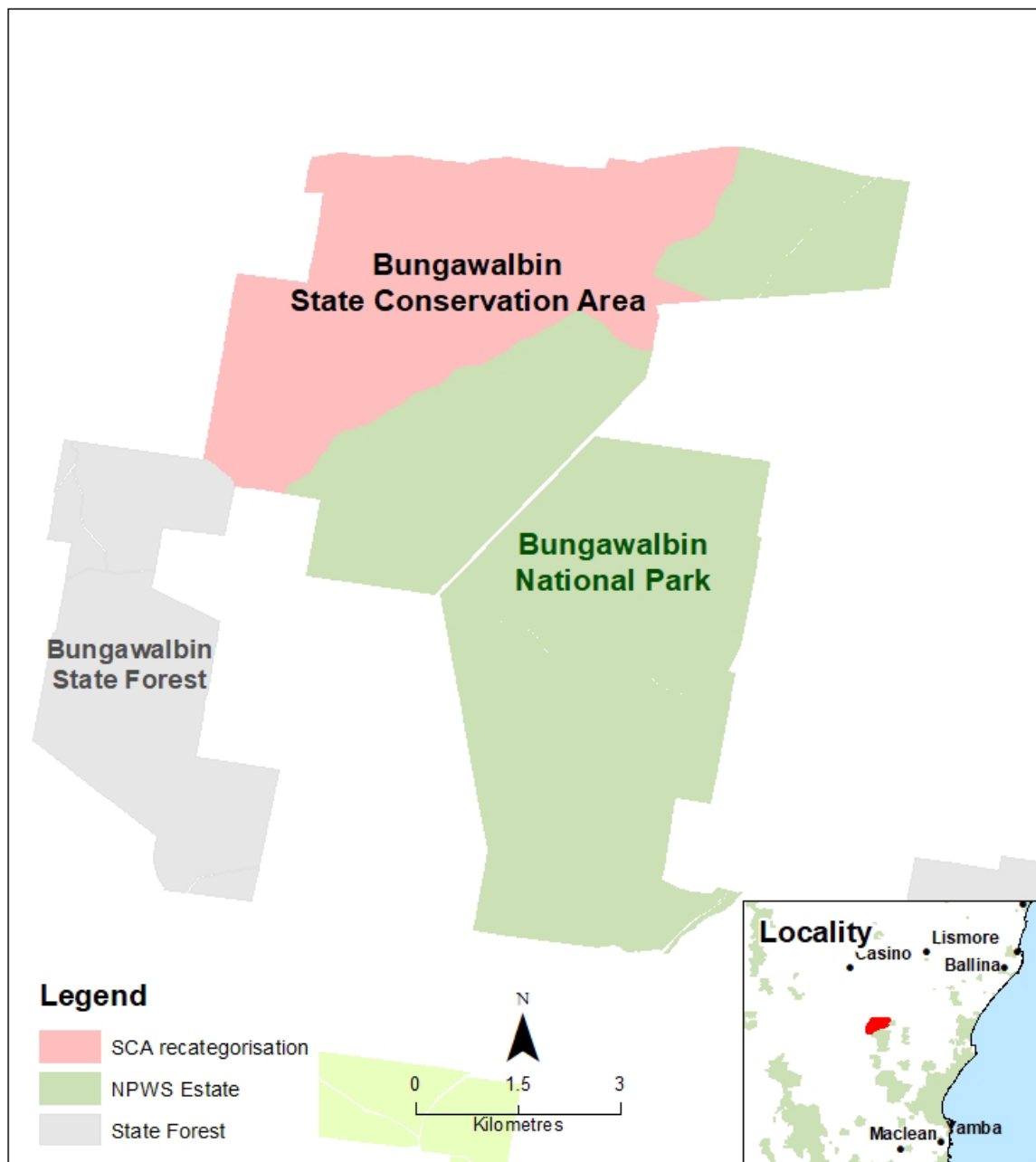


Figure 10 Bungawalbin State Conservation Area

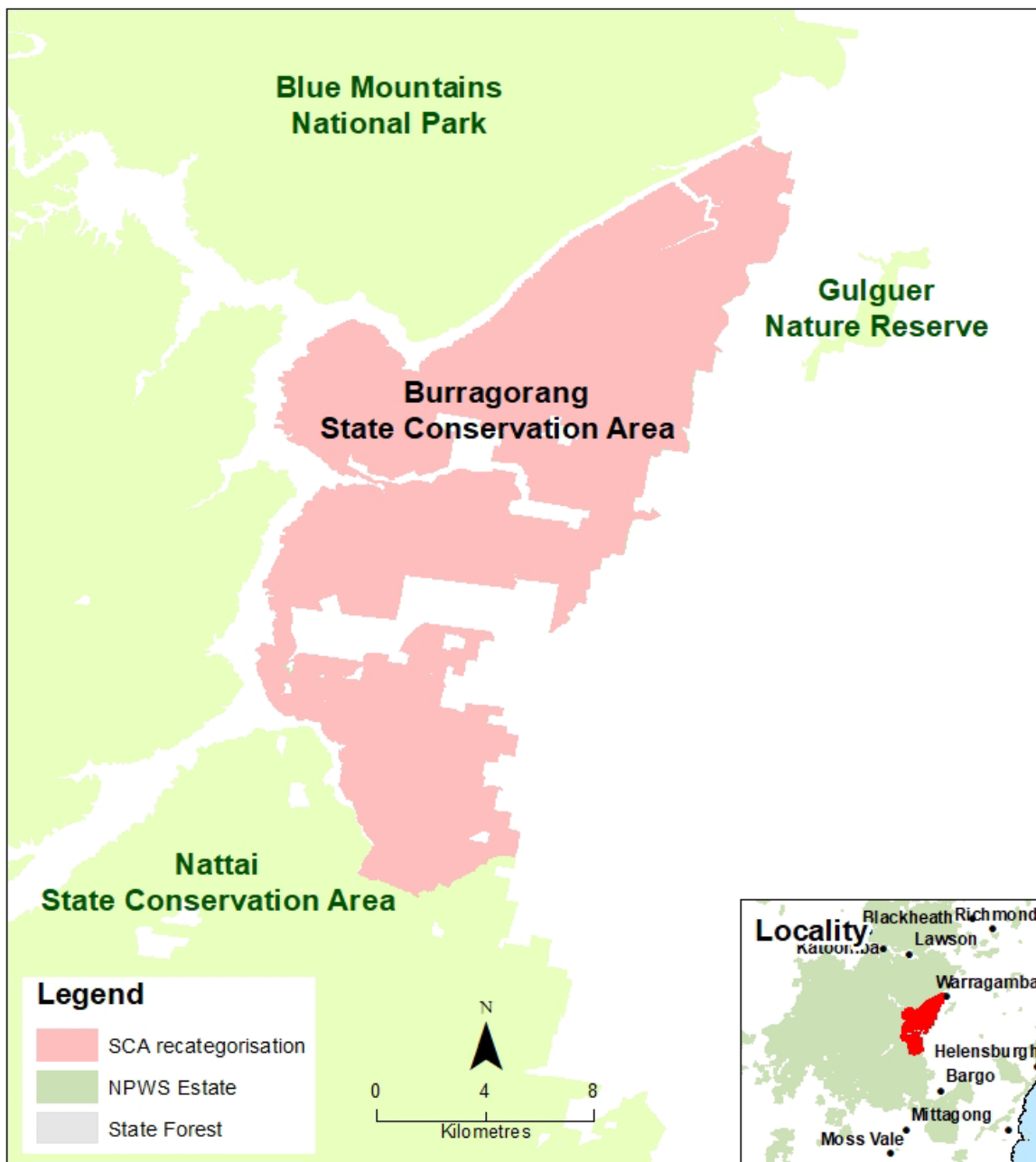


Figure 11 Burragorang State Conservation Area

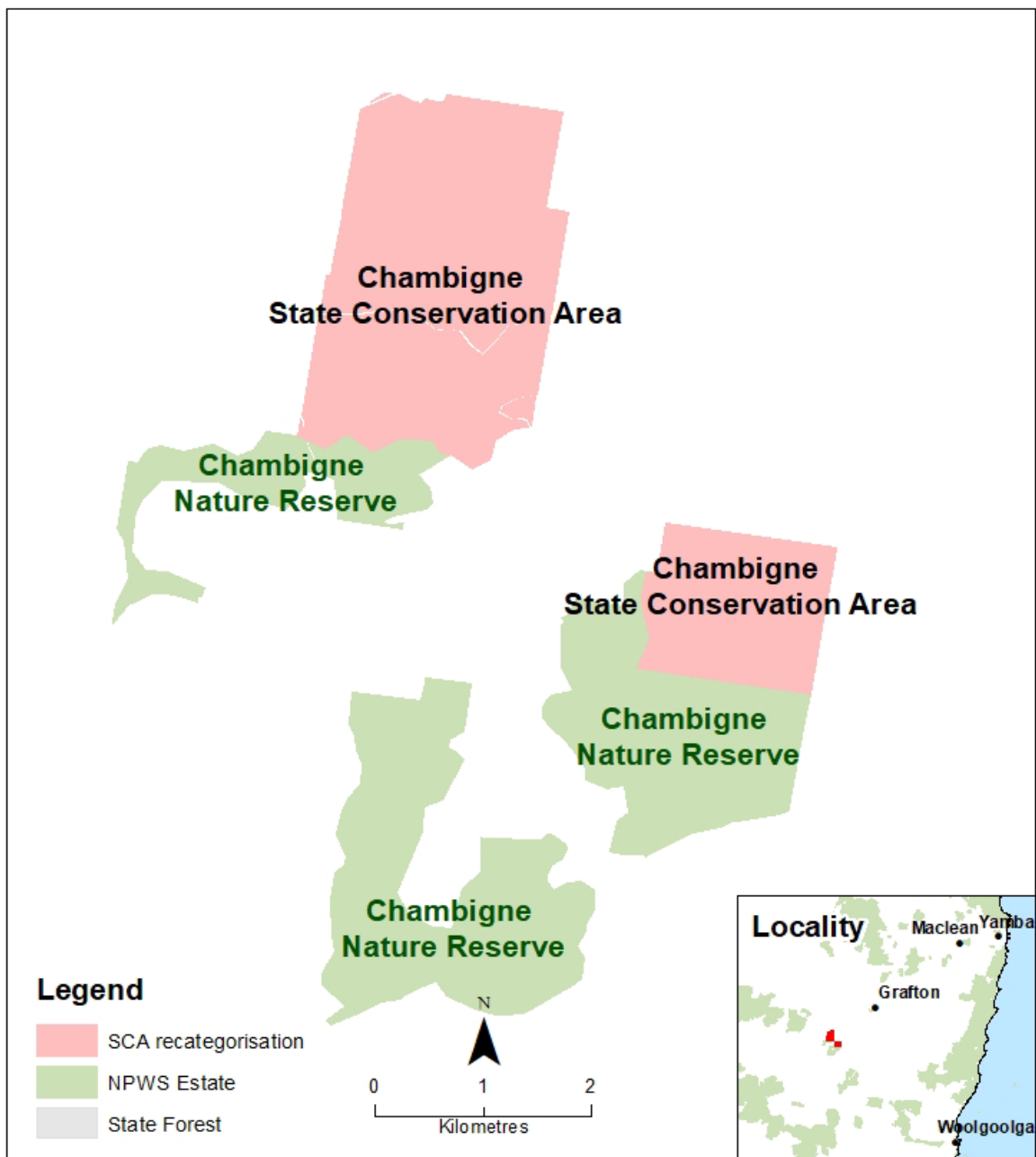


Figure 12 Chambigne State Conservation Area

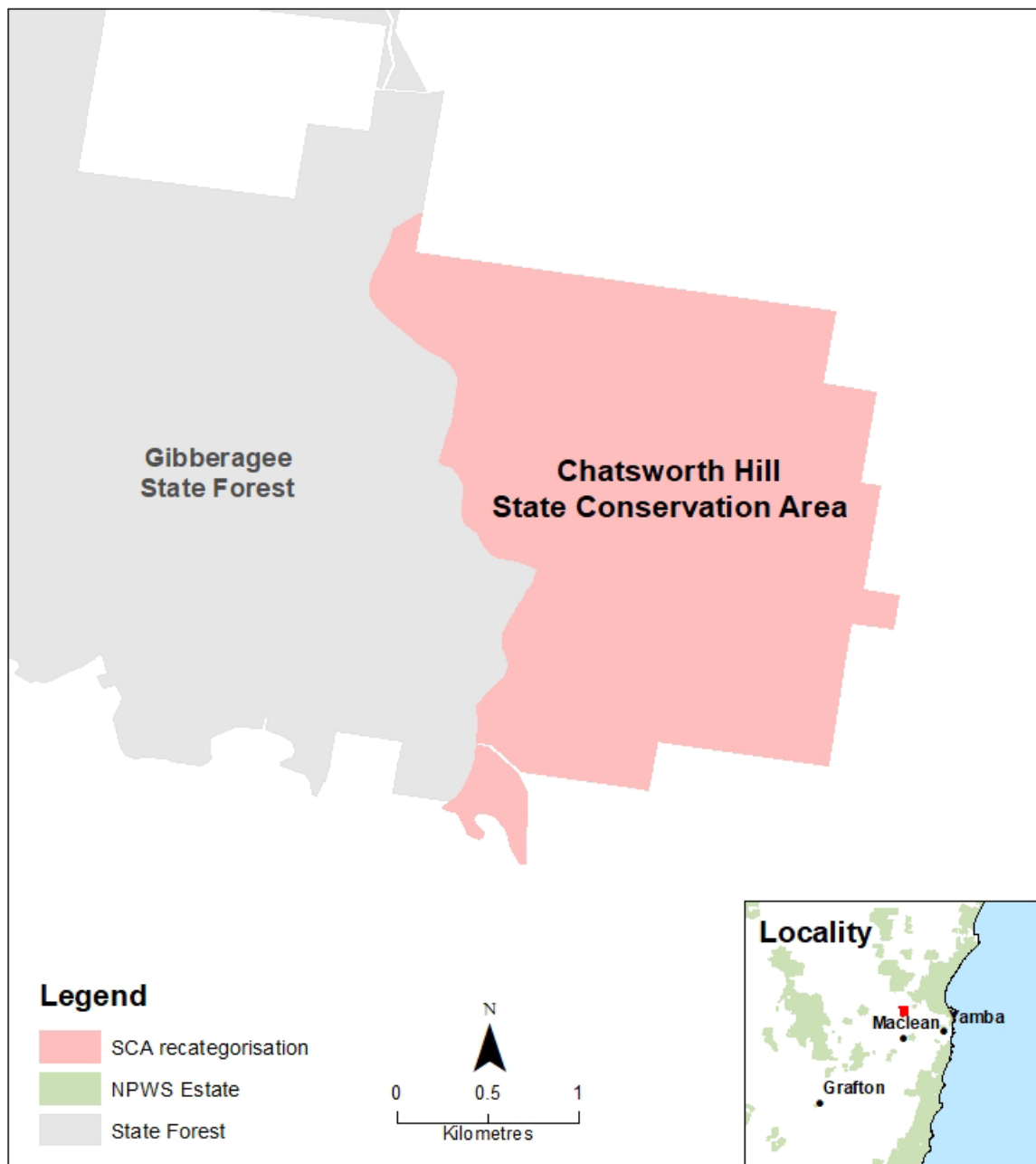


Figure 13 Chatsworth Hill State Conservation Area

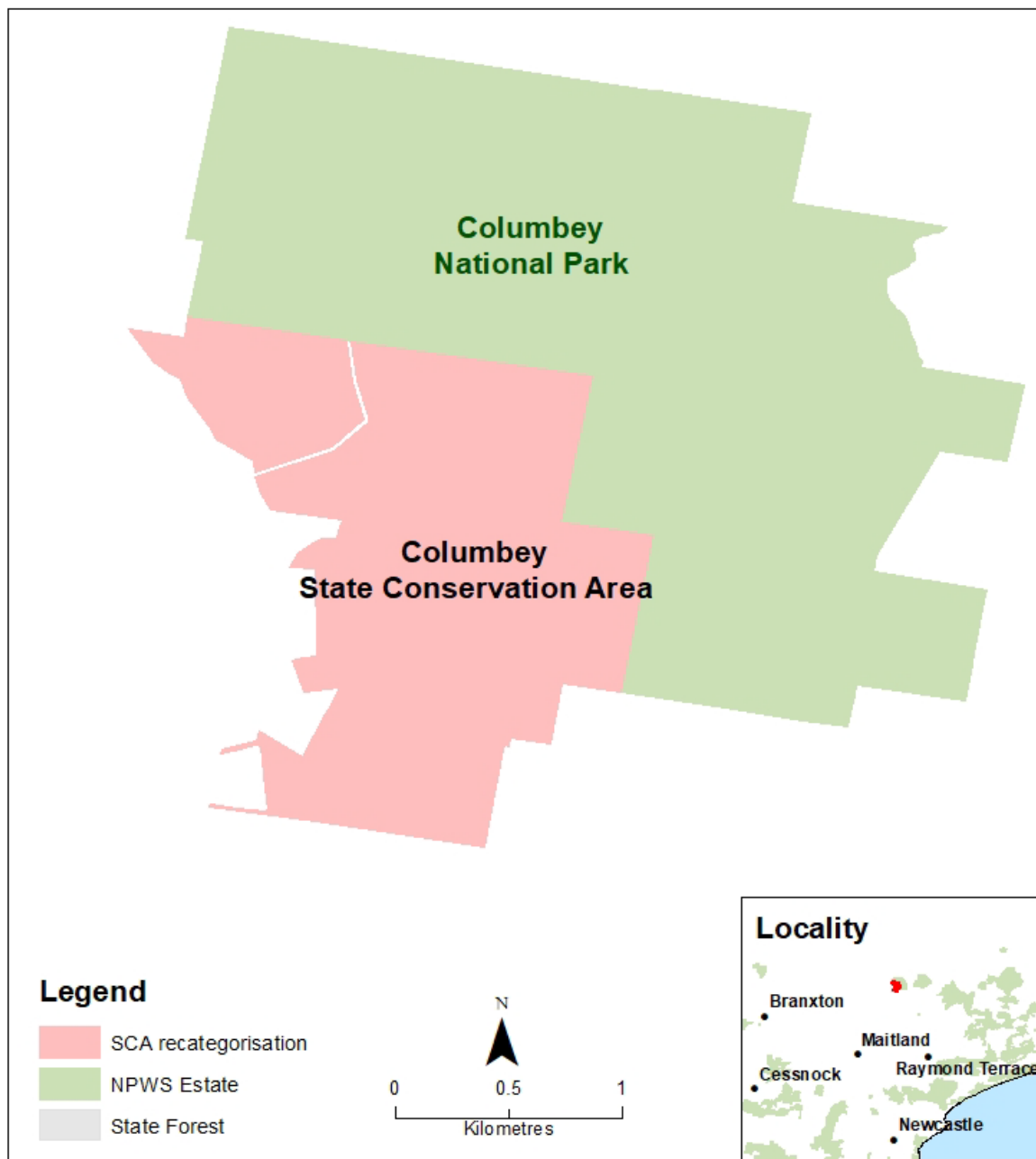


Figure 14 Columbey State Conservation Area

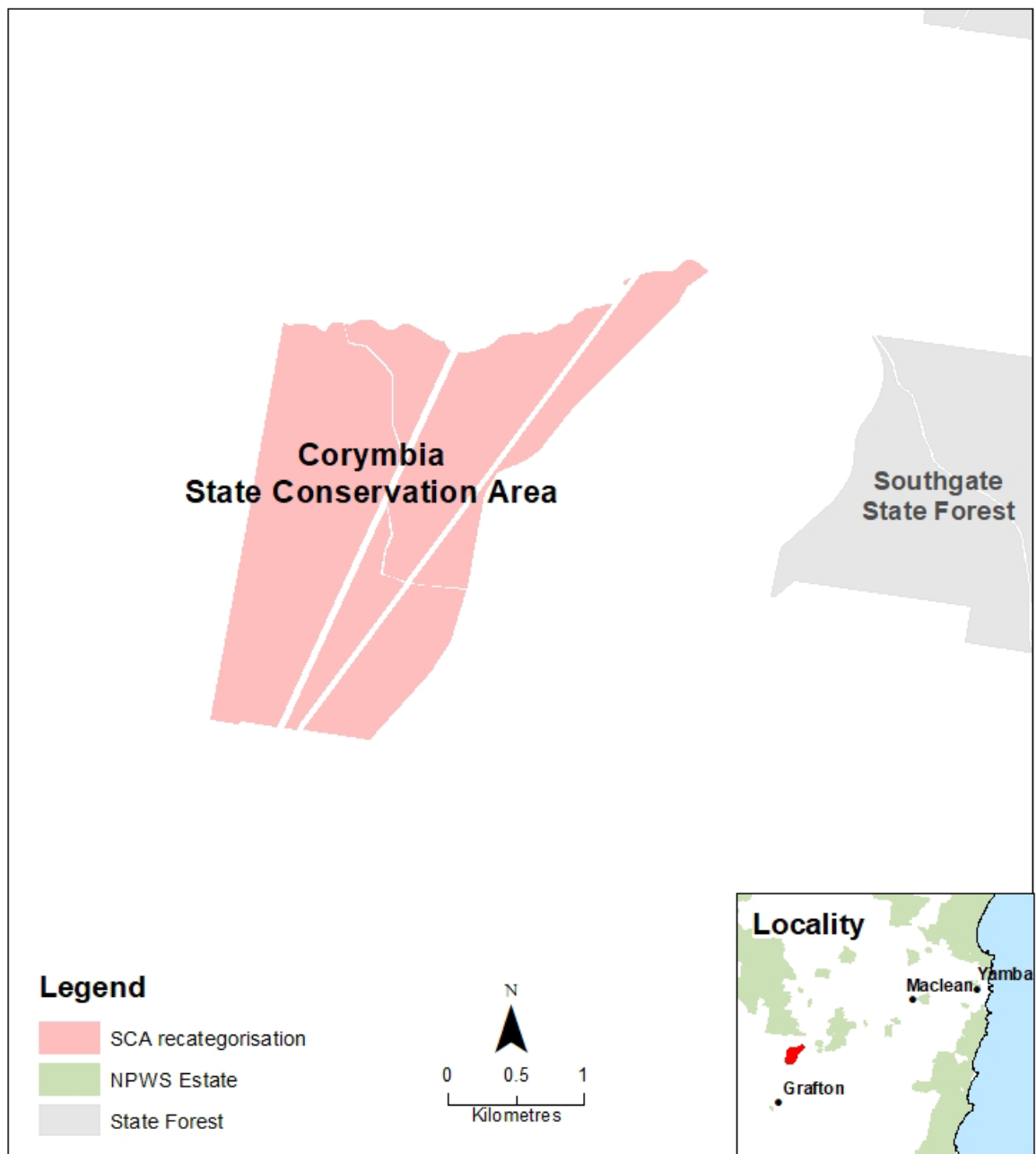


Figure 15 Corymbia State Conservation Area

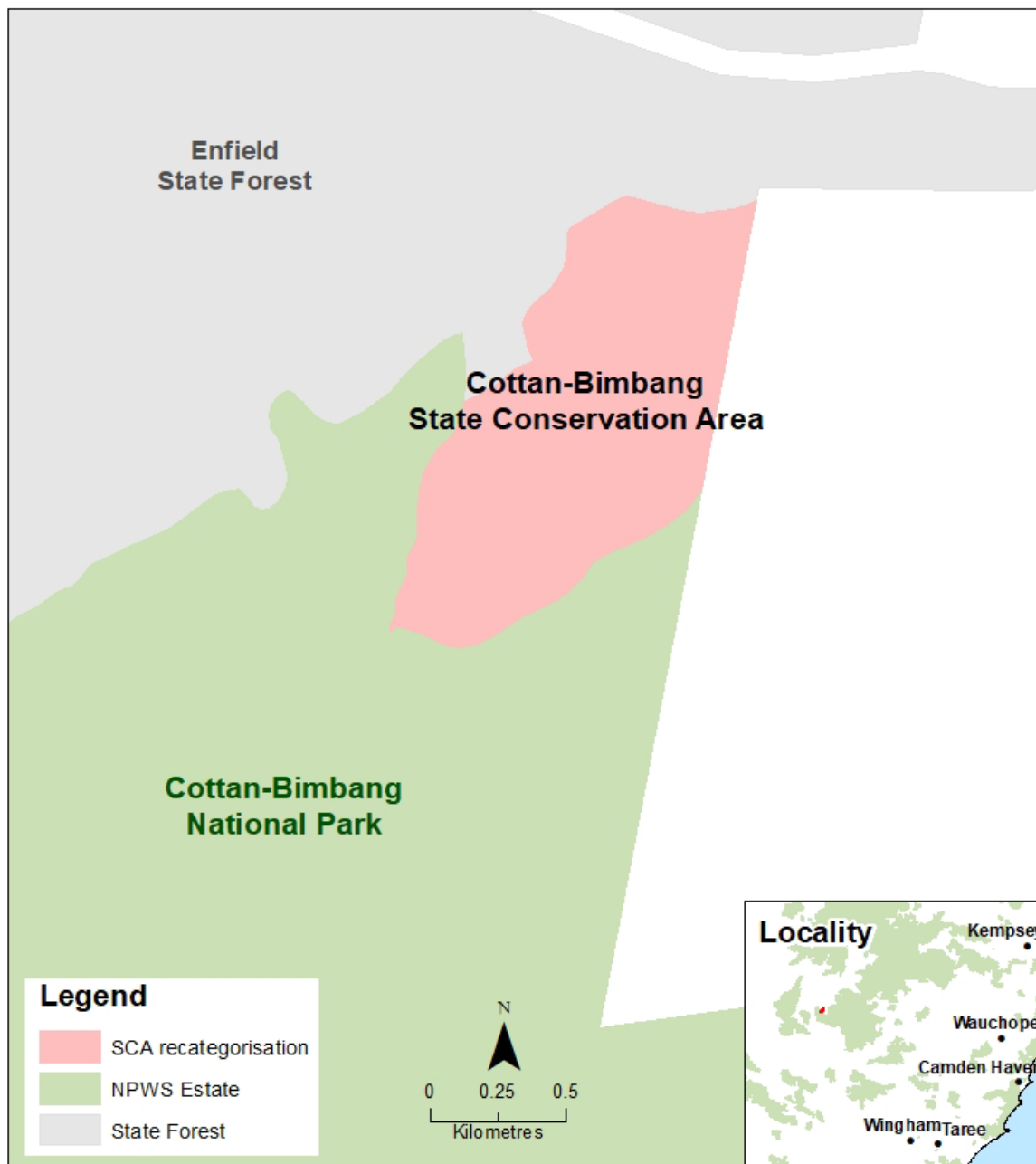


Figure 16 Cottan-Bimbang State Conservation Area

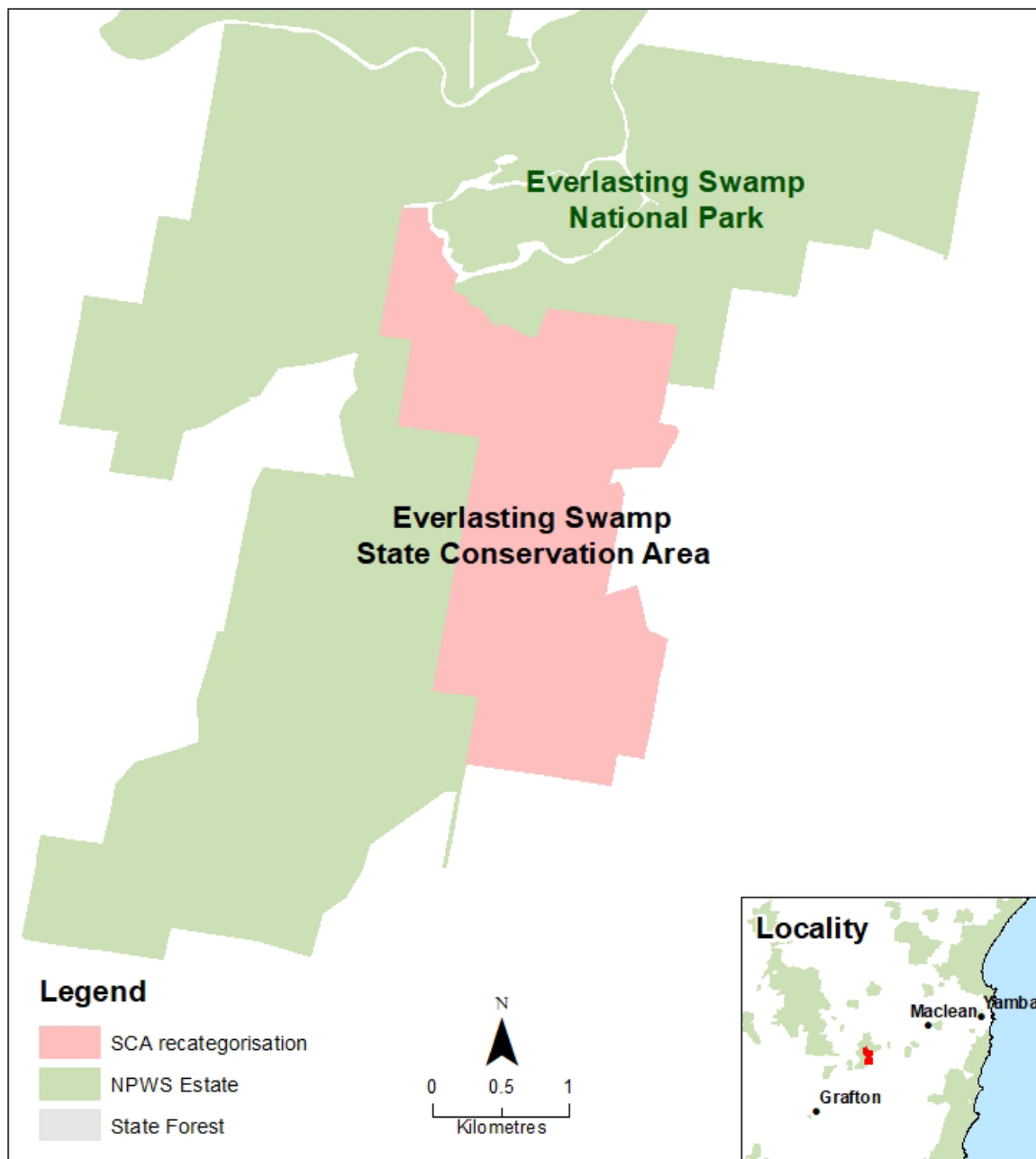


Figure 17 Everlasting Swamp State Conservation Area

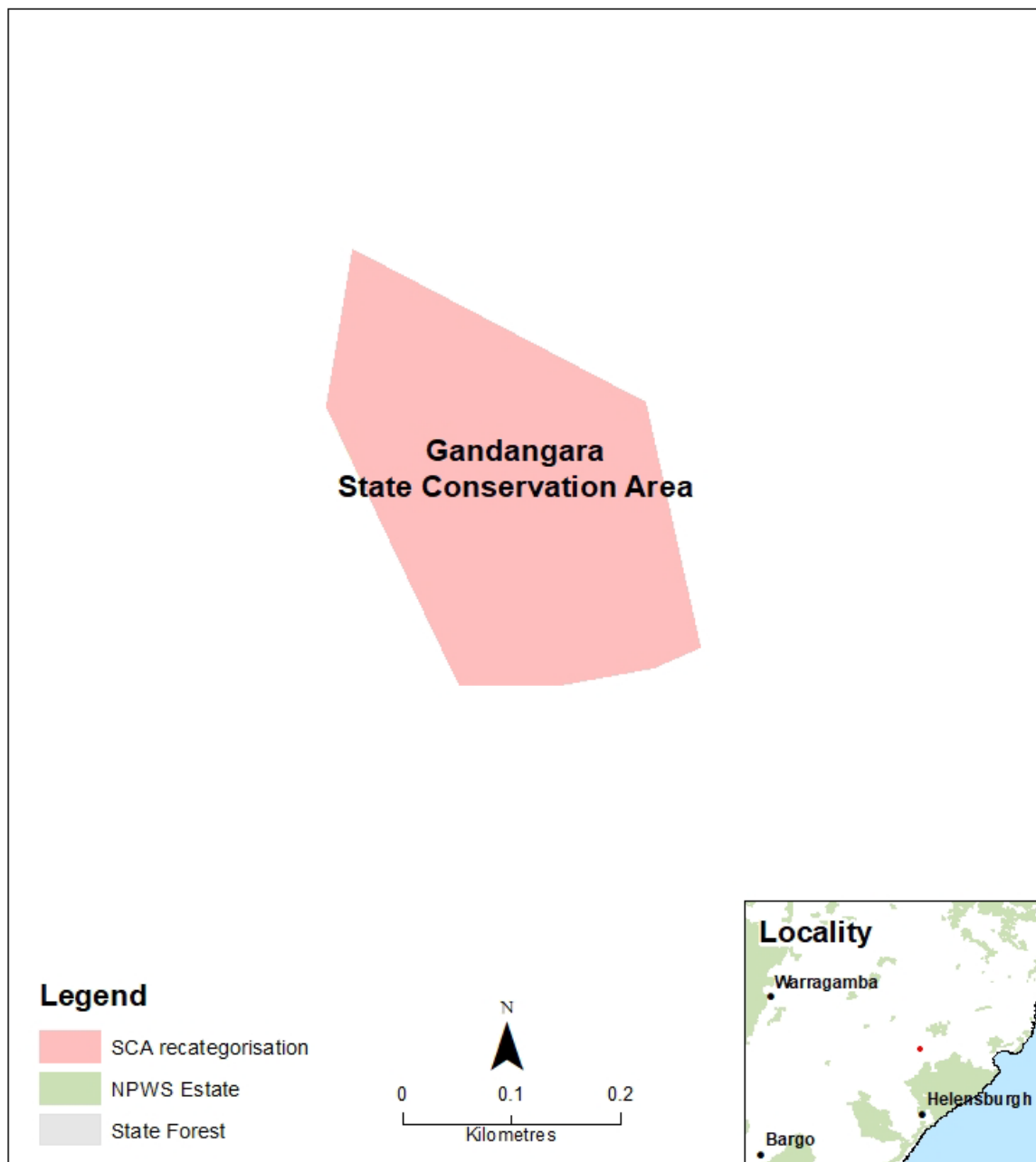


Figure 18 Gandangara State Conservation Area

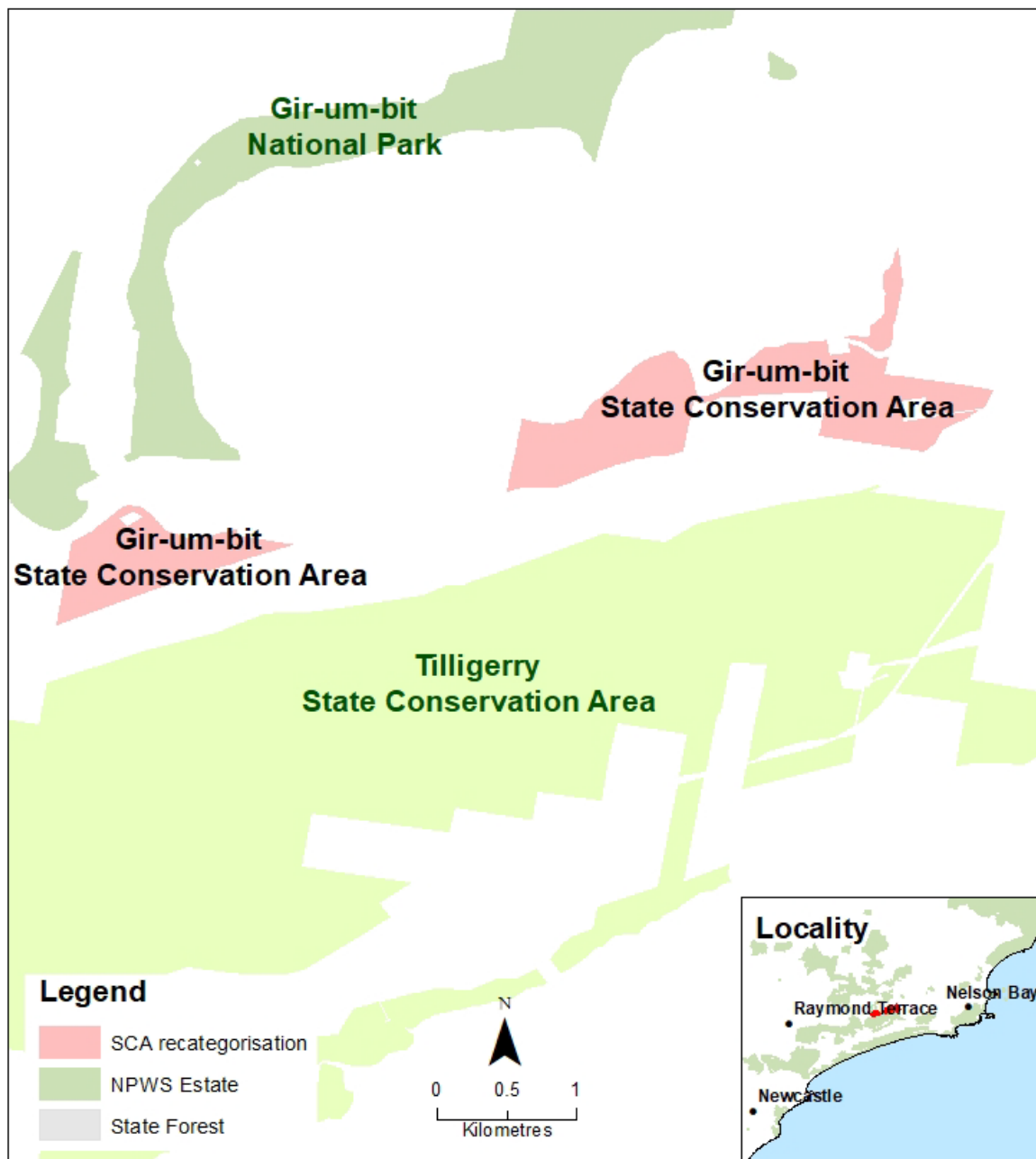


Figure 19 Gir-um-bit State Conservation Area

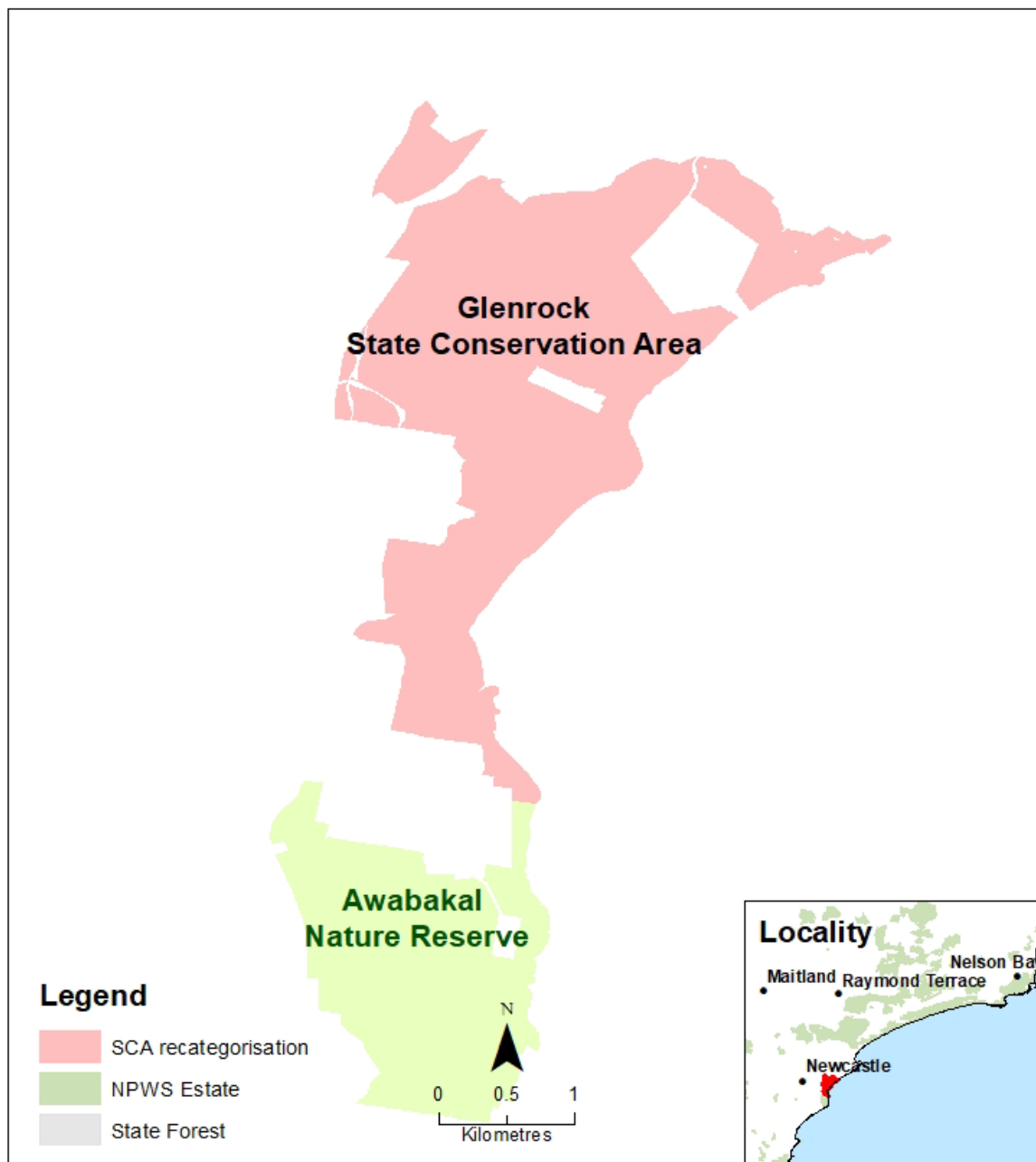


Figure 20 Glenrock State Conservation Area

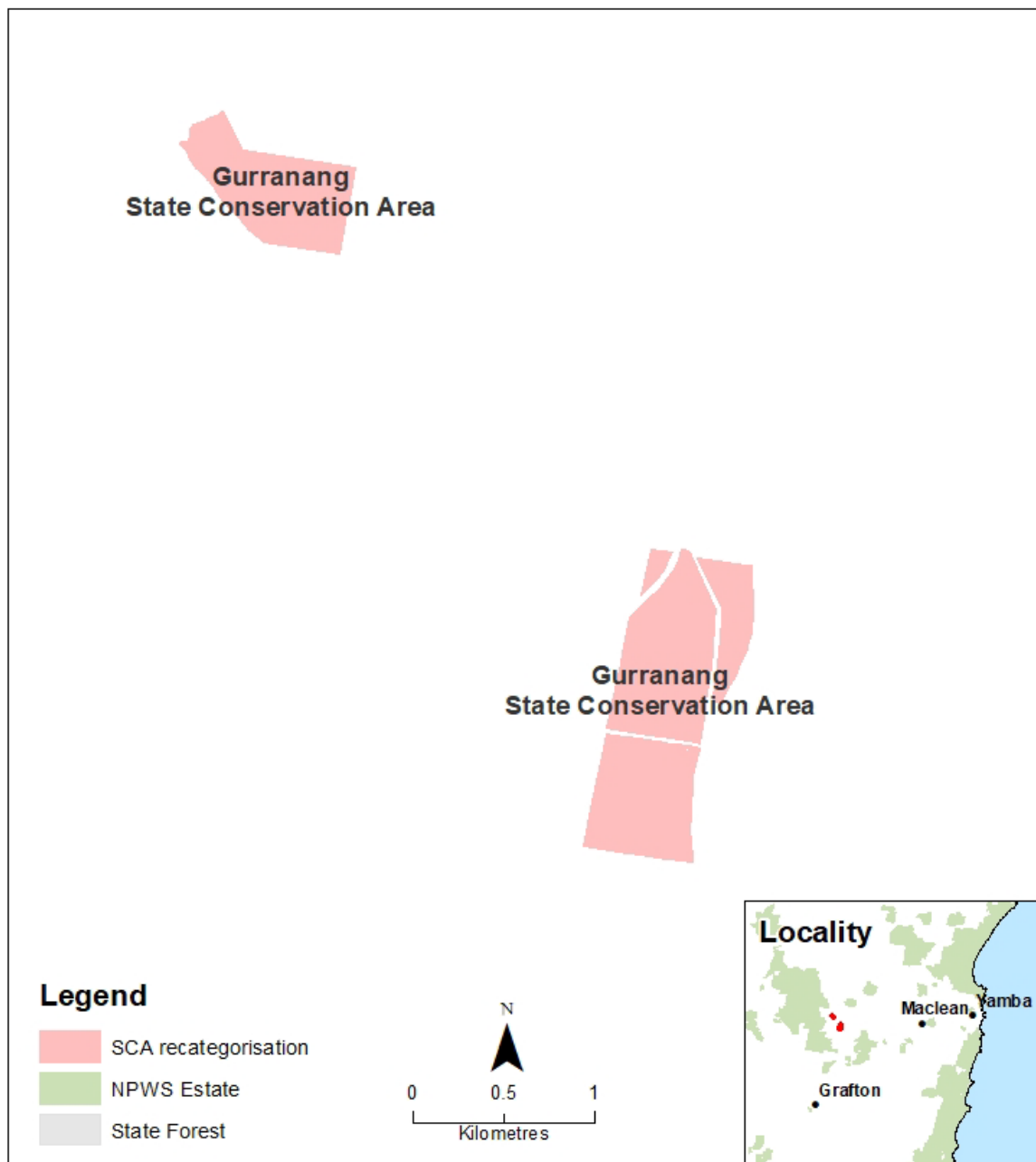


Figure 21 Gurranang State Conservation Area

Third and fourth review of state conservation areas

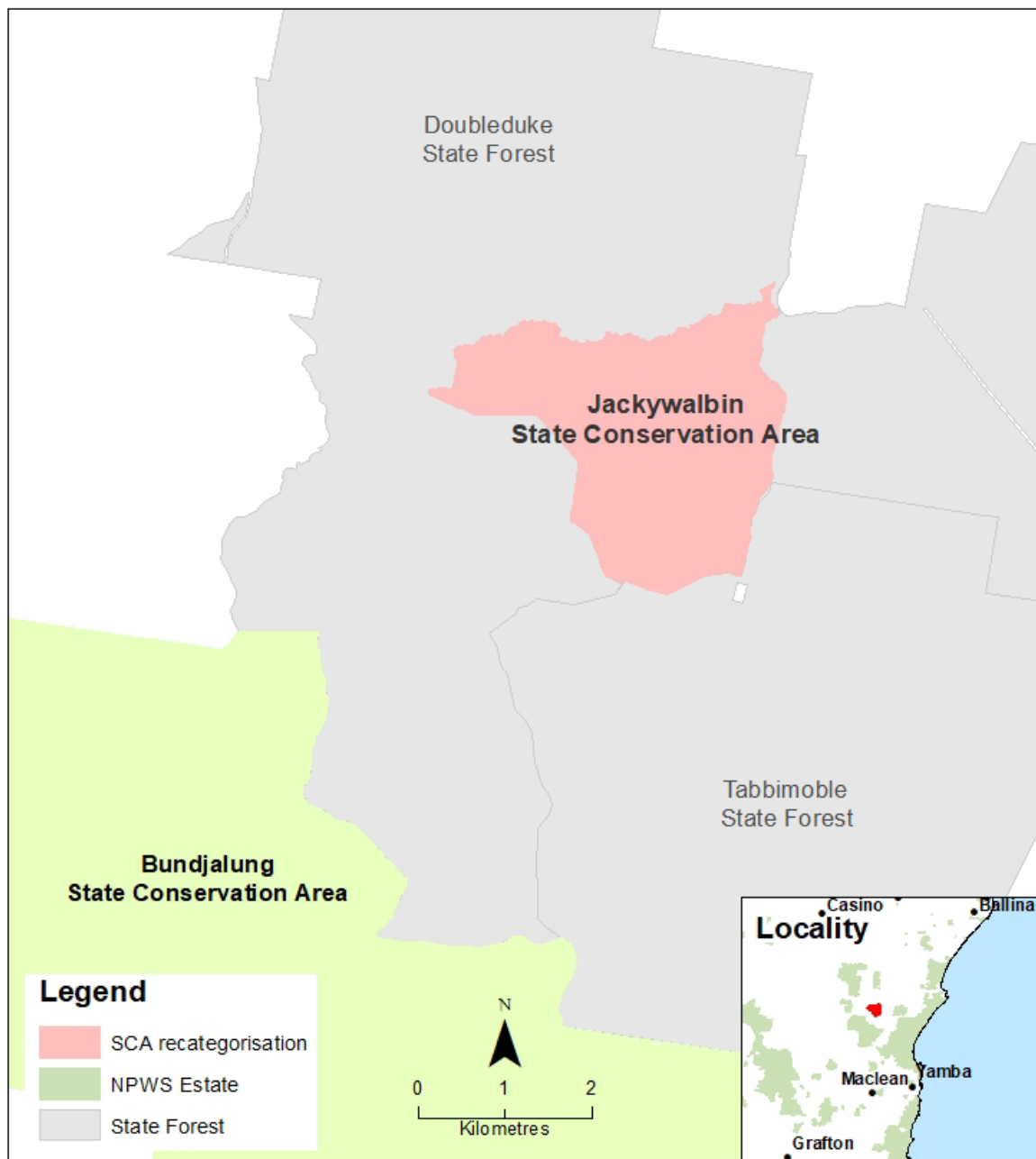


Figure 22 Jackywalbin State Conservation Area

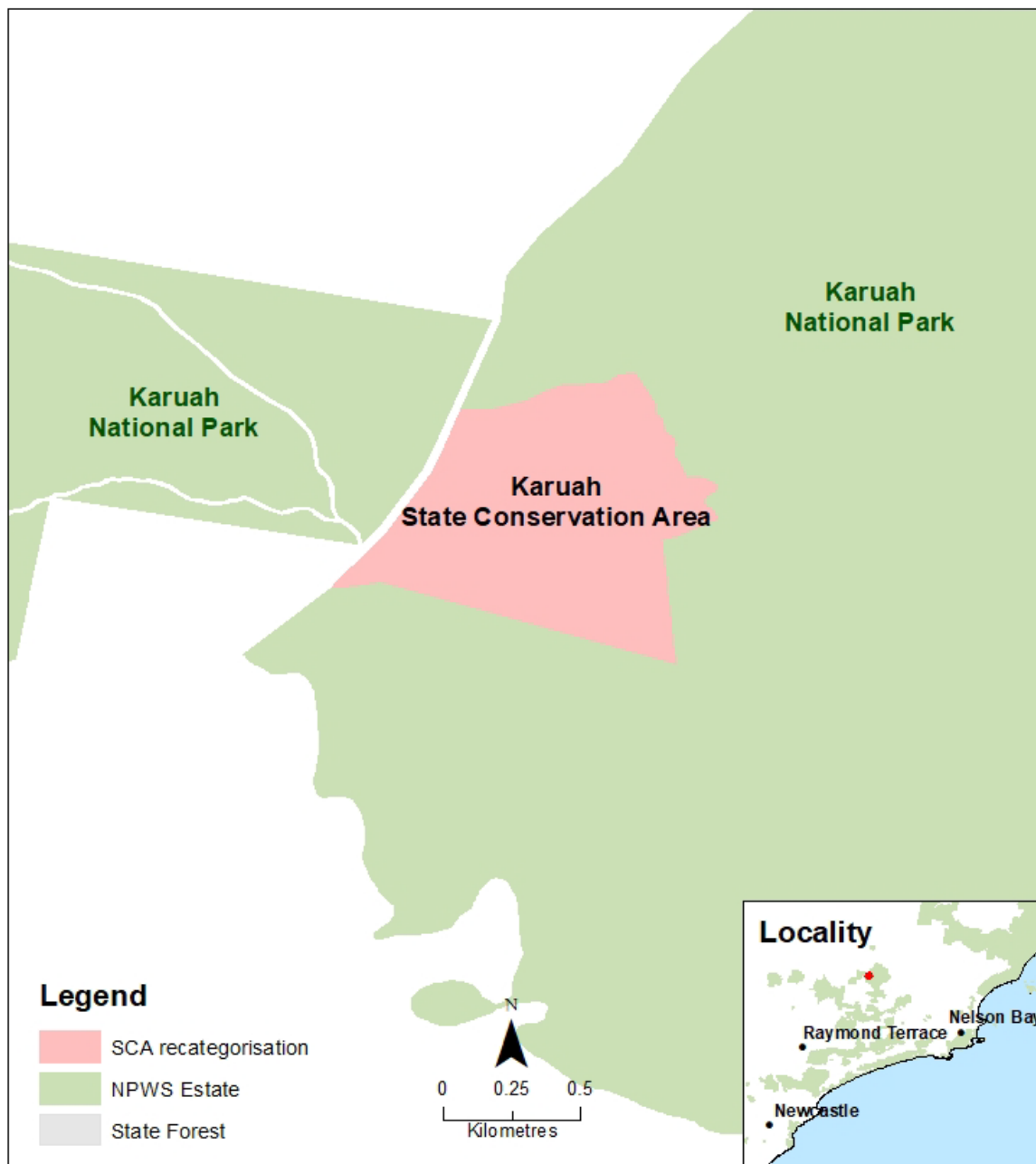


Figure 23 Karuah State Conservation Area

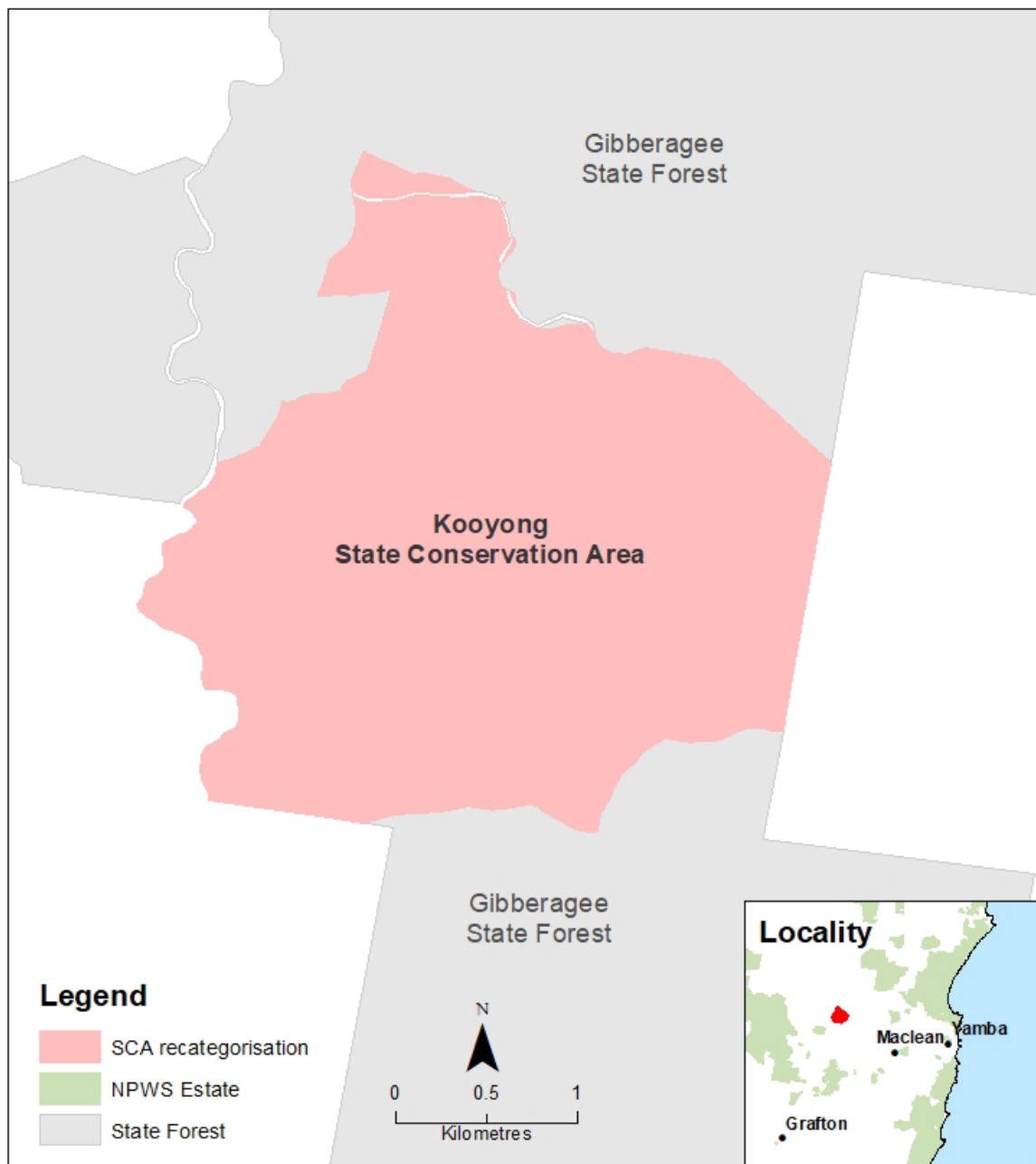


Figure 24 Kooyong State Conservation Area



Figure 25 Kumbatine State Conservation Area

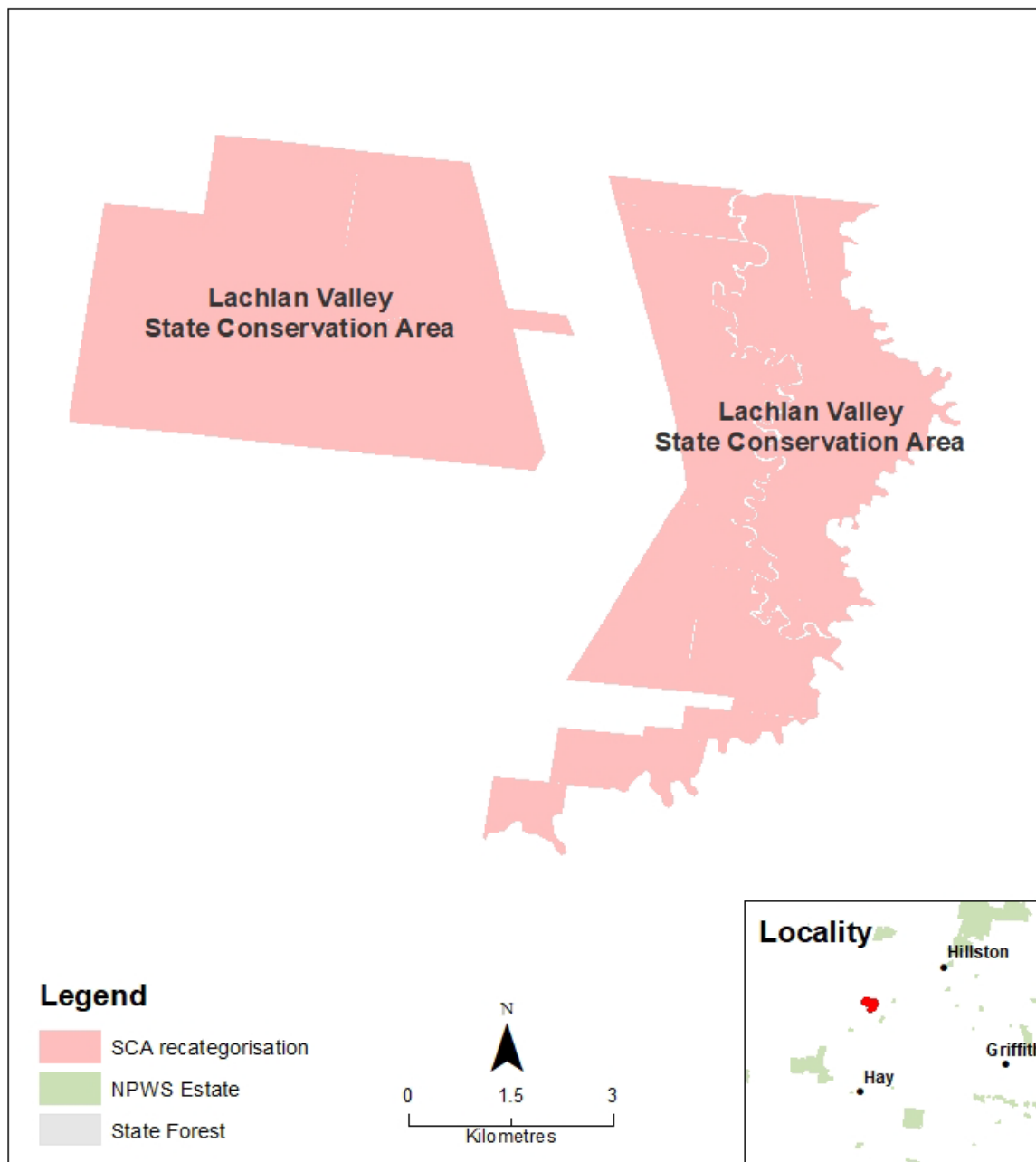


Figure 26 Lachlan Valley State Conservation Area

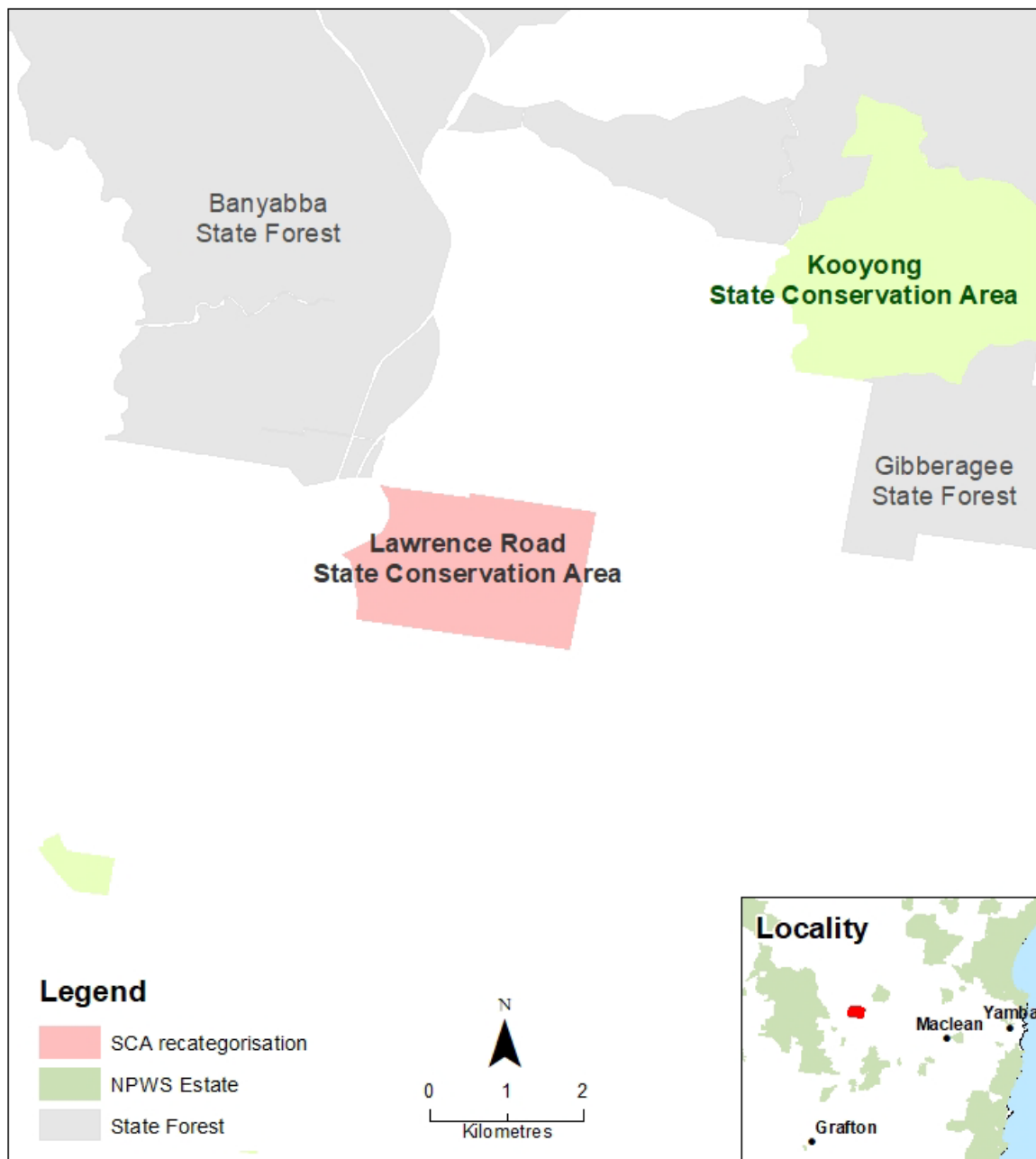


Figure 27 Lawrence Road State Conservation Area

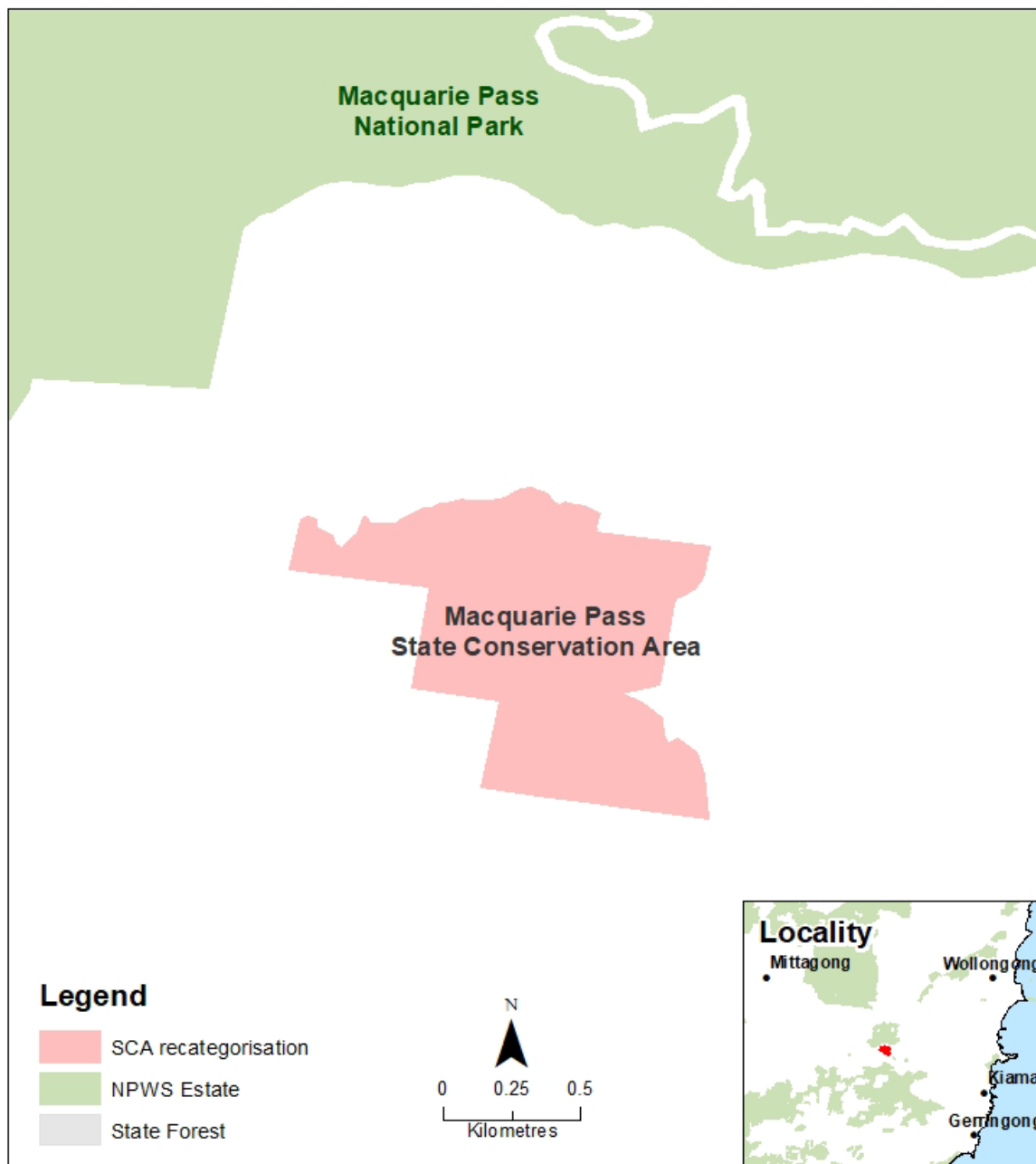


Figure 28 Macquarie Pass State Conservation Area

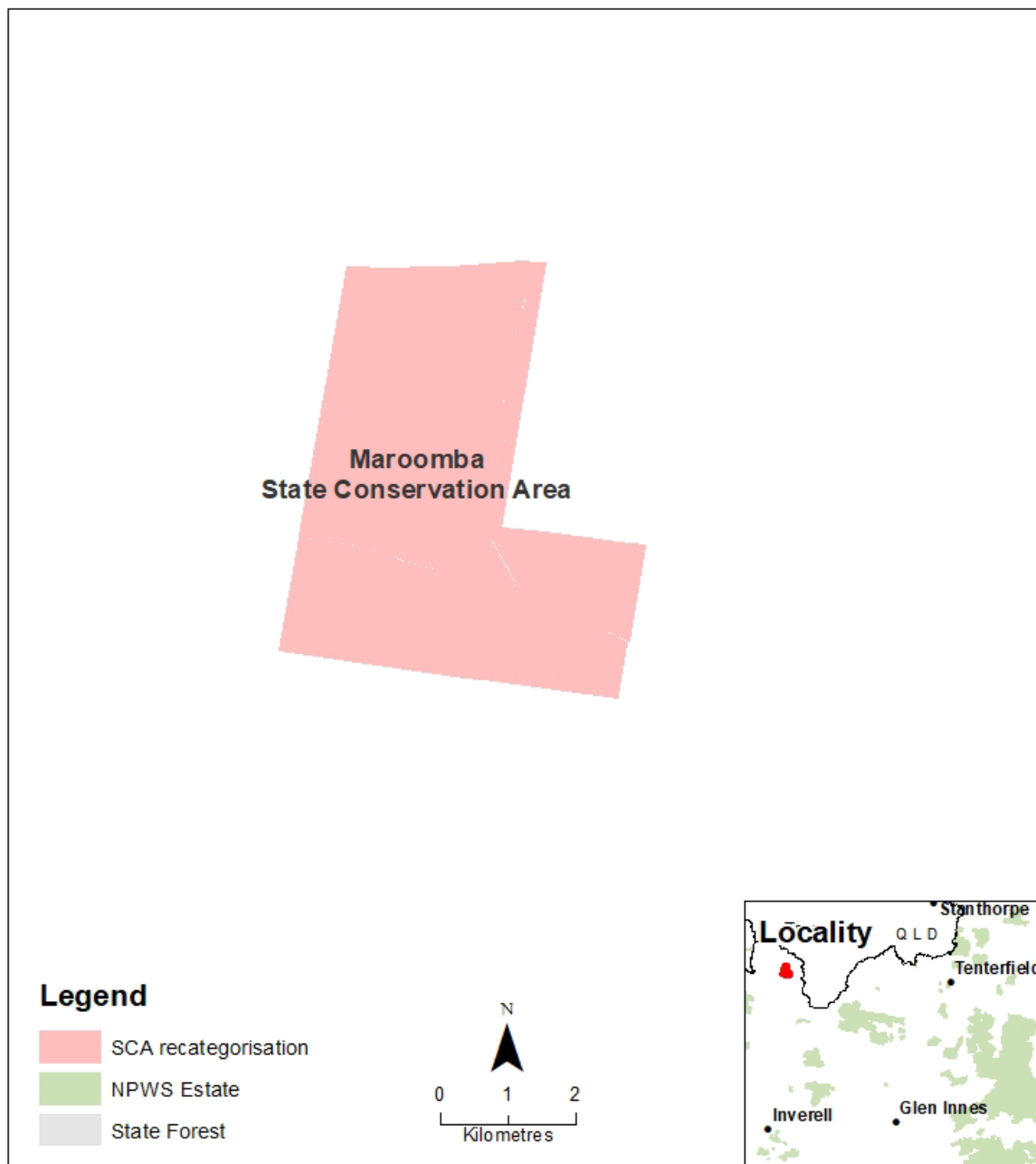


Figure 29 Maroomba State Conservation Area

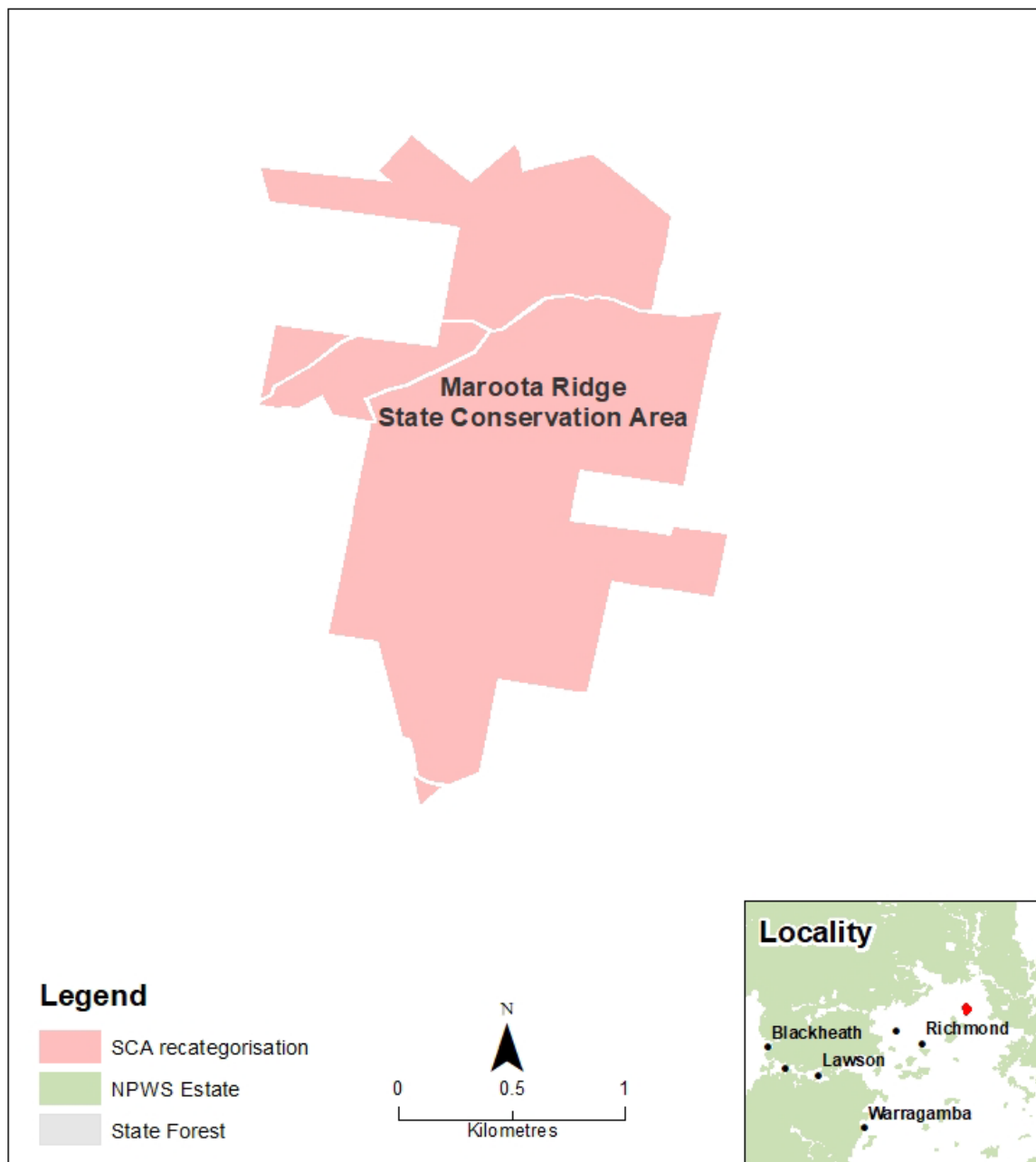


Figure 30 Maroota Ridge State Conservation Area

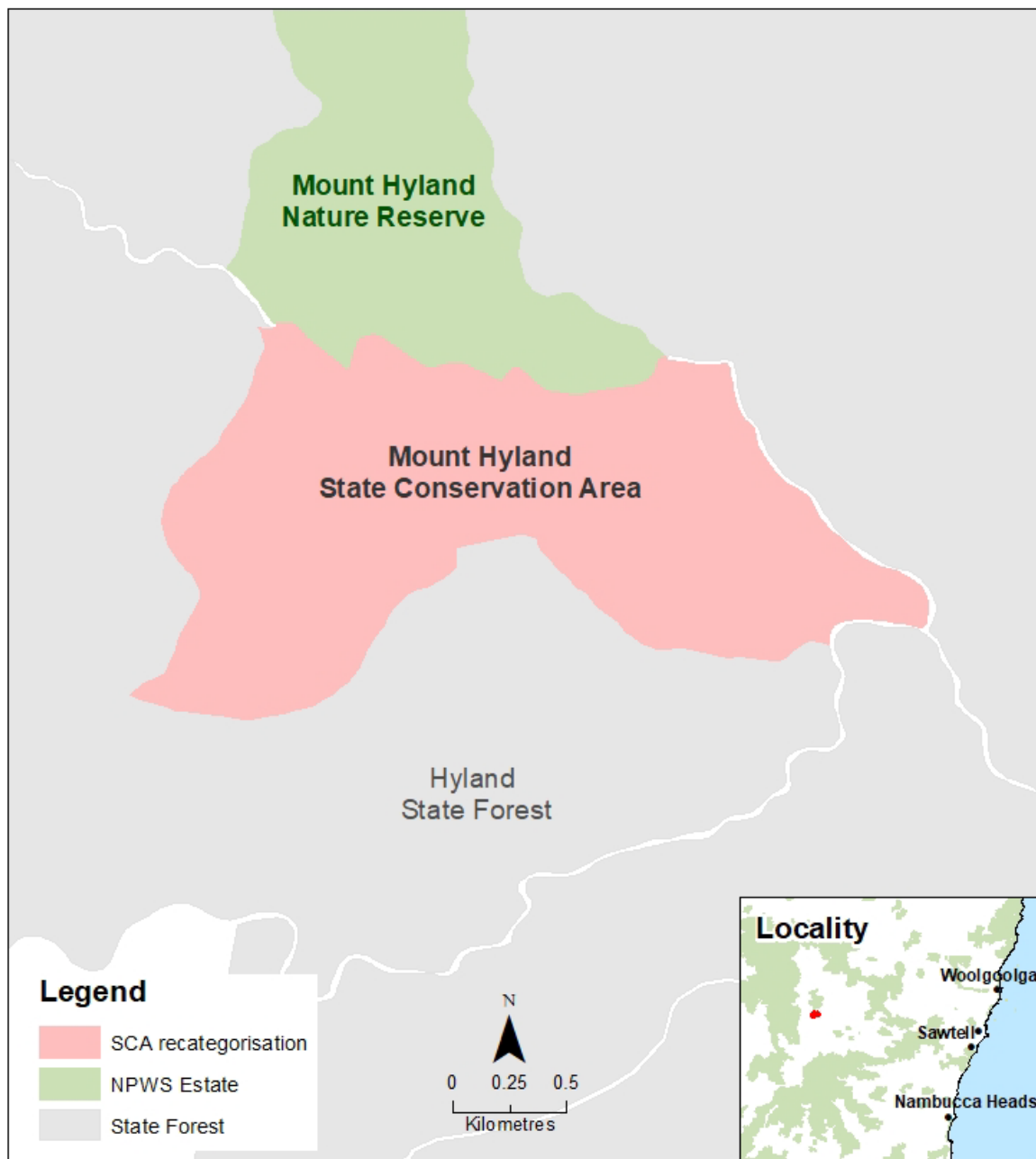


Figure 31 Mount Hyland State Conservation Area

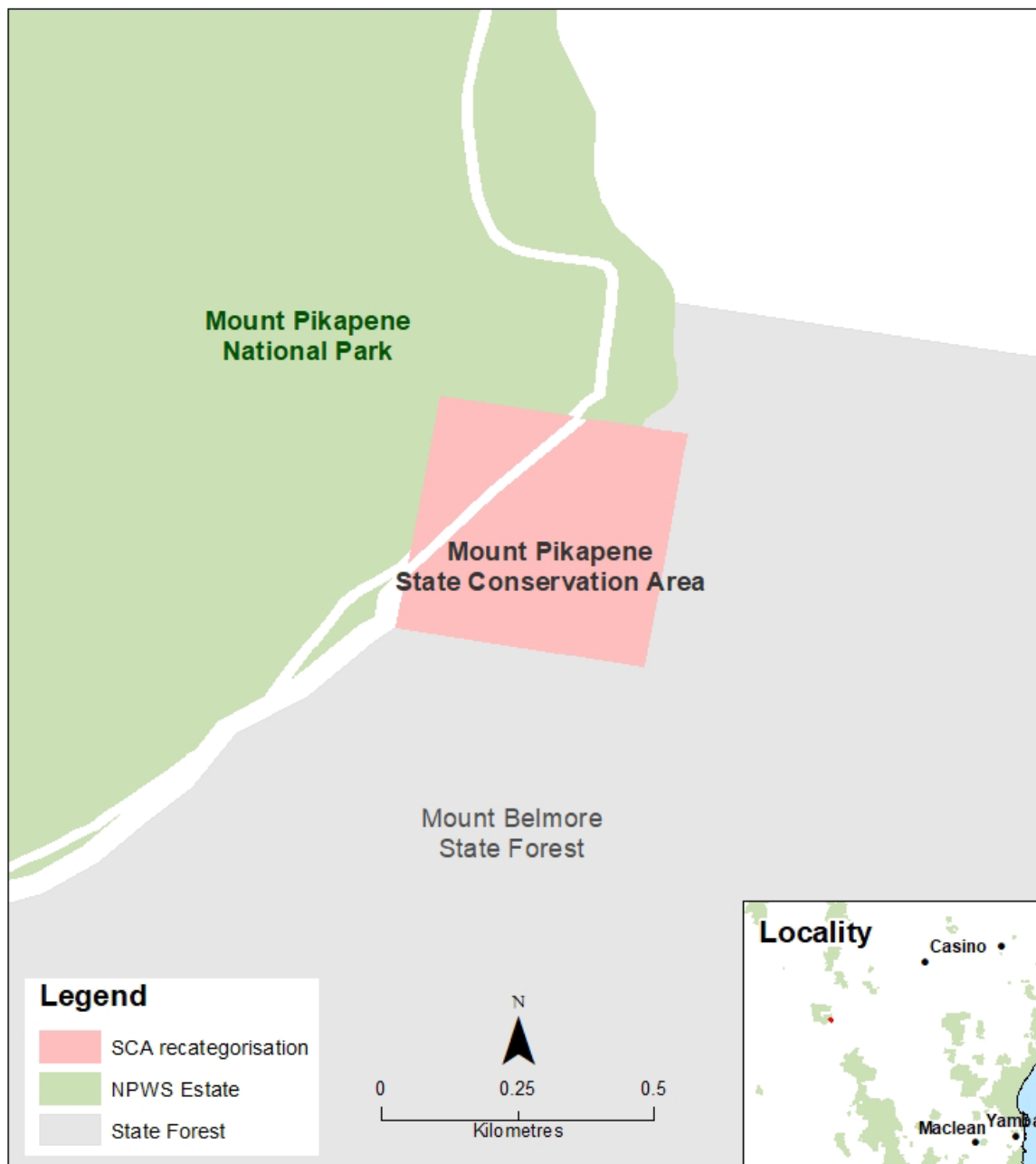


Figure 32 Mount Pikapene State Conservation Area

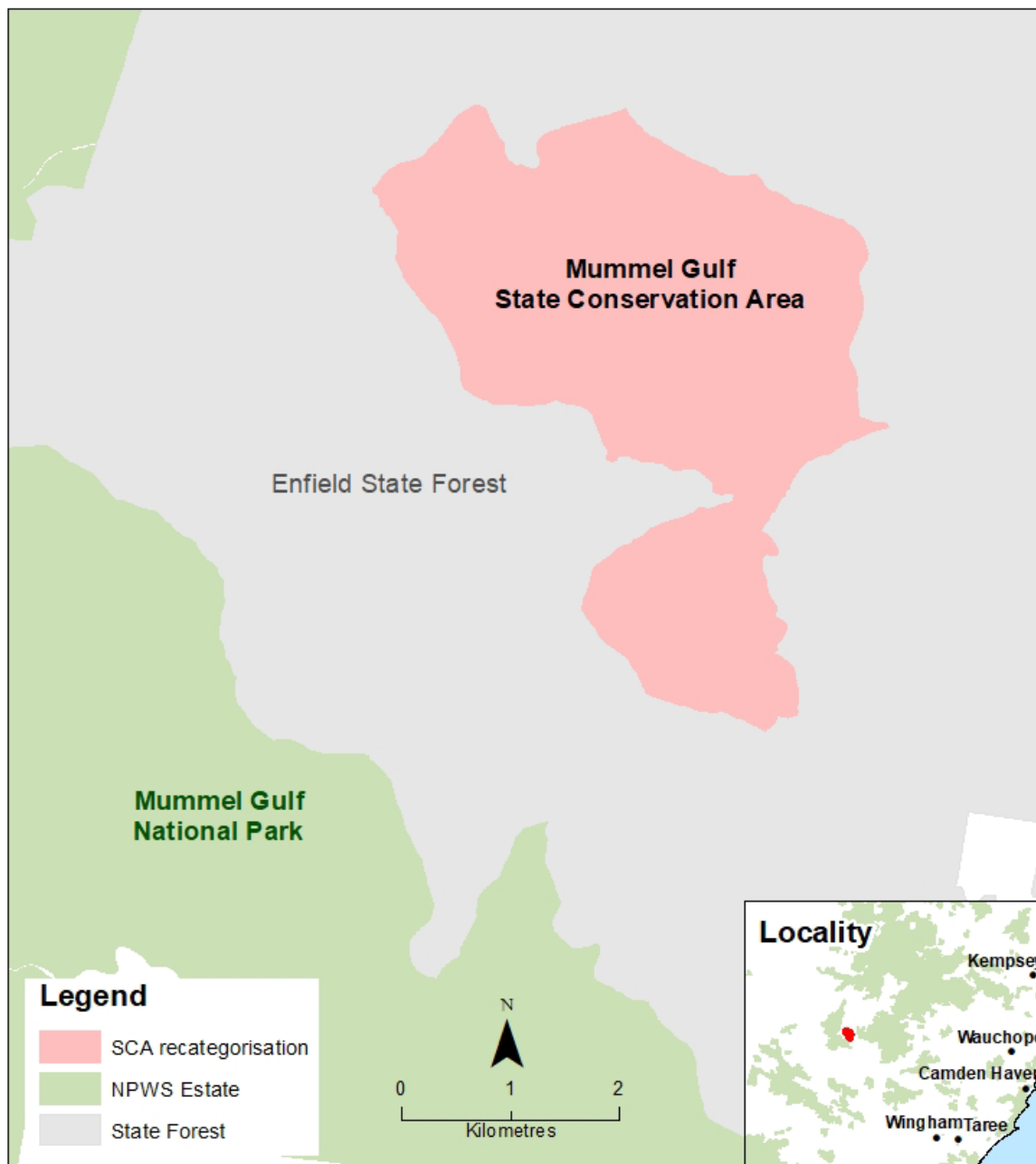


Figure 33 Mummel Gulf State Conservation Area

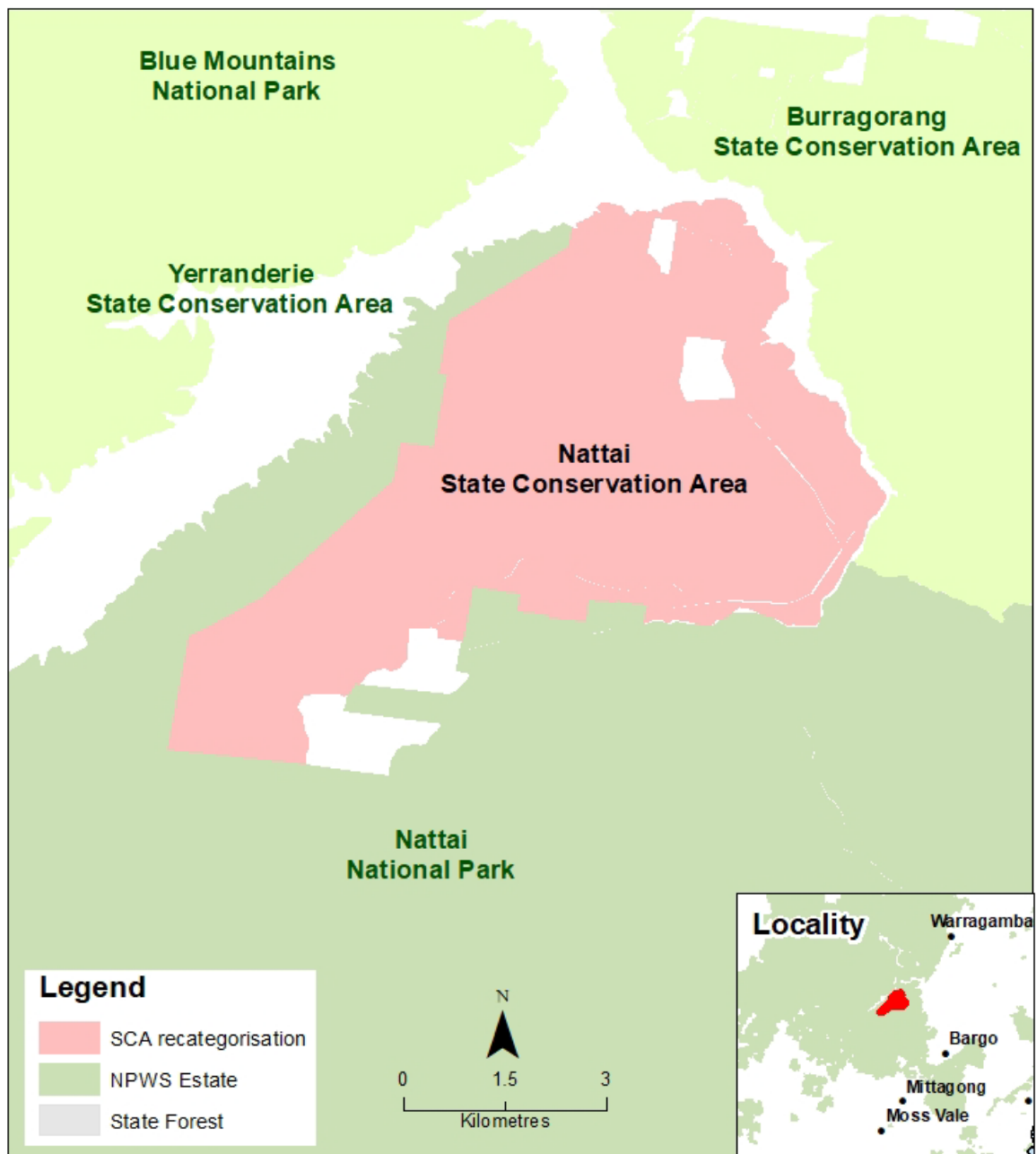


Figure 34 Nattai State Conservation Area

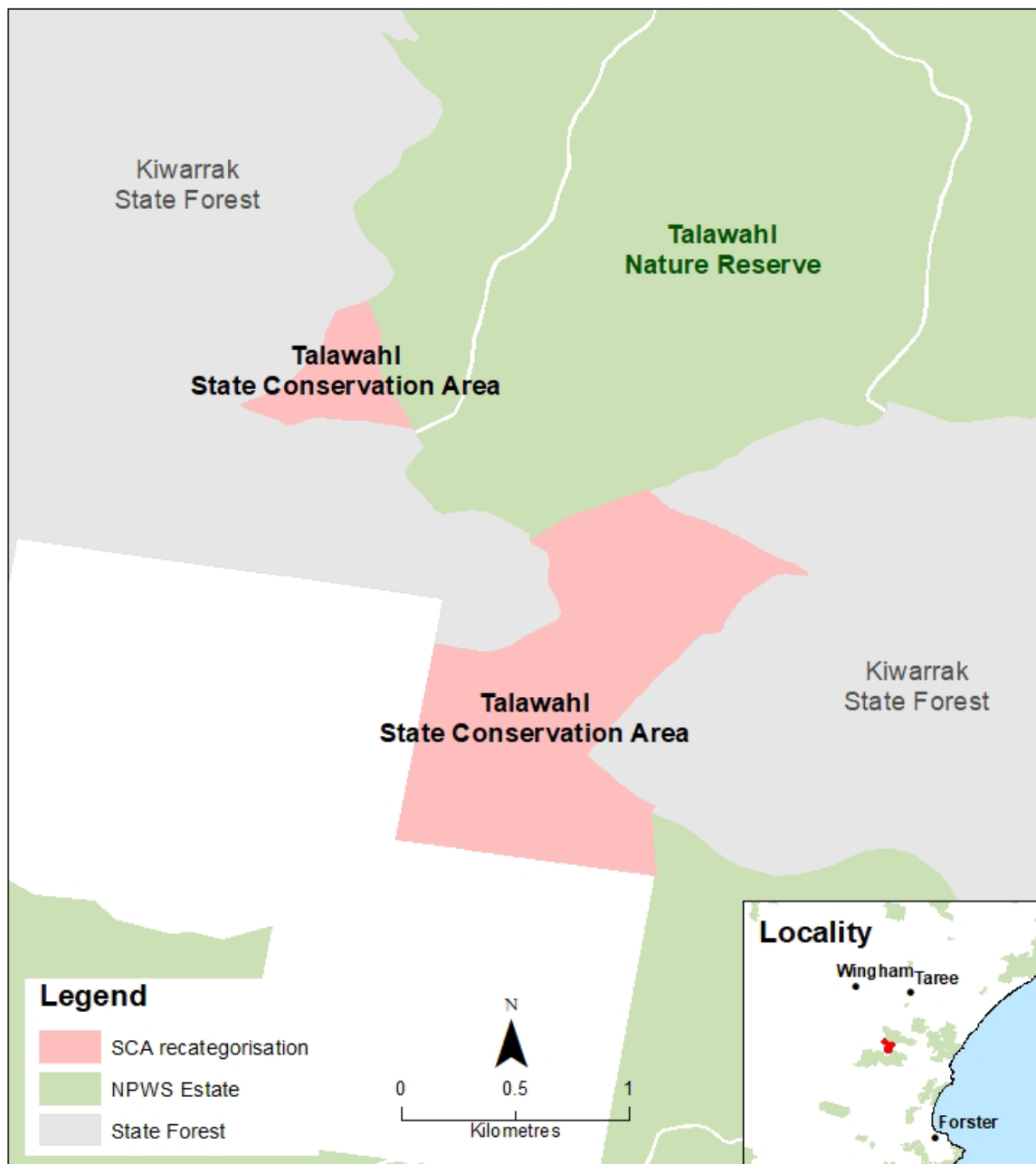


Figure 35 Talawahl State Conservation Area

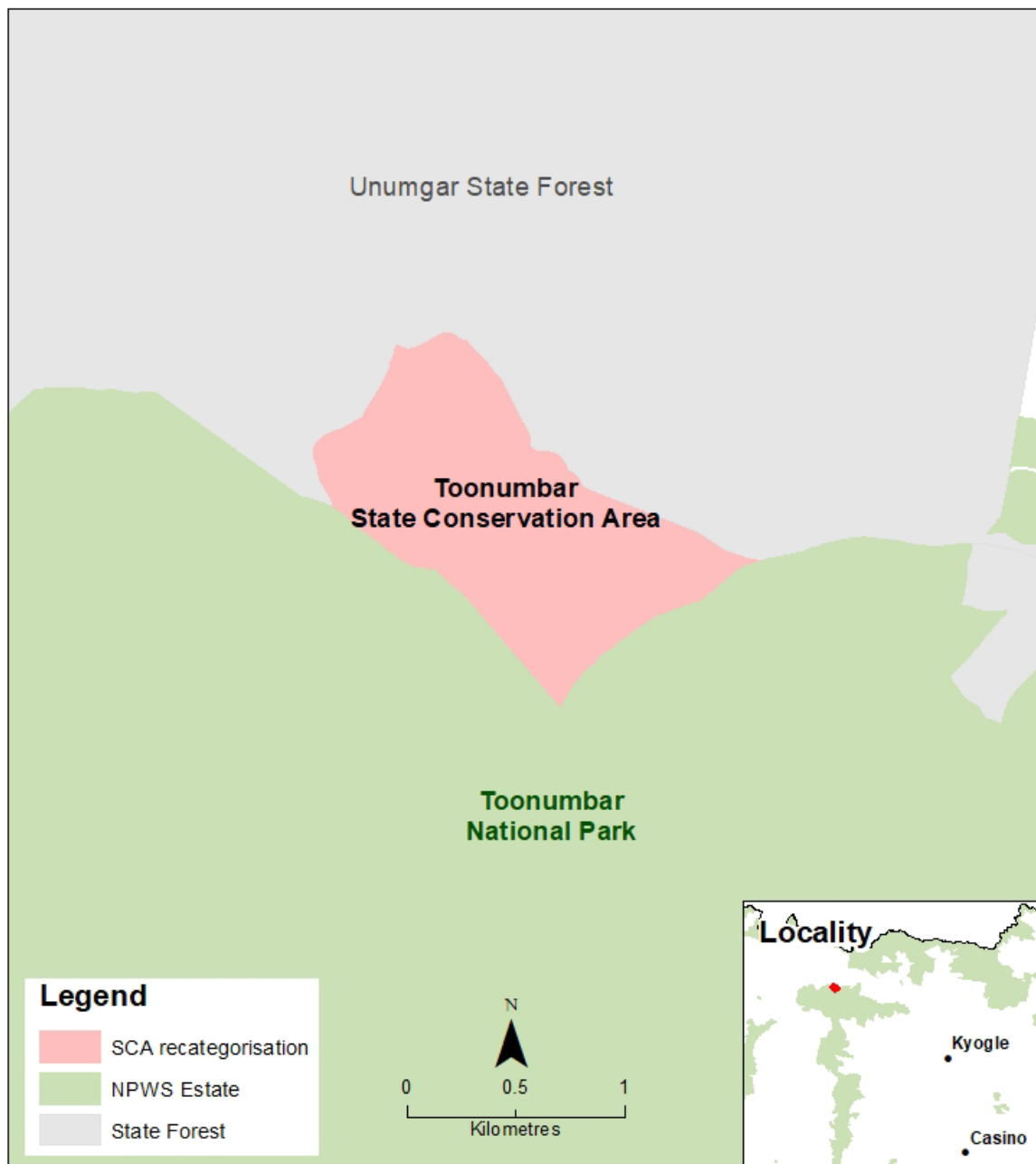


Figure 36 Toonumbar State Conservation Area

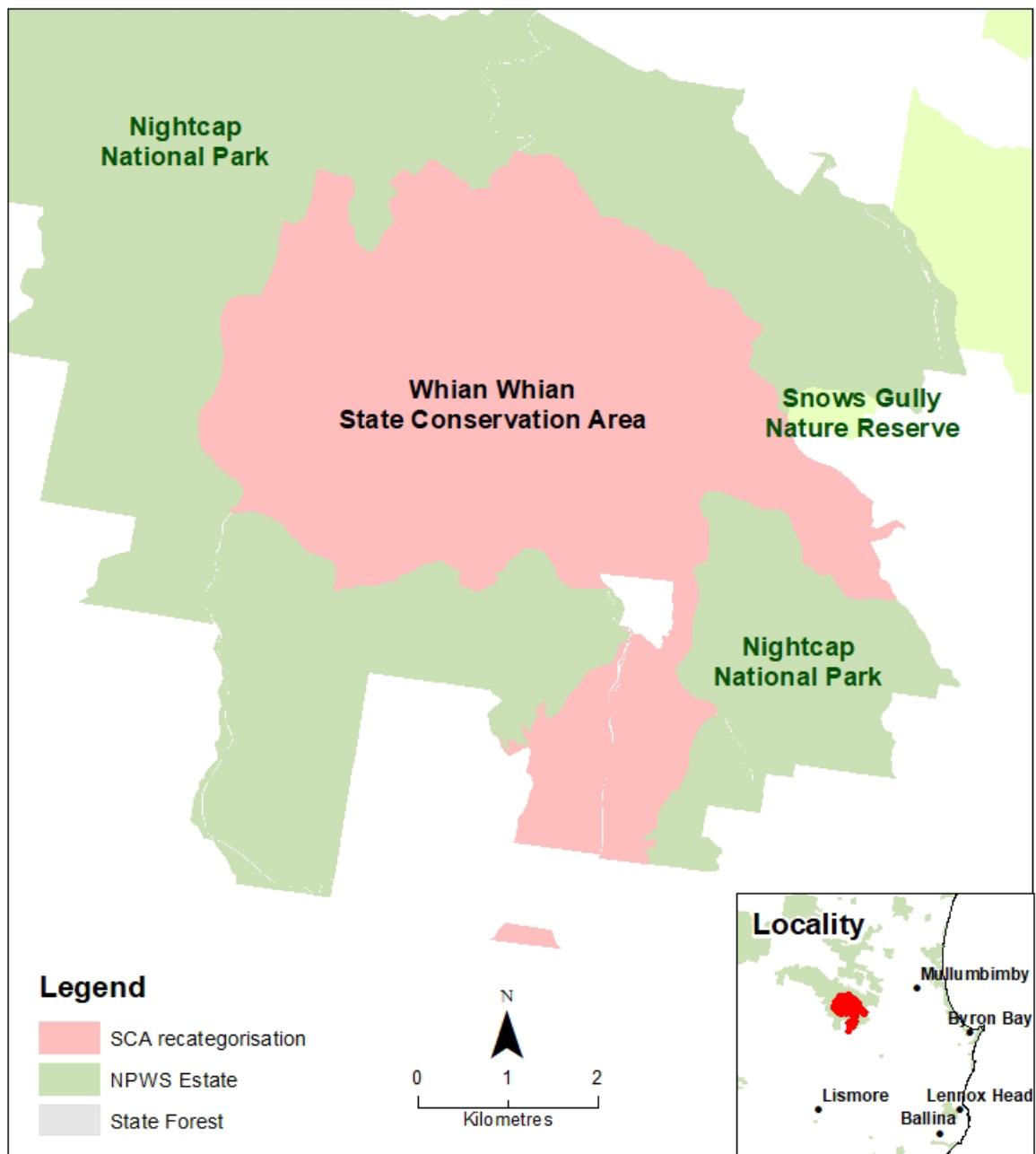


Figure 37 Whian Whian State Conservation Area

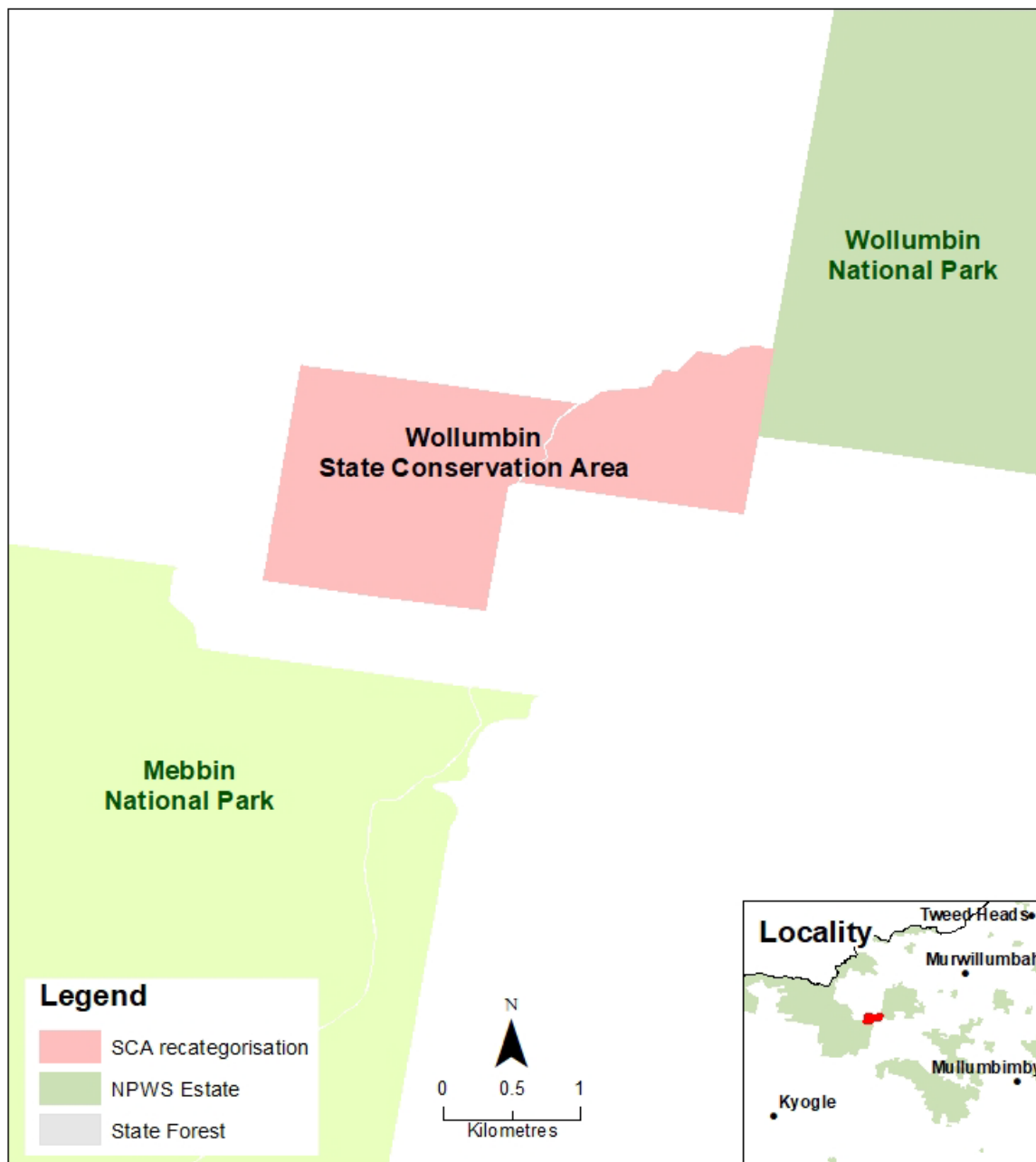


Figure 38 Wollumbin State Conservation Area

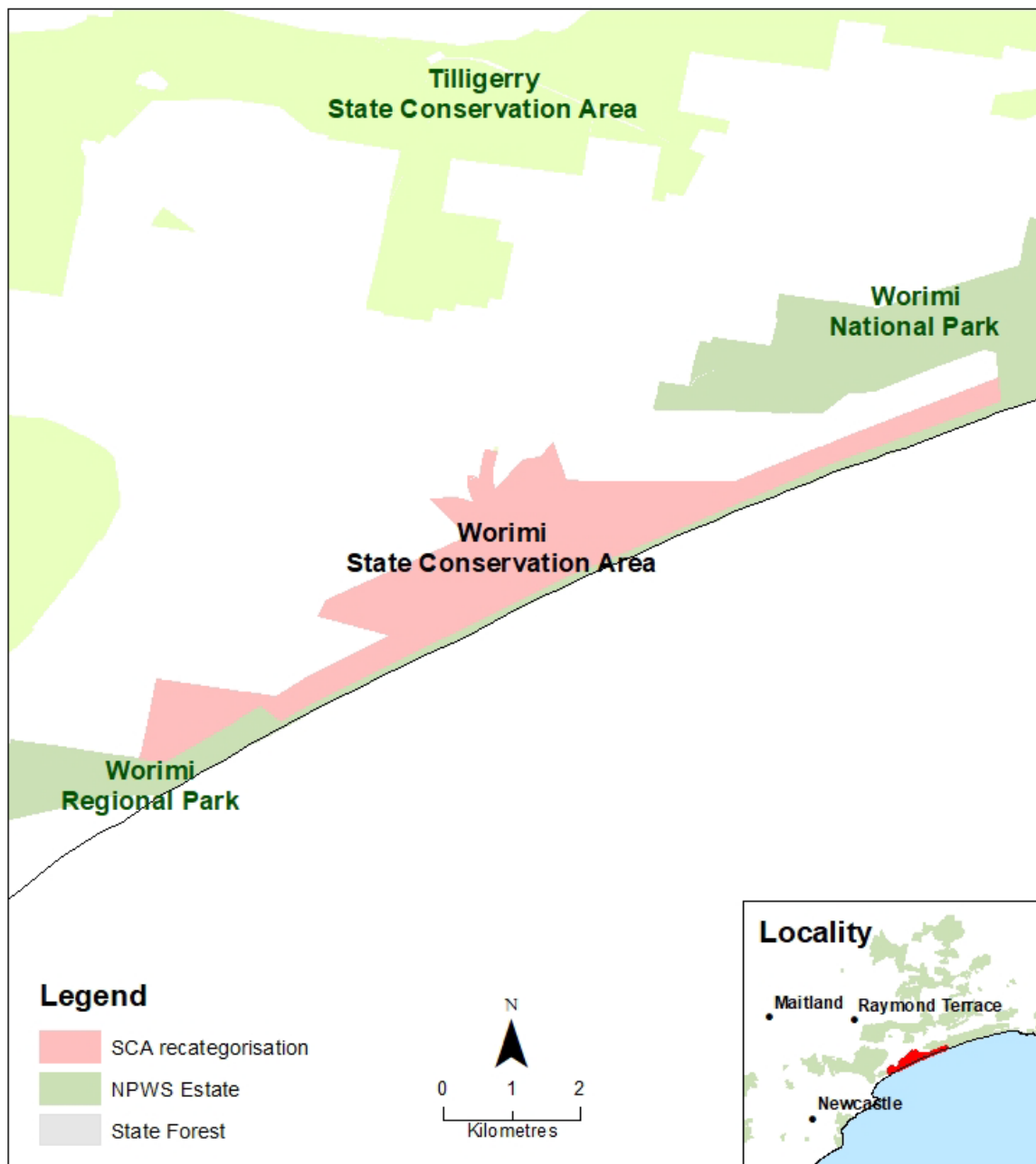


Figure 39 Worimi State Conservation Area

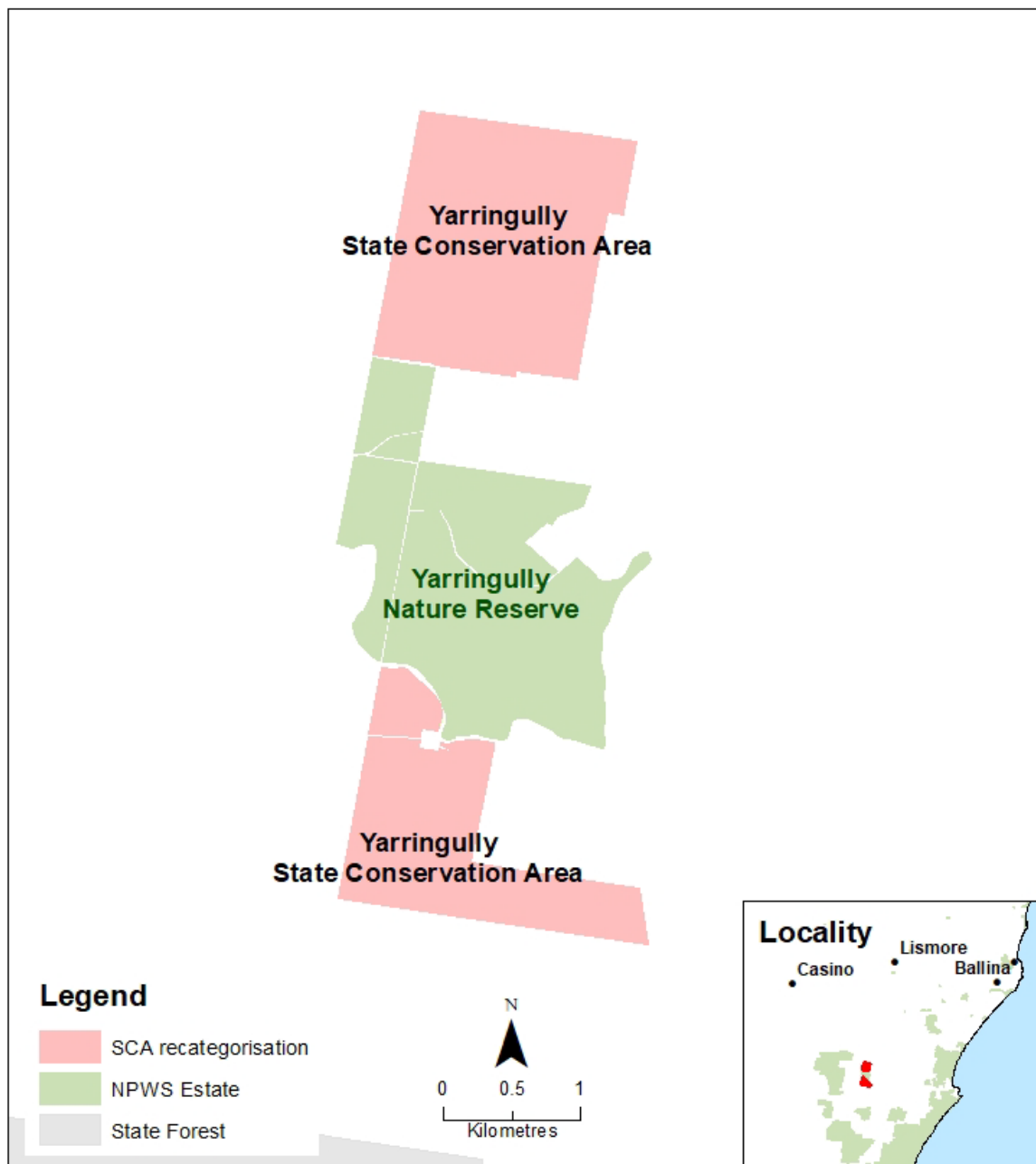


Figure 40 Yarringully State Conservation Area

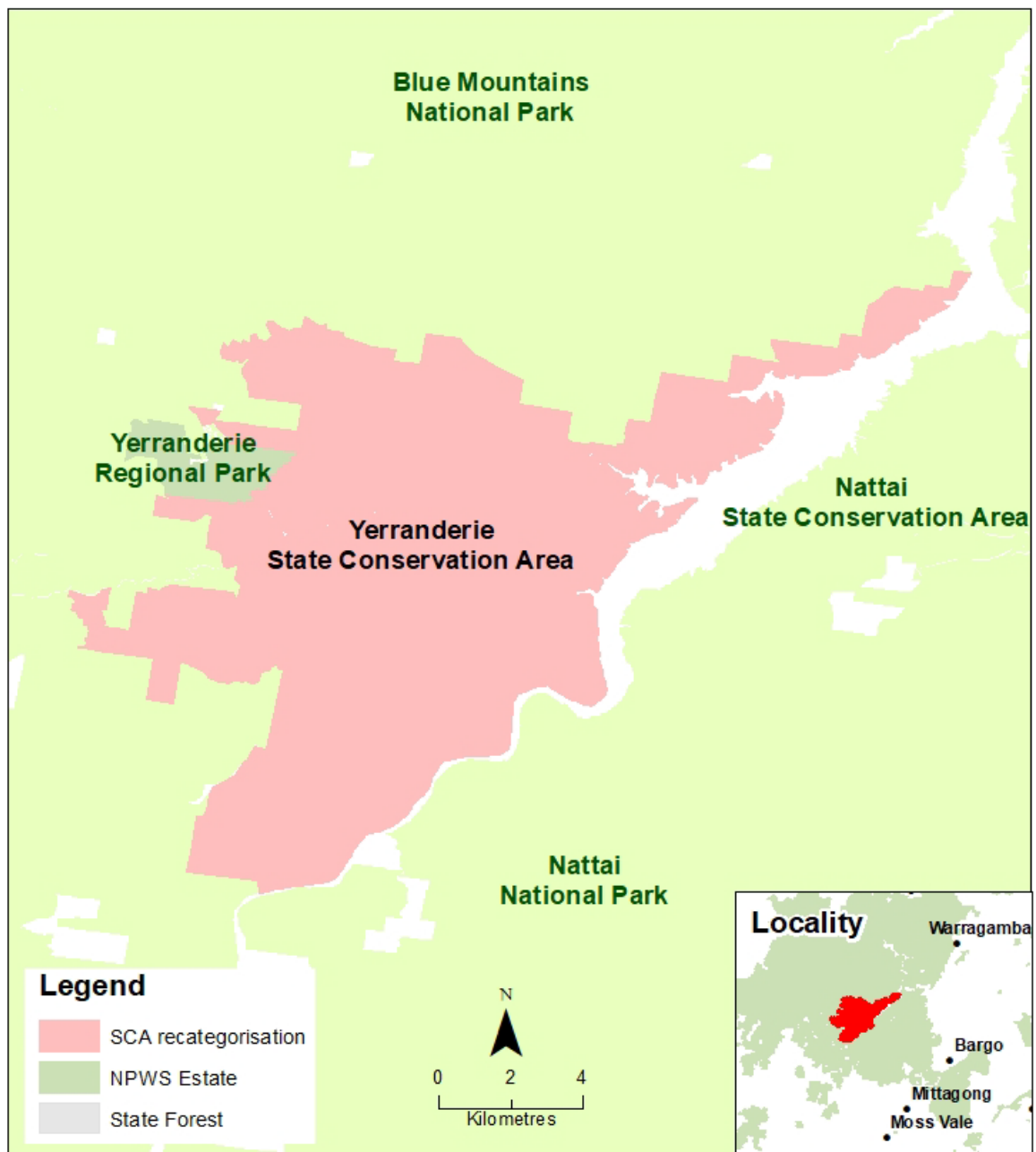


Figure 41 Yerranderie State Conservation Area

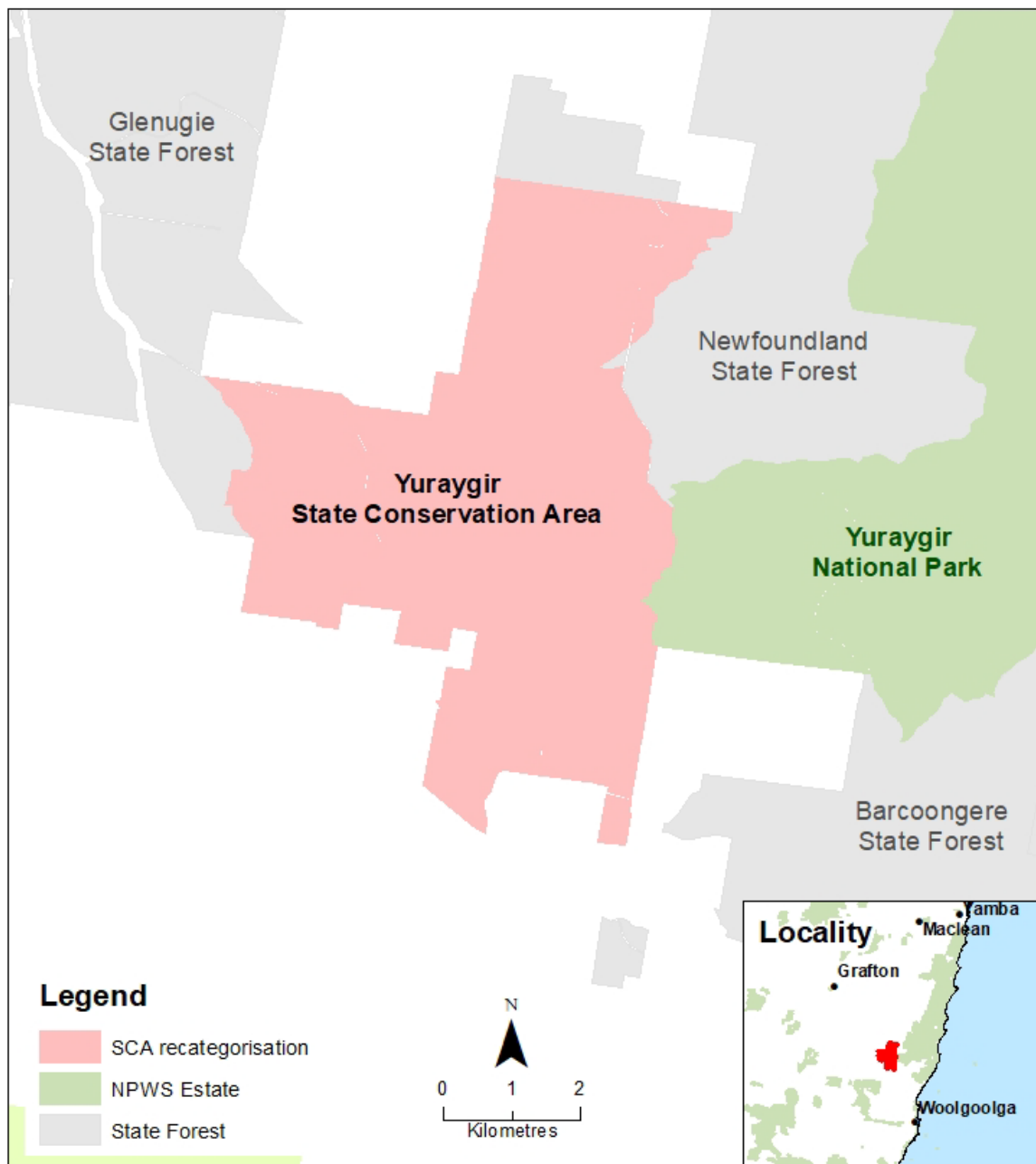


Figure 42 Yuraygir State Conservation Area

Appendix B: Maps of state conservation areas available for partial reservation as national park or nature reserve

Note: areas shown on the maps as “SCA recategorisation” are the lands available to be considered for reservation as national park or nature reserve.

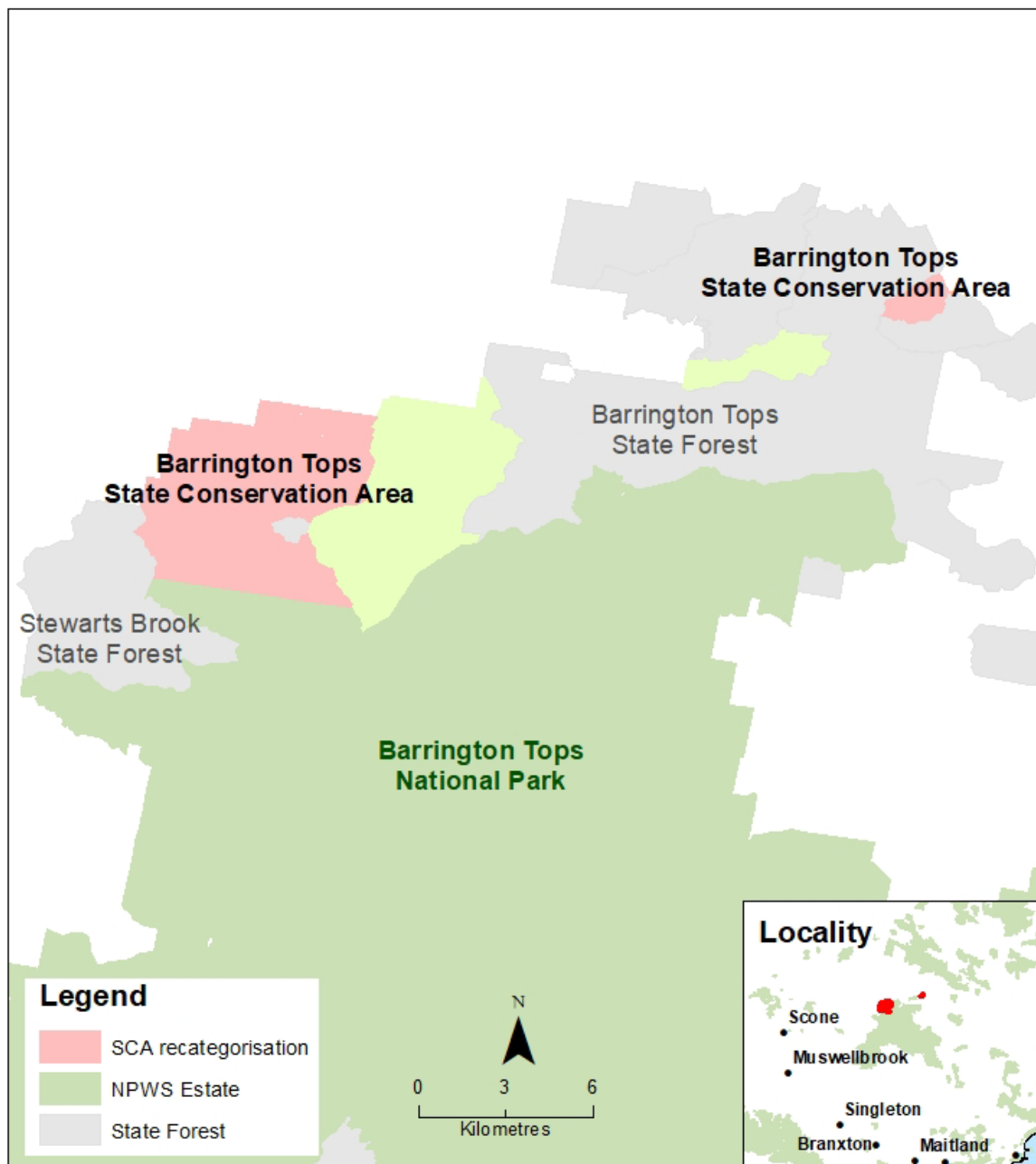


Figure 43 Barrington Tops State Conservation Area (part)

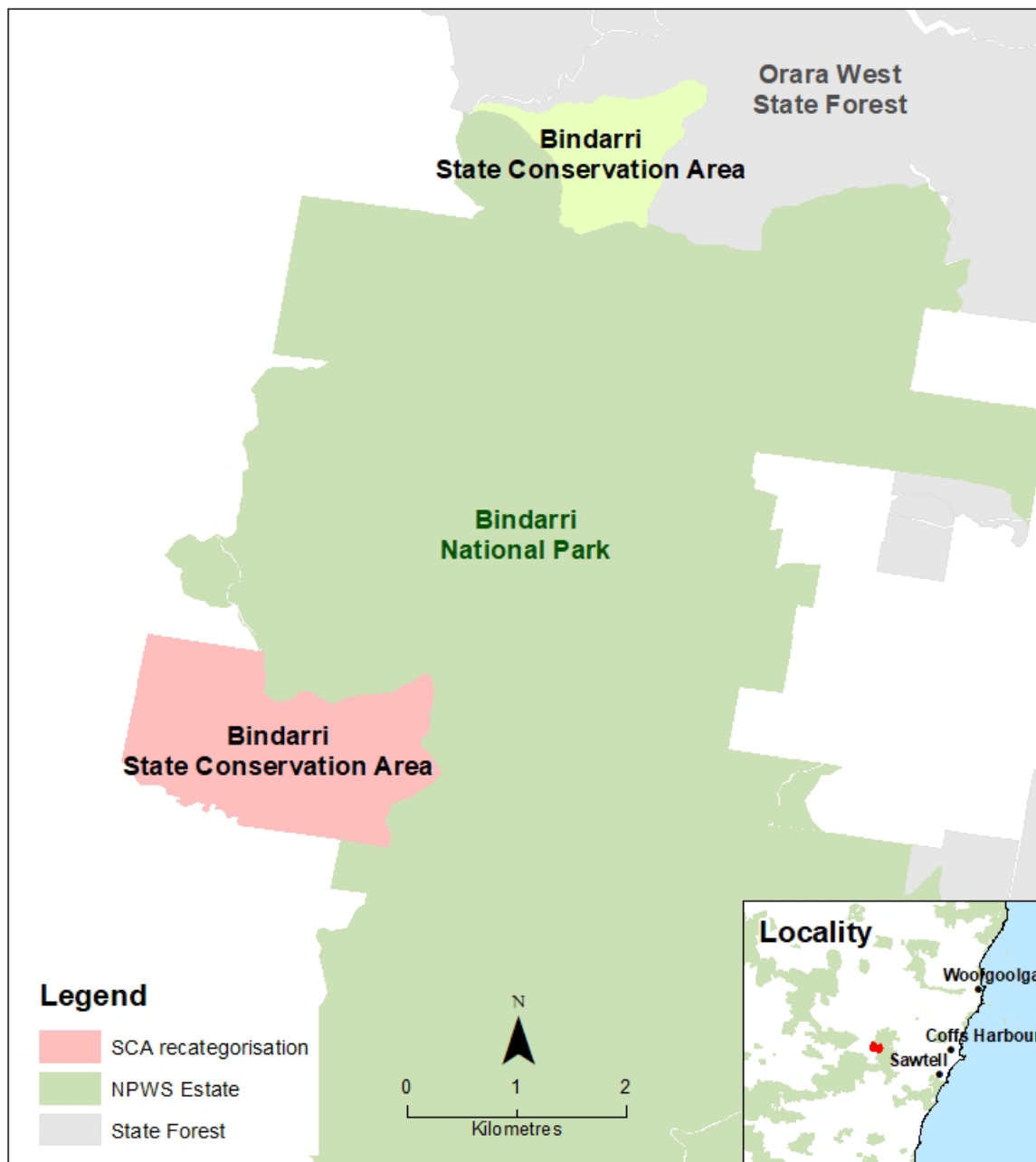


Figure 44 Bindarri State Conservation Area (part)

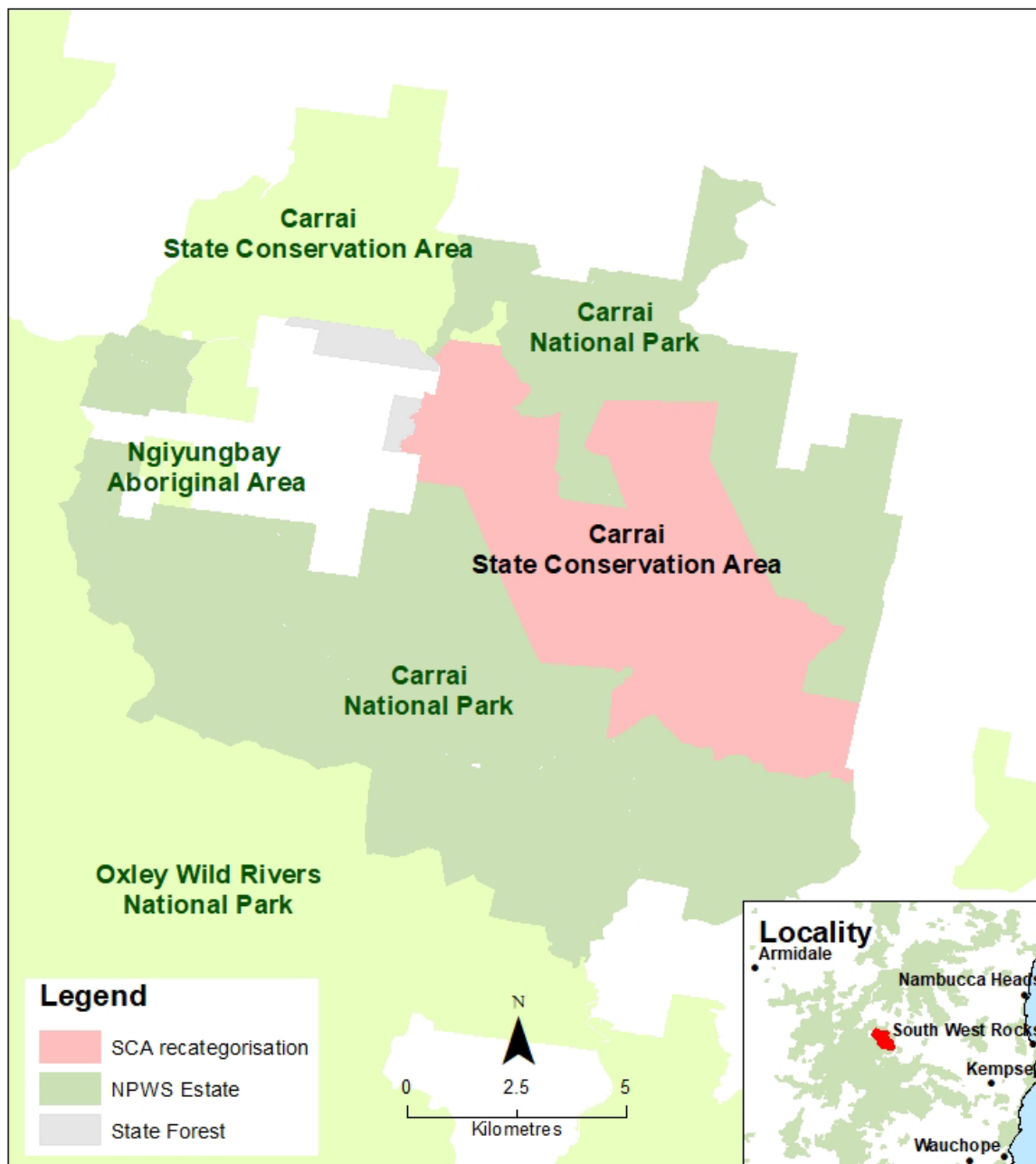


Figure 45 Carrai State Conservation Area (part)

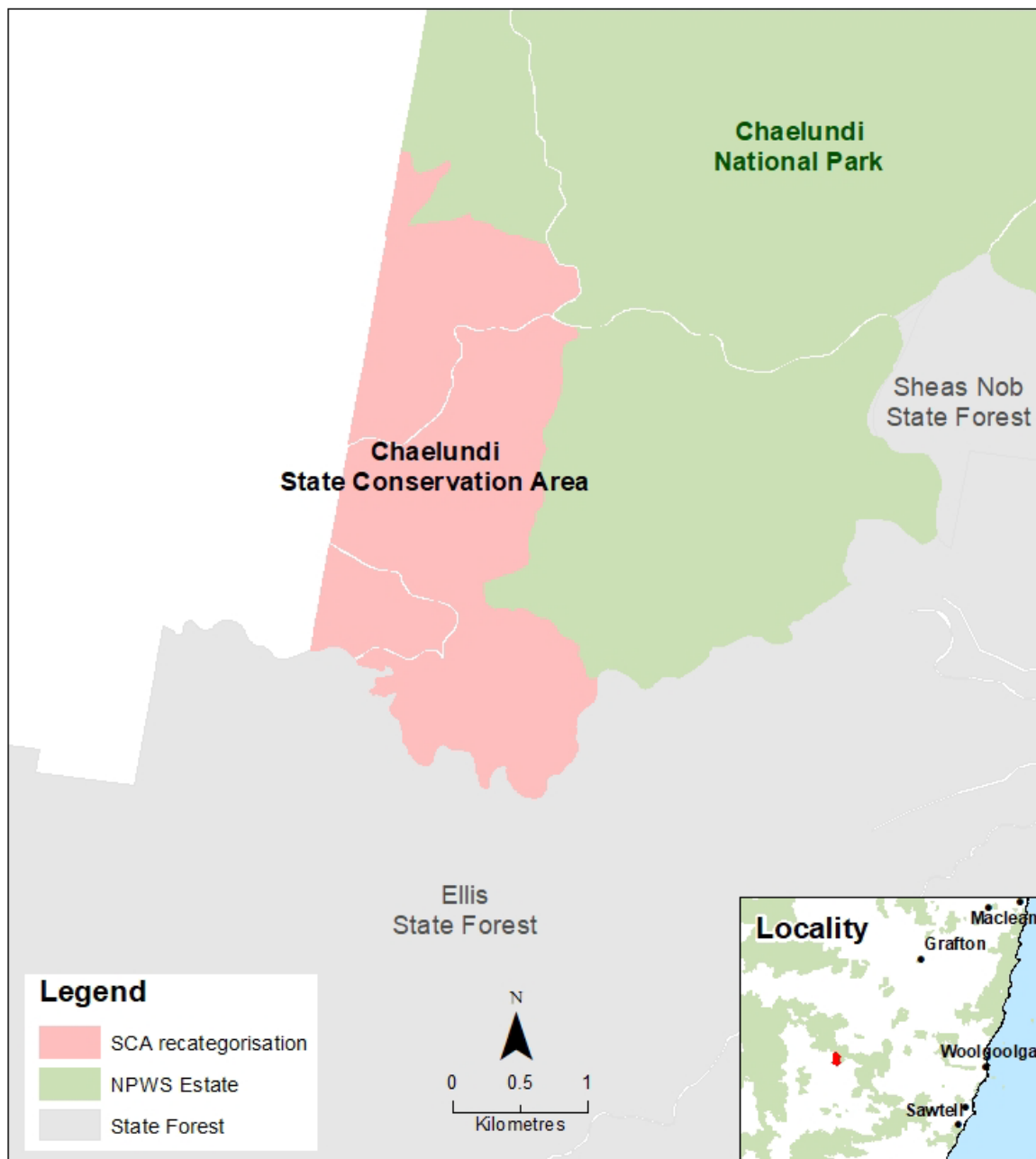


Figure 46 Chaelundi State Conservation Area (part)

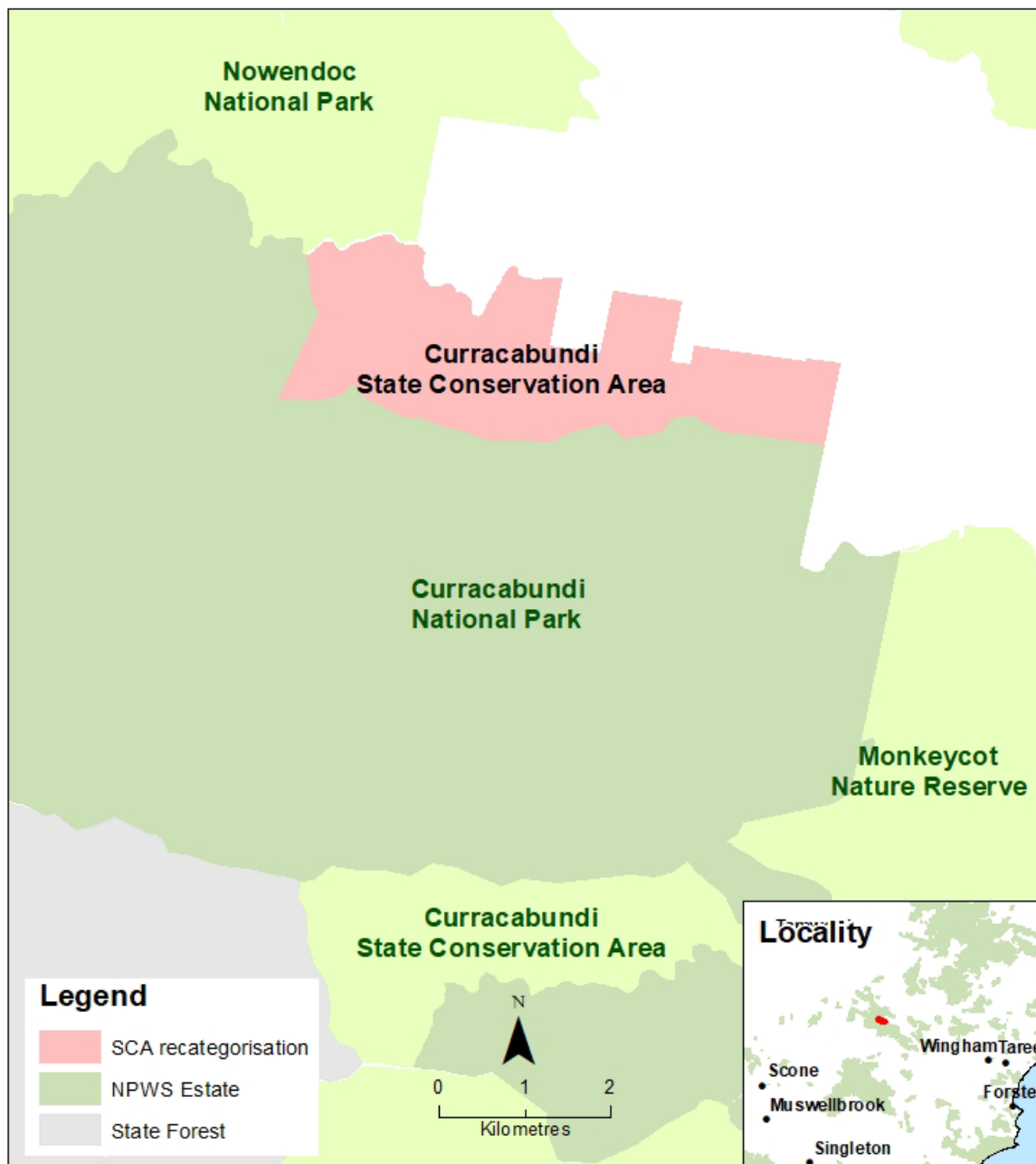


Figure 47 Curracabundi State Conservation Area (part)

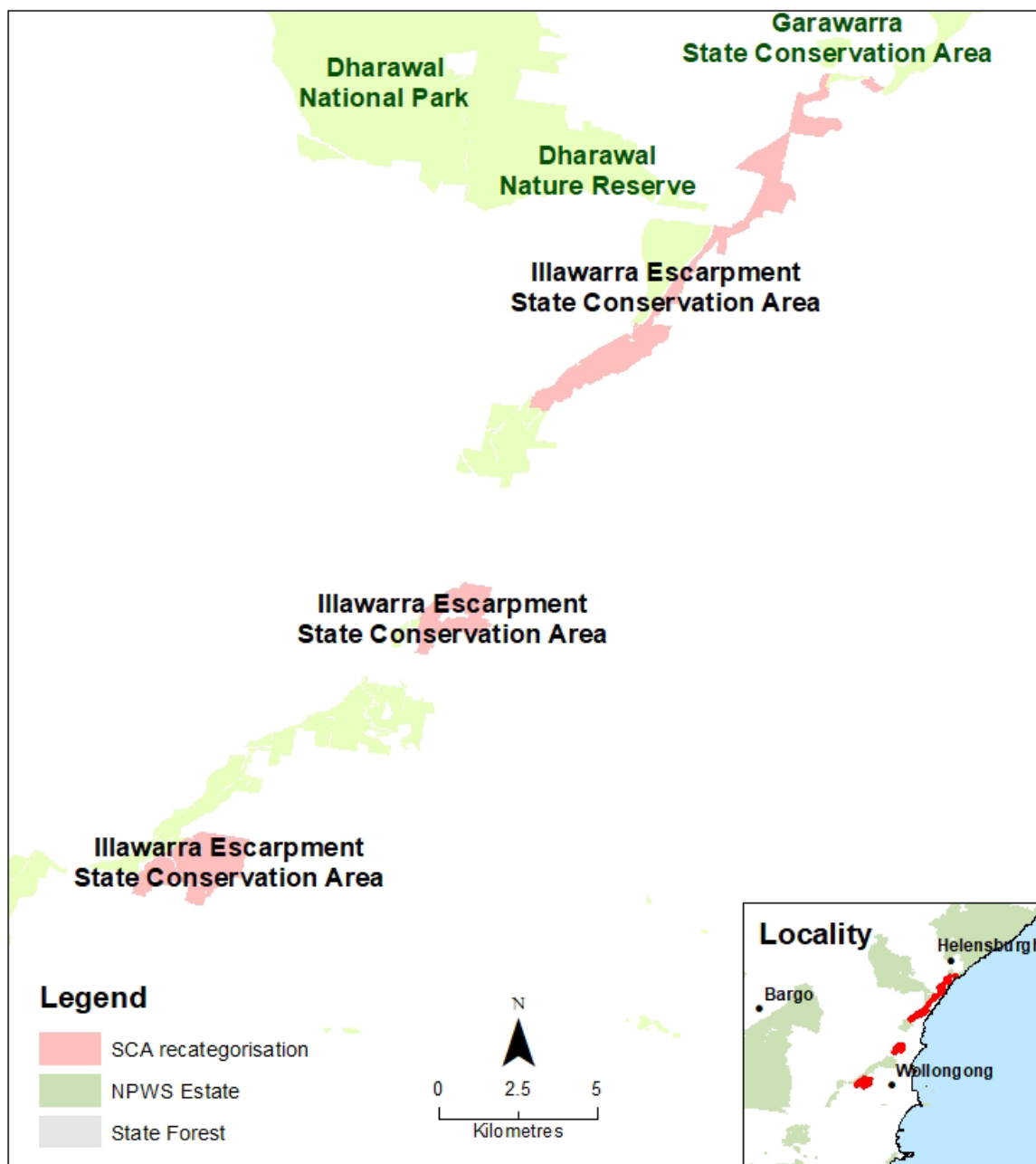


Figure 48 Illawarra Escarpment State Conservation Area (part)

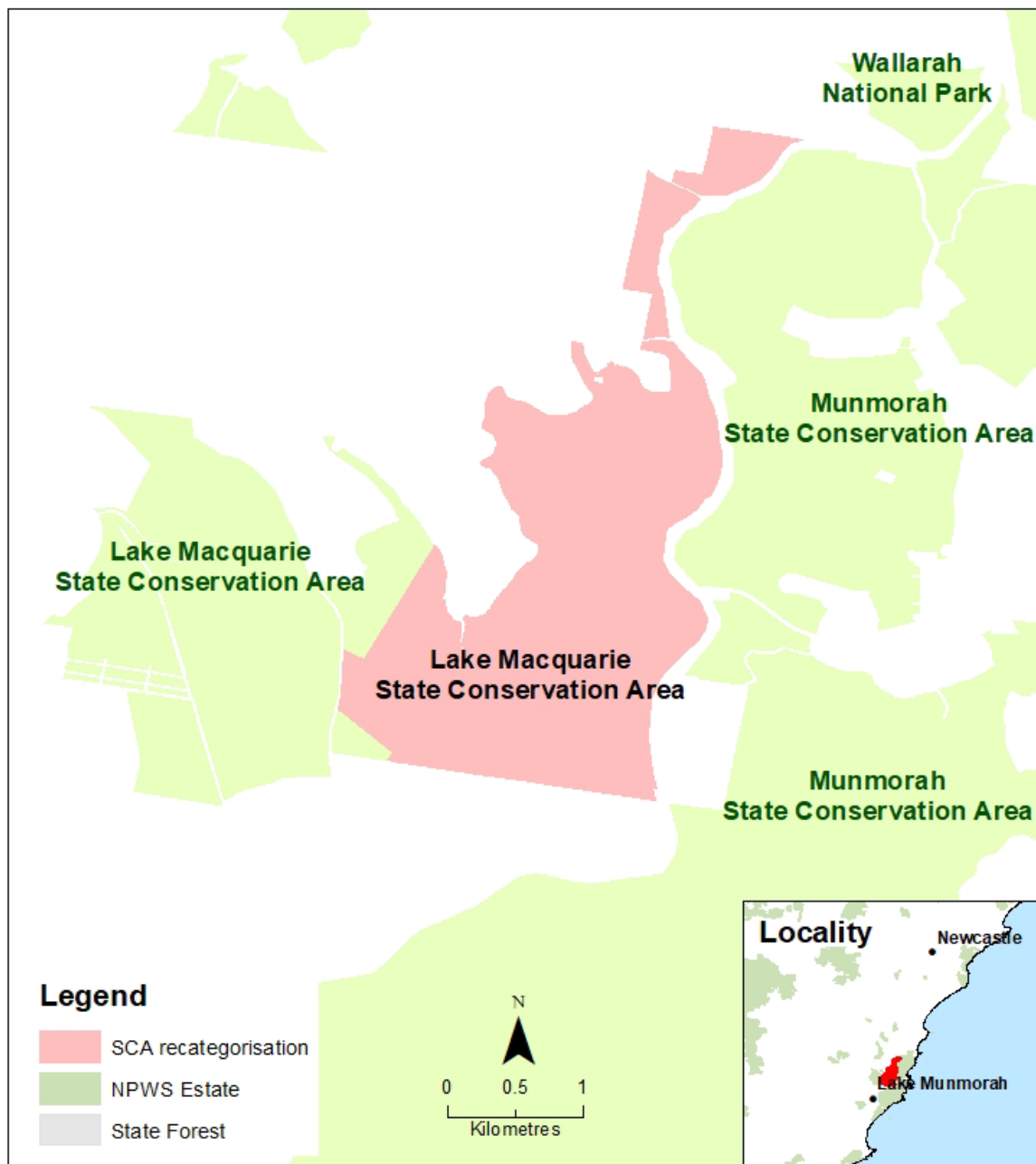


Figure 49 Lake Macquarie State Conservation Area (part)

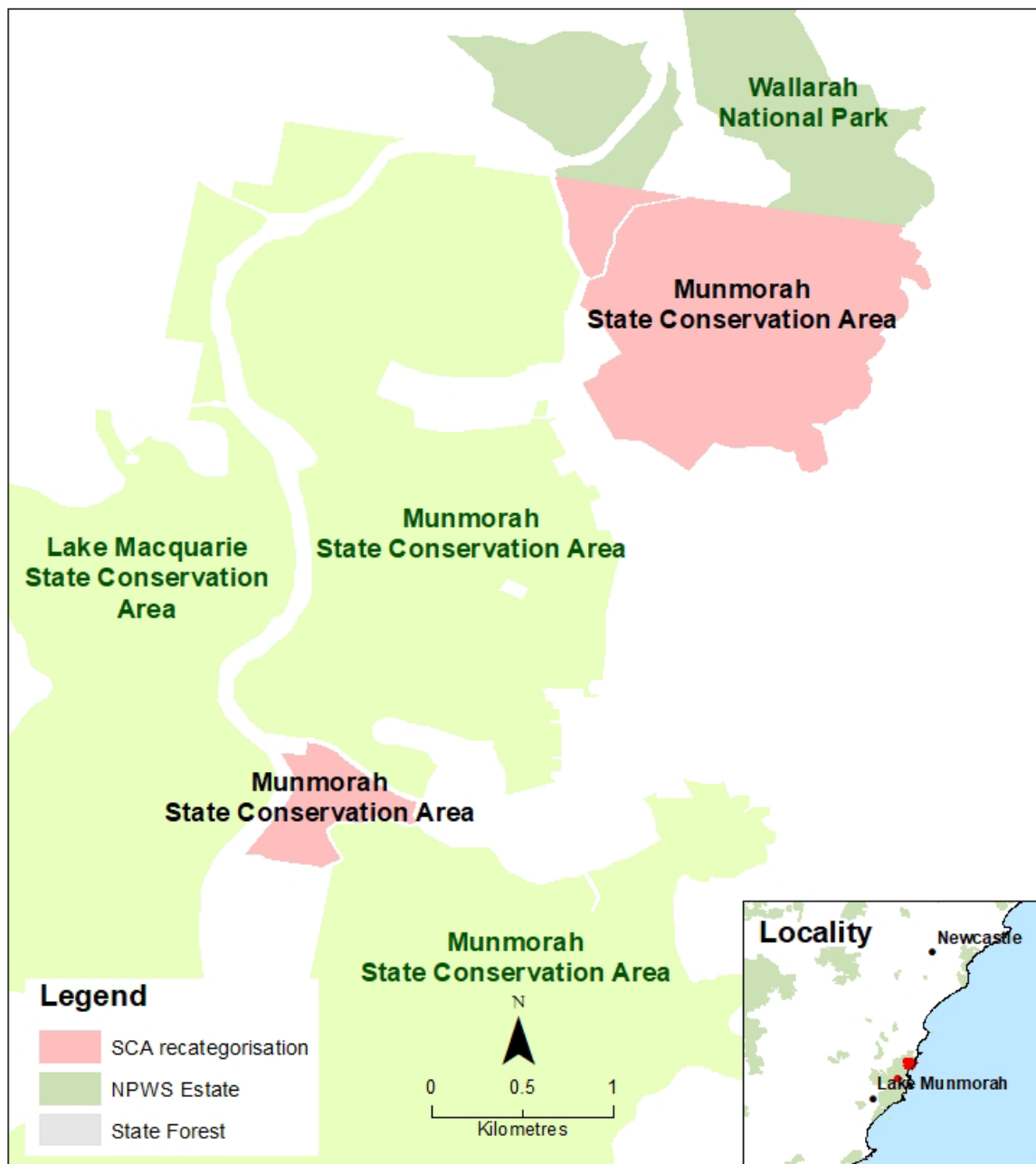


Figure 50 Munmorah State Conservation Area (part)

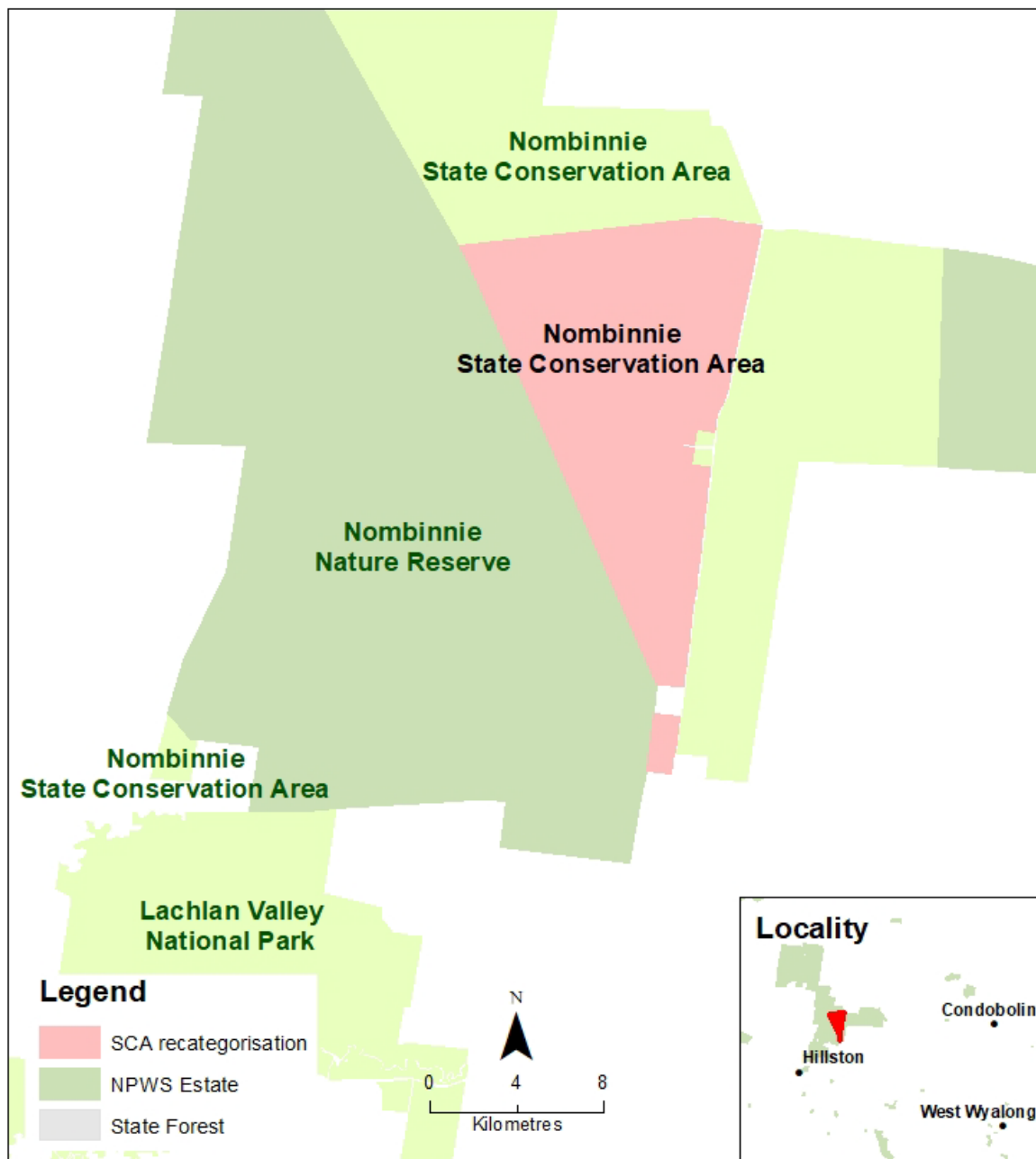


Figure 51 Nombinnie State Conservation Area (part)

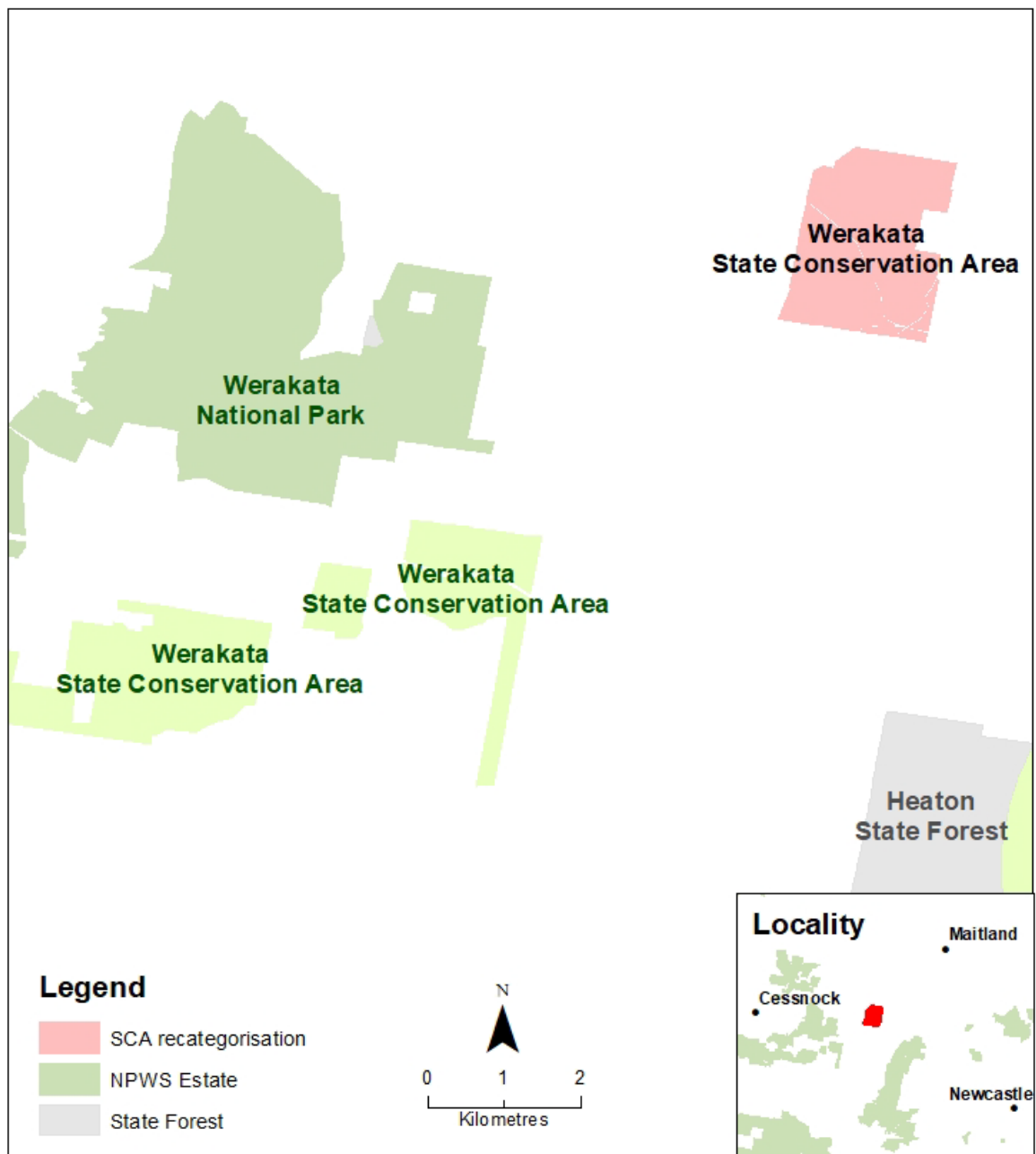


Figure 52 Werakata State Conservation Area (part)

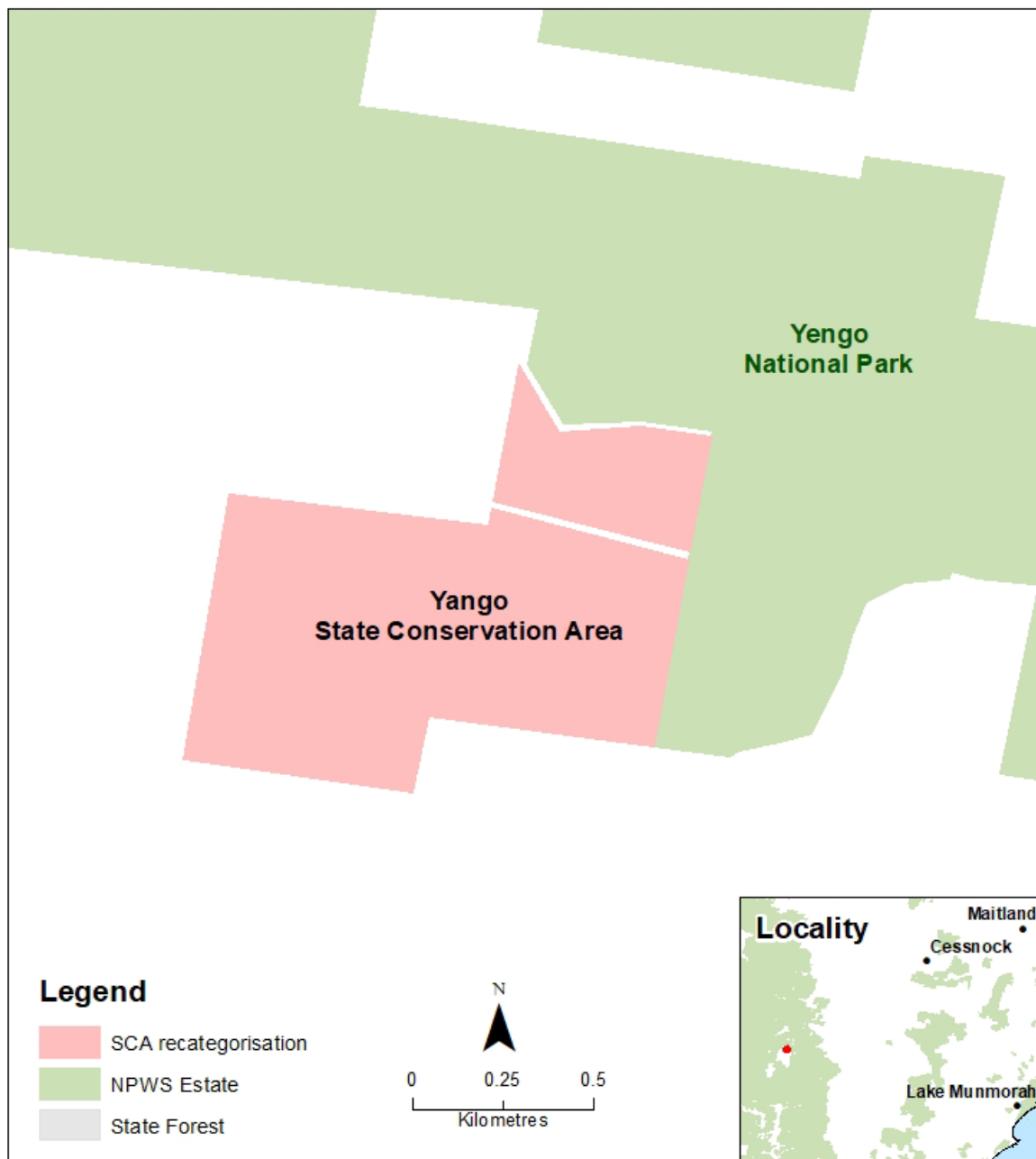


Figure 53 Yango State Conservation Area (part)