

# Murramarang South Coast Walk

**Master Plan** 



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Cover photo: Aerial view of the Yellow Rock area in Murramarang National Park. Photo: John Spencer/DPIE

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#### **Project update August 2022**

This master plan is a high-level guiding document for the Murramarang South Coast Walk project. Since this masterplan was published in June 2021, we have identified and adopted new ways to improve the walking product and visitor experience. Please keep the following changes in mind when reading this master plan.

In response to feedback from internal and external stakeholders, a decision has been made to change the direction of the 'camping on-park' itinerary as outlined in this master plan. That is, the start of the walk will now be Pretty Beach in the northern section of the park versus Maloneys Beach as originally planned.

The benefits of changing the promoted walk direction on example itineraries include:

- to make the experience more pleasant for walkers with the sun coming from behind instead of shining into the walker's eyes; this will also provide better photo opportunities
- to address the safety concerns about crossing Durras Lake, the direction change will allow visitors to get local advice from National Parks and Wildlife staff at Pretty Beach visitor office before they start their journey and again at Depot Beach visitor office before they reach the lake.

Of course, walkers can still choose to do any section of the walk in any direction and can combine their walk with accommodation options on-park or in nearby towns.

Initially, this project included an off-park section extending from Pretty Beach to Bawley Point. This section is now outside of the scope of this project. Since this master plan was published, the Shoalhaven City Council has successfully bid for funding from the NSW Government's Restart NSW Infrastructure Grant to create the Murramarang Coastal Walk Extension. This new project aims to improve existing tracks between Pretty Beach and Narrawallee.

The total length of the Murramarang South Coast Walk to be developed by National Parks and Wildlife Service will be 35 kilometres.

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### **Executive summary**

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is creating a multi-day signature walking experience. The walk will attract visitors to the NSW South Coast during off-peak periods when visitor accommodation and services are readily available.

The key concepts of the walking trail design presented in this master plan are:

- The walk starting point will be established at the Maloneys Beach section of Murramarang National Park. The site will link with and share facilities with the adjoining council reserve to create a unified precinct. NPWS will continue to work with the community and local councils during the detailed design phase to ensure this upgrade improves the day use facilities available to all park users.
- New walking track sections will be built to join existing tracks to create a long-distance coastal walk that traverses the length of Murramarang National Park and Murramarang Aboriginal Area and the stunning beaches that connect the coastal villages of Maloneys Beach, Durras, Depot Beach, Kioloa and Bawley Point. Existing tracks will be upgraded and, where bushfire affected, reinstated, to deliver a consistent, high-quality trail experience. Some tracks will be relocated to avoid sensitive areas, remove ongoing maintenance issues, and to capitalise on the area's outstanding natural beauty.

- For the most part, the trail will be created to meet a Grade 4 classification (according to the Australian Walking Track Grading System) suitable for most ages and fitness levels.
- High-quality interpretive signs will be positioned strategically along the route to present captivating stories on the area's diverse landscapes, spectacular coastline, amazing history and rich Aboriginal culture. Wayfinders, waterpoints, seating and other appropriate features will also be positioned along the route to enhance the walking experience.
- A range of camping and accommodation options already exist within the national park and the coastal villages. The walk-in bush camping area at Oaky Beach will be reinstated to provide a suitable camping option on the southern section of the trail. NPWS will monitor visitor experiences and demand to assess the need for additional walk-n sites. This project will not provide additional hard-roof accommodation within the national park.
- The walk end point will be created at Bawley Point Beach Reserve with a tailored trail head. This site was chosen in consultation with the local council and local community groups. NPWS will continue to work with the community and council during the detailed design phase.

- The walk will be established as a 'choose your own adventure' over four or five continuous days starting at Maloneys Beach or Bawley Point, or as a series of shorter walks. The walk could also be undertaken with or without a guide. Example itineraries will be available to help walkers plan their trips and capitalise on the many optional extra activities already available in the area.
- Sections of the walk are expected to be open to the public in mid 2022.



Figure 1 Murramarang South Coast Walk. Source: Google Earth.

### 1. Introduction and purpose

The combination of alluring natural features and existing overnight accommodation in Murramarang National Park and nearby coastal villages presents an opportunity to create a new, high-quality, multi-day walking experience.

The Murramarang South Coast Walk will traverse spectacular coastline and dramatic landscapes to attract visitors to the NSW South Coast during off-peak periods when weather conditions are best suited to long-distance walking. Originally inspired by local bushwalkers, the walk will promote the culture and heritage of the region.

The walk will be delivered through funding provided by the NSW Government to make it easier for everyone to enjoy our natural environment, increase nature-based tourism in NSW, boost regional visitor economies, and improve community wellbeing.

The Murramarang South Coast Walk will be developed to be one of a handful of signature walks in New South Wales. The walk will deliver trails for families and walkers of all ages and abilities. Walkers will have many choices of places to stay, using accommodation already established within the national park and coastal villages.

The walk extends beyond park boundaries and will link the villages of Maloneys Beach, Durras, Depot Beach, Kioloa and Bawley Point. This project aims to strengthen the local economies and create jobs, but recognises the importance of conserving the character and amenity of these communities.

#### 1.1 Purpose of this master plan

This final master plan presents 'big picture' conceptual strategies for Murramarang South Coast Walk. It enables the community to see the types of changes and improvements that are proposed, such as new tracks, visitor facilities and upgraded precincts.

The master plan also shows how visitor sites within the national park may change over time, and how the park character and values can be conserved and improved. Being a forward-looking plan, the strategies in this document aim to meet future growth and changing visitor expectations.

This final master plan will remain a non-statutory document that guides improvements to visitor facilities while protecting significant natural, cultural and social values.

Proposals outlined in this master plan are subject to environmental and cultural assessment and resolution of any Aboriginal land claims. No changes to the Murramarang National Park or Murramarang Aboriginal Area statutory plans of management are proposed.

### Murramarang National Park has an abundance of wildlife

Eastern grey kangaroos spend their days dozing near the beaches and by campgrounds until dusk when they gather to feed. In the moist forests of the park you might see lyrebirds fossicking in leaf litter. If you don't see wonga pigeons (pastel blue-grey back feathers and black dotted stomach) you may hear their deep 'whoop, whoop' call that carries through the forest.



Photo: Michael Jarman/DPIE

#### 1.2 Why is the project needed?

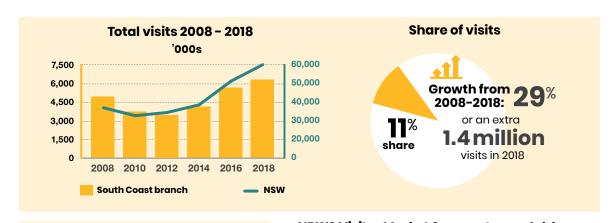
NPWS has been awarded \$3.64 million to design and construct a signature-grade walk that will attract new visitors to the NSW South Coast during off-peak periods.

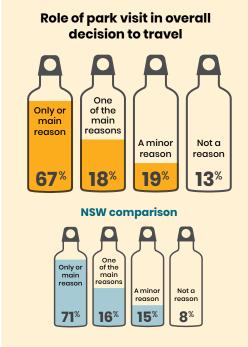
This project is funded by the NSW Government \$300-million Regional Growth – Environment and Tourism Fund. This fund is committed to enhancing environmental attractions, strengthening regional economies, and creating local jobs.

The Murramarang coast is 270 kilometres south of Sydney and 160 kilometres east of Canberra. This means over 6 million people live within a few hours drive of the Murramarang National Park and Murramarang Aboriginal Area. This provides a wonderful opportunity to promote park values to a growing population base. It also presents a challenge for NPWS to ensure our visitor facilities are appropriately located and designed.

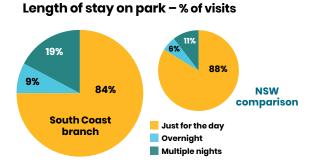
The importance of this challenge is demonstrated by the recent growth in the number of people visiting national parks in New South Wales. The NPWS 2018 Park Visitor Survey found visits to NSW national parks have increased by more than 16% from 2016 to 2018. The NSW South Coast has experienced visitation growth higher than the State average, with a 29% increase in visitation to South Coast national parks.

This project is an important initiative that will cater to growing visitor numbers and changing visitor expectations in a sustainable manner.









**Figure 2** Snapshot of national park visitation on the NSW South Coast. Source: NPWS 2018 Park Visitor Survey.

# 1.3 Alignment with local council destination action plans

#### **Eurobodalla Destination Action Plan**

Eurobodalla Destination Action Plan 2018 to 2021 guides the cooperative efforts of council and industry to manage and grow Eurobodalla's visitor economy.

The Murramarang South Coast Walk is consistent with the plan's overall aim:

To increase visitor expenditure and overnight visitor stays by 25% by 2021 and to encourage visitor dispersal throughout the year and across the Shire.

The plan identifies eight priority areas and associated actions to be implemented over the next four years to achieve this aim. The Murramarang South Coast Walk is consistent with Priority 5:

Develop a strategic and coordinated approach to tourism product and experience development to position Eurobodalla as an iconic nature based tourism and regional food destination on the South Coast.

The actions listed for Priority 5 rank the Murramarang South Coast Walk as a high priority:

Engage with NPWS and Forestry Corporation of NSW to identify industry and commercial partnership opportunities for nature-based tourism product and experience development including the development of a significant 4-day coastal walk in Murramarang National Park from Maloneys Beach to Bawley Point.

#### Shoalhaven Destination Management Plan

Shoalhaven Destination Management Plan 2018–2023 is a strategic document that prioritises key focus areas and actions. The Murramarang South Coast Walk is consistent with the plan's vision:

To be recognised as a year-round destination, valued for its quality environment and visitor experiences.

The plan lists the Murramarang South Coast Walk as one of the 'top experiences to drive off-season visitation'.

### Murramarang spotted gum forest

Murramarang's spotted gum forest is one of the biggest continuous stands in New South Wales. With an understorey of burrawang palms, this majestic forest stretches down to the ocean. Spotted gums have a smooth, dimpled bark which is shed in summer, producing a mottled cream and grey 'spotted' appearance.



Photo: Michael Van Ewijk/DPIE.

### 2. The master plan process

#### 2.1 Project vision and principles

The Murramarang South Coast Walk is one of a limited number of 'signature' walks being established by NPWS across New South Wales. The overall objective for this project is to create a unique long-distance coastal walking track in the Murramarang National Park, encompassing spectacular ocean lookouts, beach and lakeside walking, interspersed with a range of supporting accommodation options in local villages.

Our vision for this project is:

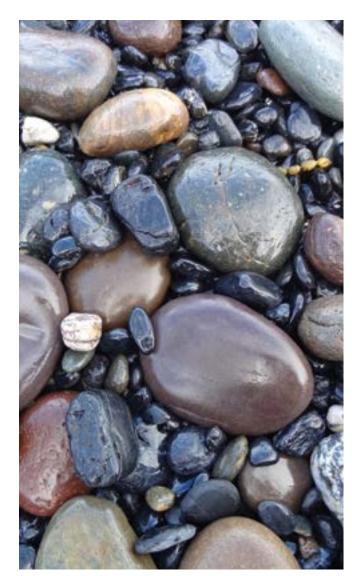
- The Murramarang South Coast Walk is recognised as a signature walking trail because it draws new visitors to the NSW coast, delivers an 'experience of a lifetime', and has the potential to become one of Australia's favourite walks.
- The spectacular coastline and dramatic landscapes, coupled with quality walking trail facilities and interpretation through innovative storytelling, encourage people to protect and love their national parks.
- The national park's facilities are enjoyed by both visitors and the local community, and the trail creates a seamless connection with the coastal villages that strengthens regional economies and creates local jobs.

During the various planning stages for the project we have recognised the following key intentions:

- The walk will be sustainable in both an environmental and business sense.
- A strong cultural theme is appropriate and should encourage Aboriginal communities to promote their culture and explore tourism opportunities.
- We are aiming to create a marketable tourism product that inspires everyone to enjoy and love their national parks.
- The project will ensure thorough environmental assessments and best practice environmental protection.
- The opportunity exists for regional stakeholders and NPWS to extend the coastal walk to the north and south.

Guiding principles for the establishment of the Murramarang South Coast Walk are:

- meeting the requirements of the park's statutory plan of management<sup>1</sup> and being appropriate to the character and physical nature of the site
- respect and protection of cultural heritage, social values, and the natural environment
- fostering appreciation of natural and cultural values while providing appropriate recreational access.



The landscapes within Murramarang National Park contain an amazing diversity of natural materials, surfaces and textures. Photo: Shannon Architects.

Notes: 1 Murramarang National Park, Brush Island Nature Reserve, Belowla Island Nature Reserve and Tollgate Islands Nature Reserve Plan of Management | NSW Environment, Energy and Science.

#### 2.2 Project methodology

Our national parks are managed to protect their unique values and provide for sustainable visitor use and enjoyment. The development of visitor facilities is undertaken in a socially, culturally and environmentally appropriate manner.

NPWS has made a significant investment in project planning and assessment including completing a comprehensive set of cultural, geotechnical, track alignment, and environmental assessments. This follows earlier economic modelling and concept development work.

The development of this master plan has included:

- site visits and investigations
- brief development and experience identification
- identification of issues and opportunities
- site analysis and option studies
- development studies of key sites
- targeted consultation with key stakeholders and public exhibition of the draft master plan.



Murramarang National Park rock features south of Durras. Photo: Destination NSW.

# 2.3 Aboriginal community engagement and opportunities

NPWS is committed to working in collaboration with Aboriginal groups to manage NSW national parks and reserves. We recognise Aboriginal people are the primary source of information about their heritage and how this is best protected and conserved. We are actively engaging with Aboriginal communities to ensure their interests are identified and incorporated in the planning and implementation of this project.

In response to public advertising and general mail outs about the proposed walk, 14 Aboriginal parties have registered their interest in being consulted throughout this project. NPWS will continue to consult all registered parties to facilitate the protection and preservation of Aboriginal culture, including Aboriginal artefacts and Aboriginal sites.

All Aboriginal objects and declared Aboriginal Places are managed and protected under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. To ensure our visitor facilities are compatible with the protection of Aboriginal objects and cultural values, and to uphold our legal obligations, all concepts adopted in this master plan will be subject to stringent cultural assessment and a permit process.

An important intention of this project is to support opportunities for Aboriginal businesses working in tourism, hospitality and education. These opportunities will be explored further in consultation with the Aboriginal community when the walking trail product and opportunities are fine-tuned through the implementation of this master plan.

NPWS will consult Aboriginal people to explore opportunities to showcase culture and stories, with interpretative displays carefully located along the walking trail route.

# 2.4 Community and stakeholder engagement

NPWS recognises effective community and stakeholder engagement is critical to the success of this project. Throughout the early phases of developing this plan, NPWS proactively engaged with State and local government to identify and incorporate public requirements into the plan's concepts. As planning has progressed we have made a significant investment in engaging with community groups and have encouraged people to register to receive project updates.

A draft of this master plan was publicly exhibited in mid 2020 to provide an opportunity for people to help refine the shared vision for the walk. Comments received from this public exhibition have informed the development of this final master plan.

NPWS will continue to engage with local communities and stakeholder groups throughout this project. For example, we will seek input into the stories to be told in the interpretative displays located along the walking trail route.

### Aboriginal people have a long and continuing connection with Murramarang National Park

Headlands have long been a focus for cultural and economic life, giving easy access to the food and medicinal resources of both the sea and the land. There is much evidence of the past today, including shell deposits, tool manufacturing sites, and indications of a specialised industry producing bone points and fishing hooks. There are many ways to discover and experience Aboriginal culture within the South Coast national parks.





Photos: top - John Spencer/DPIE; bottom - David Duffy/DPIE.

### 3. Existing situation

#### 3.1 Regional context

Murramarang National Park is located on the NSW South Coast between the regional towns of Batemans Bay and Ulladulla. This is an area where the 'forest meets the sea' and is widely known for its dramatic coastline, spectacular national parks and relaxed lifestyle.

Visitors to the area enjoy magnificent beaches, national park walks and wildlife encounters, from kangaroos on the beach to whales migrating through the protected waters of Batemans Marine Park.

A diverse range of accommodation and visitor services are provided within the coastal villages and the nearby regional hubs. There is a growing food and wine sector based on fresh local seafood and produce, and an emerging arts and cultural scene.

The region has a population in the order of 450,000 and is well-connected to the major population centres of Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra by the Princes and Kings highways. Over 6 million people live within a few hours of Murramarang National Park.

In the year ending March 2019, the South Coast received 6.9 million domestic day trip visitors (up 2.1% on the previous year) and 4.2 million domestic overnight visitors (up 6.8% on the previous year) (Tourism Research Australia, National Visitor Survey).

Visitation to the region is highly seasonal with peaks occurring predominantly in the summer months and holiday periods. NPWS visitor data indicates over 75% of visits to Murramarang National Park occur in only six months of the year.

NPWS has investigated the market and established there is capacity and interest from the tourism industry and service providers to support the proposed multi-day walk in practical and innovative ways.



Murramarang National Park east of Maloneys Beach. Photo: Michael Van Ewijk/DPIE.



**Figure 3** Location of Murramarang National Park.

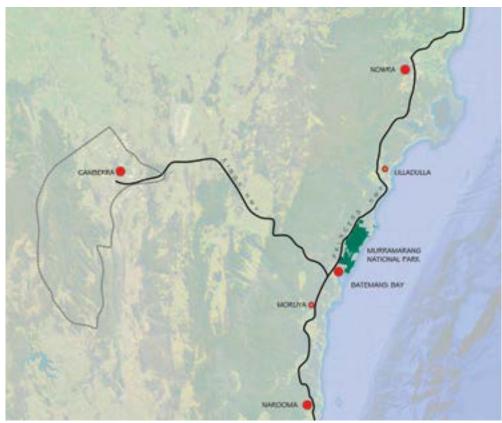


Figure 4 Murramarang South Coast Walk region.

## 3.2 Murramarang National Park and Murramarang Aboriginal Area

Murramarang National Park spans 30 kilometres of coastline (Figure 5). The park is known for its majestic spotted gums and burrawangs that grow right down to the ocean. The dramatic landscapes offer a stunning backdrop for a nature escape all year round.

The park is a popular place for day and overnight visitors. For overnight visitors there is a choice of campgrounds and accommodation within the park at established precincts – Pretty Beach, Pebbly Beach, Depot Beach, Yellow Rock and several bush camping sites.

The coastal villages of Maloneys Beach, Durras, Depot Beach and Kioloa share the boundaries of the national park. These coastal villages are popular visitor destinations and provide a suite of established accommodation and visitor services.

The Murramarang South Coast Walk will also pass through the Murramarang Aboriginal Area (Figure 5). This site has immense Aboriginal cultural significance and protects the largest midden on the NSW South Coast.

Summer is the most popular time to visit Murramarang National Park and Murramarang Aboriginal Area. The clear waters of Batemans Marine Park, which encompass the entire walk, are popular for swimming, fishing and snorkelling. The forested landscape provides shade to stay cool while walking. Whales are commonly spotted during migrations periods.

Spring, autumn and winter are not as busy and therefore offer the opportunity to enjoy the abundant wildlife. Birdwatching opportunities abound in these quieter times of year.

Visitors may even witness the courting displays of lyrebirds in rainforest areas.

There are numerous short walks within both reserves. The proposed coastal walk will link, improve and extend these trails to create a signature multi-day walk equal with the quality of the natural setting.



Figure 5 Murramarang National Park and nearby coastal villages.

#### 3.3 Access and parking

Murramarang National Park and the coastal villages are connected by an extensive road network (Figure 6).

There are multiple entry points to Murramarang National Park and the villages from the Princes Highway. Sealed secondary roads lead visitors to beaches, trail heads and day use areas. Unsealed roads provide access to the less busy areas of the park.

The proposed walking trail will be unique for a multi-day walk in that many visitor nodes along its route are readily accessible to the public in vehicles, providing opportunities to undertake the walk in sections. There are many vehicle parking options already established within the park and the villages (Figure 6).

Transport and transfer options from Canberra and Sydney are presently limited. NPWS enquiries indicate transport operators are interested in servicing walkers and are likely to be responsive to demand.



Figure 6 Murramarang National Park vehicle access and parking options.

#### 3.4 Maloneys Beach

The Murramarang South Coast Walk starting point will be established within the Maloneys Beach section of the national park. This site has a large, open grassy area, a small stand of native vegetation and is framed by a vegetated cliff.

Maloneys Beach provides an appealing entrance to Murramarang National Park but has become degraded over time due to uncontrolled vehicle access to the grassy foreshore, foredune and beach. This is not permitted under the park's statutory plan of management.

Vehicle access has also led to illegal camping and human waste disposal, littering, and uncontained fires. These activities are a source of regular complaints.

The foredune is also not vegetated with the natural range of plants and does not capture and accumulate sand. The beach and foredune is particularly vulnerable to erosion due to high tides, storm surges and sea level changes.

For the above reasons, the current condition of the Murramarang National Park section of Maloney Beach is not satisfactory as a starting site for a signature walk.

The council reserve alongside the national park provides parking, public toilet facilities, barbecue facilities, tables and a shelter. Within this area, vehicle access is restricted to formal roads and car parks.

NPWS will continue to work closely with Eurobodalla Shire Council in the planning and delivery of the proposed precinct upgrade to ensure all parts of Maloneys Beach are balanced and connected.

Section 4.4 of this master plan details proposals for upgrading this site to create a beautiful trail head.



Erosion to Maloneys Beach foreshore due to unauthorised vehicle access. Photo: DPIE.



Unauthorised beach access and damaged foredune. Photo: DPIE.

#### 3.5 Existing walks

NPWS maintains a network of short walking tracks within Murramarang National Park and Murramarang Aboriginal Area (Figure 7). The longest individual track is the 20-kilometre loop from Pretty Beach to Snake Bay returning via Durras Mountain.

Some sections of the existing walks do not provide a compelling visitor experience as they are disconnected, in poor or average condition, and in some cases have used old logging trails. New sections of track will be created, existing tracks will be upgraded, and in some sections the track will be relocated closer to the shoreline.

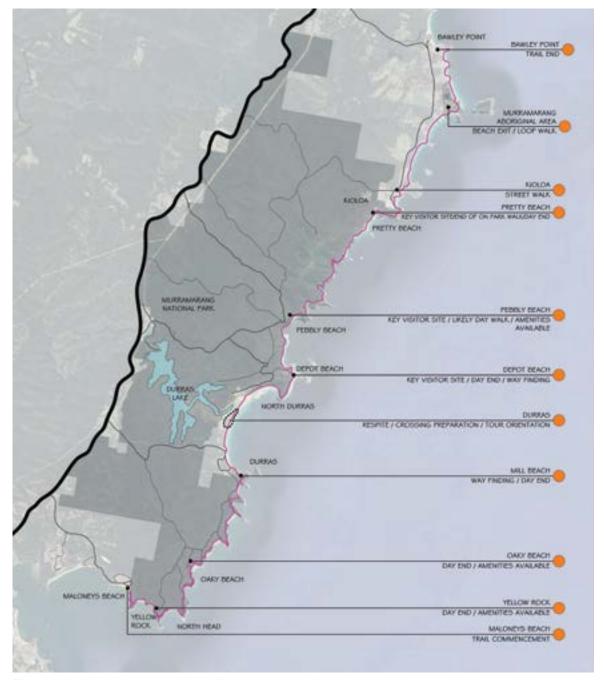


Figure 7 Murramarang National Park existing walking tracks.



Ancient rainforest at the Depot Beach Rainforest Walk. Photo: John Yurasek/DPIE.



Stunning elevated views from Durras Mountain track. Photo: John Yurasek/DPIE.

#### 3.6 Camping within the park

NPWS provides 167 camp sites within Murramarang National Park.

Visitors seeking amenities within a national park setting can stay at Depot Beach or Pretty Beach (Figure 8) which have toilets and showers. North Head, Oaky Beach and Pebbly Beach campgrounds provide a more rustic experience with only limited amenities (Figure 8). All campgrounds are ideally located next to beaches and walking tracks.

The national park campgrounds have potential to provide accommodation for walkers during off-peak periods. The campgrounds are very popular throughout summer and during school holiday periods and are often at full capacity. There would be no change to existing operations during these periods.

# 3.7 Accommodation within the park

NPWS operates 16 'hard-roof' accommodation buildings within Murramarang National Park.

Accommodation is available at Yellow Rock, Depot Beach, Pebbly Beach and Pretty Beach (Figure 8). All cabins and houses include private bathrooms and kitchens. Water, showers, onsite sewerage and power are available at Depot Beach and Pretty Beach. Limited services are available at the Pebbly Beach cabins and the Yellow Rock houses.

The NPWS buildings have the potential to provide accommodation for walkers during off-peak periods when the national park is less busy. Hard-roof accommodation within the park is very popular throughout summer and during school holiday periods and is often at full capacity. There would be no change to existing operations during these periods.

A section of Murramarang National Park at the southern end of Durras is leased to a private operator. This venue offers a variety of accommodation options, with easy access to beautiful beaches and walking tracks.

#### Depot Beach campground

Depot Beach campground provides cabins and camp sites set among the spotted gums native to the area. The beach is just a couple of minutes' walk away. The campground is one of several camping areas within Murramarang National Park.



Photo: Nick Cubbin/DPIE.



Photo: John Yurasek/DPIE.

### Durras Lake – an intermittently closed and open lagoon

Durras Lake is located between Durras and Durras North. When the lagoon is open, walkers will get their feet wet or they will need to arrange transfers by water or vehicle. If conditions are deemed unsafe, NPWS will close the track within the national park using existing online and media-release alert systems. There are no plans to install a crossing of Durras Lake.



Photos: Google Earth.

# 3.8 Village accommodation and supplies

There are over 400 camp sites and 350 accommodation units within the coastal villages surrounding Murramarang National Park (Figure 8). Additional camp sites and accommodation are available at Batemans Bay (11 kilometres south) and around Ulladulla (33 kilometres north).

A limited number of shops, cafes and takeaway stores exist within the coastal villages. Supplies, food and beverages can be purchased at Maloneys Beach, Durras, Kioloa and Bawley Point, although this can be limited during off-peak periods. The nearby larger towns of Batemans Bay and Ulladulla are obvious supply stops for multi-day walkers.

The NSW Government and local councils, through the regional funding program and local tourism plans, are committed to strengthening regional economies and creating local jobs. The establishment of the walk will benefit existing accommodation providers and other operators within the coastal villages.

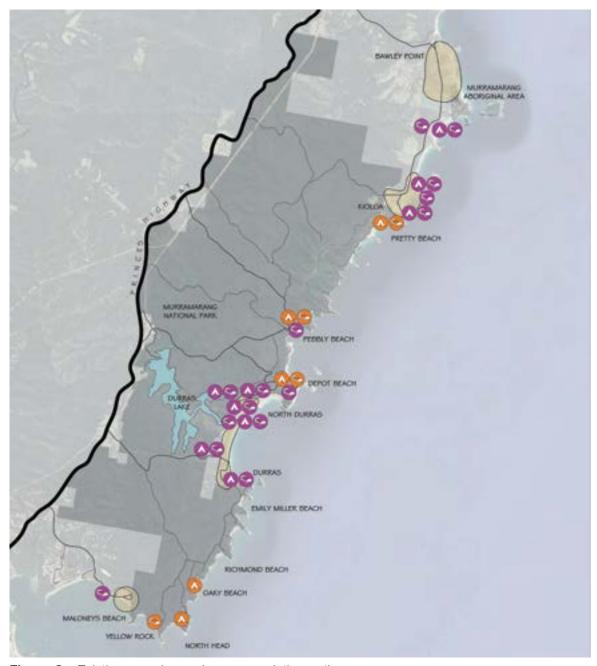


Figure 8 Existing camping and accommodation options.



Figure 9 Existing public amenities.

# 3.9 Public amenities and drinking water

Public amenities are located at regular intervals along the route, both within and outside the park (Figure 9). These facilities sustain peak visitation periods and have capacity to support walkers during off-peak times.

The Murramarang South Coast Walk will not be set up to attract multi-day walkers during peak periods when camp sites and accommodation are already at capacity. The walk will not increase the use of public facilities during peak periods.

Limited drinking water points are available along the route. To ensure walkers have access to water at regular intervals, NPWS will provide potable water at key locations within the park.

NPWS will ensure information about public amenities and drinking water is readily available for walkers.

### 4. Master plan concepts

#### 4.1 The walkers

NSW national parks continue to be very popular for recreational activities. Around 55% of NSW residents have visited a national park within the past 12 months. Park visitors are seeking:

- social interactions places and experiences that encourage learning with activity, places to explore as a family, places to socialise with others and have fun
- adventure places to be independent, opportunities to spend time in nature, places that provide stories, accessible adventures, iconic nature and wildlife
- discovery exploring new areas and trying new things, being active, learning about the land, deeper interactions with nature and culture
- harmony and simplicity places that facilitate a slower pace, focus on nature with no pressures, provide contrasts to modern life.

People undertaking the walk will be drawn to the beautiful natural setting of the Murramarang coast, opportunities for deep immersion in the Aboriginal culture, and other recreational activities. The surrounding coastal villages and road network provide easy access and accommodation options. Unique to this multi-day walk is the potential to complete the Murramarang South Coast Walk in smaller sections. As such, the walk will attract a wide range of people, not just experienced walkers, but also those interested in outdoor activities. Walkers will vary widely in their age, physical capabilities, walking experience and expectations.



Exploring near Pretty Beach. Photo: David Finnegan/DPIE.

#### 4.2 Walk styles

This walk will attract a wide range of people with differences in their expectations and requirements.

 Table 1
 Different types of Murramarang walkers

Walker group	Style	Minimum requirements
Independent, self-contained, end-to-end walkers	Independent walkers will take in the entire length of the trail over four or five days with their own equipment and provisions. This cohort will use NPWS campgrounds for nature-based experiences or stay in hard-roof accommodation.	<ul> <li>Ability to book individual camp/ accommodation nights in linear progression.</li> <li>Carparking and availability of return travel.</li> </ul>
Guided walkers	These walkers will complete the trail in a similar manner to independent walkers, but they will be assisted by a professional guide.	<ul> <li>Availability of camp sites/accommodation in linear progression.</li> <li>Likely to seek commercial transfers, catering, provision of tents, etc.</li> </ul>
Self-guided, serviced walkers	These self-guided walkers will complete the trail using pre- booked camping and/or accommodation. They will be predominantly 'day pack' walkers.	<ul> <li>Ability to book catered accommodation nights in linear progression.</li> <li>Luggage/equipment transfer and provision of some supplies.</li> <li>Carparking and return travel.</li> </ul>
Back-to-base walkers	This group will base themselves at one location on or near the trail and arrange drop-off/pick-up to complete the walk as a series of day walks.	<ul> <li>The ability to book camping/ accommodation in the region.</li> <li>Availability of drop-off / pick-up services.</li> <li>Carparking at key locations.</li> </ul>
Day walkers	Visitors can choose to walk individual sections in any order and time frame of their choosing. The multi-day walk is not their primary reason to visit the park.	Vehicle access to various points of the walk.
Groups	A variety of group types (e.g. organised tours, schools, self-arranged) may use the trail in any format.	<ul><li>Group accommodation.</li><li>Likely to seek commercial transfers, catering, provision of tents, etc.</li></ul>

### 4.3 Itinerary options and activities

There are many variations in how walkers may use the Murramarang South Coast Walk. Walkers will be able to 'choose their own adventure' to:

- hike only in the national park if seeking a nature-based experience
- walk in a shorter time frame or undertake the walk as series of day walks
- walk in an extended time frame to enjoy the many side attractions
- start at Maloneys Beach and walk north, start at Bawley Point and walk south, or start at one of the variety of locations and complete the walk in the order of their choice.

NPWS recognises that many visitors require example itineraries to help plan their walking experience. This master plan provides an itinerary for camping within the park, and a 'choose your own adventure' itinerary to demonstrate the many ways walkers can experience the Murramarang South Coast Walk.

Extended activities noted against specific days are in addition to the many other experiences that are available such as swimming, kayaking, birdwatching and exploring rock shelves.

#### Murramarang National Park is home to more than 90 bird species

Species include three owl species, peregrine falcons, sea eagles, gannets, shearwaters, white-faced storm petrels, sooty oystercatchers, eastern yellow robins, satin bowerbirds, the rufous fantail, and a penguin colony.



Photo: David Finnegan/DPIE.



Snorkelling at Depot Beach. Photo: John Yurasek/DPIE.



Exploring Durras Lake by kayak. Photo: David Finnegan/DPIE.

# Example itinerary: camping within the park

Table 2 is an example of one camping itinerary that may be undertaken on the Murramarang South Coast Walk.

 Table 2
 Example camping itinerary

	Main activities	Extra activities
Day 1	Arrive at Maloneys Beach and walk 8 km to Oaky Beach walk-in camping area.	<ul> <li>Boat tour of Batemans Bay</li> </ul>
		<ul> <li>Arrival at Maloneys Beach by boat</li> </ul>
		<ul> <li>Loop walk at Acheron Ridge</li> </ul>
Day 2	Depart Oaky Beach and walk 14.5 km to Depot Beach.	Swim in the pristine beaches of the national park
		<ul> <li>Water-based activities at Lake Durras</li> </ul>
Day 3	Depart Depot Beach and walk 12.5 km to Pretty Beach.	Side walks at Depot Rainforest or Mt Durras
		<ul> <li>Explore the secluded bays</li> </ul>
Day 4	Depart Pretty Beach and walk 13 km to the trail end at Bawley Point.	<ul> <li>Cultural tour at Murramarang Aboriginal Area</li> </ul>

Similar itineraries can be undertaken staying at campgrounds within the coastal villages.

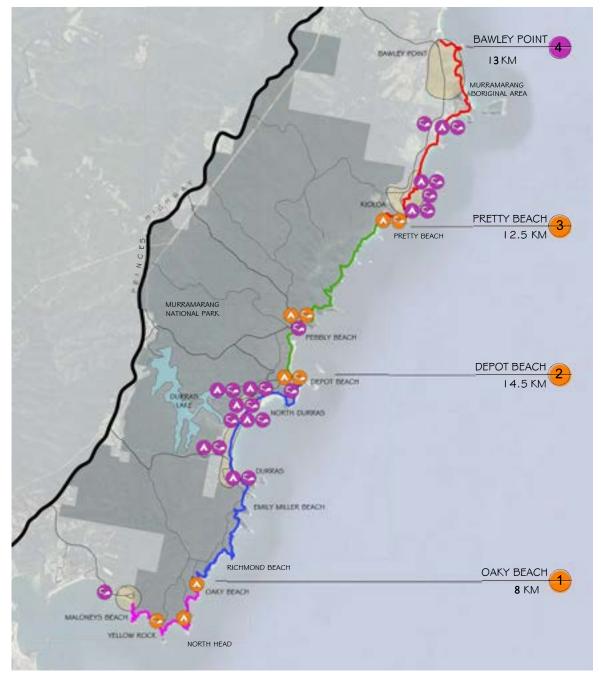


Figure 10 Example camping itinerary map.

#### Choose your own adventure

The Murramarang South Coast Walk hosts 48 kilometres of walking tracks and has access to several coastal villages. Visitors have the flexibility to choose from a smorgasboard of exciting nature-based adventures. Depending on their travelling party, fitness level, budget, time available, and appetite for experience, visitors will be able to 'choose their own adventure'.

Walkers will be able to embark on multi-day, full-day or part-day hikes that are guided or self-guided, staying in NPWS campgrounds or hard-roof accommodation within or outside the park.

Walks can also incorporate a variety of activities including swimming, snorkelling, birdwatching, whale watching, as well as experiencing wildflowers in spring and summer.

The villages of the Murramarang coast also provide a wide range of accommodation options. An example of a four-day itinerary could be:

- Day 1 Arrive at Maloneys Beach and walk 15.8 kilometres to Durras.
- Day 2 Depart Durras and walk 6.1 kilometres to Depot Beach.
- Day 3 Depart Depot Beach and walk
   16.5 kilometres to Merry Beach/Kioloa.
- Day 4 Depart Merry Beach/Kioloa and walk
   9.6 kilometres to Bawley Point.

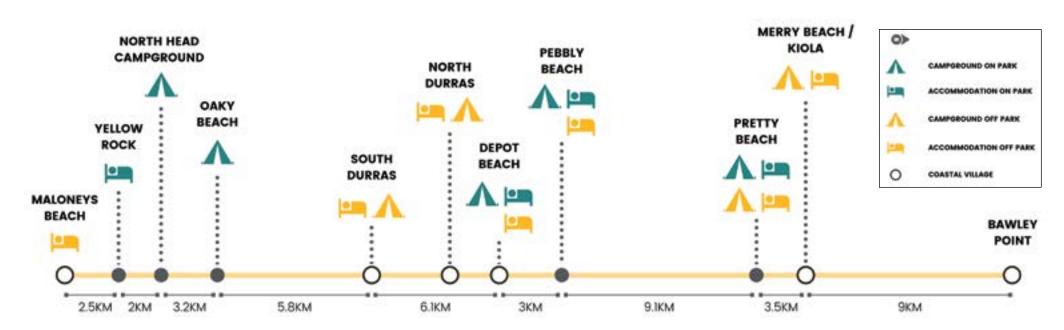


Figure 11 Example 'choose your own adventure' itinerary.

#### 4.4 The start of the walk

#### **Maloneys Beach**

A formal starting point for the walk will be established at the Maloneys Beach section of Murramarang National Park. The site design will link with and share facilities with the adjoining council reserve creating a unified precinct.

NPWS is proposing to upgrade the Murramarang National Park section of Maloneys Beach to:

- establish a welcoming and appealing entry to Murramarang National Park
- create a walking trail starting point consistent with a 'signature' standard walk
- reverse environmental damage within Murramarang National Park
- better manage unauthorised activities
- provide day use facilities that can be enjoyed by visitors and the local community.

The preferred concept for the national park section of Maloneys Beach establishes a new carpark, trailhead and a celebration point – all within the park (Figure 12). Vehicle access will be restricted to formal roads, and eroded and damaged areas will be rehabilitated.

For most visitors, the start of the multi-day walk at Maloneys Beach will be the beginning of their adventure. Walkers will typically arrive by vehicle but there is also potential for people to start their adventure with a boat trip from Batemans Bay, with a beach landing at Maloneys Beach. Both types of arrival will be greeted with an appealing entry to the national park that is welcoming and evokes a sense of excitement.

This preferred concept offers the opportunity for walkers to celebrate the start of their journey as they depart Maloneys Beach. Trail starting points are important to walkers, and typically involve photographs and social media opportunities. A small celebration node will be established at the walk starting point where the escarpment and beach meet. This node will be created with unique and appropriate infrastructure that reflects the natural setting (see Figures 13 and 14 for stylised examples).

Low-key, stylised interpretative displays targeting walkers will be provided within the precinct. To improve the amenity for all users – visiting walkers and locals alike – some tables and chairs will be installed in the open area (presently dissected by vehicle tracks).

Native trees may be planted to provide shade for visitors. Walking tracks within the park will meet Grade 1 classification<sup>2</sup> with flat even surfaces, no steps or steep sections, and be suitable for wheelchair users who have someone to assist them. Beach access points will be provided suitable for launching kayaks and other small watercraft, and for use by beach wheelchairs. Tracks connecting the national park precinct to council infrastructure will be investigated.

NPWS will continue to work with the local community and local council during the detailed design phase to ensure this upgrade improves facilities for all users.

#### **Maloneys Beach north**

#### BOUNDARY LINE PROVIDE VEGETATION MURRAMARANG NATIONAL PARK UPGRADE CROSSING SPRAY SEAL VERY STEEP EMBANKMENT CARPARK FORM DRAINAGE (14 CARS) AMENITY PROVIDE VEGETATION BARRIER LEGEND SPRAY SEAL CONCRETE PATH PUBLIC RESERVE EXISTING TREES REVEGETATION AREAS NEW FENCES TRAILHEAD & SHELTER REFER ENLARGEMENT TRAFFIC SIGN PARK USE FEE MACHINE NATURAL BARRIERS WALKING ROUTE DETERMINED BOLLARD SHELTER & BBQ ON SITE FALLEN TREE / LOG BARRIER ROCK BARRIER. LOCALLY SOURCED VERY STEEP EMBANKMENT VERY STEEP EMBANKMENT

#### **Maloneys Beach south**

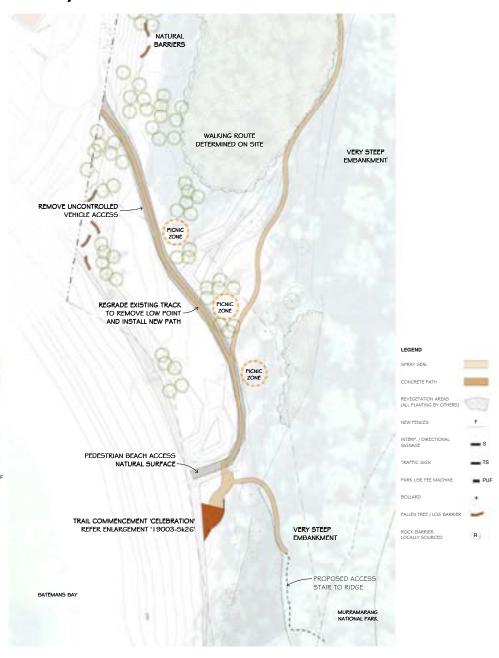


Figure 12 Maloneys Beach starting point – preferred option.



Figure 13 Possible trail head and shelter.



Figure 14 Walk start trail head and celebration option.

#### 4.5 The track

NPWS proposes to create a 48 kilometre signature grade coastal walking trail by:

- creating new walking track sections to connect the coastal tracks already established within Murramarang National Park
- where appropriate, relocating some tracks closer to the coastline to capture dramatic views of the spectacular coastline and to allow rehabilitation of eroded old logging trails
- where required, upgrading the coastal tracks already established within the national park to provide a consistent walk experience.

For the most part, the trail will be built as a natural surface track suitable for most ages and fitness levels. Some bushwalking experience will be recommended, and the track may have short steep sections, rough surfaces and steps. As the walk is developed, some sections may be very steep for short sections. The trail will be built to meet Grade 4 with some sections of Grade 3.

The final alignment may change slightly in response to environmental, cultural and geotechnical constraints.

Occasionally Lake Durras will open to the sea. When these waterways are flowing, walkers will need to get their feet wet or arrange transfers by water or vehicles.

A high-tide track will be investigated at Maloneys Beach incorporating the existing Acheron Trail. Alternative tracks will be provided at other locations along the walk where there is potential for inundation.

#### Snapshots of the Murramarang coastal scenery encountered on the walk



Leaving Maloneys Beach. Photo: Tom Pinzone/DPIE.



Yellow Rock. Photo: Tom Pinzone/DPIE.



Example natural surface track, Oaky Beach. Photo: Tom Pinzone/DPIE.



North of Pebbly Beach. Photo: John Yurasek/DPIE.



Snapper Point. Photo: John Yurasek/DPIE.



Bawley Point. Photo: Tom Pinzone/DPIE.





Rugged shoreline and enchanting spotted gum forests of Murramarang National Park. Top photo: Michael Van Ewijk/DPIE. Bottom photo: John Yurasek/DPIE.

#### 4.6 Camping

The walk will be promoted to increase off-peak visitation, particularity throughout winter and some periods of spring and autumn when existing campgrounds have capacity.

NPWS recognises that our existing campgrounds at Depot Beach, Pretty Beach, North Head, Oaky Beach and Pebbly Beach do not provide the isolated, walk-in bush camping experience normally provided with multi-day walks; however, they do provide the public facilities that many first-time walkers and families will appreciate.

The walk-in bush camping area at Oaky Beach will be reinstated to provide a suitable camping option in the southern section of the trail. NPWS will monitor visitor experiences and demand to assess the need to provide walk-in sites in the northern section of the walk.

This master plan identifies areas where walk-in bush camping sites could be created with minimal impact if demand requires. These areas were selected because they have previously been disturbed, are not used currently, and do not conflict with the park's plan of management.

If these new camping options are required, NPWS will complete the standard set of environmental and cultural assessments.

#### Oaky Beach

NPWS proposes to reinstate the walk-in bush camping area at Oaky Beach. The walk-in camping sites are located adjacent to the vehicle-based camping area, but are separated by a suitable vegetation buffer that creates a sense of isolation. This area would also be able to be used by visitors not doing a multi-day walk.

Before reinstating this camping area, NPWS will commission an extensive tree assessment and remove dangerous limbs or trees. The management of tree risks is standard practice at all camping areas and visitor nodes.

The park's plan of management allows for five walk-in camp sites at Oaky Beach along with ten drive-in camping sites in the adjoining area. The plan of management would not require amendment.

NPWS proposes to provide level earth camping pads within the walk-in area and provide toilet facilities that may also be used by the walk-in and drive-in campers.

NPWS is also considering options to improve the drive-in camp sites.

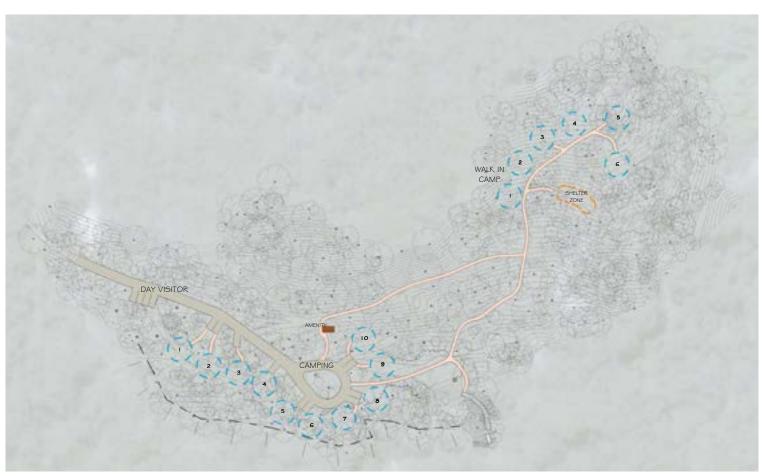


Figure 15 Oaky Beach concept.

#### **Depot Beach**

NPWS provides a fully serviced campground at Depot Beach with 59 camp sites. Sites would be made available for walkers during off-peak periods.

As the existing campground does not provide the intimate, isolated camping experience that is preferred by long-distance walkers, a small, walk-in bush camping area could be established near the existing campground if demand requires.

Although not part of the Murramarang South Coast Walk project, the amenities block at Depot Beach is being upgraded and this will benefit all users.

This walk-in bush camping area could be established by converting one of the carparks associated with the Rainforest Walking Track (Figure 16). Presently this short track is served by two carparks, one at the beach and one at this location.

This site will comfortably accommodate five to ten camp sites. Standard environmental and cultural assessment requirements would apply and the proposal would be consistent with the park's plan of management.



Figure 16 Depot Beach – potential walk in bush camping area.

### **Pretty Beach**

Sixty camp sites are operated by NPWS at Pretty Beach with power, water, toilets and showers provided. Sites would be made available for walkers during off-peak periods.

If future demand requires, a small, walk-in bush camping area could be established to the east of the existing campground in an area that has been previously disturbed (Figure 17).

It is expected that five to ten camping sites could be created. Standard environmental and cultural assessment requirements would apply and the proposal would be consistent with the park's plan of management.

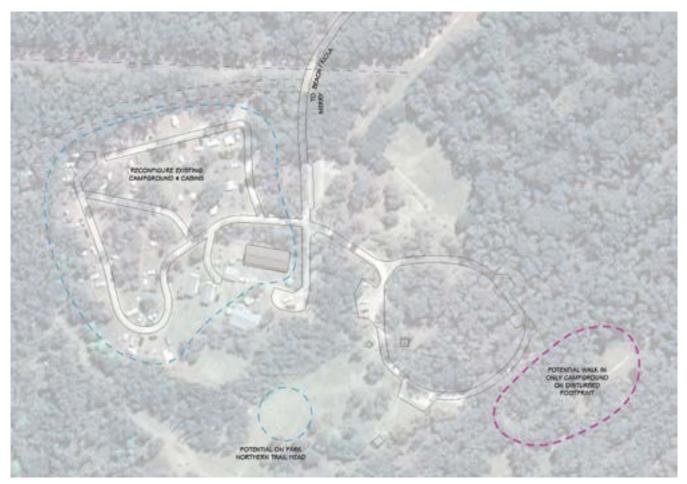


Figure 17 Pretty Beach – potential walk-in bush camping area.

#### 4.7 Accommodation

A range of existing accommodation options are available within the national park and the adjoining coastal villages with significant capacity available during off-peak periods.

Although not for the exclusive use of walkers, several upgrades are planned to existing accommodation precincts within the national park that will benefit walkers and other visitors.

Similar to our campgrounds, NPWS recognises that our hard-roof accommodation does not provide the isolated, walk-in experience normally provided with multi-day walks. NPWS will monitor visitor experiences and demand to assess the need to provide additional accommodation.

The provision of additional accommodation within the national park is not within the scope of the Murramarang South Coast Walk project and would require significant future capital investment and community consultation. Any future work may require a review of the park's statutory plan of management.

#### **Yellow Rock**

The Yellow Rock site is gated and not accessible by vehicle by general park users. The former use of the site as a caravan park has created large disturbed areas.

The existing cottage at Yellow Rock will be available to walkers through a booking system, to suit their itineraries. A second cottage has recently been refurbished and will also be available for walkers. A third house at the site is currently occupied by a caretaker.

The existing public toilet will be refurbished and will be available for walkers.





Existing Yellow Rock beach houses. Photos: John Spencer/DPIE.



Figure 18 Yellow Rock precinct.

#### **Durras**

Durras and Durras North are surrounded completely by Murramarang National Park and form an important visitor node for walkers and general park users. It is likely that walkers will stay overnight within the Durras communities owing to the length of the first section of the walk.

#### **Depot Beach cabins**

Depot Beach campground contains 10 existing cabins managed by NPWS. The cabins have kitchen and bathrooms facilities and sleep up to six people in two bedrooms. The cabins are very popular and have high occupancy rates throughout the year.

During off-peak periods, some cabins could be managed to allow use by walkers.

#### **Pebbly Beach shacks**

Set between the bush and the beach, the four Pebbly Beach shacks are located in a secluded section of coastal rainforest within Murramarang National Park. Only limited water and power is provided.

Depending on demand, some shacks could be managed to allow use by walkers during off-peak periods.

Minor upgrades to the shacks, including improved bathrooms and sewage disposal, are being considered.



Depot Beach cabins. Photo: Nick Cubbin/DPIE.

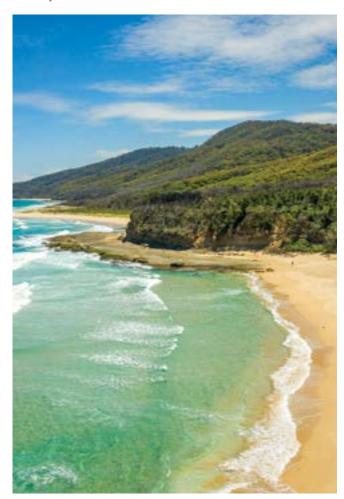


Pebbly Beach shacks. Photo: Tom Pinzone/DPIE.

### **Pretty Beach**

Pretty Beach is primarily a fully serviced campground with two existing cabins. Independent funding has been secured to replace these cabins. Their siting may also be improved.

The replacement cabins will continue to be used primarily for family short stays. During off-peak periods some cabins could be managed to allow use by walkers.



Pretty Beach. Photo: John Spencer.

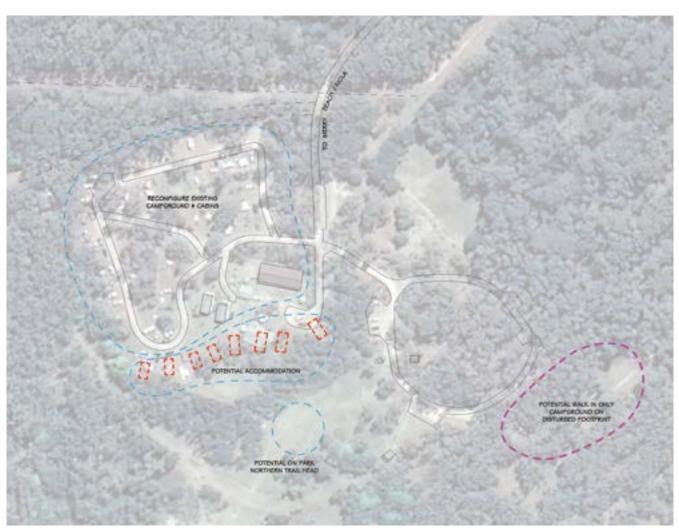


Figure 19 Existing Pretty Beach cabins may be replaced and their siting improved.

# 4.8 Track facilities and information

#### **Trail heads**

The Murramarang South Coast Walk is unique for a multi-day walk in that visitors can access the walk at numerous points along the route. Primary trail heads will be installed at Maloneys Beach and Bawley Point, and additional trail heads may be installed at key start and end points, including Pretty Beach.

NPWS will work closely with the Eurobodalla Shire Council, Shoalhaven City Council and local communities to assess the need for other minor trail heads. The design of the alternative trail heads, along with the design of each of the elements described below, will occur in the next phase of the planning process. The design of alternative trail heads will reflect the primary trail heads at Maloneys Beach and Bawley Point.



Figure 20 Potential small trail head shelter.

#### **View points**

The Murramarang South Coast Walk will be known for its spectacular coastal views. The walk traverses a series of headlands that present stunning vistas. View points will be clearly defined at regular locations to allow walkers to enjoy the views, take photographs and, in some cases, rest. These view points will be designed to enable safe viewing while deterring access to locations that may be unsafe.

#### **Rest points**

Rest points will be provided along the walking trail to offer respite and pause points for walkers to enjoy the scenery. The rest points will be strategically located at key viewing points, at the end of more difficult sections (e.g. beach sections), and potentially at midday sections to double as food and refreshment points.

## **Water points**

To ensure walkers have access to water at regular intervals, NPWS will provide potable water at Yellow Rock, Depot Beach, Pebbly Beach and Pretty Beach. Water is available at the coastal villages at the track start and end points at Maloneys Beach and Bawley Point.

### Interpretation

High-quality interpretive displays will be positioned strategically along the walking trail to present captivating stories on the area's diverse landscapes, spectacular coastline, amazing history, and rich Aboriginal culture.

Objectives for the development of the interpretation for the walk include:

- communicating messages relating to nature and culture including natural and historical processes, ecological relationships, and human roles in the environment
- involving people in nature and history through a firsthand (personal) experience with the natural and cultural environment
- influencing people's behaviour and attitudes concerning the wise use of natural resources, the preservation of cultural heritage, and respect and concern for the natural and cultural environment
- providing an enjoyable, memorable and meaningful experience.

These displays will use a consistent design language, material and colour palette and will integrate with other infrastructure where possible. Existing interpretative displays within the national park will be updated to reflect the new walking trail network.

The use of digital information sharing will be explored to provide an innovative mix of sources.

NPWS will engage with local communities to identify suitable locations and storylines.

## Examples of interpretive material presentation



Moruya Point. Photo: Tristan Ricketson/DPIE.



Belair National Park, Photo: Shannon Architects.

## Examples of interpretive material presentation



Vulkathuna – Gammon Ranges. Photo: Shannon Architects.



Fencing – Uluru – Kata Tjuta. Photo: Shannon Architects.



Totem sign. Photo: John Yurasek/DPIE.

#### **Minor infrastructure**

Low-key, well-designed furniture elements will be strategically located along the trail to improve the comfort and experience of walkers.

These elements will be unique, distinctive and high quality and will be designed in the next phase of the planning process.

#### Examples of track furniture from the Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail



Seating. Photos: Shannon Architects.



Seating. Photos: Shannon Architects.



Seating. Photos: Shannon Architects.



Camp Deck. Photos: Shannon Architects.



Totem Sign. Photos: Shannon Architects.

## Wayfinding

Carefully located wayfinder totems will guide visitors along the walk. These wayfinders will signify the location of trail heads (e.g. beach heads) and track intersections (e.g. where the walk intersects shorter walks). Wayfinders will also serve to guide walkers to key accommodation points, toilets and water points.

A stylised wayfinder totem will be designed in the next phase of the planning process consistent with the status of the walk as one of few signature walking tracks in New South Wales. The wayfinders will be carefully developed and sited to preserve the natural character of the walking trails.

#### Website and booking system

The NPWS website will promote the Murramarang South Coast Walk as a 'choose your own adventure' experience. The end-to-end multi-day walk featuring NPWS camping options will be available for booking online as a package.

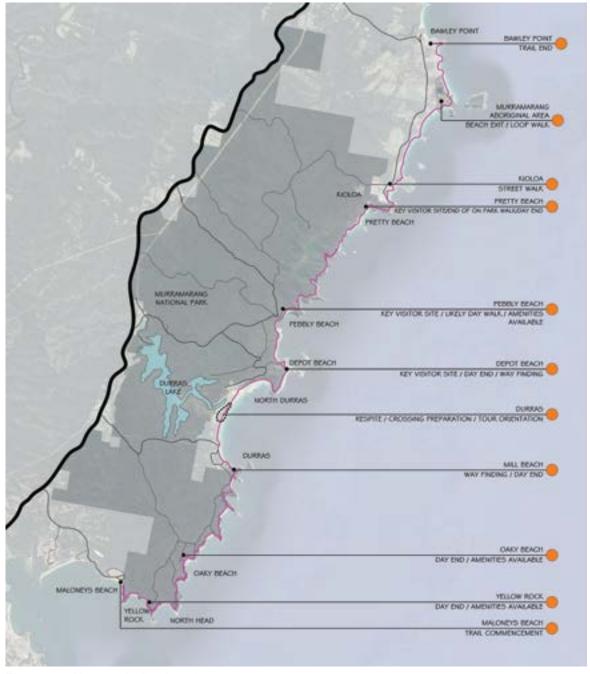


Figure 21 Key wayfinding locations.

#### 4.9 The walk's end point

### **Bawley Point**

A formal end point for the walking trail will be created at Bawley Point. Walkers will have completed a significant multi-day experience and will be encouraged to celebrate this with a photograph and social media posting. There are several opportunities for walkers to celebrate and photograph the end of their walk, most notably the 'trig point' and the recently reinstated historic gantry.

The Bawley Point and Kioloa Community
Association has recommended, and Shoalhaven
City Council has endorsed in principle, the
creation of the end point within Bawley Point
Beach Reserve. This site offers a similar look and
feel to the starting point at Maloneys Beach. Both
sites are on the fringe of urban areas, have basic
parkland facilities, and provide essential services
such as carparking and toilets.

The trail head to be installed at Bawley Point will be compatible with the natural setting of the beach reserve. The design of this node will employ stylised infrastructure that reflects and scales down that provided at Maloneys Beach. Tables and chairs, and a small interpretative display providing information about the walk, will be provided for the benefit of both visiting walkers and the local community.



Approaching Bawley Point Beach Reserve – the end of the walk. Photo: DPIE.



Figure 22 Bawley Point trail head and celebration point opportunities.



Figure 23 Bawley Point trail head – siting option.



Figure 24 Bawley Point trail end – signage option.

#### **Pretty Beach**

A northern trail head may be built within the park at Pretty Beach. This would provide all park users with a central location from which to arrive or depart at the northern end of Murramarang National Park, including the Murramarang South Coast Walk, Durras Mountain Walk and Snapper Point Lookout. Other options for locations may also be suitable, and would be identified during the detailed design process.



Alternative trail head, Pretty Beach. Photo: Tom Pinzone/DPIE.



Murramarang forest landscape. Photo: David Finnegan/DPIE.



Figure 25 Trail head location option at Pretty Beach.

## 5. More information

Australian Walking Track Grading System | NSW National Parks.

Eurobodalla Destination Action Plan 2018 to 2021.

Murramarang National Park, Brush Island Nature Reserve, Belowla Island Nature Reserve and Tollgate Islands Nature Reserve Plan of Management | NSW Environment, Energy and Science.

Murramarang Aboriginal Area Plan of Management | NSW Environment, Energy and Science.

Shoalhaven Destination Management Plan 2018–2023.

