



Caldera Rim Walk Wollumbin National Park

Draft Master Plan

Prepared by NewScape Design for the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service



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Cover photo: Wollumbin Caldera
Photo credit: Dean Trezise/DPE

Image Right: View from Pinnacle lookout, Border Ranges National Park across the caldera to Wollumbin
Photo credit: Tim Boscoe@ unsplash





We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of New South Wales.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge the Bundjalung peoples where the project is proposed

Contents

4	Introduction and background
5	A new walking track
6	Project process
7	Project vision and timeline
8	Caldera Rim Walk experience
11	Possible future Caldera Rim Walk experiences
12	Materials palette - example treatments

Image: Wollumbin from Nightcap National Park, Doughboy Hill in foreground
Photo credit: Janelle Lugge (Shutterstock)

Introduction

About this study

NewScape have been engaged by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) to prepare the following report for the Caldera Rim Walk. The draft master plan is a high level concept package used to inform community and stakeholders of the proposed new Caldera Rim experience and a new walking opportunity in the region.

The resulting proposed works meet the following objectives:

- Encourage dispersal of coastal visitation, especially from Byron Bay
- Create a significant, high quality immersive nature-based visitor experience in the Tweed Hinterland
- Proposed works have regard for the existing natural and cultural heritage of the site
- Works can be staged and implemented cost effectively
- Upgraded landscape treatments are durable with low maintenance requirements
- Provide visitor opportunities to support a vibrant regional tourism economy

This document is in a graphic report format that outlines the proposed new walking track with supporting images and high level concept plans.

Background

The Far North Coast Hinterland

Set within the remnant caldera of an ancient shield volcano, the Tweed Valley offers spectacular scenery in an undulating and fertile terrain of the Far North Coast hinterland region of New South Wales. The region's national parks include World Heritage listed Wollumbin National Park, Mount Jerusalem National Park, Nightcap National Park and Whian Whian State Conservation Area. Characterised by lush rainforests, mountain views, countless waterfalls and hidden rockpools, this region has the potential for an immersive hiking experience in pristine nature. Close to the popular tourist destination of Byron Bay, this region has high visitation and easy accessibility via Gold Coast and Ballina/Byron Airports.

Visitor planning in the region aims to provide a varied suite of complementary recreation opportunities accessible from Murwillumbah and the Tweed Coast to cater for a diverse range of user groups, including locals and tourists. The award winning Minyon Falls precinct opened in 2022 and the multi-day Tweed Byron Hinterland Trails project is currently being constructed.

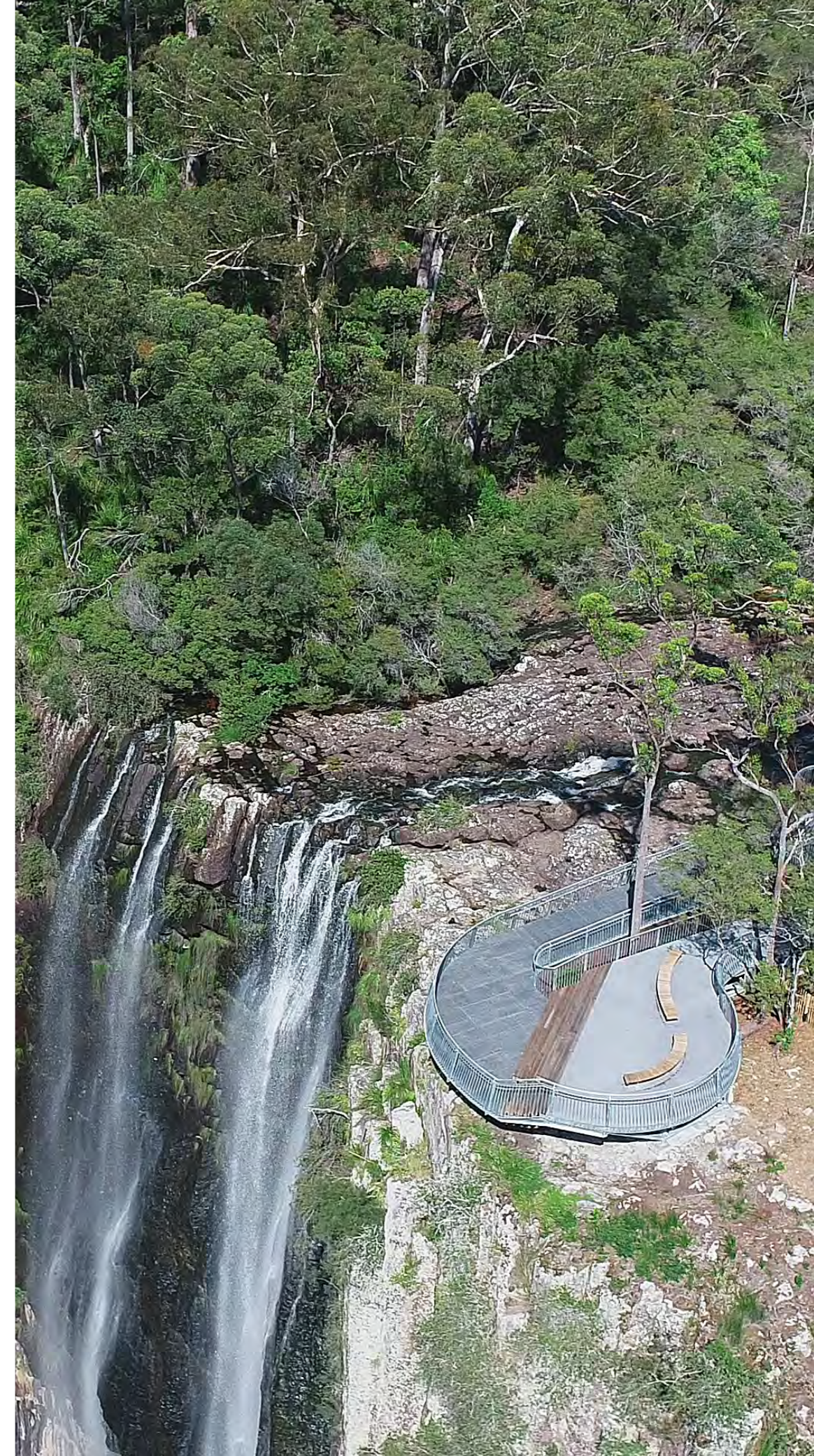


Image: Lookout over Minyon Falls, part of the Tweed Byron hinterland trail . Photo credit: J Malecki/DPE

A new walking track in the Tweed Byron Hinterland

Investments in northern NSW

The NSW Government is investing at record levels in national park visitor infrastructure, recognising the importance of national parks, particularly through visitation, in generating \$17.9 billion per annum in economic activity to the NSW economy.

In the Tweed, Byron and Lismore local government areas (LGAs), national parks generate \$974 million per annum in economic activity and support more than 600 jobs.

Visitation to the north coast national parks grew by 45% between 2008 and 2018, providing a strong indication of increasing demand for nature-based opportunities in the region.

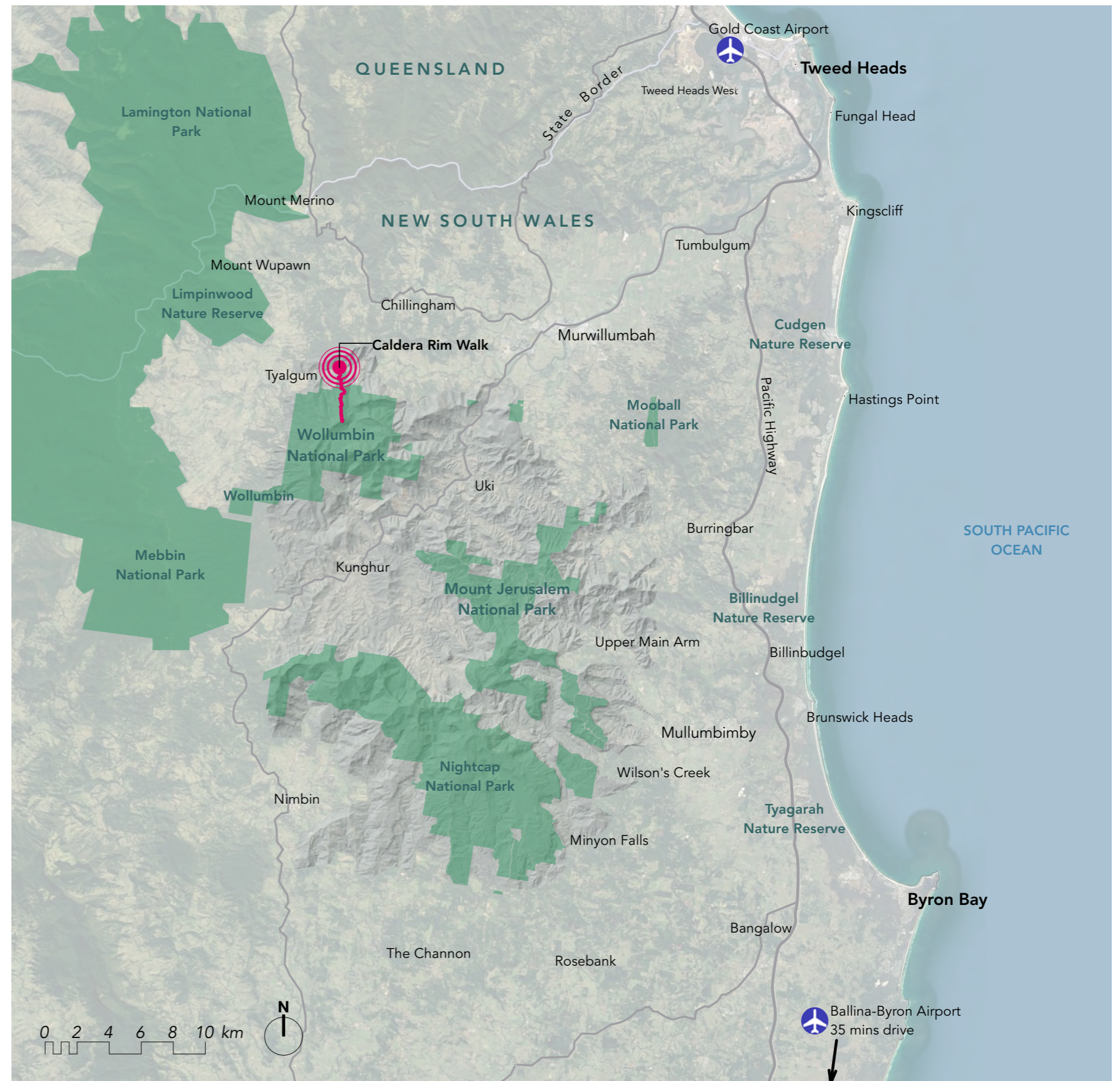
As part of this biggest ever investment in national park visitor infrastructure, NPWS is delivering a suite of new and improved visitor amenities across a range of national parks throughout NSW, helping to meet demand and support sustainable community access.

Projects include a new multi-day walk, accessible trails, upgraded campgrounds and picnic areas, and new spectacular lookouts.

Trail Network and Visitor Hubs

Development of new and existing day-use areas and day walking options will alleviate pressure on popular locations and elevate visitor amenity and experiences across northern NSW. Multi-day hikes will link with several new visitor hubs and cater for a range of visitor experiences in the spectacular and varied terrain of the national parks. Combined with shorter walks and cycling trails the region will cater for a broad spectrum of visitors with:

- Multi-day hike trail
- Day use and overnight visitor hubs
- Cycling trails
- Short-medium length walking trails



Project process

Process

Our national parks are managed to protect their unique values and provide for sustainable visitor use and enjoyment. This includes providing meaningful visitor experiences and, where appropriate, new infrastructure including tracks and facilities to support engagement with visitors

The project supports the strategies and guiding principles identified in the Plan of Management and will be informed by environmental and cultural assessments. Safety by design aspects such as vehicle parking and access and walker safety will be incorporated. The Review of Environmental Factors (REF) will include mitigation measures on how to reduce the impacts on the values of the park.

Aboriginal culture

Wollumbin National Parks is part of the lands of the Bundjalung People, who maintain a strong connection to Country. These connections may be maintained in spiritual or cultural practice, storytelling, activities, teaching and remembering, or as physical evidence.

NPWS is committed to working with the Bundjalung community to ensure their cultural heritage is acknowledged, protected and respected as a part of living culture.

Community engagement

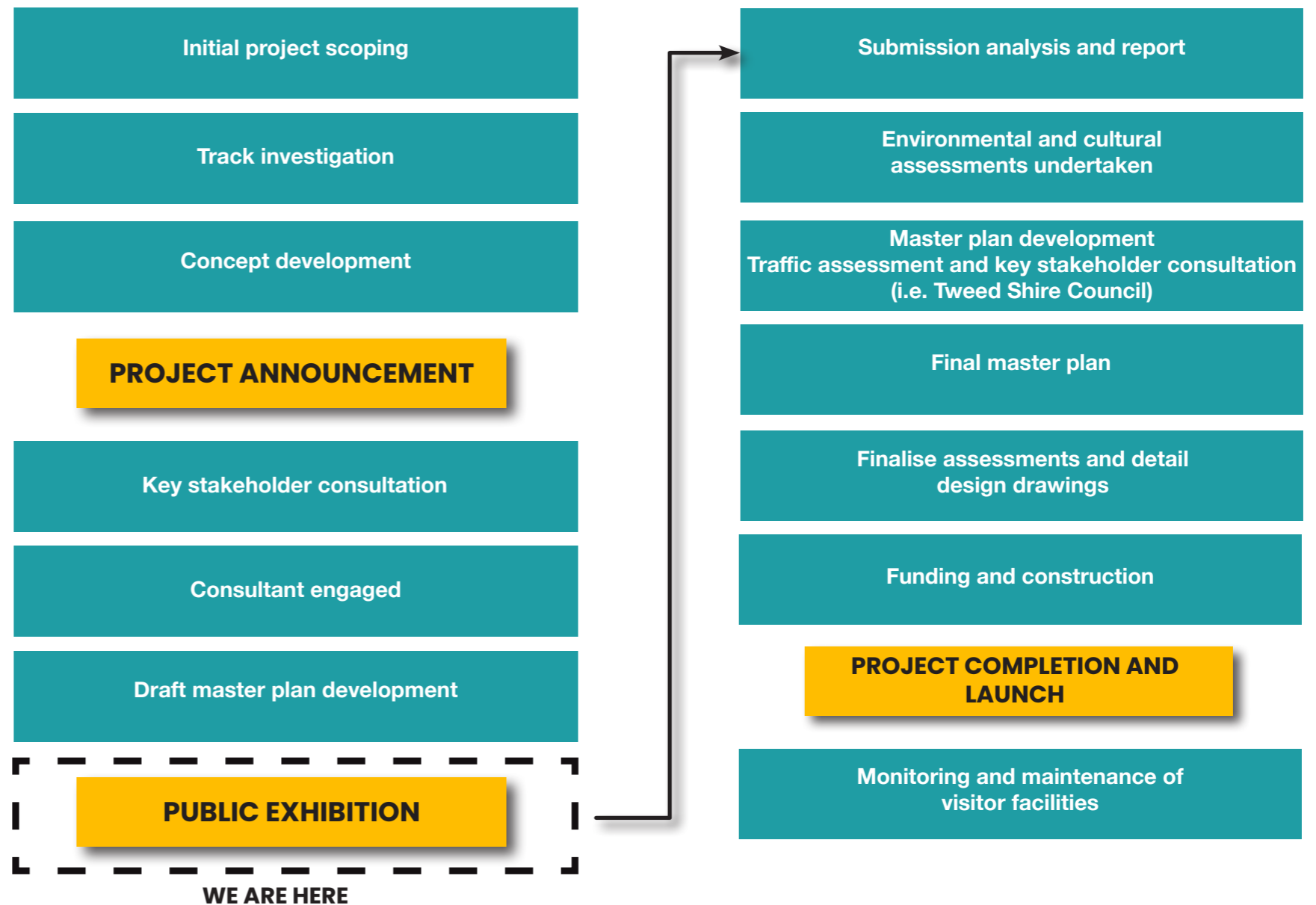
The draft master plan represents a significant opportunity for us to engage with the immediate and broader community to create a shared vision in planning for the Caldera Rim Walk.

NPWS has established the Wollumbin Consultative Group and the Wollumbin Stakeholder Advisory Committee to inform the development of the walk and provide a formal mechanism to ensure coordinated and meaningful engagement with stakeholders throughout the project.

NPWS recognises that community input adds value to the work that we do and we encourage everyone to 'Have your say' during public exhibitions.

NPWS welcomes continued engagement with residents, community, industry, government and stakeholder input on the draft master plan. Design development will continue to be refined and progressed responding to community feedback.

Project timeline



Project vision

The Caldera Rim Walk is underpinned by four principles

Conservation

- Protecting fauna and flora species
- Protecting and enhancing cultural, natural and social values
- Managing the environmental impacts of visitors
- Selecting an alignment and sustainable track design, material selection and construction techniques that will minimise impacts to biodiversity values.

Culture and heritage

- Protecting and enhancing cultural, natural and heritage assets
- Providing a visitor experience and facilities that interpret, foster education and awareness
- Respecting the Aboriginal and natural heritage in the region and highlighting the park's significant cultural connection and natural attributes as part of UNESCO Gondwana Rainforests.

Image: View over the caldera Wollumbin
Photo credit: Janelle Lugge (Shutterstock)

Communities

- Providing park experiences and facilities for community benefit
- Delivering local economic benefits by increasing visitation, dwell time and overnight stays in the region.
- Providing opportunities for service partnerships and local jobs through the walking track project.

Experiences

- Providing an experience for a range of visitors that builds high-quality, memorable connections with the natural environment and cultural landscape in Wollumbin National Park.

Project design strategies

Preliminary routes have been investigated in consultation with the Aboriginal community and the NPWS North Coast Regional Advisory Committee.

NPWS will seek further input from specialist track designers when finalising the plan.

The track location aims to provide connectivity to park features while considering safety and respecting the environment and conservation values of the park. Safety and risk assessments will be undertaken during planning and construction of the track.

The strategies for the design of tracks, facilities and experiences will:

- Manage impact on visual amenity, environmental and conservation values and blend with the immediate environment
- Maximise the use of natural and local materials where possible and minimise the use of synthetic materials
- Be designed to minimal footprints with a focus on respecting environmental and cultural sensitivities
- Sighted to enhance key visitor nodes and experience
- Ensure trailheads and start and finish points reflect the unique nature of the park to create a sense of place and sense of arrival and departure



Caldera Rim Walk experience

Caldera Rim Walk proposal

The proposed Caldera Rim Walk is an approximately 8km return, half-day bushwalk with spectacular views of the Wollumbin summit and surrounding caldera. The walk offers a challenge to bushwalkers, climbing over 500m in elevation to the top of the inner Tweed Caldera, through a variety of vegetation communities including rainforest, wet sclerophyll forest and drier eucalypt and grasstree dominated ridgetops.

The walk would be a grade 4 hiking track in accordance with Australian Walking Track Grading system. It is predominately natural surface track with rough ground and steep sections. These tracks are suggested for people with experience bushwalking and a reasonable level of fitness and unrestricted movement will be required.

With easy access from Murwillumbah and Tyalgum, the proposed Caldera Rim Walk would be accessed from Tyalgum Road and as part of the existing Tweed Hinterland Rainforest Way Scenic Drive.

Further opportunities to extend the track into nearby parks may be investigated which could enable economic opportunities for local Aboriginal businesses and other local businesses.

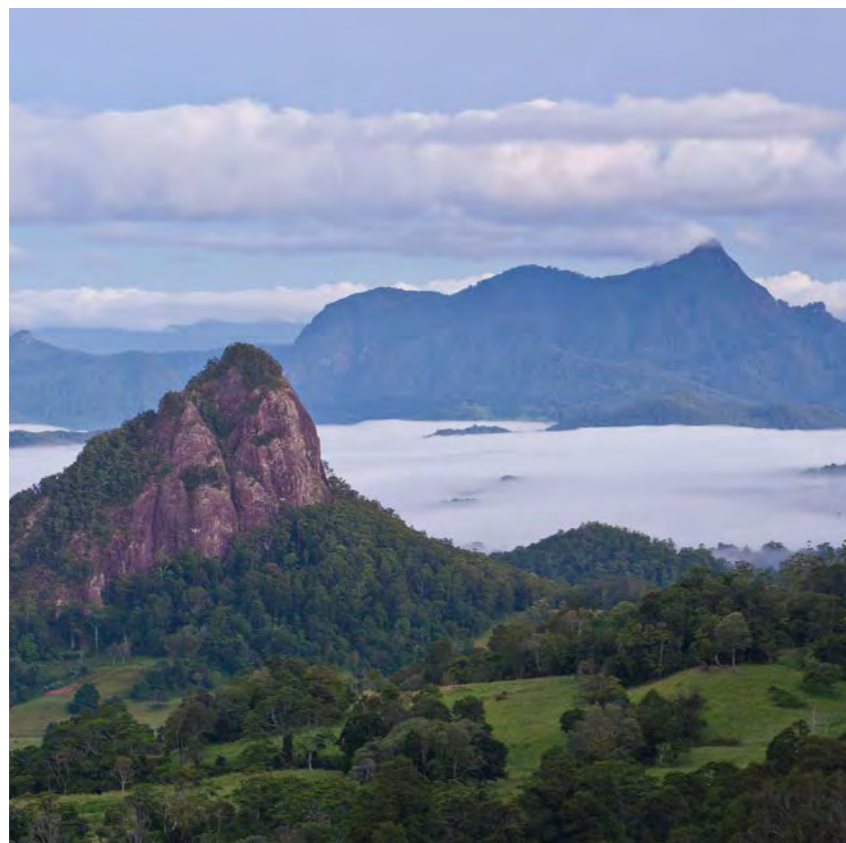
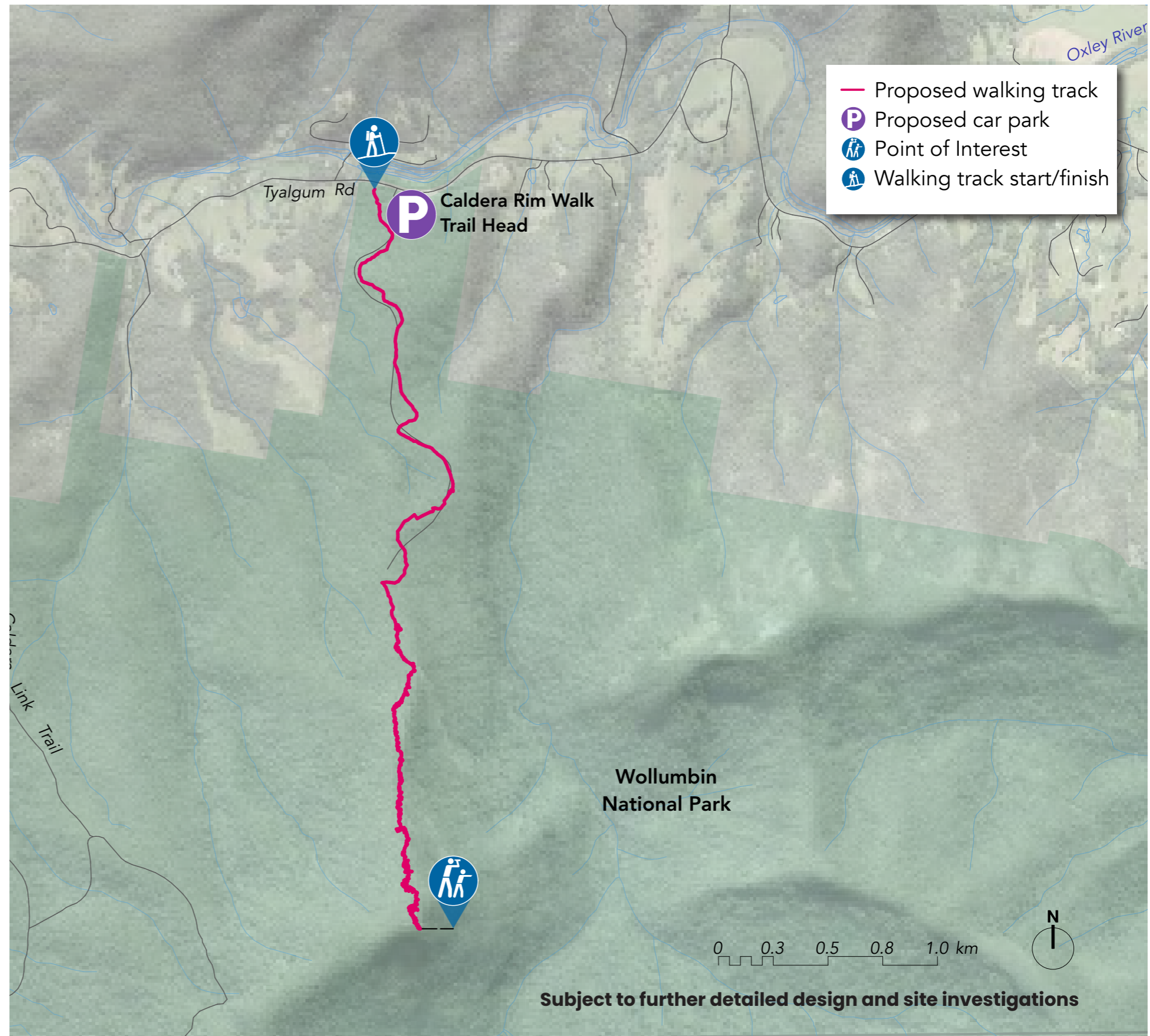
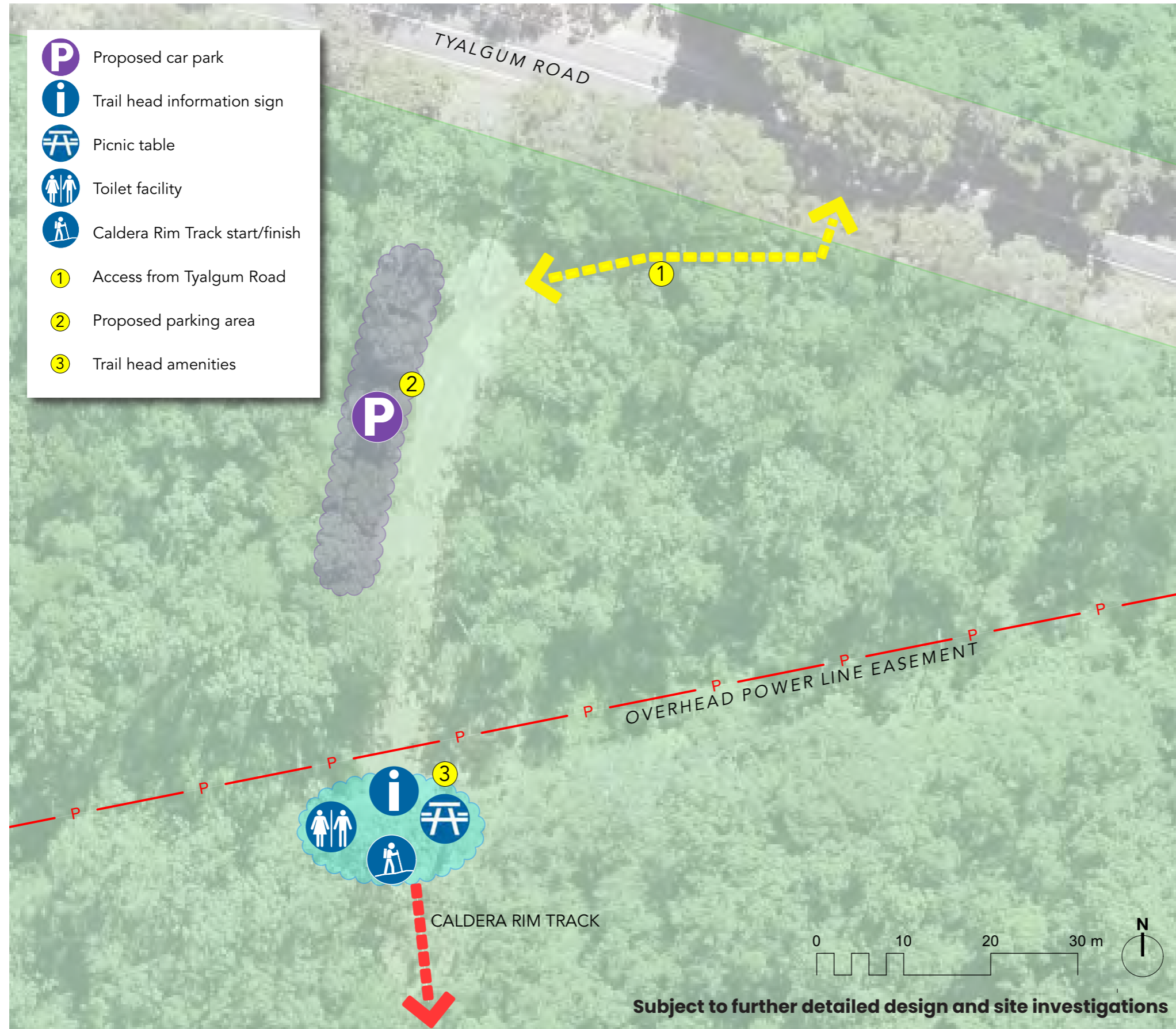


Photo credit: Janelle Lugge



Caldera Rim Walk experience

Indicative trail head design - option 1



Hike through lush rainforest. Photo credit: J Slabb/DPE



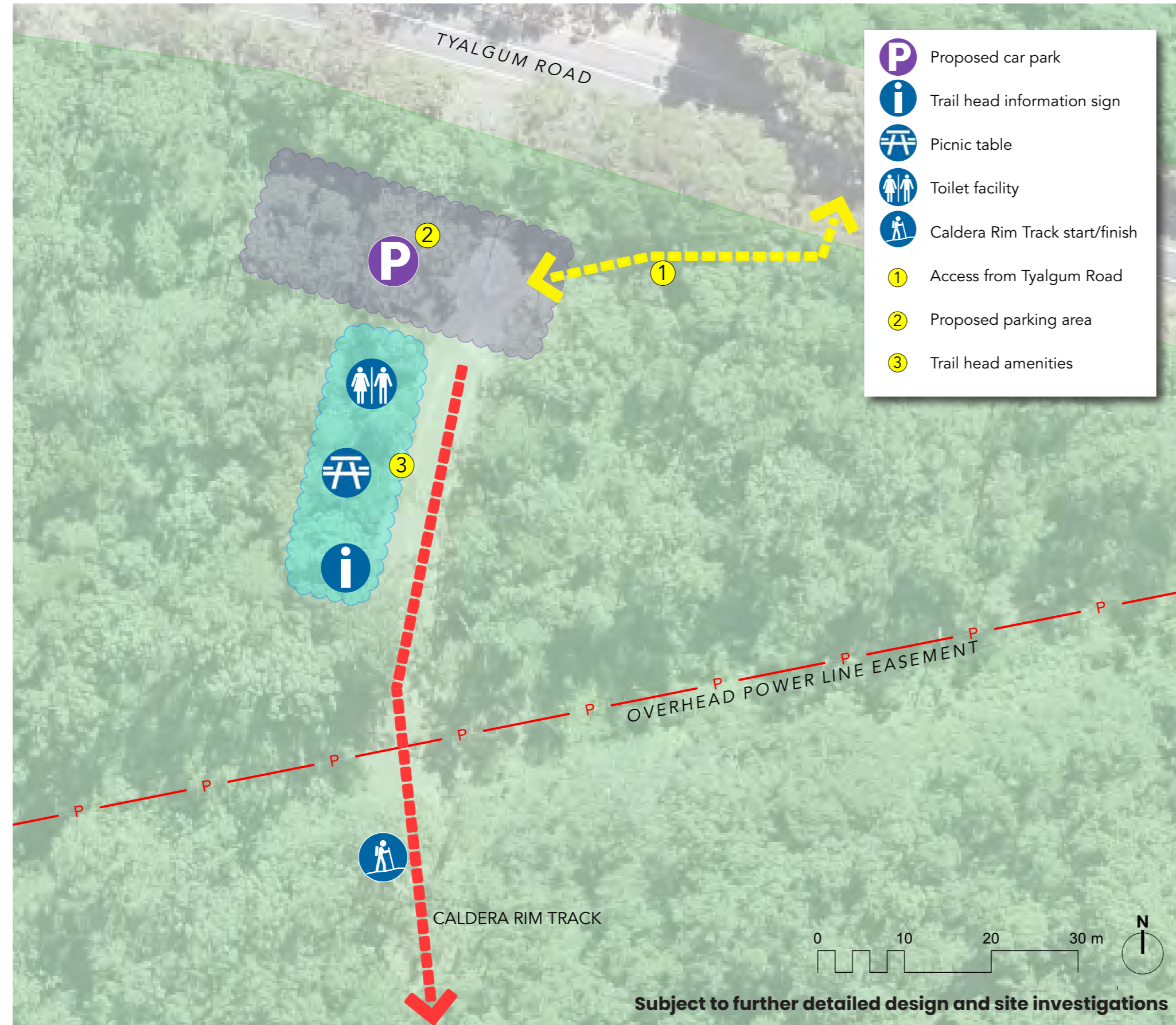
Enjoy visitors amenities at the trail head
Photo credit: Jimmy Malecki.DPE



Caption – Walk along eucalypt dominated ridgetops
Photo credit: J Slabb/DPE

Caldera Rim Walk experience

Indicative trail head design - option 2



Lookouts to take in the views Photo credit: M Vanderveer

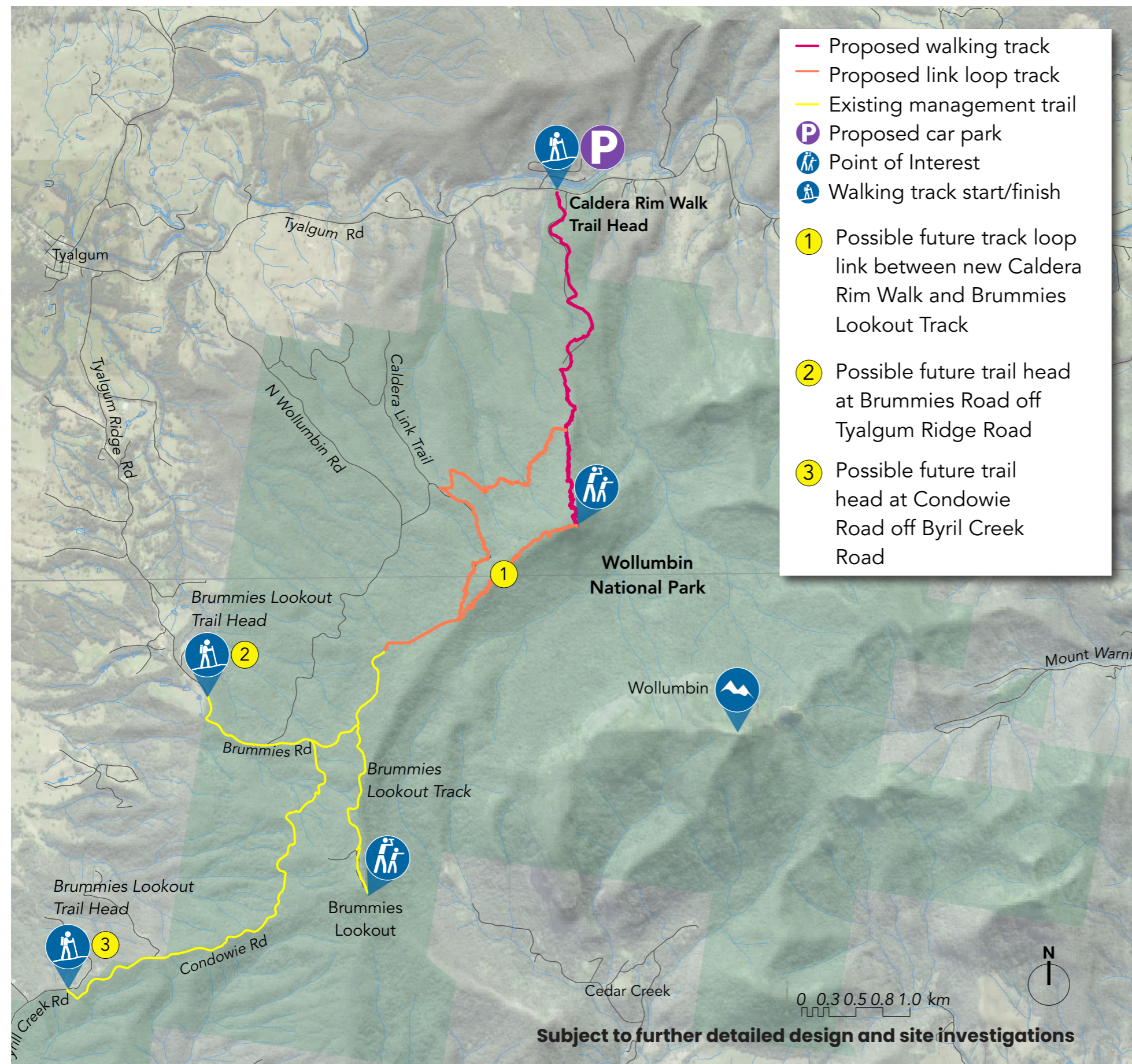


Information sign at the trail head Photo credit: J Spencer



Photo credit: J Slabb

Possible future Caldera Rim Walk experiences



Option 1 would provide a future 4 km counter-clockwise loop extension of the Caldera Rim Walk that would reduce the gradient of the climb, increasing the length of natural surface trail, offer greater rainforest experience through a stunning gully, and increase lookout opportunities and scenic views along the ridge.

Options 2 and 3 would utilise the existing fire trail network to extend the network of trails on the inner caldera to allow for longer walks and connection with alternative park entrances.

Combined the walks would offer a full day walk experience on the caldera rim.

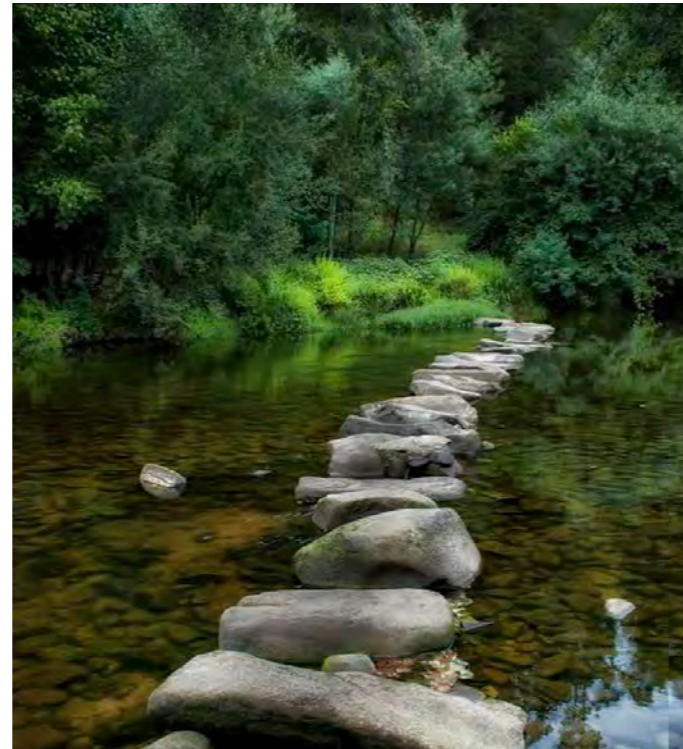
Photo credit: J. Slabb



Materials palette – example treatments



A **footpad track** using natural soil is the preferred track construction technique for cost effectiveness and a natural look and feel



Locally sourced **natural stepping stones** for water crossings on main creeklines.



Although stepping will be minimised along the track, some **steps** will be required in steep sections. This can be in the form of a rock scramble or formalised stone steps.



Benching will also be required at sections with steep crossfall.



New light touch on ground **viewing platforms**.



NSW Park Facilities Manual **information shelter**.

