



NSW NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE

Aboriginal cultural values discussion paper

Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, Lion Island
Nature Reserve, Long Island Nature Reserve
and Spectacle Island Nature Reserve



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Cover photo: Couple taking photos of Aboriginal rock engravings, America Bay catchment, Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. David Finnegan/DPIE

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Introduction

The NSW *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* requires a plan of management to be prepared for each national park and nature reserve. A plan of management is a legal document that sets out how the values of the park including natural, cultural (Aboriginal and shared heritage) and recreation values will be managed in the long term.

The current Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, Lion Island Nature Reserve, Long Island Nature Reserve and Spectacle Island Nature Reserve Plan of Management has been in place since 2002. In this time, visitation to the national park has increased, new management challenges have emerged, and community interests and expectations have changed.

In response to these emerging management challenges and changing community interests and expectations, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is preparing a new plan of management for Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park and the island nature reserves.

Five discussion papers have been developed to inform preparation of this new plan of management and provide opportunities for comment and community feedback. The papers describe and explore key management issues focused on the following themes:

- Natural, visitor experience and shared heritage values
- Aboriginal cultural values
- Recreational activities
- Visitor destinations
- Leases, licences and consents

Purpose of this paper

The purpose of this paper is to invite discussion about how NPWS might work in partnership with Aboriginal people to care for the Aboriginal cultural values of Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park and the island nature reserves.

Aboriginal cultural values

Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park and the island nature reserves are cultural landscapes. This means that the present landscapes are products of the long-term and complex relationships between people and the environment. The landscapes reflect how people have lived on or used the land and how they connect with the land spiritually and culturally.

Connections may be physically evident (e.g. structures, engravings, relics and so on) or maintained in spiritual or cultural practice such as storytelling, visiting Country and utilising resources, teaching and remembering. This cultural landscape presents opportunities for Aboriginal people to connect to Country and for park visitors to learn about Aboriginal culture and heritage.

Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park and the island nature reserves are part of Country shared between two groups of Guringai People, the Garrigal and Terramerragal. The national park and island nature reserves hold great significance for Aboriginal people. They protect hundreds of Aboriginal sites and are places where ceremony, cultural practices and storytelling can be continued and passed on through generations.

The local Aboriginal community is diverse, bringing cultural beliefs, languages and practices from different Aboriginal nations. An approach that balances the range of community and individual perspectives is desirable, as any one place in the landscape may hold significance for many different people for different reasons.

Caring for Aboriginal cultural values

NPWS works with Aboriginal people to ensure the cultural heritage of the national park and island nature reserves is acknowledged, protected and respected as a part of their living culture. A practical example of this partnership is the project to protect and manage The Basin rock engravings. The project was a partnership between NPWS and the Metropolitan Land Council and involved training Aboriginal youth in rock engraving conservation techniques and removing encroaching vegetation and lichen from the engravings to protect them from weathering and bushfire.

NPWS will continue to partner with the Aboriginal community to identify Aboriginal cultural values. We will work together to determine the best and most culturally appropriate way to protect and conserve these values for future generations. Aboriginal people will continue to be involved in ongoing management planning and decision making for the national park and island nature reserves.

Supporting cultural activities and learning

For Aboriginal people, everything in the landscape has significance. Land, waterways, plants and animals are associated with Dreaming stories, cultural learning, cultural activities and cultural uses. Aboriginal people need access to culturally significant places to meet cultural obligations to look after these places and to help maintain their deep connection with the landscape. NPWS will identify facilities, activities and places within the national park and island nature reserves that could support Aboriginal people in undertaking cultural practices, passing on cultural knowledge and connecting to Country. Opportunities might include supporting community days on Country and providing cultural learning spaces and places to share knowledge, skills and stories.

Connecting to Culture is an example of a program that assists young Aboriginal people living in Sydney to connect with their culture. It is an Aboriginal educational program held in Sydney's national parks, including Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. Activities include camping trips, fieldwork on Country, recording and preserving Aboriginal sites and discovering Australian native plants and traditional practices.

Supporting business and employment

Aboriginal people are looking at new ways to manage Country through employment with NPWS and exploring business opportunities that allow them to more directly control how significant places are managed and interpreted. NPWS will continue to actively encourage opportunities for Aboriginal people to benefit from employment and businesses that arise from park management, tourism and other activities taking place in the national park and island nature reserves.

Do you have any suggestions for other ways that NPWS can work in partnership with Aboriginal people in the park?

Improving awareness of Aboriginal cultural values

Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park provides a place for the wider community to develop a greater understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal heritage and culture. There are opportunities to make improvements to the way these cultural values are presented, respected and interpreted within the national park. Any programs or projects to interpret cultural values or provide information about Aboriginal cultural heritage are undertaken in collaboration with Aboriginal people.

An example is improving signage and interpretation in the West Head section of the national park, known as the Lambert Peninsula, a place that has one of the highest densities of Aboriginal rock engravings in Australia. NPWS, in collaboration with Aboriginal representatives, is preparing an interpretation and signage concept plan for this peninsula.

Other opportunities for the wider community to learn about Aboriginal culture in the national park are tours led by Aboriginal guides and interpretation at selected Aboriginal sites. Tours in Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park are conducted by the NPWS Discovery program and private operators.

There is growing interest in Aboriginal heritage and visitors and tourists wanting to see Aboriginal sites and hear from Aboriginal people about their culture (see the [Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan](#)). Tourism involving Aboriginal cultural heritage values must be culturally sensitive and preferably delivered by, or in collaboration with, Aboriginal people.

What opportunities to find out about Aboriginal cultural values would you like to see in the park?

What do you think?

Your thoughts, ideas and comments on this discussion paper are now invited and can be provided using an [online comment form](#), by emailing ku-ring-gai.plan@environment.nsw.gov.au or by writing to Manager, Planning Evaluation and Assessment, PO Box 95, Parramatta NSW 2124.

The questions scattered throughout the paper are only intended to guide your thoughts. You may choose to comment on other aspects of the management of Aboriginal cultural values in the park. All input will inform the preparation of a new plan of management for Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, Lion Island Nature Reserve, Long Island Nature Reserve and Spectacle Island Nature Reserve.

There will be another opportunity to have your say when the draft plan is completed and put on public exhibition. If you would like to be notified when the draft plan is available, please [register your details](#).