Identifying visitor preferences for alternative experiences to summiting Wollumbin (Mt warning): final report 1 of 3: tourism and recreation planning initiatives 1994-2014

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FINAL REPORT - Report 1 of 3

TOURISM AND RECREATION PLANNING INITIATIVES 1994-2014

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Front cover photograph:
Looking north towards Wollumbin (Mt Warning) with the Border Ranges National Park rising on the left. Northern Rivers\(^1\) region, NSW. Hamilton Lund; Destination New South Wales.

\(^1\) The Northern Rivers is sometimes referred to as North Coast and Far North Coast. Each is used in this document relative to its historical context.
1 INTRODUCTION

Wollumbin is an extinct volcanic plug that forms a distinct and widely visible landmark in the northern rivers region of New South Wales. While referred to by its Aboriginal name throughout this report, the dual named mountain is popularly known also as Mt Warning. Wollumbin, particularly the mountain summit, is considered a sacred site of spiritual and cultural significance to Indigenous tribes of the region and the activity of summiting Wollumbin is contrary to Indigenous spiritual tradition. Nonetheless, the ascent of Wollumbin along the so called summit track is one of the region’s key visitor attractions. The ascent is nationally and internationally promoted as a ‘bucket list’ item through outlets such as Australian Geographic2 and Lonely Planet Guides and each year an estimated 100,000 visitors attempt to climb Wollumbin via the summit track. This presents a raft of challenges for the sustainable management of the site.

This project originated from the closure of the Wollumbin summit track following major storm events in late January 2013. The dramatic downturn in visitor related business to the local area, following the closure of this focal attraction, highlighted a need and opportunity to diversify nature-based visitor experiences in this area by offering alternative visitor experiences. While the track was reopened in November 2013, physical, environmental, cultural and financial restrictions to managing the site also support a diversification of local visitor experiences and a strategy to disperse visitors and reduce visitor pressure on the Wollumbin summit track.

Thus the focus of this research project entitled “Identifying Visitor Preferences for Alternative Experiences to Summiting Wollumbin (Mt Warning)” was on identifying and testing activities and scenarios of visitor experiences in the region as potential alternatives to the experience of summiting Wollumbin. The project was funded by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service with substantial in-kind support from Southern Cross University.

2 REVIEW OF TOURISM & RECREATION PLANNING INITIATIVES 1994-2014

This document, Report 1, is the first of three reports to make up the Final Report for the project “Alternative Experiences to Summiting Wollumbin (Mt Warning)”. It collates the findings of a desktop review of existing planning and management documents and sets the broader context for the overall project. The desktop review preceded the stakeholder interviews (see Report 2) and the surveys with potential visitors (see Report 3). Its substance lies in a detailed review of historic planning instruments that have guided the management of tourism in the Northern Rivers generally and of Wollumbin (Mt Warning) National Park in particular, over the last two decades. It serves as a reference point in assembling extracts and concepts from a range of original source documents, guidelines, destination management plans, strategic plans, action plans and planning framework instruments containing relevant prior research, community consultation and reporting that has occurred in the period of 1994 to 2014. Its purpose is both to show the relationship of this extensive planning to Wollumbin (Mt Warning) National Park in a regional planning sense and to present the chronological history of such planning for consideration in current and future planning and management. It highlights that many of the current issues relating to tourism experiences in the Northern Rivers region have been around for some time, and that there are significant social, cultural and organisational complexities involved in moving beyond the planning phase into implementation. By bringing together the range of existing planning documents, this report aims to provide a baseline context that helps inform future planning and management decisions. As such, future actions arising from the findings in Report 3 need to be considered in the broader context presented here in Report 1.

The authors acknowledge the substantive work and writings of the original source contributors and have borrowed heavily from same to demonstrate the planning context, content and intent of such documents as they pertain to Wollumbin (Mt Warning) National Park. In an attempt to increase readability and not be overly repetitive with referencing, each document, as it appears for the first time has been clearly ascribed to its original source with only specific quotes directly referenced from there on.

The New South Wales Department of Environment and Conservation, in 2004, prescribed the basis for planning of recreational use and development on all classes of protected area, except Aboriginal Areas, collectively referred to as “parks” within NSW via a recreational planning framework (see McGregor 2004). This planning framework is primarily seen as a tool for land managers, assisting them in providing a balance between potentially competing recreation activities while ensuring that any use or development is ecologically sustainable.

Section 3, of this document, largely borrows from that framework to set the historical context for recreational opportunities and challenges as metered through the legislative frameworks and instruments of the period (e.g. National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974) for on-park management. Sections 4-7 further review, mine and reflect the content of broader instruments of both historic and contemporary nature set within NSW NPWS, State, regional and local contexts. These include planning, strategies and marketing proposals that also bring additional opportunities and challenges to “parks” via external agencies, off-park activities and political ideologies.

Understanding and contextualising the current project within the evolution of recreational planning is fundamental. Of particular note is that some 16 years ago the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service’s own report National Parks: Visions for the New Millennium (NPWS 1998) recommended that the Service devise regional strategies for recreation and tourism planning in close consultation with other such government agencies, regional associations of local councils and regional and other tourism committees.

Attached as Appendix A, Table 1 summarises in chronological order the existing and potential recreational opportunities identified throughout the range of documents reviewed in relation to Wollumbin (Mt Warning) National Park.

3 REGIONAL PLANNING CONTEXT

Wollumbin’s prominent visibility and distinct physical presence as the ‘heart’ of the Northern Rivers biosphere have contributed to the mountain’s symbolic status. Wollumbin has a unique set of evolutional, geological, cultural, mythical, spiritual, environmental, historical and social attributes, and thus is often used to promote the quintessential essence of the Northern Rivers brand. Not surprisingly though, not everyone shares the same values, which inadvertently puts pressure on Wollumbin, particularly in a recreational context. Following is a summary of a desktop review of existing planning and strategy documents relating to visitor use and experiences in the Northern Rivers. The brief overview was compiled from planning instruments relating to recreational values, experiences and opportunities developed by a range of stakeholders over the past two decades: 1994 – 2014.

The genesis of nature-based tourism and recreation planning for the broader Northern Rivers “region” was in the NSW Far North Coast Nature-based Eco-tourism Plan (1995). This seminal work provides the foundations and presents the guiding principles, at a regional level, for ecological sustainability supporting the ensuing raft of planning instruments. Notably, among those are The Rainforest Way (2000), Bundjalung Cultural Tours (2003), Australia’s Green Cauldron (2008 & 2012) and North Coast Destination Management Plan (2013). In many respects, elements of the successive plans have built upon, or sought to deliver on, recommendations from the Nature-based Eco-tourism Plan.

At a “sub-regional” level, Tweed Caldera (NSW) specific initiatives have included a pre-feasibility study for An Environmental Interpretive Centre for the Tweed (2008) and the Caldera Sustainable Communities Project Community
Discussion Paper (2011). Both documents have sought to highlight the depth of local community engagement required to establish world class amenities and experiences for both local and visitor enjoyment.

At the centre of “local” natural-area planning are the Wollumbin National Park (NSW) specific initiatives contained within the Parks and Reserves of the Tweed Caldera Plan of Management (2004). The parks and reserves of this planning area are all considered in the one plan because, with the exception of the western Border Ranges, they form part of a common landscape, the Mt Warning shield volcano (also forming part of this spectacular landform are Lamington and Springbrook National Parks in Queensland). Most of the planning area is internationally renowned for its World Heritage listed subtropical rainforests (part of the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage property), outstanding landscapes, and the recreation opportunities it affords. The plan also provides for the protection of significant Aboriginal and historic cultural heritage values.

Appendix A encapsulates the key objectives of each document reviewed with accompanying indications of the types of nature based tourism experiences currently available within the region. It also captures the ongoing dialogue about potential experiences available in the region. All potential or existing experiences in Appendix A have been classified into either on-park or off-park. They provide an important indication into experiences that have been previously considered as options for improving the diversity of visitor experiences in the Northern Rivers region and/or relieving the pressures on the Wollumbin summit track.

Some key challenges to the progression of a number of the initiatives and recommendations in the reports catalogued in Appendix A are associated with the way tourism activities are managed across the Northern Rivers region. These factors include, though are not limited to, the diversity of land tenures, separated agency responsibilities, as well as independent local governments, marketing associations, and communities demonstrated to be insufficiently engaged with one another to facilitate sustainable tourism development. Nonetheless, sustainable nature based tourism development can be overcome by intra-regional and multi-agency collaborations such as demonstrated in the case of the Rainforest Way project. The case of the Rainforest Way highlights the importance of leadership, project management, dedication and negotiation to deliver tangible benefits and keep stakeholders at all levels sustainably engaged.

In addition to regional, subregional and local context considerations, there are important state and national level influences to consider such as those arising from the Visitor Economy Taskforce Report on doubling visitor expenditure by 2020 and the marketing focus on the Experience Seekers segment by Tourism Australia, respectively.

4 NATIONAL PARKS (NSW) INITIATIVES


The Recreational Planning Framework for NSW National Parks (McGregor 2004) was prepared as a first step in fulfilling a recommendation in the Draft NSW NPWS Visitor Use Charter (NPWS 2001) which states that the NPWS will undertake planning for visitor use of the reserve estate at a regional level. It sets out how recreation and nature tourism was to be planned for at the NPWS branch, regional and individual park levels. The second step was to monitor visitor use and undertake surveys to determine visitor satisfaction and use preferences.

The NPWS has comprehensive policies that, among other things, guide recreational use on parks in NSW. Plans of Management (POM) that have been prepared for many of the more highly visited parks, for example, Wollumbin (Mt Warning), further guide recreational use in specific parks. Statutory requirements, such as declared wilderness and relevant State Environment Planning Policies especially SEPP 14 and 26, also guide what are appropriate uses, including recreational uses, in a park.

The recreational planning framework’s aim was to provide strategic direction for recreation and nature tourism and should be read in conjunction with the reports referred to above. One common element between all these planning and policy documents is that they all recognise the need to protect the natural and cultural values of parks while
trying to provide for appropriate recreational use that will not threaten these values nor threaten ecological sustainability.

Although the NPWS manages recreational use in national parks, nature reserves, historic sites and state conservation areas, again collectively referred to as “parks” in this document, the agency acknowledges that it is not the only provider of nature-based recreation opportunities. Other agencies and landholders also provide opportunities for nature tourism and recreation, including the Departments of Sustainable Natural Resources and Sport and Recreation, regional tourism organisations, local government and private tourist operators. ‘As far as practicable, this planning framework is cognisant of the supply of recreation facilities and opportunities both on and off the protected area estate’ (McGregor 2004, p.1).

The NPWS is also a partner with other State Government departments, particularly Destination NSW3, in the planning and provision of nature-based recreation opportunities (TNSW 2003). Cooperative planning of this kind ensures a more balanced approach to what, and where, opportunities are provided across the NSW landscape. Again, the agency acknowledges that there is considerable scope for a wider range of agencies and peak community bodies to develop a range of strategic plans for outdoor, especially nature-based, recreation, such as a walking tracks strategy for NSW (McGregor 2003).

4.2 Situation analysis

The following recreation management issues were considered by McGregor (2004) as important for the NPWS to identify or achieve in developing the Framework:

- an agreed system for efficiently allocating resources between parks;
- a strategic planning approach that will help avoid the unnecessary duplication of similar visitor facilities and recreation opportunities;
- establishment of the role of recreation and tourism in accordance with the Visitor Use Charter (NPWS 2001) with the level to which it should promote recreational use varying from park to park;
- better information about who is using the parks, when and for what purpose, to ensure that fully informed planning and management decisions are made;
- variations in demographics, vehicular access and future recreational use patterns, necessitating implementation of a range of recreation management strategies throughout the state;
- promotion to the community about visitor facilities and recreational activities provided in parks and where these opportunities may be obtained;
- a balance between being responsive to appropriate community demands regarding the recreational use of parks and regulating use so as to minimise impacts on the natural and cultural values;
- mechanisms for accommodating increasing visitor numbers and competing interests amongst visitors within resource capacity limits, and
- adequate funding for future maintenance of recreation facilities, otherwise they can become a serious drain on resources and adversely impact upon park values.

4.3 Why develop a planning framework?

It was widely recognised that tourism was, and remains, an important component of the national, state and regional economies. Tourism, especially nature tourism, is one of the most rapidly growing sectors of the economy. The NPWS is an integral part of the tourism industry. The NPWS is expected to play a key role in the development of nature tourism, rather than be simply a supplier of visitor sites and facilities, but this must be done within the context of the pre- eminent need to protect a park’s natural and cultural values ahead of any other use of the park.

The principal reasons why planning is required, as summarised by McGregor (2004, p. 2-3) are as follows:

3 Formerly Tourism NSW
• Guide management in the rapidly evolving and growing nature tourism and recreation sectors;
• Better match recreation settings and facilities to appropriate recreation needs, thereby ensuring high levels of visitor satisfaction;
• Recognise the pre-eminence of declared wilderness and ensure use or development is in accordance with wilderness requirements;
• Determine where visitor facilities are most needed or where they should not be provided;
• Determine where priorities lie for capital and recurrent expenditure (i.e. where to direct resources);
• Guide the plan of management process by providing a strategic overview of recreational opportunities within the “region”, and by providing a basis for determining what recreational uses and facilities are generally appropriate for individual parks;
• Enable interpretation and promotion of parks to be better focused in order to meet organisational and visitor needs;
• Engender public support for parks by providing suitable recreation opportunities and experiences that instil public understanding and appreciation of parks;
• Provide guidance to commercial operators on the appropriateness of proposed commercial activities;
• Assist in the resolution of actual or potential conflicts between recreational users;
• Provide guidance to all existing and prospective users and project proponents as to what recreational activities and visitor facilities, if any, are appropriate and where they can occur;
• Enable sensitive areas to be identified and protected from inappropriate recreational use or development;
• Enable areas providing remote opportunities to be identified, protected and experienced;
• Establish an upper limit to the extent to which use and development of a site is permitted to change in order to preserve the desired recreation setting, thereby avoiding “recreation succession” (Worboys et al., 2001);
• Provide better visitor management by minimising environmental impact and recreational conflict, and
• Enhance people’s enjoyment of parks, while providing opportunities for a healthy outdoor lifestyle (Maller et al., 2009).

The pressures and demands that were, and continue to be, placed on most NSW parks are increasing as the community makes greater use of the parks and as resident and tourist populations grow. It is expected that this growth will continue, reshaping visitor expectations and needs. A detailed study of visitors to a group of major national parks (Griffin & Archer 2001) revealed very high levels of visitor satisfaction but this level of satisfaction would diminish if there was inappropriate use or development in the parks.

Providing for visitor use and the development of visitor facilities can extract a high environmental price, both from on-site impacts (e.g. site impact, effluent disposal, soil erosion) and off-site impacts (e.g. ad-hoc tracks, fire escapes, litter, landscape intrusion). There is a growing awareness that new visitor facilities should not be developed on lands in a substantially natural condition, on wetlands, undeveloped coastlines, skylines or escarpments or where there are significant species or cultural sites (McGregor 2004).

NPWS (1997) states that the agency can best provide for national park visitors by providing a cross section of opportunities, determining strategic locations for development and marketing and avoiding incremental and unplanned shifts to the developed end of the recreation opportunity spectrum (see Clark & Stankey 1979). This progressive change to a recreation setting is sometimes referred to as recreation succession (Worboys et al., 2001). Recognition of carrying capacity enables managers to provide a suite of recreation settings for a range of quality recreation experiences. Monitoring of key sites may be necessary to ensure the desired carrying capacity is not exceeded with consequential deterioration in the recreation experience and environmental quality.

With the establishment of clear objectives and environmental and social indicators, monitoring programs should be able to determine whether the change to carrying capacity is within acceptable limits (Stankey et al., 1985). When use levels, as perceived by the management authority or the consumer, are not considered as causing impacts on the
environment the conditions are deemed acceptable. Management actions, either by accommodating higher levels of use (perhaps through site hardening) or restricting the level of use, are necessary when environmental or social impacts occur. If higher levels of use are allowed, managers need to be aware of the implications these changes will have on the carrying capacity, recreation setting and visitor enjoyment.

4.4 Compatibility between recreation activities

Recreational activities, even nature-based ones, have varying degrees of compatibility with each other. In order to maximise visitor satisfaction it is important to recognise potential conflicts between recreational activities and manage them accordingly. Sometimes the potential conflict can be resolved simply by separating activities, while other activities have specific infrastructure or recreation setting needs.

The task of land managers is to provide various combinations of activities and recreation opportunities in ways that facilitate the widest achievement of desired experiences. Managers should not attempt to provide every type of experience opportunity at every park, but should provide for those experiences that are most appropriate to the recreation setting. There will be some recreation activities that are inappropriate in any park, while others may be inappropriate in only some parks. Consequently, the goal should be to ensure that recreation opportunity suppliers (both public and private) within a “region” collectively provide a range of diverse opportunities (Clark & Stankey 1979).

4.5 Providing for visitors

4.5.1 Visitor satisfaction

An essential consideration in planning for recreation in parks is to ensure visitors are satisfied with their park experience. Visitor satisfaction can be enhanced by minimising potential conflict between recreation activities, providing for a range of recreation opportunities across the landscape, and protecting the desired recreational opportunities sought by visitors.

There is some excellent survey methodology used to specifically measure visitor satisfaction, some of which has been applied in NSW parks (Griffin & Archer 2001). An understanding of visitor profiles is also important in understanding the preferences, needs and levels of satisfaction of park visitors. Much more research needs to be carried out on visitors to a region/site that identifies continually changing markets in order to develop profiles of each of the groups. Central to this is the development of a better understanding of the information needs of various audiences, both visitors and wider community, and evaluation of their satisfaction with such needs. It is therefore incumbent on the management agency to continually review and inventory the range of facilities and services provided across different recreational settings (Wearing & Archer 2002).

Visitor surveys of these kinds were outside the scope of the 2004 planning framework but McGregor (2004) recognised that they should occasionally be undertaken to ensure that the relevant desired outcomes outlined in the planning framework were being met. The outcomes from visitor surveys could also provide feedback into future planning frameworks by ascertaining visitor needs, and changes to these needs, over time.

4.5.2 Visitor facilities

The recreational planning framework acknowledged that NPWS has a major capital investment in visitor facilities such as visitor centres and displays, signage, camping and picnic areas, toilets and showers, tourist roads and car-parks, walking tracks and boardwalks, lookouts, boat ramps and wharves. The provision and maintenance of visitor facilities is probably the single greatest demand on park resources, both financial and human. Facilities are generally costly to construct and require regular servicing and maintenance. Existing visitor facilities may be inappropriately located and not meet visitor needs or be inconsistent with the desired recreation setting. Occasionally recreation facilities are inappropriately located within declared wilderness areas.
The provision of an appropriate range of recreation opportunities will have considerable influence on the type and extent of visitor facilities provided. It may be just as valid to remove or reduce park facilities to obtain the desired recreation setting as it may be to develop new or additional visitor facilities. It is important to note that not all visitor sites or facilities will appeal to all visitor sectors. The type of experience desired or attribute/facilities provided would largely determine which visitor sector will be attracted to a visitor site or park. Within a regional context parks should provide for a range of visitors, including age, socio-economic status, ability/disability and cultural variations.

Further, not all parks can or should be expected to play an equal role in meeting the needs of recreation and tourism. Some parks may not provide for recreation at all, others may provide for very specific visitor sectors only while others may play a much higher recreation and tourism role. Some parks will have a low carrying capacity while others may present hazards to visitors who are inexperienced or not self-reliant. Where consistent with the desired recreation setting, recreation sites can be “hardened” to withstand higher levels of use than the natural environment can sustain (McGregor 2004). All too often, however, this inadvertently leads to a change in the recreation setting. Some recreation sites do not have an appropriate balance of visitor facilities for the desired recreation setting. For example, a recreation site that provides for large groups but has no picnic tables or walks may not be a balanced site.

Recreation succession (or incremental development) of visitor sites occurs when there is a slow, progressive expansion in size of the site and/or facilities provided. This causes a shift towards a more developed recreation setting and the carrying capacity of the site may be exceeded (For further detail see McGregor 2004 sections 2.2 & 2.3). Recreation succession may attract a different user group while displacing the original users. The zoning scheme developed through the planning framework should be used to determine what type and level of development is appropriate (For further detail McGregor 2004 section 2.4).

Consequently McGregor (2004) recommended that visitor facilities should not be provided where:

- there is no demonstrated demand or need for them;
- they are adequately provided for elsewhere;
- they are in conflict with the natural or cultural values of the park; or
- they could result in a change to the desired recreation setting.

Consideration needs to be given to encouraging the private sector to provide some facilities off-park for traditional park visitors, although it may not always be possible to offer an equivalent high quality natural setting. There are some facilities, such as the provision of permanent accommodation, restaurants and even themed attractions which the NPWS may not need to provide on park, especially where this can be readily provided off-park.

4.5.3 Promotion and monitoring
Effective and appropriate “promotion” of what NPWS offers is critical to the success of any planning framework. The NPWS needs to clearly define its “products” (e.g. nature-based recreation opportunities) and client base, and promote how it seeks to meet the needs of the various visitor sectors (Griffin & Archer 2001).

Monitoring provides feedback to the NPWS, allowing improvements to be made to visitor services, providing a better understanding of visitor impacts on park values, and better predicting the changing needs of visitors (McGregor 2004). Promotion and monitoring guides efficiencies with respect to the provision for visitor facilities and interpretation services thereby facilitating higher levels of visitor satisfaction and improvements in NPWS management. Importantly, appropriate promotion and monitoring allows the NPWS to better direct visitors to where they will be able to find the recreation experience or setting they seek and thereby increase visitor satisfaction. It also indicates whether carrying capacity is being exceeded or there is a change to the recreation setting.

Within this national park planning context it is essential to review the wider political landscape within which “parks” are positioned and the opportunities and challenges that are brought to bear on them via external agencies and forces. The following section describes a selection of such key initiatives.
5 STATE GOVERNMENT (NSW) INITIATIVES

5.1 Introduction
The New South Wales government has, for several years now, recognised that national parks are not only part of the national fabric but integral in the mosaic of built and natural attractions that support and invite tourism to the State. This is also apparent in the literature (Moore et al., 2009; Weiler et al., 2013) and planning documents highlight the value of “parks” as recreation grounds and not just for their conservation values. Demonstration can be seen in an oscillation of planning perspectives ranging from historic State-based tourism master planning of national parks; for example, Towards 2020: New South Wales Tourism Master Plan 2000-2003 (TNSW 2002b); through levels of specific planning, Taskforce on Tourism and National Parks (Taskforce on Tourism and National Parks 2008); and promotion, Draft Promotions Plan: National Parks and Wildlife Service Northern Branch (EC3 Global 2009); and back again through contemporary whole-of-State initiatives, 2021: A Plan to make NSW Number One (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2011), the latter, being federally aligned to the National Long Term Tourism Strategy (Department of Resources Energy and Tourism 2009).

This section does not review in detail each of these other than to note that the common thread emerging is that the State government is interested in ‘creating a platform whereby visitor numbers and tourism expenditure can be increased, from [facilitation of] tourism in national parks and reserves’ (TTNP 2008, p. iii), and, in conjunction with its external and partnership promotional efforts ‘attract more visitors and match visitor needs with opportunities provided in national parks’ (EC3 Global 2009). The formal acknowledgement of NPWS in the tourism space was marked in 2008 with the establishment of a branch dedicated to tourism within Parks. As outlined within the (yet to be published) Draft NPWS Tourism Strategy (NPWS 2014) the creation of this branch assisted NPWS to successfully implement Living Parks: A Sustainable Visitation Strategy (DEC 2006) and assisted field branches with the development and implementation of Branch Visitation Management Plans (BVMP).

The Living Parks strategy envisaged ‘visitors enjoying, experiencing and appreciating our parks while park values are conserved and protected’ (p. 6). Building on Towards 2020 (Tourism NSW, 2002), the tourism master plan of the time, Living Parks provided a useful foundation for establishing baselines to increase visitation to protected areas of NSW. In fact, many actions contained within Living Parks are relevant today. In respect to localised impacts for the Northern Rivers and more specifically Wollumbin (Mt Warning) National Park, it is useful to note that regionally-based initiatives such as Rainforest Way and Australia’s Green Cauldron (further described in Section 6) are identified throughout as localised and context specific strategic levers for achieving State objectives.

5.2 Visitor Economy Taskforce Report & Industry Action Plan (2011)
As part of the NSW Government broad based reform, stemming from NSW 2021: A Plan to make NSW number One (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2011), the Visitor Economy Taskforce was established, among a suite of other priority industry sectors, to position NSW for strong growth. With the direct support of the State Government action plans were developed to drive growth and productivity and re-establish NSW as an economic leader. The Visitor Economy Taskforce gave a direct assessment of the NSW’s tourism industry and the Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan (Trade and Investment NSW 2012) was the Government’s response to the review. The industry action for the visitor economy has five high level principles that underpin the NSW economic framework and augments the North Coast Destination Management Plan (NCDN 2013). The five principles include:

- Demonstrate leadership;
- Make it easier to do business;
- Collaborate to drive innovation and competitiveness;
- Invest in critical infrastructure;
- Raise the global profile of Sydney and NSW.
The NSW Government identified through the industry action plan that a new culture and process was to be implemented by the regional stakeholders of the visitor economy through a destination management planning approach. Besides identifying and developing a process for the ongoing delivery of quality tourism products and visitor experiences, the North Coast Destination Network Board recognised that both the State and Federal Government had clearly identified a well-developed destination management plan as a key requirement for accessing future investment. The North Coast destination management planning response therefore was to incorporate the NSW State’s Vision for the 2020 Visitor Economy and recommendations and actions identified through the Visitor Economy Taskforce (Balding et al., 2012) and the Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan (Trade and Investment NSW 2012) into their regional destination management plan.

6 NORTHERN RIVERS (NSW) REGIONAL INITIATIVES

6.1 Introduction
A succession of Northern Rivers’ regional plans and strategies have been developed over the past two decades with perhaps the genesis of nature based regional development and planning situated within the Far North Coast Nature Based Eco-tourism Plan (Manidis Roberts Consultants et al., 1995). Seeding from this parental vision for tourism development in the Northern Rivers, the Rainforest Way (RFW) Communication Prospectus (Caldicott 2000), RFW Strategic Plan (Tiyce et al., 2000) and its subsequent Product Development Plan (Planning for People Pty. Ltd. 2006) followed by Australia’s Green Cauldron (AGC) Experience Development Strategy (TRC 2012) have all emerged as preeminent planning documents to attract visitation to the Northern Rivers and promote recreational opportunities within the region. Each has a focus on the World Heritage values of the Project area, inclusive of the Wollumbin (Mt Warning) National Park footprint. A further, non-implemented initiative was the Bundjalung Cultural Tours project (Macleay Business Enterprise Centre 2003), that also reflected the cultural and geological values of the region. More recent consultations with indigenous representatives, via the AGC project, have reignited the cultural tours concept and this aspect could now be pursued further though the more recent Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan 2013-2016 (Destination NSW 2013).

In simplistic terms, AGC is a regional subset of a federal initiative under the National Landscapes Program (NLP), showcasing Australia to a global audience. Each National Landscape is positioned in a unique way that capitalises on its individual appeal, attraction and offer, and this branding is supported by an Experience Development Strategy (EDS). As reinforced through the Draft NPWS Tourism Strategy (NPWS 2014) an important feature of the program, and therefore also of the EDS, is that tourism planning takes place at a landscape level. This means that tourism services, infrastructure, products and experiences can be integrated and presented to visitors in a seamless fashion and under a common brand and theme. While this approach presents some challenges in terms of collaboration with a range of stakeholders, these are outweighed by the opportunity for stakeholders to cooperatively plan high quality tourism experiences that make the best use of expert skills and knowledge in a range of areas (NPWS 2014).

Rainforest Way is the domestic link of the ACG showcasing the ‘way to’ the rainforests presented in a drive tourism format. North Coast Destination Network (NCDN), as the overarching lead agency for tourism marketing within the Northern Rivers, also presents an annual destination management plan (DMP) that serves to facilitate alignment between local grass roots initiatives, State-based planning objectives and federal (Tourism Australia) ideologies. The following section presents the fore mentioned plans in chronological order.

6.2 NSW Far North Coast Nature Based Eco-tourism Plan (1995)
The guiding principles underpinning this Nature Based Eco-tourism Plan (NBEP) were those of ecological sustainable development (ESD). Its purpose was to encourage the community, local government and visitors to see the Far North Coast as a ‘World Heritage’ region and to foster such high regard for the environment that many of the principles and values of the World Heritage concept would be reflected in community values and affect the way the community manages its natural, rural, and hopefully, its urban assets (Manidis Roberts Consultants et al., 1995).
6.2.1 Product audit
Clearly, as identified by Manidis Roberts Consultants (1995), there were a variety of tourism attractions available throughout the region, as audited at that time. However, it was identified that the true nature-based ecotourism attractions were only available within national parks and state forests with off-park commercial nature-based tourism attractions being very limited. Some of the viable off-park nature-based attractions included Pioneer Plantation, Avocado Adventure-land, Treetops Environment Centre, Minjungbal\(^4\) Trading Company and Crystal Creek Coffee.

There was also a variety of accommodation available in the region; everything from bed and breakfasts, farm stays and guesthouses to hostels, caravan parks, motels, lodges and resorts. However, most of this accommodation was along the coastline and fitted into the general tourism category rather than the nature-based or ecotourism segment of the tourism market. Unfortunately, little accommodation provided was meeting nature-based tourism criteria and only one accommodation establishment, Crystal Creek Rainforest Retreat, was meeting the new ecotourism definition (Commonwealth Department of Tourism 1994) at that time.

6.2.2 Product gaps
Visitor information and services at the local government level within the study area were found by Manidis Roberts Consultants (1995) to be of a generally good standard. However, there was identified room for improvement, particular in regards to the national parks and state forest areas. It was also identified that there had been several proposals to develop an education and interpretive centre on Mount Nullum which was considered as ‘ideally located to view the entire area - the Caldera, Mount Warning itself and the coast ’ (Manidis Roberts Consultants et al., 1995, Sect.D, p.3). This author notes that such development has not proceeded to date, despite the initial recognition some two decades earlier and more recent consideration further outlined in Section 7.

Pressures from visitor use were already evident at Mount Warning in 1995 where the majority of visitors are focused on a very small part of the National Park, around the summit. Manidis Roberts Consultants (1995) described environmental impacts including firewood collection, damaged vegetation, soil compaction and track making. Additionally, social impacts included overcrowding, resulting in a reduction in the visitor experience and congestion in the carpark, were evident. With expected growth rate of visitors and increased local population engaging with the World Heritage area it was important that visitation and the consequent impacts were managed. Thus, it was considered important, in 1995, to identify additional and or alternative opportunities for presenting World Heritage values to both the increasing local population and the increasing visiting population to spread the impacts. Locating facilities at Mount Nullum was considered as a mechanism to relieve pressure on Mount Warning. The economic viability and the environmental sustainability of any such proposal were recognised as requiring careful assessment. It was proposed, however, that such facilities, inclusive of an interpretive centre could serve as the primary facility of the region for demonstrating ESD and sustainable forestry in practice - noting that Mt Nullum was still under State Forest tenure at that time. A point of interest at this juncture is that there was no mention of the significance local Minjungbal indigenous culture, the opportunities this could bring for regional tourism, nor the concern of indigenous people in respect to climbing the Mountain (or Mt Nullum) raised throughout the Plan, despite the Minjungbal Trading Company in Tweed Heads being listed as a viable local attraction.

6.2.3 Experience development
The tourism industry in 1995 was shown, through the NBEP, to be in a state of transition with mass tourism declining as free and independent travel became the norm. In Australia, domestic visitation was relatively stable but international visitation was increasing at impressive rates. The Far North Coast, however, was perceived not to be capitalizing on this growth because it was deemed as not adequately adapting to changing visitor demands.

\(^4\) Minjungbal is a sub-clan of the larger Bundjalung Indigenous nation and is localised to the Tweed region.
Ratings by visitors on specific aspects of the visit suggested the need for new services that would improve visitor experiences for those visiting the region for its unique natural and cultural environments; including improved roads, signage, visitor facilities and new and additional products and services.

It was identified that eco-tourism and nature-based tourism attractions on protected and private land needed to be developed (Manidis Roberts Consultants et al., 1995). Similarly, eco-tourism and nature-based accommodation operators should be encouraged. Lastly, the area should seek constantly to improve its visitor services and information distribution in order to increasingly and effectively manage and attract domestic and international visitors. Clearly, it was seen that the management of tourism, including nature-based and ecotourism, was fragmented. It was evident that no organisation was taking responsibility for the leadership role, the numerous important tourism related functions including natural resource management, cultural and lifestyle product development, business support, marketing, community liaison, land-use planning and infrastructure.

To develop the World Heritage focus there were two important activities that were promoted through the Nature Based and Eco-tourism Plan:

1) The establishment of a task force that was designed to coordinate the development of a nature based and eco-tourism industry, paying particular attention to enhancing and protecting the World Heritage values of nominated areas and generating a World Heritage ethic among the tourist industry, all land managers and government.

2) The establishment of World Heritage facilities from information centres through to interpretive facilities in each of the four surrounding local government areas (LGA’s) - Tweed, Kyogle, Lismore & Byron - that will educate, motivate and reinforce the significance of the World Heritage area and the region’s natural and cultural resources and to establish World Heritage values as a focus for the region.

The task force would not be used to alter existing land-use management practices of government agencies but was to serve as a facilitator between existing management agencies, industry and local government to enhance the World Heritage image throughout the region. This would also entail continued consultation with relevant Southeast Queensland agencies. The Nature Tourism Task Force (NTTF) was consequently established (this author was a member of the Task Force) to be the lead agency in fostering the Rainforest Way Project and the Eco-lodge Project. The latter was an initiative to identify private and public lands suitable for high level eco-lodge development based on specific criteria and to develop a communication prospectus of such landholding (NTTF 2001; Stephen Fletcher & Associates Pty Ltd 2001).

6.3 The Rainforest Way (2000)

With its origins in the 1995 Nature Based and Ecotourism Plan, RFW anticipated dispersal of visitors from the coast to attractions in the hinterland. The vision of a primary touring route through Northern Rivers and South East Queensland was supported by seven complementary experiential loops and trails to provide enhanced visitor experiences and generate greater environmental, cultural, social and economic benefits for the NSW/Qld cross border regions (Caldicott 2000).

Capitalising on the unique World Heritage attractions of the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia, formerly known as the Central Eastern Rainforest Reserves of Australia (CERRA), the Project highlights the immense beauty and abundance of the region’s rainforest areas and the intrinsic values associated with the CERRA and the World Heritage status they hold. The project partners sought to encourage responsible and sustainable tourism development that respected the values of regional stakeholders and communities while remaining market-driven and responsive to the needs and wants of target markets. The main aim of the Project was to increase visitation and extend length of stay in the region – and, in so doing, offering opportunities for the development of business in hospitality and tourism to strengthen Qld/NSW cross-border partnerships.
The Rainforest Way is a themed touring route through the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales and the hinterland of Southeast Queensland that provides visitors with easy access to the natural attractions of the region and to some of the area's key cultural and historical attractions. The route provides a link between the lush and tranquil rainforests of the northern CERRA, many of which are easily accessible from the four major arterial corridors that service the region - Pacific Highway, Summerland Way, Bruxner Highway and Mt Lindsay Highway. The principal touring route links the NSW towns of Kyogle, Casino, Coraki, Woodburn, Lismore and Murwillumbah with the Qld towns of Natural Arch, Nerang, Beechmont, Canungra, Beaudesert and Rathdowney. Throughout the region, a number of larger centres provide essential services and many small towns and villages offer cultural attractions and are ideally located close to the rainforests and national parks. A network of secondary touring routes, or ‘loops and trials’, link the attraction clusters, or groupings of ‘things to see and do’, thereby extending the visitor experience and broadening the distribution of economic benefits to the hinterland (Caldicott 2000).

Complementing the core World Heritage theme, three additional themes were identified as appropriate for the development of loops and trials leading from the Rainforest Way. These themes were ‘lifestyle and culture’, ‘heritage and nostalgia’ and ‘landscape and agriculture’. These themes were interwoven into the total self-drive visitor experience. In many ways they were inseparable as a drive on the touring route can easily pass through all of these themes in one easy day’s drive (Caldicott 2000).

The Project, and its RFW Strategic Plan (Tiyce et al., 2000), received strong support from local government, state agencies and private tourism stakeholders in this cross-border region. The Rainforest Way was a significant contemporary element in the Northern Rivers Regional Tourism Action Plan (Rob Tonge and Associates & Proactive Consulting 2002) and fostered several key strategies from the Tourism New South Wales Region Action Plan 2000-2003 (TNSW 2002a).

From its humble beginnings in the Richmond Valley (Lismore, Kyogle and Richmond River Shires), the RFW began to develop a life of its own with the Project attracting significant bi-state interest with six local governments - four in NSW and two in Qld - all engaged and advocating for further support via their respective state agencies. These were inclusive of tourism marketing agencies, land conservation agencies and regional development agencies. Planning and communication of the Project continued through 2005/06 with a further set of plans and communication pieces released including a ‘prospectus for stakeholders’, ‘product development plan’ and ‘marketing plan’ (Planning for People Pty. Ltd. 2005a, 2005b, 2006).

6.4 Bundjalung Cultural Tours (2003)
The significance of traditional indigenous heritage and culture that permeates through lifestyles and landscapes of the Northern Rivers, whilst noticeably absent from the NBEP, was not lost within the fore mentioned RFW planning instrument. However, the influence of indigenous participants and the tangibility of indigenous experiences, as a market ready tourism product, were not readily visible nor were they operational at the beginning of the new century. However, not surprisingly, the footprint of the Bundjalung Nation, as retold through aboriginal stories, is one and the same as the RFW. The RFW geographical ‘landscape’ and Bundjalung mythological ‘country’ were mirrored, providing a complementary vehicle for product development and promotional tools meeting the objectives of dual project teams.

Under the auspice of the Bundjalung Elders Council Corporation, Richmond Valley Business and Rural Financial Counselling Services Inc. prepared a business plan to support a program of cultural tours across the Northern Rivers (Macleay Business Enterprise Centre 2003). The business plan was to demonstrate that the Bundjalung Cultural Tours (BCT) could fill a niche market in the tourism industry and become a viable operation. As a service business, operating in the tourism space the tours were targeting the international and domestic tourist market.

The program proposed offered a fully catered seven-day bus tour plus two additional three-day tours inclusive of accommodation and bush-tucker meals through the hinterland and coastal areas of the Northern Rivers region. The
tour was cited as the first of its kind in NSW offering tourists an insight into Aboriginal culture and allowing visitors to experience living culture in this area. While it offered significant potential for Indigenous employment and economic advancement, it also offered opportunities to preserve and present to the world Australia’s unique and diverse Indigenous cultures. The tour was planned around day and night activities reflecting the local cultural Aboriginal lifestyle, traditions and beliefs (Macleay Business Enterprise Centre 2003).

This business was considered unique, at that time, as participants were to be provided with a cultural introduction in the beginning of the tour; indigenous people would be driving the bus and an indigenous person would act as the general tour guide during the seven days. Pamphlets were to be provided outlining protocol guidelines for such matters as ‘not to enter’ property or sites without a guide present, ‘not to remove’ any plants or rocks, and ‘how to address’ Elders, as examples. Local indigenous people were to be selected as tour guides at the individual stops. The local Elders were to determine and engage the appropriate and approved person to provide the storytelling.

Although Aboriginal day tours are common throughout Australia providing a short glance into the Aboriginal culture it was considered that the tourism industry did not provide for the cultural diversity in the Aboriginal culture. ‘Australian Indigenous culture has, to date, been portrayed as a single Indigenous culture where boomerangs, didgeridoos, spears and dot paintings are stereotypical’ (Macleay Business Enterprise Centre 2003, p. 10). The uniqueness of the Bundjalung Cultural Tours was the collaborated effort of 10 different tribes providing tourists with a better understanding of the Indigenous culture and beliefs, demonstrating their cultural diversity. The theme of the tour is the Bundjalung Dreamtime Story, telling tourists about the creation of the land and later the creation of the Bundjalung people. Tourists would be welcomed on Aboriginal owned land, sometimes not accessible to non-Aboriginal people. Tourists would be included in daily activities such as swimming with the dolphins, diving for turtles and hunting wildlife for indigenous consumption purposes. All catering and most accommodation was to be provided by the Indigenous communities thus giving tourists an unique experience that otherwise was only to be found in the Northern Territory. Tourists were to accompany Aboriginal hunters only. Diving for turtles was to be on a catch and release basis only. Bush-tucker meat was to be sourced from commercial outlets or from private breeding grounds (Macleay Business Enterprise Centre 2003).

The diversity of the Northern Rivers region was also considered as providing a very unique and varied background as the tour progressed through tablelands, rainforests and the coastal areas. It was perceived that tourists would gain a real appreciation of Australia’s beauty and its people. ‘Tourists will not only gain a sense of adventure and appreciation of Australia’s beauty, they will also be provided with education about the Indigenous people of Australia and especially the people of the Bundjalung Nation’ (Macleay Business Enterprise Centre 2003, p. 9).

To this author’s knowledge (member of the Project Steering Committee), despite the conduct of a few sample tours and preliminary familiarisation tours, the Bundjalung Cultural Tours program has never been implemented. In relation to the opportunities for enhanced Indigenous cultural engagement, interpretation and employment for local people the BCT program did not feature a direct visit to Wollumbin (Mt Warning) within its itinerary even though the Tour commences at the Minjungbal Trading Company in Tweed Heads.

Some 10 years later, in 2013, Destination NSW undertook targeted consultation during the development of the Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan 2013-2016 in order to identify new ideas to support Aboriginal tourism businesses and tourism activities and to achieve ownership and commitment by stakeholders. The vision for same is to support the development of NSW Aboriginal tourism experiences, product and businesses leading to: a) a greater understanding of the richness of Aboriginal culture; and b) economic and social benefits for Aboriginal people, both as operators and employees (pp. 3-4). The nexus with Wollumbin (Mt Warning) National Park, and opportunity complimenting any initiatives to refocus visitation away from the summit walk, would be to engage the local Minjungbal people in new dialogue to develop sustainable market-ready and export-ready Aboriginal tourism products and experiences in the Northern Rivers.
6.5 Australia’s Green Cauldron (2008 & 2012)

Australia’s Green Cauldron (AGC) is one of Australia’s National Landscapes. It was accepted into the National Landscapes Program (NLP) in 2005 due to its volcanic origins and World Heritage values, satisfying three of four possible criteria for natural heritage of outstanding universal significance: Criterion I – outstanding examples of major stages of earth’s evolutionary history; Criterion II – including rainforest ecosystems and relict plant and animal species dating from Gondwana; and, Criterion IV – significant areas for the conservation of biological diversity (Edwards 2004). Encompassing the hinterland to the west of the Gold Coast and Byron Bay, ACG extends north to Tamborine Mountain and west towards Warwick taking in the volcanic semi-circle of the Scenic Rim region in Queensland and the Wollumbin (Mt Warning) caldera in New South Wales. The NSW caldera region is bordered by Border Ranges National Park to the west, Lamington and Springbrook National Parks to the north with Nightcap National Park in the south with Wollumbin (Mt Warning) National Park in the centre. The AGC includes 12 national parks most of which are part of the Gondwana Rainforest World Heritage Area, several other conservation areas and two marine reserves (TRC 2012).

The AGC also has a consistent footprint to that of the Bundjalung Cultural Tours and the Rainforest Way. Again, this is no coincidence as the AGC has its foundations deeply rooted in the extensive community and stakeholder consultations undertaken and the significant scaffolding that RFW planning provided in building the case to the Federal Department of Tourism to have the Wollumbin (Mt Warning) (NSW) and Scenic Rim (Qld) caldera regions accepted into the NLP.

As identified through the fore mentioned Plans, the eclectic mix of communities, and areas with high levels of cultural significance for Indigenous people, complete the picture of a special place now referred to as a ‘mysterious melting pot’ of nature and culture. Australia’s Green Cauldron has great potential for the Experience Seeker market through the provision of focused product development and marketing and by focusing on the region’s existing natural and cultural features and tourism products to showcase the ‘mysterious melting pot’ (TRC 2012, p. ii).

Under the auspice of the AGC Steering Committee, an Experience Development Strategy (EDS) (TRC 2012) was commissioned to identify opportunities to deliver ‘world’s best’ experiences consistent with the National Landscape positioning that must also balance the long-term economic benefits of tourism with the community and conservation values of the region. As identified by TRC (2012) Australia’s Green Cauldron region covers a vast area with many interesting natural, cultural and social opportunities. ‘Packaging these up in a way that appeals to the target market for National Landscapes (Experience Seekers) becomes quite a challenge’ (TRC 2012, p.ii).

The EDS provides a platform for achieving that balance by outlining the key experiences that will appeal to Australia’s Experience Seeker target market. Experience Seekers are a varied market differing by age, country of origin and spending power, but united by values, attitudes and motivations. They are typically well educated and are motivated by opportunities for personal growth, fulfilment and learning. They are discerning about experiences, especially the presentation of natural and cultural heritage.

‘Despite being one of the most accessible National Landscapes in Australia (due to its proximity to the major population centres of the Gold Coast and Brisbane), Australia’s Green Cauldron has maintained its distinctive unspoilt natural character and cultural identity, providing a very appealing destination for visitors seeking authentic experiences’ (TRC 2012, p. ii).

The EDS identifies that Wollumbin (Mt Warning) National Park, as the iconic peak in the centre of the Tweed Valley, is also a principle focus of the AGC. With its ancient volcanic caldera, encapsulating the Indigenous and natural significance of the region, Wollumbin (Mt Warning) becomes an obvious visitor drawcard. The EDS also identifies the juxtaposing positions of its visitor potential being underutilised while acknowledging the current summit walk is against the wishes of the Bundjalung people. This acknowledgement is significant in reflecting broader community values and respect of Indigenous cultural heritage that was not always evident in the earlier foundational plans.
Despite the juxtaposed position, however, the outlook for the next 10 to 15 years suggests that existing visitor flows through Australia’s Green Cauldron will intensify, mainly through the Brisbane and Coolangatta gateways and along the current road and rail transport corridors such as the Pacific Highway, currently branded as the Legendary Pacific Coast touring route. By 2025, it is estimated that one quarter of Australia’s population will live within northern New South Wales (especially the Northern Rivers Region) and South East Queensland. This is likely to result in increased visitation to Australia’s Green Cauldron from nearby centres of population and potentially from visiting friends and relatives from other states. Additionally, some local Councils associated with Australia’s Green Cauldron have pointed out that projected growth in population and visitor arrivals will drive further investment in transport networks (especially rail and upgraded roads), visitor infrastructure and facilities (TRC 2012).

The agencies responsible for management of the national parks within Australia’s Green Cauldron, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, both have policies supporting the development of sustainable nature based tourism in national parks for its benefits to State and local communities and as a way to gain public education and support for conservation. Both agencies also support appropriate partnerships with the community, Indigenous people and commercial operators in developing tourism opportunities.

The brand promise ‘Immerse Yourself in a Mysterious Melting Pot’ describes the experience that is to be delivered to the Experience Seeker through the experience development strategy (Calais Consultants & Associates 2008, p.6; TRC 2012, p.12) for the AGC. These “hero” experiences recommended through the EDS, and listed below, have been identified to deliver on this promise. The destination’s appeal and diversity encapsulate its geology and ecology, its geography (hinterland to coast), history (Indigenous to today), topography (from city skylines, to mountains, steep escarpments, hidden valleys, rural landscapes, ocean headlands and idyllic beaches), atmosphere (changing seasons and moods), creativity (arts, craft and music), culture/lifestyle (traditional to alternative, including alternative philosophies, spirituality and healing) and communities (rural, semi urban and alternative).

Because of this diversity, there is potential for Australia’s Green Cauldron to link to and leverage off the existing positioning for tourism in the various parts of the region - the Gold Coast, the Scenic Rim, Byron Bay and Northern Rivers. Australia’s Green Cauldron Steering Committee has identified two hero experiences for delivery of the destination’s brand promise (Calais Consultants & Associates 2008, p.6; TRC 2012, p.16):

1. ‘Touch Australia’s creative and spiritual heartland’

2. ‘Immerse yourself within three ancient mysterious calderas as you travel between world class rainforest and coast’

The hero experiences express the distinctive essence of Australia’s Green Cauldron as a destination where an amazing diversity of creative, spiritual communities, landscapes and natural wonders can be experienced within short distances of each other. Visitors can experience the coast, seaside resorts, iconic wildlife, rainforest, an ancient volcanic landscape, quaint villages, distinctive cultures, lifestyles, spirituality and creative communities - all in one or two days. It is this packaging of diverse components which provides the uniqueness and key selling points for Australia’s Green Cauldron – the promise of experiencing a mysterious melting pot (Calais Consultants & Associates 2008).

Developing visitor opportunities that connect the different elements is at the heart of the hero experiences. A crucial connection is that between the coast and the hinterland – both in terms of building compelling experiences and attracting visitors into the region in practical terms. Coastal destinations currently have the main pulling power for visitors – with the Gold Coast being the main current destination and gateway for global visitors. There is a need to draw visitors attracted to the Gold Coast and Byron Bay into the hinterland. This concept is beginning to gain traction with some visitors to the Gold Coast and Byron Bay. A small number of tour operators have already developed
products based on this opportunity (see for example http://www.greencauldrontours.com) as they see further potential for growth.

### 6.5.1 Current opportunities

Some of the leading opportunities listed by TRC (2012) for Experience Seekers currently are:

- viewing the landscape from a range of spectacular lookouts, either as part of a short walk or a road journey on the Rainforest Way – e.g. Springbrook National Park, Mt Tamborine, Greenhills Road in the Scenic Rim, Burleigh Heads National Park, Cunningham’s Gap, Border Ranges National Park;
- viewing the landscape from the air – hot air balloon rides and helicopter scenic flights from Ipswich and the Gold Coast;
- guided national park tours with several operators;
- wildlife encounters at Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary and David Fleay Wildlife Park;
- expansive views of land and sea from Cape Byron, the most easterly point in Australia – which can be combined with heritage experiences;
- adventures in the coastal environment – e.g. learning to surf, kayaking at Byron Bay (including near dolphins and near whales close to shore during the migration season), diving and snorkelling at Cook Island or Julian Rocks;
- climbing Wollumbin (Mt Warning) – although the Indigenous community does not support climbing the Mountain due to its spiritual significance;
- eco-accommodation and a range of rainforest and bushwalking activities associated with O’Reilly’s Rainforest Retreat and Tree Top Walk, Binna Burra Mountain Lodge and Mt Barney Lodge;
- the Gold Coast Hinterland Great Walk;
- Tamborine Skywalk;
- a wide range of accessible surfing opportunities.

More niche opportunities involve energetic climbs of Mounts Barney, Lindesay, French, Maroon and Edwards, further inland, with some guided products on offer. There is also a plethora of walking tracks and other trails in the region – though in many places these are not presented in a way that assists visitor choice (particularly for visitors on short visits).

The region’s road system is well suited for small group cycle touring, as evidenced by the popularity of weekend riding groups from Brisbane, the Gold Coast and elsewhere. Cycle tourism would also fit well within the region’s sustainability emphasis, providing a ‘green’ form of transport that might be marketed and packaged to reflect an environmental ethos. However, in many cases these opportunities (apart from surfing on the Gold Coast) are not clearly publicised and accessibly packaged to global Experience Seekers and many other visitors. The wide range of choice obscures the ‘must do’ experiences for many visitors, especially those on short itineraries (TRC 2012).

Some of the infrastructure associated with natural attractions and visitor interpretation does not meet the world’s best practice standards expected by global visitors in an iconic destination and World Heritage area. Standards and design of some lookouts and walking trails require upgrading, as well as the range of onsite, interactive and digital interpretation methods (TRC 2012).

### 6.5.2 Future opportunities

To harness the potential of existing experiences and provide a framework for new product opportunities, reinvigoration of the Rainforest Way is listed as a priority in the EDS for attracting both international and domestic day and overnight self-drive visitors. With a clearer focus on high quality ‘must do’ attractions, it has the potential to provide high quality journeys linking the collective appeal of Australia’s Green Cauldron communities and key experiences and products (TRC 2012).
Renewed discussions with Indigenous people in the region indicated a strong desire by some to establish Indigenous owned and run businesses, as well as to achieve more employment throughout the tourism sector. Recognising that such initiatives could add a highly appealing cultural dimension for global Experience Seekers it is apparent, through lack of reference, that the fore mentioned Bundjalung Cultural Tours did not surface during the EDS consultation stages. This may be a reflection of the fragmentation of regional agencies and the loss of ‘regional capital’ as key drivers leave the field. To engage further with Indigenous culture, greater participation of the Indigenous community is required throughout the industry, particularly on tours, at events and through storytelling. Skills and business development is needed to assist this. The EDS recommended that strengthening existing activities such as the Drumley Walk in Queensland (http://www.thedrumleywalk.com/) would also help to build profile.

Assuming reinvestment in the Rainforest Way will be treated as a priority, upgrading of spectacular lookouts along the Way would greatly assist in showcasing the variety of landscapes and providing interest to the journey. ‘This should include at least one icon tower or other lookout structure that is attractive in its own right’ (TRC 2012, p.24). A range of iconic walking and cycling opportunities could be developed and packaged – both products that are popular with global Experience Seekers and which build upon current interest in the region (TRC 2012). This will require walking trail upgrades and development. Opportunities identified include a walk near Wollumbin (Mt Warning) that showcases this iconic and attractive mountain enhancing visitor experiences and appreciation of its rainforest. The dilemma over Indigenous concern about the summit climb needs to be addressed and a workable solution developed. A similar issue about climbing of Uluru in Central Australia is being addressed by traditional owners and park management – dialogue between Wollumbin (Mt Warning) stakeholders and Uluru may provide guidance on ways to proceed.

Other potential opportunities identified through the EDS for longer walks included a potential Border Crossing Walk connecting the mountains and rainforest of NSW and the Scenic Rim in Queensland and enhancement and extension of the Gold Coast Hinterland Great Walk (TRC 2012).

6.6 North Coast Destination Management Plan (2013)

With the NSW State goal to double tourism by 2020, measured by overnight visitor expenditure, the new North Coast Destination Network will assist Destination NSW achieve that goal by implementing a comprehensive strategy to influence people to travel to the North Coast of NSW and create a sustainable tourism industry to help increase the economic benefits to the North Coast and to the State.

In June 2013, under the leadership of the NCDN Board, a North Coast Destination Management Plan (NCDN 2013) was created to provide a roadmap to achieve doubling overnight visitor expenditure by 2020. The creation of this plan is part of a DMP continuous process and is descriptive rather than prescriptive to ensure flexibility to meet the changing needs of consumers and communities. The idea behind a DMP continuous process means that there is no start or end date and direct and non-direct stakeholders can be consulted at any time to ensure the DMP is on the right path to create a sustainable destination management approach.

7 Tweed Caldera (NSW) Regional Initiatives

7.1 An Environmental Interpretive Centre for the Tweed (2008)

The Mount Warning Wollumbin Caldera National Landscape Program has the potential to develop internationally as a renowned and iconic landmark, however the report by Calais Consultants & Associates (2008) also notes the Murwillumbah Information Centre, as the single existing centre, does not attain international interpretive centre standards. Further, an interpretive centre was recommended to be located in close proximity to key park entry and use the caldera and rainforest ecology as its key interpretive objective and would reflect the iconic appeal of Mount Warning (Wollumbin).
Tweed Shire Council and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service have considerable land holdings covering the area known as Mt Nullum to the east of Wollumbin (Mt Warning) within the caldera. These land parcels provide an enormous diversity of flora and fauna in close proximity to key transport hubs. There is potential to meet the deficiency as highlighted in the Calais Consultants & Associates (2008) report by locating an international standard interpretive centre within the land parcels mentioned above. The Centre would require significant investment which could provide landmark attractions in keeping with the environment of its surrounds. Whilst Mt Nullum has been canvassed as a potential site due to its landscape and location, there may be other sites that require consideration. Prior to making any significant investment, it was considered necessary to commission a report which provides details and examples of other similar facilities, nationally and internationally (Baumer 2008).

Under the auspice of the Tweed Economic Development Corporation, a steering committee was formed to investigate pre-feasibility for an interpretive centre on Mt Nullum. The purpose of the pre-feasibility study was to develop a preliminary analysis of the viability of the proposed environmental interpretive centre. The study’s aim was to create a clear outline of the role, need for and objectives of the interpretive centre enabling further assessment through the feasibility study (Baumer 2008). Were the results of the report to be deemed favourable, the next steps in the planning process would include, a review of finance, environmental impact assessment, concept plan, and business plan as well as a more detailed assessment of structure and design elements of the interpretive centre.

The environmental interpretive centre proposed for the Tweed area is envisioned as a world-class standard, discovery, education and research facility to foster the interpretation of the natural, cultural and historic resources of the area. The interpretive centre aims to foster the tourism experience of the Tweed area in coordination, with the Green Cauldron project which has labelled the Mount Warning (Wollumbin) Caldera region as a national landscape of iconic significance.

The expression of an ‘interpretive centre’ as identified through community consultation (Baumer 2008) promoted an elevated tourism experience not only as an accessory to the attraction, the Wollumbin (Mt Warning) caldera, but also as a built attraction in itself and facilitate the complementary experience of the natural attraction. Among a variety of concepts for building design and interpretive attributes, a range of adventure experiences were also profited. For example:

- If a cable car or sky rail is used it could be designed to arrive inside the crater rim enhancing the experience of entering the caldera;

- Consider active, fun components to encourage young people to visit, e.g.
  a. Flying fox back down
  b. Abseiling back down
  c. Perhaps rock climbing up if suitable.

Based on the findings of this pre-feasibility study it was recommended that the concept required further planning to refine a range of issues inclusive but not limited to environmental impact assessments, costing and development plans. To this author’s knowledge the World Heritage interpretive centre concept for Mt Nullum has not been further progressed.

7.2 Caldera Sustainable Communities Project (2011)
This discussion paper forms part of the suite of some 13 projects initiated as part of the Caldera Sustainable Communities 2010 Project (Duke 2011). While the brief for the project has meant that the focus is on tracks and trails associated with the rural villages and districts of the Upper Tweed Valley, many of those identified could be part of a broader network - walking, cycling and paddling other areas of both Tweed Shire and our neighbours in the Green Cauldron.
During late 2009–early 2010, the Trails Working Group (TWG) from the communities of the Upper Tweed Valley undertook discussions and preliminary research with the aim of identifying potential recreational tracks and trails in their region. In documenting this work, it soon became apparent to Duke (2011) that in order to progress the concept and realise community goals, a range of significant issues would need to be considered.

For example, a number of the opportunities identified by the TWG, and in subsequent research, are within the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage Area and National Parks Estate. ‘There will therefore need to be dialogue between the community, tourism industry and land managers regarding access to, and use of, the National Park Estate into the future’ (Duke 2011, p.1). In addition to recording and identifying potential tracks and trails, the discussion paper was prepared to provide some of the contextual material and information that the community would need to assist in that process, and in developing and supporting a local ecotourism sector.

In researching the data for the discussion paper it had become clear to Duke (2011, p.1) that ‘there is an urgent need for the development of both local and regional ecotourism plans to coordinate and support community and business efforts to develop a sustainable and locally appropriate tourism industry’. The recommendations in the report of the NSW Taskforce on Tourism and National Parks (Taskforce on Tourism and National Parks 2008) provide support for the importance and potential of this region and, at the moment, without a proper plan to support their initiatives, Duke was concerned for both the community and local business that did not have the framework in place to ensure the tourism potential of the region is developed in a sustainable rather than ad hoc manner.

Further, Duke (2011, p.2) was considerate of the need to identify the limitations of the discussion paper stating ‘it is important to note that this is neither a strategy or a plan. Rather, as a Discussion Paper, it seeks to provide background data for consideration as part of a broader more formal planning framework’. The initial aim was to identify the opportunities and produce maps and promotional material. However, as already highlighted it soon became apparent that many variables would need to be considered in order to provide context and assess feasibility. While there were not the resources available to develop a formal plan within the timeframe available, the Discussion Paper was produced to start working towards that end.

‘As a Discussion Paper the potential opportunities identified here are not formal recommendations. The tracks and trails discussed are based on those identified by current users, and members of the Trails Working Group’ (Duke 2011, p.2). Selection of those included within the Paper took into account the aims and permitted visitor uses in the current relevant National Parks Plan of Management (Edwards 2004). Although cautioned by Duke (2011, p.2) that ‘most, but not all, are consistent with the current plan – inclusion here does not therefore necessarily indicate that all are accepted options at present’. However, where appropriate, after careful consideration and research, Duke is flagging the potential for future amendments to the existing plans of management.

Bearing in mind cautions issued, those interested in the range of track/trails listed within the discussion paper for walking, cycling, paddling, or horse-riding can view same at:

8 WOLLUMBIN (MT WARNING) NATIONAL PARK (NSW) SPECIFIC INITIATIVES

8.1 Parks & Reserves of the Tweed Caldera Plan of Management (2004)

The plan of management for the parks and reserves of the Tweed caldera establishes the scheme of operations in accordance with the provisions of Sections 75 and 76 of the National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1974. It encompasses the national parks and nature reserves commonly known as the Tweed caldera, all of which form part of the ancient Mt Warning (or Wollumbin) shield volcano in far northern NSW. The planning area encompasses Wollumbin (Mt Warning), Border Ranges, Mebbin, Nightcap, Goonengerry and Mt Jerusalem National Parks and Limpinwood, Numinbah and Snows Gully Nature Reserves.
As identified by Edwards (2004, p.iii) the ‘parks and reserves of the planning area are all considered in the one plan because, with the exception of the western Border Ranges, they form part of a common landscape – the Mt Warning shield volcano. (Also forming part of this spectacular landform are Lamington and Springbrook National Parks in Queensland). Most of the planning area is of international renown for its World Heritage listed subtropical rainforests (part of the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage Property), outstanding landscapes, and the recreation opportunities it affords. The majority of Border Ranges NP and all of Limpinwood NR is declared wilderness, thereby affording a sense of remoteness and solitude. The plan also provides for the protection of significant Aboriginal and historic cultural heritage values.

A wide range of nature based recreation opportunities as described by (Edwards 2004) are provided in the planning area. Some outstanding scenic drives are provided, including the extensive Tweed Scenic Drive in the Border Ranges with its focus on rainforests and views into the Tweed Caldera. Such driving opportunities are rare elsewhere. There is also a diverse range of spectacular bushwalks including: the summit walk in Wollumbin (Mt Warning) NP; Antarctic beech forest walk in Border Ranges NP, and walks to towering waterfalls in Nightcap NP. Three camping and 11 day use areas are provided in the planning area. Horse riding is also provided on a range of trails in those parts of the planning area where the activity can be undertaken safely and sustainably.

8.2 Aboriginal Heritage

The NPWS recognise that the Aboriginal peoples are the original custodians of the lands, waters, animals and plants of the planning area. Despite being dispossessed, the local Aboriginal community maintain a unique and deeply felt association with and connection to the land and water of the planning area. The land and water biodiversity values within a whole landscape context are the centre of Aboriginal spirituality and contribute to Aboriginal peoples’ identity. Aboriginal communities associate natural resources with the use and enjoyment of valued foods and medicines, caring for the land, passing on cultural knowledge and strengthening social bonds. Aboriginal heritage and nature are inseparable from each other and need to be managed in an integrated manner across the landscape. The NPWS acknowledge and respect this attachment and the traditional laws, customs, beliefs and culture of the local Aboriginal community. The NPWS seek opportunities for partnerships with the local Aboriginal community in managing and conserving natural and cultural heritage (Edwards 2004).

The anthropological and archaeological attributes of the Far North Coast region have indelible connection for the local Aboriginal peoples. They are closely interrelated and bound together by their “Dreaming” and it is highly important that all sacred sites are protected. If one site is damaged, all sites associated with that “Dreaming” are affected in some way (Heron et al, 1996). Whilst many of these sites are protected due to their location in remote forest, some culturally significant sites are subject to varying levels of recreation use. These include sites in Wollumbin (Mt Warning), Nightcap and Mt Jerusalem NPs. There is evidence of inappropriate levels of visitor use at these sites causing impacts. Assessment and monitoring of these sites need to be undertaken in partnership and with the consent of local Aboriginal people (Edwards 2004).

8.3 Guidelines and actions

In consideration of the above, guidelines and actions specific to Wollumbin (Mt Warning) National Park as identified by Edwards (2004, p. 53) include:

8.3.1 Breakfast Creek

- Undertake a feasibility study for a transport system such as a shuttle bus service to transfer visitors to and from the walking track head at Breakfast Creek. This would operate during peak visitation periods with the intent to reduce traffic and parking congestion whilst maintaining visitation at a sustainable level;
- Identify parking bays at Breakfast Creek to improve parking patterns including an emergency vehicle bay and bus parking and turnaround if feasible;
• Promote alternative visitor opportunities in the Tweed region to reduce visitor pressure on the Summit walking track;
• In consultation with the local Aboriginal community, information will be provided at the Mt Warning car park to explain the cultural values and significance of the mountain to Aboriginal people and to discourage inappropriate use of the mountain.

8.3.2 Car Parking
• Improve parking patterns and reduce encroachment on adjoining vegetation at day use areas at Breakfast Creek in Mt Warning NP. This may involve the installation of bollards, rehabilitation and resurfacing works.

8.3.3 Public Roads
• Coordinate with local government and relevant agencies regarding the integrated management of public roads linking with park roads to provide consistent road standards and more efficient road maintenance.

9 SUMMARY

In summary, the range of plans and strategies presented, both in the context of national, State, regional and park specific initiatives, demonstrate the global significance of Wollumbin (Mt Warning) National Park from a ‘World Heritage’ perspective right through to ‘local’ recreational opportunity. Visitation to the Mountain is a phenomenon that is integral to values at all levels but is a management issue still waiting to be addressed. For example, the juxtaposed positions of positive global promotion on one hand and the subsequent negative visitation impacts on the other hand remain unresolved. The reviewed reports spanning two decades from 1994-2014 have, to some extent, recognised these issues and some attempts to remedy same have been the source of the many recommendations presented.

Table 1, attached as Appendix A, encapsulates the key objectives of each document reviewed with accompanying indications of experiences currently available within the Wollumbin (Mt Warning) National Park and potential experiences either on-park or off-park (within surrounding parks, reserved or private lands) that have been previously considered as options for improving the visitor experiences and/or relieving the pressures from the Summit Walk of the Wollumbin (Mt Warning) National Park.

The authors conclude that a barrier to progressing many of the initiatives presented throughout this report, and its forbears, including repetitious but unfulfilled actions, stems from the inherent fragmentation of tourism management across the Northern Rivers. This fragmentation is inclusive of authority, function and practice. Independent land tenure, independent agency responsibilities, independent local governments - each with their respective but independent legislative frameworks - coupled with independent marketing associations and fiercely independent communities that are insufficiently engaged with each other are significant hurdles to the common interests of collaborative and sustainable tourism development. This is not to suggest that such collaborations are not possible within this region. The Rainforest Way project, as a successful case study, demonstrates that true inter and intra-regional and multi-agency collaborations can and have occurred with some success (Smith 2011). What this case study illustrates though, is that it takes a well-respected lead agency (e.g. NTTF), with a dedicated, professional, skillful and respected project leader to ‘herd the cats’ - break through the parochialism; negotiate fruitful outcomes; deliver tangible benefits; and, keep stakeholders at all levels sustainably engaged. Recognising that additional barriers exist, such as resourcing, incentives and partnerships, the Rainforest Way experience demonstrates that such barriers can often be overcome through timely stakeholder commitment to project collaboration and respected leadership.
10 REFERENCES


Planning for People Pty. Ltd. 2005a, *Rainforest Way: marketing plan*, Ballina, NSW.


## APPENDIX A - CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF DOCUMENTS RELATIVE TO WOLLUMBIN (MT WARNING) NATIONAL PARK (1994-2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Existing Experiences</th>
<th>Potential Experiences</th>
<th>Inside Park</th>
<th>Outside Park</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>NSW Far North Coast Nature-based &amp; Eco-tourism Plan</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>To be the guiding light for sustainable tourism development. To encourage the community, local government and visitors to see the Far North Coast as a ‘world heritage’ region and to foster such high regard for the environment that many of the principles and values of the world heritage concept are reflected in community values and affects the way the community manages its natural, rural, and hopefully, its urban assets.</td>
<td>Murwillumbah World Heritage Rainforest Visitor Centre</td>
<td>Lyre Bird Walk</td>
<td>Summit Walk</td>
<td>Staged Caldera Scenic Rim-walk Trail</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rainforest Way (RFW) Strategic Plan</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>With its origins in the 1995 Nature-based and ecotourism Plan, RFW anticipated dispersal of visitors from the coast to attractions in the hinterland through a vision of a primary touring route with complimentary experiential loops and trails through Northern Rivers and South East Queensland to provide enhanced visitor experiences and generate greater environmental, cultural, social and economic benefits for the cross border regions.</td>
<td>Bushwalking, Picnicking, Photography, Sightseeing, Barbeques, toilets, shelter shed and car park</td>
<td>Summit track</td>
<td>Lyre Bird track</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Bundjalung Dreamtime Tours Business Plan</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>The business plan was to demonstrate that the Bundjalung Cultural Tours could fill a niche market in the tourism industry and become a viable operation. As a service business, operating in the tourism space the tours were targeting the international and domestic tourist market. The program proposed offered a fully catered seven-day bus tour plus two additional three-day tours inclusive of accommodation and bush-tucker meals through the hinterland and coastal areas of the Northern Rivers.</td>
<td>No specific physical inclusion of Mt Warning (Wollumbin) NP within the itinerary. The Tweed connection was via the Aboriginal Land Corporation based at Minjumbal Aboriginal Museum Arts and Craft Centre in Tweed Heads</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>The Recreation Framework for NSW National Parks</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>This Plan was prepared to fill a preliminary recommendation in the draft NPWS Visitor Use Charter (NPWS 2001) which states that the NPWS will undertake planning for visitor use of the reserve estate at a regional level. It sets out how recreation and nature tourism was to be planned for at the NPWS branch, regional and individual park levels.</td>
<td>The focus is strategic across parks, not specific within a particular park</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Parks and Reserves of the Tweed Caldera Plan of Management</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>The Plan provides a framework on how the planning area will be managed in the years ahead. It aims to inform NPWS staff, the community and other agencies proposing desired outcomes, guidelines and actions to protect the values and to address the issues affecting the planning area. These relate to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage and management of visitor use, other authorised activities and park management.</td>
<td>Summit Walk</td>
<td>Encourage commercial involvement of local Aboriginal people</td>
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<td>Install interpretive signage at carpark to explain the Aboriginal cultural significance of the mountain and to discourage inappropriate use</td>
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<td>Protect the deteriorating heritage of Long Creek Tramway (Border Ranges) &amp; Kunghur Flying Fox (Nightcap)</td>
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<td>Promote education on World Heritage &amp; provide information to the tourism industry and tour operators to assist in presenting World heritage values of the area</td>
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<td>Promote alternative visitor opportunities in the Tweed region to reduce visitor pressure on the Summit walking track.</td>
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<td>Cancel the former SFNSW occupation permit held for the proposed flying fox tourist attraction in Mt Jerusalem NP. Remove existing fencing and flying fox materials and close the site.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Rainforest Way: Infrastructure, Product and Signage Strategy</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>The major goal is to develop sustainable touring routes that increase economic activity in some (Northern Rivers) locations while reducing the environmental and other impacts on other (hotspot) areas of the region.</td>
<td>World Heritage Interpretive Centre</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Mt Warning Wollumbin Caldera National Landscapes Program (Brand Development and Product Audit)</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Tourism Australia and Parks Australia have forged a partnership between tourism and conservation agencies identifying Australia’s iconic landscapes, which capture and promote the best of Australia and are sought after by the global target audience of Experience Seekers. This project aim is to undertake Brand Development and an Experience Audit for the Mt Warning (Wollumbin) caldera which straddles the eastern side of the NSW/Queensland border.</td>
<td>Mt Warning View</td>
<td>Base Circuit Walk</td>
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<td>Drive</td>
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<td>Gold Coast Scenic Circuit</td>
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<td>Summit Walk</td>
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<td>Base Circuit Walk</td>
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<td>Rainforest Interpretive Centre</td>
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<td>Indigenous Tours</td>
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<td>Increased Interpretations</td>
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## Purpose

To provide some contextual 
To identify potential recreational 
The Experience Development 
To provide the roadmap to 

### Existing Experiences

- Mt Warning Interpretive Centre
- Visitor Information Centre
- Various alternate walking/cycle trails proposed both on/off Park Estate
- Address the indigenous peoples' concerns about climbing Wollumbin
- Develop high quality alternative walking track that provides alternative to the summit walk
- Incorporate $2f indigenous guiding
- Develop a world class day walking track at the base of Mt warning
- Enhancement of Rainforest Way inclusive of at least one icon tower or other lookout structure that is attractive in its own right
- Work with accommodation providers and upgrade camping facilities to cater for contemporary trends (e.g. eco-lodges, heritage cottages, retreats, glamping and campervans)
- Establish indigenous owned and operated business
- Establish a ‘gateway’ interpretive centre

### Potential Experiences

- Mt Nullum Environmental Interpretive Centre
- Summits climb that attracts numerous visitors
- Short walk provided at the foot of the climb
- Various alternate walking/cycle trails
- Address the indigenous peoples’ concerns about climbing Wollumbin
- Develop high quality alternative walking track that provides alternative to the summit walk
- Incorporate $2f indigenous guiding
- Develop a world class day walking track at the base of Mt warning
- Enhancement of Rainforest Way inclusive of at least one icon tower or other lookout structure that is attractive in its own right
- Work with accommodation providers and upgrade camping facilities to cater for contemporary trends (e.g. eco-lodges, heritage cottages, retreats, glamping and campervans)
- Establish indigenous owned and operated business
- Establish a ‘gateway’ interpretive centre

### Inside Park

- √

### Outside Park

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### Asset/Experience gaps:

- Indigenous culture and aboriginal experiences
- Integrated trails
- Interpretive centres
- Lookouts and viewing platforms

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[Final Report (1/3) - Alternative Experiences to Summiting Wollumbin (Mt Warning)](https://example.com/alternative-experiences-mt-warning)