Mount Remarkable National Park

Management Plan Amendments 2021

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Government of South Australia
Department for Environment and Water

Minister's foreword

Mount Remarkable National Park conserves one of the last major rugged woodland areas in the southern Flinders Ranges, with spectacular landscapes and scenery. It provides a major recreation opportunity for bushwalking, camping, mountain bike riding, and nature study.

In June 2021, the Department for Environment and Water sought the community's views about proposed changes to the management of the park to allow for greater visitor services and eco-tourism opportunities through the release of a draft amendment to the Mount Remarkable National Park Management Plan 2006.

All submissions received on the draft amendment have been considered and have assisted in the development of this final amendment. I thank all those that made a submission.

I am now pleased to adopt the Mount Remarkable National Park Management Plan Amendment 2021.

David Speirs MP
Minister for Environment and Water

Why was this plan amended?

Providing new opportunities for recreation and tourism

Ten million dollars has been committed to developing a new nature-based tourism destination for South Australia in the Southern Flinders Ranges precinct. This includes $5 million State Government investment as part of the Parks 2025 program.

Mount Remarkable National Park will benefit from this funding through the development of hiking and mountain bike trails, and the upgrading of existing visitor facilities. The construction of new and improved facilities will occur over a number of phases, with some work already underway.

To implement the full suite of proposed projects and enable greater visitor services in the park, the Mount Remarkable National Park Management Plan required amendment. This includes changes to broaden the areas where cycling tracks may be developed, make allowances for guided four-wheel drive (4WD) tours under certain circumstances, and provide principles for ecologically sustainable tourism accommodation developments.

All future development will need to preserve and enhance park values. The amendments outlined here facilitate ecologically sensitive development while expanding park visitor access and enjoyment to a wider variety of users.

Managing total grazing pressure

Since the adoption of the Management Plan in 2006, it has become apparent that excessive total grazing pressure is having a detrimental effect on native vegetation and on park plant diversity.

A variety of strategies will be investigated for the management of kangaroos, and other feral species that are contributing to the overall grazing pressure. Strategies for the management of total grazing pressure may include culling of kangaroos when there is evidence suggesting that overpopulation is impacting on the habitat quality of the park and culling is the only practicable method of control.

Tourist Accommodation

Mount Remarkable National Park contributes to the local tourism sector by providing high quality nature experiences such as camping, bushwalking and cycling in an accessible location which provides a sense of remoteness and beauty.

The park has seen consistent growth in visitation over time, leading to a change in visitor requirements. Current overnight visitors are restricted to the highly popular Mambray Creek and Old Baroota campgrounds, or bushcamping sites accessible by foot only in remote areas of the park.

The challenge of managing changing visitor requirements while maintaining the natural values which make this park unique is an ongoing priority. Part of meeting that challenge will be providing better visitor services without diminishing the values of the park.

The amendments outlined here will enable government to partner with the private tourism sector to develop appropriately-scaled, ecologically sensitive tourism accommodation within Mount Remarkable National Park. The amendments lay out a set of principles to guide development, and make a change in the Conservation Zone to allow these principles to be enacted.

Two priority strategic areas envisioned for tourism accommodation are outlined below. Tourism accommodation outside of these areas is not considered appropriate development in Mount Remarkable National Park at this stage.

Any proposal for tourist accommodation within the park will need to be assessed on its merits, including through an analysis of risks to park values, and a formal planning and approval process under the provisions of the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016*.

Amendment 1
Section 4, page 6 – Conservation Zone, following the third paragraph
Text to be added
Tourist accommodation of an appropriate scale and form may be considered in certain areas of lower biological and cultural sensitivity within the Conservation Zone, subject to an assessment process which considers the principles outlined in section 8.6 Tourism Accommodation.

Amendment 2

Section 8, page 25, after 'Information and Interpretation'

Text to be added

8.6 Tourist Accommodation

To respond to growing visitation to Mount Remarkable National Park and changing visitor expectations, the Department for Environment and Water may collaborate with the private sector to enable ecologically sustainable tourism accommodation in the park.

For tourism accommodation to be ecologically sustainable it must safeguard the park values that attract visitors. Any development must be located and designed to protect park values, including environmental, historic, scientific, aesthetic, and cultural values.

All tourism accommodation in Mount Remarkable National Park must:

- Utilise the existing management track network to the greatest extent possible for the transport of waste, water, visitors, emergency services, and other transport requirements of the site during construction and operation.
- Demonstrate application of the mitigation hierarchy (avoidance, minimisation, rehabilitation, offset) in designing for and mitigating against any impacts to native vegetation through the development and operation of accommodation, with a focus on avoidance. All developments will be subject to requirements under the *Native Vegetation Act 1991*.
- Offer a unique experience which encourages environmental stewardship and visitor connection with the values of the park.
- Apply best practice sustainable design in terms of materials and environmental performance which is sympathetic to the natural and aesthetic values of the park, and which allows for the accommodation to be relatively self-sufficient.
- A Conservation Dividend may be required in addition to the lease or licence for these activities and will be used to contribute to approved conservation programs in Mount Remarkable National Park.

A formal planning and approval process under the provisions of the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016* will also apply to all private development applications within park boundaries.

Tourism accommodation is envisioned in two key strategic areas described in the text below and shown in Figure 5. Each area represents different opportunities for tourism accommodation development.

The Warren Bonython Link

This area was grazed by domestic stock until its incorporation into Mount Remarkable National Park in the year 2000, and as a result is of lower conservation quality in some areas than many other sections of the park. Developments envisioned in the Warren Bonython Link includes singular or clustered, micro-small scale, individual structures that can accommodate multiple visitors. Any development must not negatively impact important grassy woodland communities present in the area, including rare white box (*Eucalyptus albens)* woodland.

Adjacent existing campsites in Mambray Creek

Tourism accommodation is envisaged for Mambray Creek where it complements and expands existing camping options in the precinct. Developments envisioned near Mambray Creek include a limited number of small-scale, single storey structures that can each accommodate multiple visitors. A key consideration in this area is the potential impact on existing infrastructure surrounding the Mambray Creek campground, such as vehicle tracks and hiking trails. Tourism accommodation developments may need to provide for the sustainable development of additional parking, toilets and other visitor services to support existing park infrastructure.

Objective

Enable the development of ecologically sustainable tourism accommodation developments within Mount Remarkable National Park in key strategic areas which contributes to the environmental, cultural and social values of the park.

Strategies

- Undertake a detailed assessment for all proposals for tourism accommodation within key strategic areas to understand potential benefits and impacts to park values.
- Ensure all tourism accommodation proposals are designed to manage impacts to park values and are complementary with existing park visitors.
- Ensure tourism accommodation developments deliver long term benefits to conservation values in the park through a dedicated conservation payment included as a part of any lease.

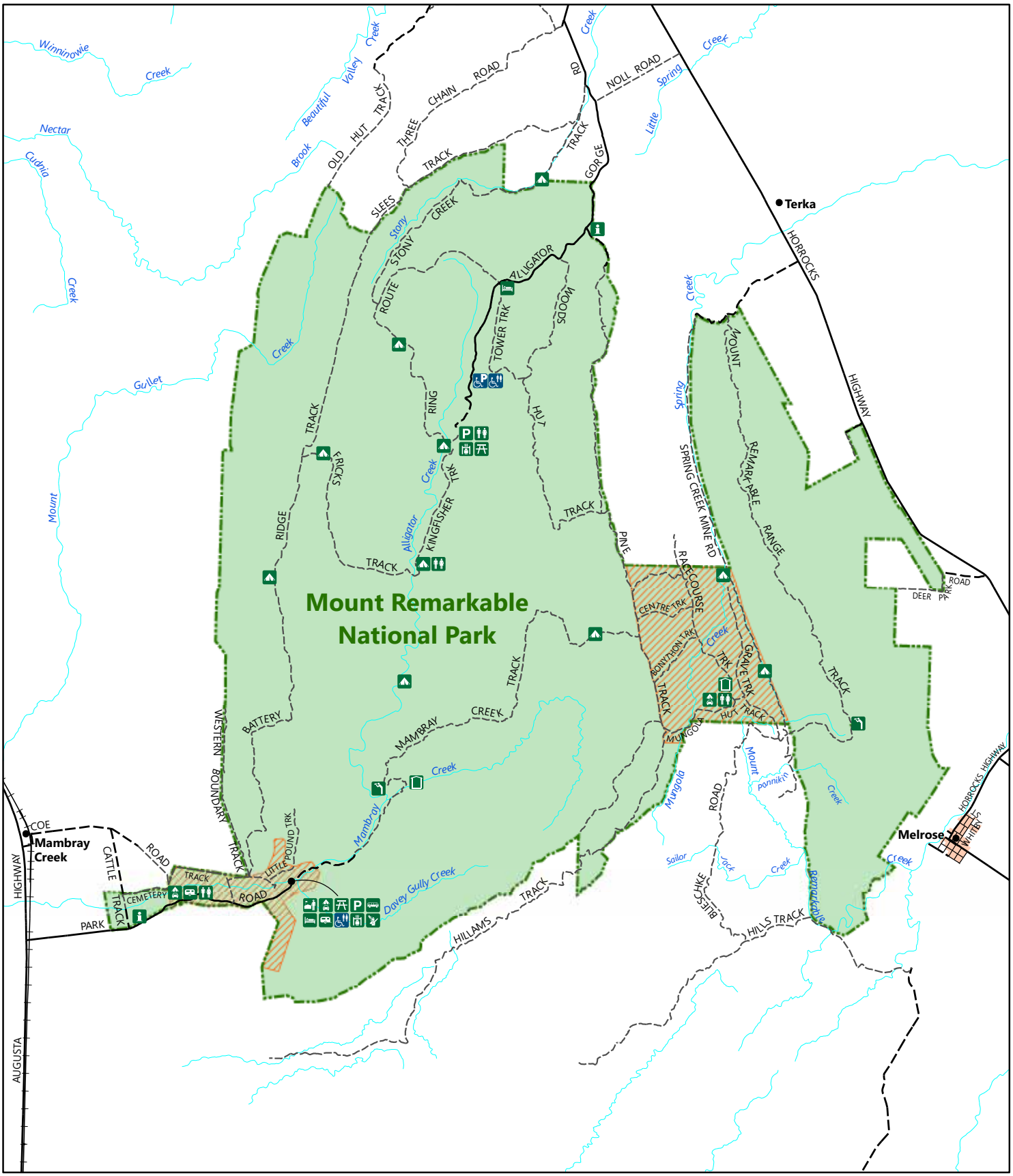


Figure 5

Mount Remarkable National Park

Tourism Accommodation Areas

0 km 2 4

LEGEND

- Tourism Accommodation Area
- Mount Remarkable National Park
- Built-up area
- Sealed road
- Unsealed road
- Vehicle track
- Railway
- Watercourse
- Accessible toilet
- Accessible parking
- Accommodation
- Barbecue facility
- Bus parking
- Bush camping
- Campground
- Caravan site
- Hut
- Information
- Lookout
- Parking
- Picnic area
- Ranger station
- Shower
- Toilets

New Zoning

To accommodate the expansion of visitor services, some amendments are required to the existing zoning provided in Figure 2 on page seven of the Management Plan.

There are two primary changes proposed for zoning. The first change is to increase the extent of the Mambray Creek Visitor Use Zone to link the lands between Mambray Creek and the Old Baroota campgrounds. This increase will enable the Department for Environment and Water to develop new visitor experiences in adjacent areas of lower conservation value. It will also enable upgrades to existing camp sites and infrastructure to allow for a wider variety of camp vehicles and experiences.

Planned developments in this area includes the creation of a permanent, environmentally sensitive shelter that acts as a base for volunteers and tour operators and an expansion of existing camp offerings. A new works depot and staff housing are also envisioned. Private tourism accommodation may also be considered within this area to complement existing options, in-keeping with the principles outlined in section 8.6.

The second zoning change is to create a new Visitor Use Zone in the Willowie section of the park, to better reflect the changed management priority of this region. Increased mountain bike trailheads, picnic areas and parking facilities are proposed in this section, primarily over a previous development footprint.

Insets of Telowie and Napperbly Blocks have not been included in this updated zoning map as these areas are currently in the process of being incorporated into a different reserve in the Southern Flinders Ranges. These areas will continue to be managed for conservation while the proclamation process continues.

Amendment 3

Section 4, page 05 – 'Visitor Use Zones', first paragraph

Text to be deleted	Text to be added
The Visitor Use Zones comprise two separate areas identified through historical use and vegetation clearance as the most appropriate for high-level visitor use and the development of visitor facilities.	The Visitor Use Zones comprise three separate areas identified through historical use and vegetation clearance as the most appropriate for high-level visitor use and the development of visitor facilities. The Willowie Visitor Use Zone is an area of previous disturbance intended primarily for the development of trailheads, picnic areas and parking facilities. The development of any new trails from the Willowie Visitor Use Zone into the surrounding Conservation Zone will be sensitive to other park values. A priority will be protection of Peppermint Box (*Eucalyptus odorata*) Grassy Woodland, an ecological community listed as critically endangered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), and other EPBC listed communities which have been recorded within the former Willowie Forest.

Amendment 4

Section 4, page 07 – Figure 2

Figure 2 to be updated with Figure 2a

Figure 2 will be updated to include:

1. Expansion of the Visitor Use Zone around Mambray Creek
2. New Visitor Use Zone around Willowie cycling precinct

Figure 2 (to be deleted)

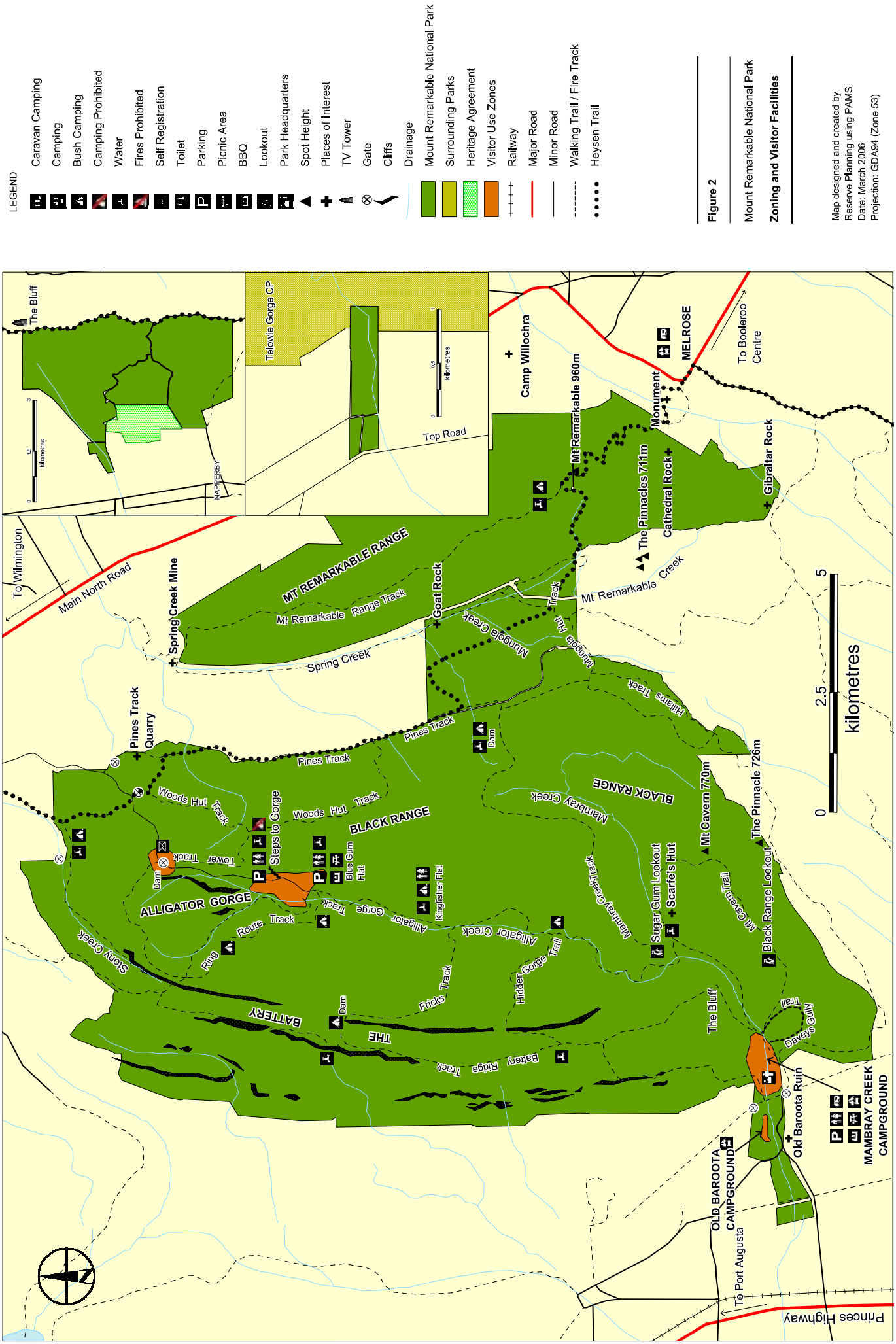


Figure 2a (to be added)

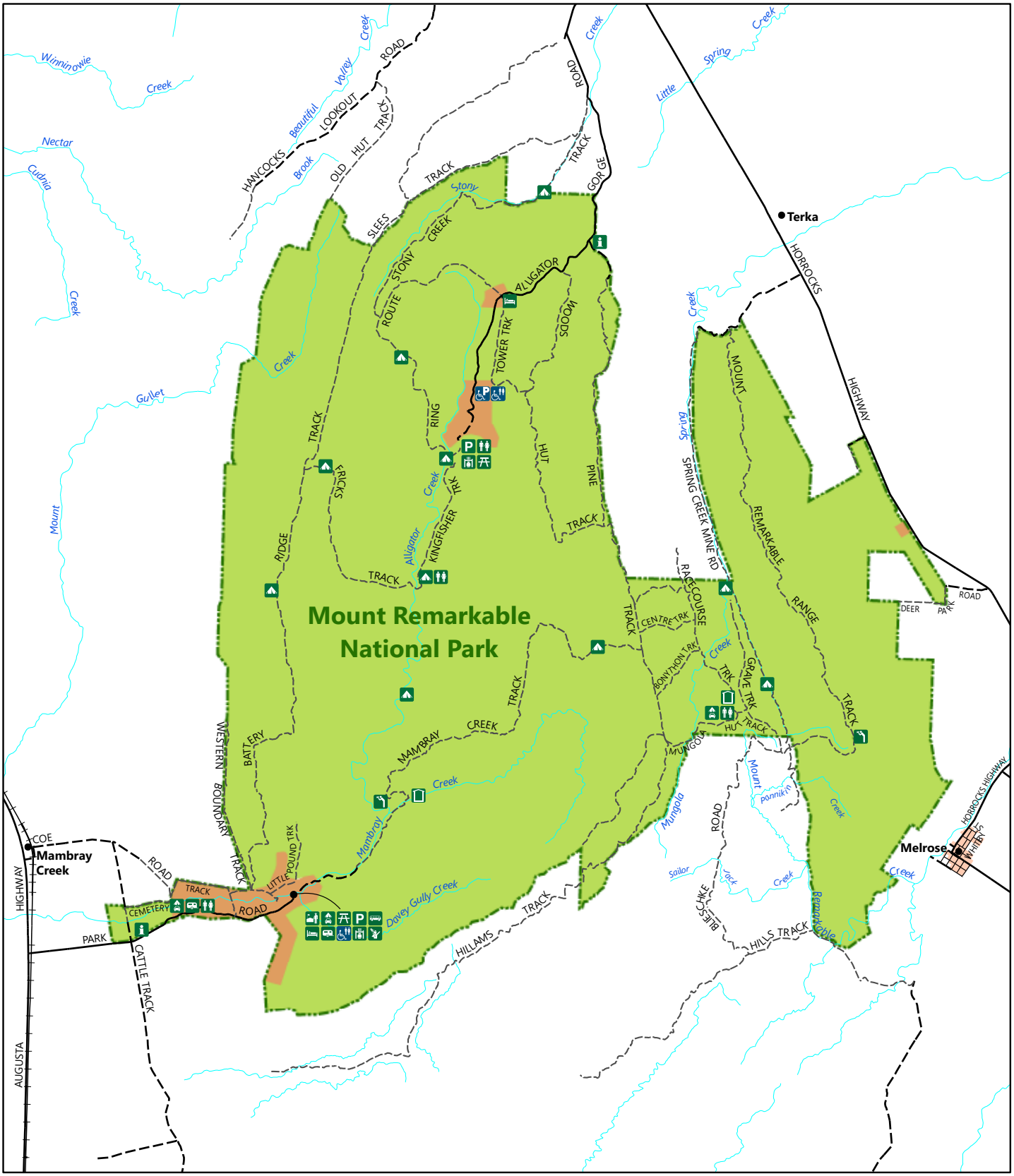


Figure 2a

Mount Remarkable National Park

0 km 2 4

LEGEND

- Conservation Zone
- Visitor Use Zone
- Mount Remarkable National Park
- Built-up area
- Sealed road
- Unsealed road
- Vehicle track
- Railway
- Watercourse
- Accessible toilet
- Accessible parking
- Accommodation
- Barbecue facility
- Bus parking
- Bush camping
- Campground
- Caravan site
- Hut
- Information
- Lookout
- Parking
- Picnic area
- Ranger station
- Shower
- Toilets

Changes to guided four-wheel drive tours

This amendment seeks to allow guided commercial four-wheel drive (4WD) tours within Mount Remarkable National Park under certain conditions. This amendment only applies to guided 4WD tours operating under a licence. Rules applying to general public access are unchanged.

To address community feedback regarding the potential impact of 4WD tours, conditions which any potential operator will need to conform to have been included in this amendment. These conditions have been informed by the concerns raised in public feedback, and will be addressed and enforced through any licence to operate.

A key consideration in allowing guided 4WD tours will be ensuring minimisation of conflict with other park users as part of the licence approval process.

Amendment 5	
Section 8.1, page 21 – 4WD Tours	
Text to be deleted	**Text to be added**
4WD Tours Due to the fragile nature of the fire tracks throughout the park, the potential conflict with bush-walkers and the risk of fire during summer, it is not considered appropriate for 4WD tours to be conducted through the park.	**Four-wheel drive tours** Without appropriate management, four-wheel drives (4WD) may cause conflict with bush-walkers and damage to management tracks. Park visitors in 4WD's are required to remain on designated public access tracks only. Guided 4WD tours may be considered within Mount Remarkable National Park where they utilise the existing management track network. Any tours will be subject to conditions to reduce potential impacts to other park values and manage safety, including restrictions on speed, the location, and the frequency and climatic conditions in which guided tours can occur. A licence to undertake guided 4WD tours will only be granted if the licensee can demonstrate impacts will be appropriately managed, and that tours can be conducted within licence conditions. Monitoring and review will occur to understand the impact of guided 4WD tours, which will inform whether future licences are granted.

Cycling

In response to the growing regional demand for mountain bike riding, the Mount Remarkable National Park Management Plan 2006 was amended in 2013 to enable the construction of new mountain bike trails in sections of the park shown in Figure 4.

Since then, mountain bike riding has grown more popular within the park and in neighbouring private land. The potential exists to expand the current regional cycling trail network, particularly with an aim to create an International Mountain Biking Association certified 'epic' trail.

Epic trails are internationally renowned long distance mountain bike trails, and the development of an epic trail in and around Mount Remarkable National Park is an opportunity for the region to gain global recognition as a quality mountain biking destination.

The amendments outlined below remove the requirement that all new cycling trails must be in the areas designated in the 2013 amendment. While these areas remain a priority for cycling trail development, this change will enable new trails across the park to better connect with other trails in the region. Trail development will remain subject to conditions outlined in the Conservation Zone (page 6) and Cycling (page 22) sections of the Management Plan.

Any new cycling trails will only be permitted if they are deemed to be of low impact to park values. This will include a careful planning process and an assessment of risks to ensure that new trails and any management tracks designated for cycling are suitable for this purpose.

Mount Remarkable National Park also contains world class hiking experiences, and the development of new cycling trails will be sensitive to these park values. While the existing plan outlines a system of risk analysis and cooperative planning for any cycling development to protect park values, an additional amendment is outlined to clarify that new cycling trails will generally be single use, rather than shared use, to protect against risks to users.

Certain management tracks, particularly near the Mambray Creek campground, may be designated for shared use where risks can be mitigated. These tracks provide gentle cycling experiences, rather than the rugged mountain biking experience provided for by dedicated tracks elsewhere in the park.

Amendment 6	
Section 8.2, page 22 – Cycling	
Text to be deleted	**Text to be added**
The construction of any new trails will be focused on previously disturbed areas within the Warren Bonython Link, former Willowie Forest Reserve and the area between the Mambray Creek and Old Baroota camping areas (figure 4).	The construction of any new trails will focus on minimising impacts to other park values, including by ensuring additional trails do not impact areas of high conservation significance.

Amendment 7

Section 8.2, page 22 – Cycling, after third paragraph

Text to be added

Mount Remarkable National Park contains an existing popular and high quality bushwalking network. New cycling trails will be developed in a manner sensitive to the remote qualities of the reserve enjoyed by bushwalkers. Shared use trails are less preferred in the park to protect existing hiking trail experiences. There are also risks associated with shared use trails in some areas of the park due to steep landscapes, narrow tracks and short sighting distances. Certain trails, such as those near the Mambray Creek campground and relatively flat and wide management tracks, may be considered for shared use when relevant risks can be appropriately managed.

Amendment 8

Section 8.2, page 23 – Strategies

Text to be deleted

Following an assessment of risk the following areas may be designated for cycling:

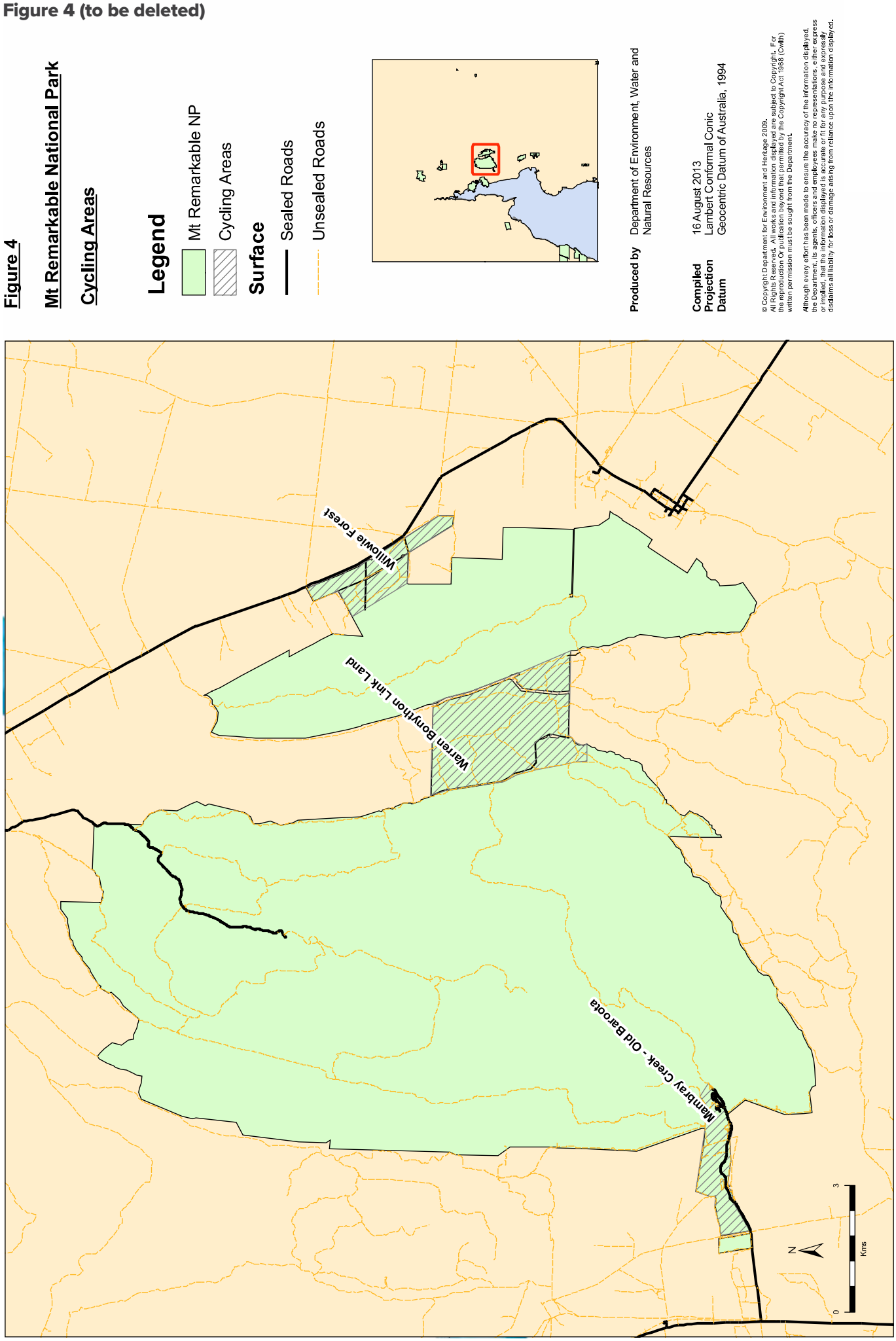
- existing tracks and trails,
- new trails within the Warren Bonython Link,
- new trails within the former Willowie Forest Reserve, and
- new trails in the area between the Mambray Creek and Old Baroota camping areas.

Amendment 9

Section 8.2, page 23 – Strategies

Figure 4 on the following page will be deleted from the Management Plan to allow for the development of cycling trails in other areas of the park.

Figure 4 (to be deleted)



Managing total grazing pressure

Since the adoption of the park management plan in 2006, grazing pressure on Mount Remarkable National Park has been exacerbated by a growing western grey kangaroo population.

Successful kangaroo population management requires the investigation of all management options, including culling. The strategic culling of western grey kangaroos may occur if it is found to be the only practicable option to reduce total grazing pressure on native vegetation.

Amendment 10
Section 5.3, page 12 – before Reptiles and Amphibians
Text to be added

Managing Total Grazing Pressure

The total grazing pressure in Mount Remarkable National Park, including by western grey kangaroos (*Macropus fuliginosus*) and introduced herbivores, is reducing plant diversity and habitat quality for important and endangered species.

While strategies for reducing herbivore populations will primarily focus on the control of introduced species (see section 5.5), reducing the total grazing pressure across Mt Remarkable National Park is likely to include management of the kangaroo population as a result of their growing abundance in the landscape.

Total grazing pressure, including by western grey kangaroos, will be monitored to assess impacts to native vegetation and revegetation programs. Should evidence indicate that kangaroos are having an unsustainable impact on biodiversity, an adaptive management framework will be implemented.

Non-lethal control actions should be considered in the first instance. Where these actions are considered ineffective or not feasible, control by culling may be implemented where this remains the only practicable method of control. Any culling will follow strict procedures for the humane destruction of animals.

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