



# Wet Tropics Walking Strategy

SUMMARY ~ October 2001

The complete Walking Strategy is available on the web at [www.wettropics.gov.au/mlr/managing\\_tourism.htm](http://www.wettropics.gov.au/mlr/managing_tourism.htm)

## A vision for the future

This Walking Strategy has been developed over the past two years to guide the future development and management of a range of walks throughout the Wet Tropics region.

*Walking is an increasingly popular activity in the Wet Tropics which can provide benefits for visitors and local communities.*

Walking allows people the time, freedom and flexibility to interact intimately with the wide range of Wet Tropics environments. Walking can increase people's understanding and awareness of the region's natural and cultural values. It offers social, recreational and educational benefits for all sectors of the community and can provide employment and economic benefits across the Wet Tropics region.

*The Wet Tropics region will provide a diversity of walks to suit the various needs and abilities of walkers.*

People are looking for different experiences when they go walking. Some people like short, easy walks where they can visit waterfalls or learn about the vegetation and wildlife. Others may seek challenging, overnight hikes in remote areas.

*People need information about what types of walks there are, how to find them and what preparations they need to walk safely.*

Comprehensive information about walking and safety will be readily available through tourist centres, brochures, guide books and the internet. Signs on the walks

will tell people about the length and difficulty and make the walks easy to find and to follow.

*Guidelines have been developed to set standards and priorities for maintaining and upgrading existing tracks and building new ones.*

People who manage walks will work to these standards when building or maintaining walking tracks so that they are safe and provide the desired experience for walkers. This strategy identifies which walks are most important to spend time and money on.

*All those involved in managing walking need to work together across the Wet Tropics region.*

There are over 145 currently managed walks in the Wet Tropics region, both inside and adjoining the World Heritage Area. Land managers, councils, Rainforest Aboriginal people, walkers, the tourism industry and conservation groups need to cooperate and coordinate walking management across boundaries. This will ensure that money and resources available for walking are used for the best results.

*There is a need to research and monitor the benefits and adverse impacts of walking.*

Improved research and monitoring will help land managers by finding out what sort of walks people enjoy, what sort of information walkers need, how to prevent walkers damaging the environment and how walking contributes to the local economy.

## In brief

The development of a high quality walking track network will provide visitors and the local community with a diversity of recreational and educational opportunities.

Priorities are set for track maintenance and upgrades and the assessment of new walking opportunities.

A Walking Advisory Group will provide expert advice to assist the strategy's implementation.

Each walk will be managed according to a track classification system, walk settings and individual walk management plans.

Rainforest Aboriginal people will be given opportunities to participate in walk management and cultural tourism.

Information will be readily available so that people can choose walks that suit their abilities and complete the walk safely.

Educational and promotional material will tell walkers about the region's natural and cultural features.

Visitor demand and impacts will be researched and monitored to ensure that walking is environmentally sustainable and satisfies the needs of walkers.

A coordinated system of walking management will enable different government agencies, local councils, Aboriginal people, the tourism industry and walkers to work together to achieve these goals.

## Keeping on track

*We are interested in your comments and advice about walks and their management.*

Please write to WTMA at PO Box 2050 Cairns 4870

OR Call the WTMA Office on: 07 4052 0555 OR Email: [walking@env.qld.gov.au](mailto:walking@env.qld.gov.au)



WET TROPICS  
MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY



Queensland Government  
Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service  
Sport and Recreation Queensland

# Cooperative Management

## Working together

There is a diverse cross-section of people and groups involved in walking management in the Wet Tropics region, both inside and adjoining the World Heritage Area. They include a wide range of state and local government land agencies, local bushwalkers, the tourism industry, Aboriginal groups and conservationists.

To manage walking effectively across the Wet Tropics region, a cooperative working relationship will be established between all these management agencies and interest groups. The strategy encourages the development of existing local community networks to help provide effective management at a local level.

### Key actions

- Coordinate communication and actions between WTMA and land managers.
- Establish a Walking Advisory Group to provide expert advice to assist the strategy's implementation.
- Ensure local participation in walking management through community advisory groups.

### Aboriginal Consultation

Rainforest Aboriginal people have been involved in the development of this strategy and have provided a substantial report on their expectations and concerns. Aboriginal traditional owners have been consulted regarding the inclusion of specific walking tracks on their country. Additional cultural walks may be included as Aboriginal groups develop tourism and cultural education on their country.

## Aboriginal participation

Rainforest Aboriginal people have a special interest in walking management due to the cultural significance of many tracks. Some walks, especially longer ones and those leading to significant features, follow traditional Aboriginal routes which connect all facets of their life and culture. These walks are often regarded as significant cultural sites by Aboriginal people, manifesting their connections with nature through dreaming tracks.

Aboriginal participation in walking management offers opportunities for employment through tourism operations, guided walks and track construction and maintenance.

### Key actions

- Refine and put into action agreed protocols for detailed consultation and negotiation about walking track routes.
- Ensure protocols apply consistently across management agency boundaries and the cultural integrity of walking tracks is maintained and cultural sites protected.
- Facilitate economic opportunities for Aboriginal communities in cultural tourism and walking track construction and maintenance.
- Ensure effective input by Aboriginal people in the issuing of permits for designated activities associated with walking such as commercial operations, research and interpretation.
- Provide cross-cultural training for land managers and Aboriginal organisations and representatives.
- Seek resources for Aboriginal liaison officers and to train and employ Aboriginal track workers, either as full time employees, contract workers or workers on particular clan lands.

## Research

There is little research information available which focuses on walking in the Wet Tropics. The strategy will ensure coordinated research into the demand for walking, its benefits and environmental, economic and social impacts. It will encourage research that is relevant and accessible to on ground managers and assist them in monitoring of walks.

### Key actions

- Commission research:
  - to provide information regarding walker use, demand and satisfaction levels and ways to improve walker education.
  - to identify, measure and monitor walker impacts and their relationship with walker behaviour.
  - into the economic and social benefits of walking and the role of walks (especially 'icon' walks) in the development of local tourism.

## Wet Tropics Nature Based Tourism Strategy

The Walking Strategy concentrates specifically on those issues affecting management of walking. It complements the Nature Based Tourism Strategy (2000) which provides broad policies and strategic directions for the future management of nature based tourism and recreation within the Wet Tropics.

It is available on the web at [www.wettropics.gov.au/mlr/managing\\_tourism.htm](http://www.wettropics.gov.au/mlr/managing_tourism.htm)

# Creating a diversity of walking experiences

## Short walks

It is important to provide diverse walking experiences to match the abilities and expectations of walkers. Currently there are 148 managed walks covered by the Walking Strategy in the Wet Tropics region (see the attached map for details). Most of these are public walks managed by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service or local governments. The majority of walks tend to be short walks of an hour or less and most walkers use just a few of these. It is estimated that about 95% of the 1.5 million annual walks by visitors in the area take place on just 25 tracks which total only 40km in length. These are often the short popular walks such as

the Marrdja Boardwalk in the Daintree, the Curtain Fig in the Tablelands or the Barron Falls Lookout. People often do these short walks to reach features such as waterfalls, swimming holes, giant rainforest trees and scenic views, or to see and learn about the various types of rainforest habitat and wildlife in the Wet Tropics.

## Longer walks

People also do longer walks for recreation, adventure, education and solitude in a natural environment and to reach more remote features of the Wet Tropics. There are relatively few longer walks which offer day trips or overnight camping and some sense of adventure and reliance on outdoor skills. Present opportunities include the Goldfield Track and Mount Bartle Frere walks which are well used as

overnight walks. The Thorsborne Trail on Hinchinbrook Island is a remote long distance 5 day walk which is usually used to capacity. The popularity of the long walks available suggests that there is a need for others. The strategy identifies various day and overnight walks to be developed, preferably as part of an extended network of tracks which will enable walkers to choose a route, distance and degree of difficulty to suit their needs and the time available.

## Heritage walks

The Wet Tropics region is rich in Aboriginal culture. Its more recent history includes logging, mining, settlement and World War 2 activities. All these themes are of great interest to visitors and many current and proposed walks would benefit from additional information for visitors about their cultural and historical associations. Aboriginal people would like to offer more guided walks as a means of improving cultural interaction and education.

## Privately managed walks

The Walking Strategy includes a very small number of privately managed walks. Private walks often offer additional experiences much valued by visitors such as specialist wildlife viewing, birdwatching, or rainforest talks. As part of the implementation phase it is proposed to liaise with managers of private walks to include their walks in the strategy.

## Regional distribution

It is also important that the walks available are well distributed throughout the Wet Tropics region. The strategy proposes that initial emphasis be placed on developing walks in southern areas to provide additional options for visitors to the south of Cairns and to assist in benefiting local economies outside of the main tourist destinations.

## Key Actions

### Walk diversity

➤ Develop walks which will improve the diversity available in the Wet Tropics. The following types of walks have been identified as priorities:

- Full day and overnight walks, including long distance walking networks with access points to enable them to be used for shorter walks as well,
- Remote long distance 3-4 day walks,
- Cultural and historical heritage walks,
- Guided walks,
- Canopy walks.

### Walker diversity

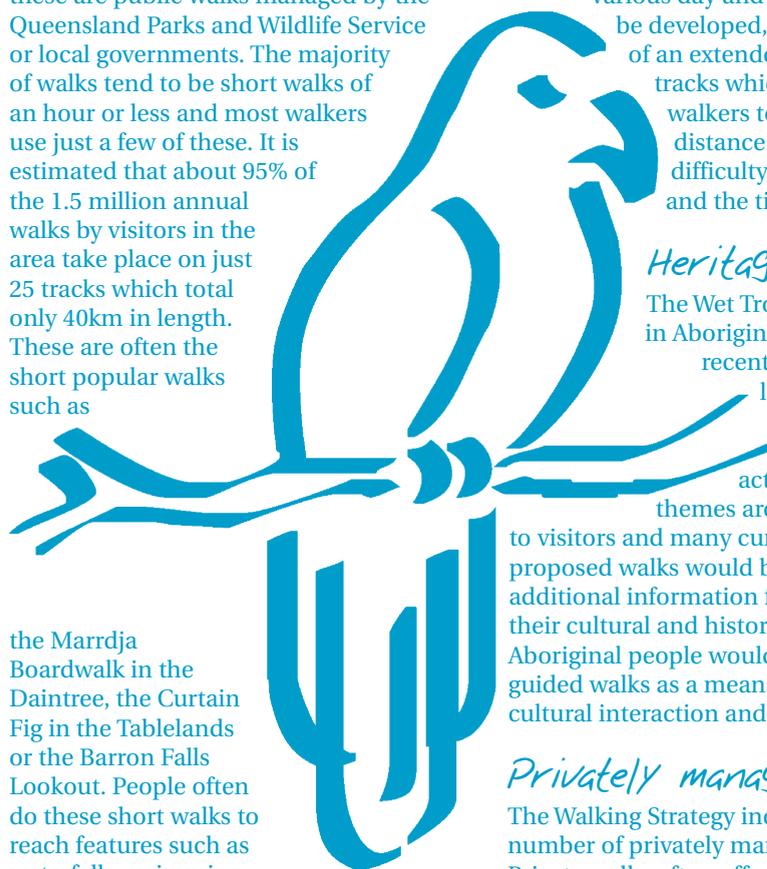
➤ To satisfy a diversity of walker capabilities and characteristics, provide a range of walks with:

- Different distances, times and degrees of difficulty,
- Opportunities for different group sizes and degrees of social interaction,
- Opportunities for people with disabilities, including wheelchair access,
- Degrees of challenge, adventure, comfort, risk, preparation and self-reliance.

### Regional diversity

➤ Develop walks in the southern areas of the Wet Tropics, including 'icon' walks such as a long distance network and a canopy walk.

➤ Provide and promote walks which take advantage of the cooler Tablelands climate and drier weather in western areas.



## Managed Walks

The Walking Strategy deals specifically with actively 'managed' walks. It does not include a lot of other 'unmanaged' walks which are popular with bushwalkers or may be Aboriginal cultural trails. However, some of these may be proposed as 'managed' walks later on.

## Check out the map!

For a list of managed walks and other potential walks take a look at the attached map.

# Specific Walk Priorities

Some of the priority walks identified to create a diverse network are listed below with brief notes to explain the reasons for their importance. This list is not intended to be definitive or to exclude the development of other new or existing walks. For convenience, walks are grouped into short walks, day walks and different types of long distance walks. Walk managers and any special interpretive features have been noted.

## Short walks and half day walks

### Wabunga Wayemba (QPWS)

This is an established Aboriginal walk which needs interpretive signs and would suit guided tours. The walk has Aboriginal carved trees and cultural significance. It could link with the proposed Koolmoon Creek Walk to become a circuit.

### Echo Creek (Private)

The Heritage Trails Network is working with traditional owners to create a half day Aboriginal cultural walk to Echo Creek Falls on an existing track. Walks will be Aboriginal guided tours through pristine rainforest. The walk will also be linked to a proposed cultural theatre, museum and shop.

### Hasties Swamp (QPWS)

A bird hide has been built and a short walk is planned beside the swamp.

### Millstream Link (QPWS)

There is an opportunity to link the short walks at Millstream Falls and Little Millstream Falls with a track running alongside the stream. There are sites of Aboriginal and historical significance and opportunities for platypus watching.

### Bump Track (QPWS)

The Bump Track is the only managed walk between Cairns and Port Douglas. A walk traversing the range on an old road, it offers access to Mowbray Falls and views to the coast. There is an opportunity to create an educational walk, focusing on its historical use by Aboriginal people and white settlers.

### Palmerston Canopy Walk (QPWS)

The Heritage Trails Network are currently investigating designs for a canopy walk near Crawford's Lookout on the Palmerston Highway. The walk will offer visitors a rare opportunity to view the rainforest canopy up close and to look down across the steep North Johnstone River Valley. QPWS, Johnstone Shire Council, Mamu Traditional Owners, WTMA and others are involved in furthering the proposal for this 'icon' walk inside the WHA. Adjacent cleared land outside the WHA has been bought to allow development of associated facilities such as a carpark and visitor centre.

### Privately Managed Walks

There are many privately managed guided walks offering chances to view flora and fauna or learn about local history and Aboriginal culture which are unavailable on public walks. It is intended to liaise with private walk operators to include their diverse guided walks within the strategy.

## Day walks

### Dalrymple Gap Track (QPWS)

The Dalrymple Gap Track offers an easily accessible day or overnight walk with a variety of vegetation habitats, from eucalypt scrub to rainforest, and potential for scenic views to the coast. It has recently been reopened. The old stone bridge has been repaired due to its historical importance. The track also has Aboriginal cultural significance. The track needs directional and interpretive signs and some creek crossing and reconstruction works.

### Mission Beach Circuit (QPWS, Johnstone & Cardwell Shire Councils)

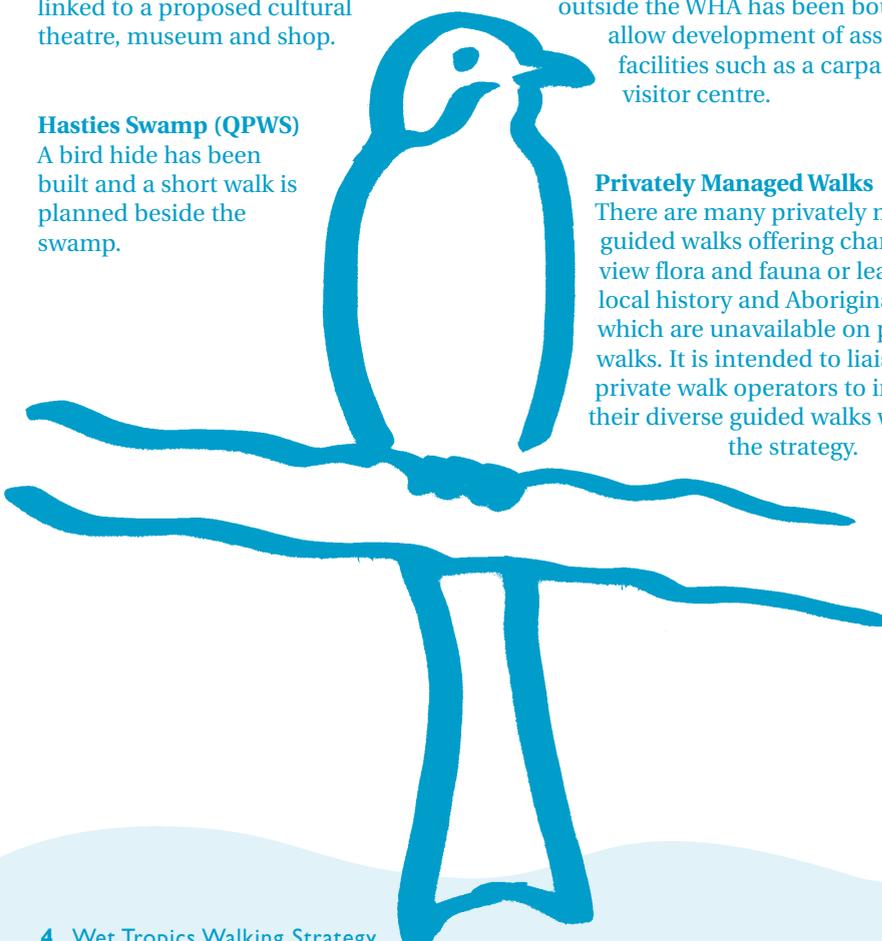
The circuit would link the Bicton Hill, Cutten Brothers and Kennedy Tracks along the coast with Lacey Creek and the Licuala Walk inland to form a loop track. The walk would provide a diverse mixture of beaches, mangroves, coastal views, lowland rainforest, licuala palms and opportunities for cassowary viewing. The circuit could provide a range of walks from half an hour to overnight and opportunities for Aboriginal guided tours.

### Wooroonooran National Park walks - Palmerston section (QPWS)

Clearing, upgrading and reopening the track from Tchupala Falls to North Johnstone Lookout will enable walkers to enjoy a series of linked walks which offer spectacular views of the North Johnstone River Valley, numerous waterfalls, creeks and swimming holes. The Palmerston network offers walks from half an hour to a full day and is a major walking attraction in the southern Wet Tropics. These walks have the potential to link with the proposed long distance walks and canopy walk in the area.

### Barron Gorge National Park network (QPWS, Mareeba Shire & Cairns City Councils)

These walks offer opportunities for scenic views to Cairns and the coast, waterfalls, swimming holes and a variety of rainforest habitats. Some walks such as the Douglas Track and Smiths Track are currently in use. Others require upgrading and signage. Many of these walks have significant Aboriginal cultural associations as well as historical importance related to logging, mining and the building of the railway line.



# Specific Walk Priorities

## Lambs Head (QPWS)

Lambs Head is a day walk offering spectacular views over Lamb Range, Copperlode Dam and to Cairns and the coast beyond. Vegetation includes well preserved stands of high altitude rainforest and orchids in close proximity to massive boulders. There is a possibility of creating a new loop track linking to Davies Creek Falls and a larger walking network across to Lake Tinaroo. Aboriginal people have expressed concerns about walking in the area and their participation in management would be essential.

## Overnight walks

### Bartle Frere East, West and Russell River Circuit (QPWS)

This circuit is for experienced walkers and offers overnight camping on the highest mountain in Queensland where the weather is often wet and misty. Currently the two Bartle Frere sections suffer from erosion and drainage problems. There is a need to repair and realign parts of the track and provide better infrastructure at the campsite. Creation of a circuit along the Russell River would extend the walking options here.

### Goldfield Track (QPWS, Cairns City Council)

The Goldfield Track is another of the few managed overnight walks and is well used due to its proximity to Cairns. The walk traverses various rainforest habitats and includes groves of king ferns. A camping area is designated on the Mulgrave River. The walk has erosion and drainage problems and large sections of the track are along an old road. Rehabilitation of some road sections to form a narrower track at the Goldsborough Valley end would improve the desired bushwalking experience. There is potential to link the Goldsborough Valley end to walks on the Tableland. However, Aboriginal concerns must be addressed.

### Cedar Bay South (QPWS, Private)

Cedar Bay South has the potential to link with the Cedar Bay North walk. It offers walking and overnight camping in coastal areas inaccessible by road. Access from the main road to Cedar Bay needs to be negotiated.

## Walk networks

### Tully Gorge/Ravenshoe/South Johnstone network (QPWS, Herberton, Cardwell, Johnstone & Eacham Shire Councils)

The Heritage Trails Network, QPWS and Mamu people are currently investigating the feasibility of a walking network in this region in order to highlight the Aboriginal cultural and other historical heritage values of the region. The area offers some of the best examples of intact rainforest habitats in the Wet Tropics. There are also numerous waterfalls, creeks and scenic views. Local governments are keen to participate in development of a linked network of tracks to stimulate tourism and economic growth for the various shires and towns such as Ravenshoe, Millaa Millaa, Mena Creek and Tully.

### Cairns/Kuranda/Lamb Range network (QPWS, Mareeba Shire & Cairns City Councils)

This network offers a variety of vegetation, habitats and spectacular scenic and coastal views. The area is rich in Aboriginal culture and heritage and also has a history of logging and mining in some areas. The walks are close to major population and tourist centres and can be easily combined with other tourist activities in the area. There is potential to link with Lambs Head and Tinaroo Dam as well, subject to addressing Aboriginal concerns.

### Murray Falls/Kirrama Range network (QPWS)

This network would include some Aboriginal tracks which the Girramay people are keen to re-establish for Aboriginal use and guided walks (Djuburriny and Gayjil) as well as old roads which also have Aboriginal significance such as Bilyana, Sullivans and Kents Tracks. The JCU hut could be used for overnight accommodation.

## Remote long walks

### Downey Creek Walk (QPWS)

A 3 day walk linking Mena Creek and South Johnstone which offers access to waterfalls, swimming holes and various rainforest types. It forms part of the Tully Gorge/Ravenshoe/South Johnstone network.

### Bluewater to Paluma (QPWS)

QPWS are currently repairing the access to the Bluewater visitor site at the top of the range. This walk offers a long 2-3 day walk close to Townsville with a variety of terrain, vegetation types and scenic views. There are options for camping along the range and accommodation at Paluma. There is potential to continue walking to Paluma Dam.

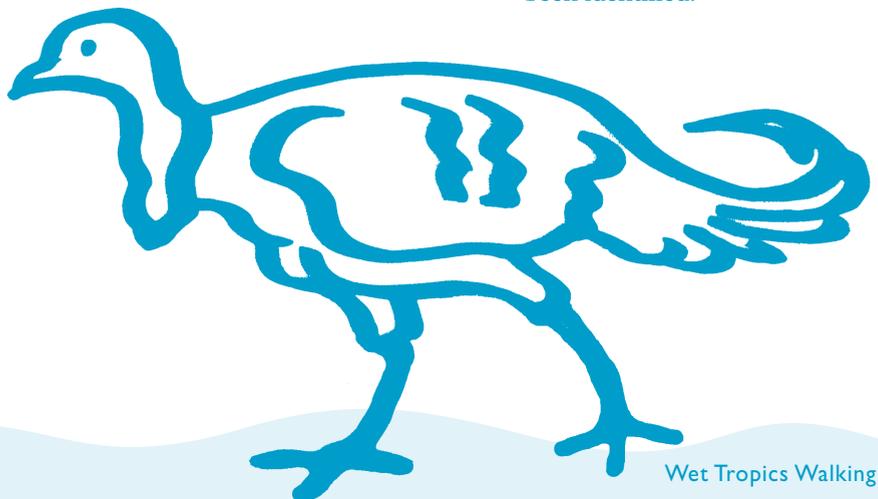
## Other walk priorities

### Bloomfield Catchment Area

Apart from the very short Bloomfield (Wujal Wujal) Falls walk, no specific walks have yet been identified for this region. Traditional owners have expressed a wish to develop Aboriginal tourism and walking opportunities and to better manage those visitors who are currently using unmanaged walks in the area.

### Daintree & Mossman areas

There is a demand from the tourism industry for long walks in the Daintree and Mossman areas. However, land managers have experienced difficulty in creating and maintaining any long walks in this area due to its steep terrain and heavy rainfall. The area also contains significant Aboriginal sites. The area is currently the subject of negotiations between traditional owners and the State Government. Potential walks have not yet been identified.



# Information, education and promotion

## Off site

Accessible information and promotional material will be provided to help people choose walks which suit their abilities and satisfy their needs.

This material will also be used as a valuable management tool to distribute walkers away from vulnerable or overcrowded areas and ensure they are well prepared for safe walking.

## On site

Educational signs help walkers to understand and appreciate the natural and cultural aspects of the World Heritage Area.

On site information and orientation signs allow visitors to find the trailhead and ensure they are aware of the length and difficulty of the walk.

## Key Actions

### Off site

- Liaise with walkers, land managers and the tourism industry to collate a database of consistent and comprehensive walking information.
- Provide walking information and promotional material so that walkers can easily learn about the diversity of walks, select appropriate walks and prepare for factors such as weather and safety.
- Make information from the walks database available for use in tourism guide books, management information sheets and tourism brochures. It will also be adapted for the internet to enable tourists to search for particular walking areas or themes within the Wet Tropics.

- Provide walkers, especially those planning to do longer routes, with information about safety, minimal impact walking, climate, degree of difficulty, suitable gear and footwear and required experience.

### On site

- Conduct an audit of current walks to identify the need for additional signs to provide clear directions and information on distance, time, safety issues and required walker abilities.
- Identify walks which need educational signs to explain their natural and cultural features.
- Increase ranger presence on selected walks.

## An example of how Tablelands walks can be promoted

Tablelands Features and Themes	Time Taken		
	short (easy) 1 hr or less	medium (moderate) up to half day	long (strenuous) full day / overnight
<b>Waterfalls</b>	Davies Creek, Tully Falls Emerald Creek, Dinner Falls Millstream Falls...	Nandroya Falls	Windin Falls
<b>Lakes</b>	Lake Euramoo, Pelican Point Torpedo Bay Walk	Lake Eacham Lake Barrine Circuit	
<b>Lookouts</b>	Mt Edith Walk Mareeba Wetlands	Nth Johnstone Lookout	Lambs Head
<b>Trees</b>	Curtain Fig, Cathedral Fig Gadgarra Red Cedar Clohesy River Fig		
<b>Mountain tops</b>		Mount Haig (B Road) Mt Baldy	Lambs Head Bartle Frere West
<b>Aboriginal cultural</b>	Malanda Falls Rainforest Bare Hill	Wabunga Wayemba	
<b>Rainforest interpretation</b>	Malanda Falls Rainforest Wongabel Botanical Walk Pelican Point Revegetation Walk		
<b>Craters</b>	The Crater, Mobo Creek		
<b>Wetlands/Birds</b>	Hasties Swamp Mareeba Wetlands	Mareeba Wetlands	
<b>Creeks &amp; Rivers</b>	Davies Creek Tully Weir	Kauri Creek Henrietta Creek to K Tree	Cochable Causeway
<b>Adventure &amp; recreation</b>		Mena Creek	Bare Hill to Copperlode Dam Bartle Frere West Mt Edith (C Road)

# Managing Assets

## Construction and maintenance

The strategy establishes priorities across management agency boundaries for construction and maintenance of a network of walking tracks.

This involves an ongoing process to resolve such issues as:

- which walks need increased maintenance of tracks to resolve safety and environmental issues,
- whether currently unmanaged walks should become actively managed,
- where new walking tracks need to be created,
- what are the desired standards for construction and maintenance of each track,
- which tracks should be closed on a seasonal or permanent basis.

### Key Actions

- Bring currently managed walks up to desired standards as a highest priority.
- Adapt current standards of construction and maintenance to better deal with Wet Tropics environmental conditions.
- Determine an appropriate style of construction and maintenance to enhance each desired walking experience, taking into consideration the cost and personnel required.
- Reduce costs by coordinating the assistance of local governments, commercial operators, bushwalkers, volunteer groups and employment and training programs to maintain or monitor particular tracks.
- Ensure that the design and alignment of walking tracks reflects the desired experience and shows off appropriate features and themes rather than merely following pre-existing roads and tracks.
- Convert old roads which are managed as walks to narrower tracks and promote regrowth to rehabilitate the remainder of the road where practicable and affordable.
- Design campsites and provide facilities to minimise maintenance and adverse impacts.

## Resources and benefits

Infrastructure and facilities for walking are often expensive and time consuming to build and maintain. However, walking brings significant economic benefits to the region. It is an important activity for most visitors and locals touring the Wet Tropics, whether on commercial or private trips. Direct tourism use of the Wet Tropics region is currently estimated to generate over \$175 million per annum. Total gross expenditure for the region (which includes flow-on effects to the local community) is estimated to be over \$750 million.

### Key actions

- Ensure that expenditure on walks reflects the strategy's guidelines and priorities for development and maintenance of walks.
- Develop an asset management approach to walking infrastructure to determine:
  - its present condition and value,
  - costs to maintain and monitor currently managed tracks to approved standards,
  - the cost of construction of new tracks and infrastructure.
- Investigate appropriate ways of using private funds and commercial services to enhance walk opportunities which do not lead to the public being alienated from a public resource.
- Investigate appropriate contributions from walkers and commercial operators through fees for particular walks such as a canopy walk.

## Monitoring

Monitoring is necessary to regularly assess the condition of walks to maintain the desired walking experience. This includes monitoring track conditions, visitor numbers and behaviour, vegetation damage, wildlife disturbance and Aboriginal concerns.

Monitoring track conditions also requires attention to specific detail such as erosion sites, drainage problems, unsafe or damaged infrastructure and graffiti.

Long term monitoring of visitor perceptions and environmental impacts is dealt with in the Research section.



### Key actions

- Train rangers and other walk managers to monitor desired settings. This will include monitoring visitor perceptions and behaviour as well as the condition of tracks and infrastructure.
- Monitor at regular intervals, consistent with risk management and visitor use for each walk. This will often mean an increased ranger presence along walks.
- Develop rapid assessment monitoring processes suitable to be undertaken by local rangers or walkers.
- Monitor visitor numbers and behaviour at sites and relate them to adverse impacts to see if limits to walker numbers may be necessary.
- Use walkers, especially commercial tour operators, to help monitor both track conditions and walker characteristics, satisfaction and needs.

# Three Steps for Managing Individual Walks

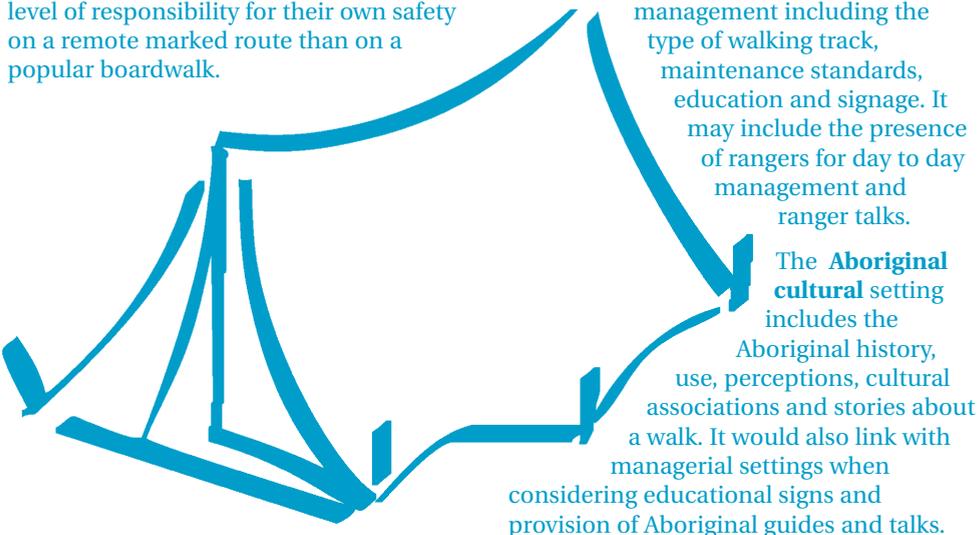
## 1. Classify different tracks

Management of each walk will be guided by a track classification system which divides walks into five classes - two types of pathways, graded walks, rough tracks and marked routes (refer to table on pages 10-11). These walk categories prescribe:

- physical characteristics such as track width, surface, length and infrastructure,
- service standards such as maintenance and monitoring requirements,
- walker safety, fitness and ability,
- the natural, social and managerial settings of a walk.

### Safety

The track classification system also demonstrates that land managers are meeting walker demand by providing a range of recreational and adventurous walks with related challenges and risk factors. Walkers must be informed and accept responsibility for the risks associated with particular walks. For instance, walkers would take a greater level of responsibility for their own safety on a remote marked route than on a popular boardwalk.



## 2. Establish desired track settings

Each walk will be assessed to establish settings which reflect the desired walking experience. The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and the Wet Tropics Management Authority have agreed to adopt a common standard for walk settings. The Walking Strategy also includes an Aboriginal setting to provide Aboriginal perspectives on walk management. The four setting categories are summarised below:

The **natural setting** includes all natural elements such as vegetation, terrain, habitat and water quality as well as evidence of human effects on the landscape (including the style of track).

The **social setting** includes factors affecting walkers' social experience such as remoteness or crowding, noise levels and interactions with other people or activities.

The **managerial setting** includes all facilities and services, directly and indirectly provided by management including the type of walking track, maintenance standards, education and signage. It may include the presence of rangers for day to day management and ranger talks.

The **Aboriginal cultural setting** includes the Aboriginal history, use, perceptions, cultural associations and stories about a walk. It would also link with managerial settings when considering educational signs and provision of Aboriginal guides and talks.

## 3. Create walk Management Plans

### Key actions

➤ Develop walk management plans for individual walks according to priorities. Plans could include:

#### visitor focused information

- desired walk experience
- features and themes
- information for walkers, both along the walk and in visitor centres, books, brochures and websites
- links to other walks
- walk type, length and degree of difficulty
- user preparation and fitness
- promotional strategy
- on and off site facilities and services
- access to the walk

#### Management focused information

- track classifications (and variation between sections of the walk)
- natural, social and managerial settings
- conservation and rehabilitation of the track and environs
- type of track construction
- soil type
- maintenance costs, needs, methods style and schedule
- interpretation needs
- ranger presence
- patterns and limits to walker use
- priority of any proposed works
- cost of necessary and desired works
- need for any rehabilitation work
- regulatory requirements such as permits
- infrastructure, campsites and site facilities
- safety management
- multiple use
- monitoring and research needs

#### Aboriginal cultural information

- traditional owners and the native title representative body
- Aboriginal history and information
- employment and participation in management
- Aboriginal cultural heritage values which require conservation management

### Key actions

- Ensure rangers and other land managers are informed about the use of the track classification system.
- Use the track classification system as a guide to inform and justify decisions about appropriate risk management for walks, rather than trying to eliminate risks altogether.

### Key actions

- Audit present settings.
- Establish and map the desired diversity of walking experiences and their different natural, social, managerial and Aboriginal settings and characteristics.
- Actively monitor settings to maintain the desired walking experience.

# Two Examples: Smiths Track and Barron Falls Lookout

## Track class

**Smiths Track** is a 7 kilometre bushwalk from Speewah to Kamerunga. It is classed as a **rough track** (see map for desired track classes). This means that it should be a distinct track, but without hardened surfaces or major changes to the natural ground. Rough tracks are usually longer than five kilometres and can be steep. Encounters with fallen debris and other obstacles can be expected. Rough tracks should be 500-900mm wide or less, have only enough signs and facilities so that walkers can find and follow the track, and be safe enough to suit experienced walkers. They should be monitored about once a month and maintenance should be by foot patrols using hand tools.

**Barron Falls Lookout** is a popular tourist boardwalk and canopy walk leading down to a railway platform and lookout. It is classed as a **pathway 1** which means it is a broad, hardened surface suitable for wheelchair access. Pathways are generally flat, less than 2 kilometres long and will be clear of vegetation. Interpretive and directional signs can be frequent and facilities may include lookouts, seats and rails. Pathways should be safe for inexperienced walkers and inspected regularly, possibly using motorised transport.

## Walk experience (settings)

The track class will relate to the desired walk experience and settings.

For **Smiths Track** this will be in a very natural landscape with minor changes, limited to a few places. There will be some opportunities for solitude away from traffic noise, but some interaction with other groups on the walk would be expected. There is a dependence on outdoor skills. Facilities, signs and ranger presence are minimal.

**Barron Falls Lookout** will also be in a natural environment, but close to carparks, roads and facilities. Walkers can expect large numbers of visitors and high levels of infrastructure. Educational and directional signs will be frequent and there will often be a ranger present.

## Walk management plans

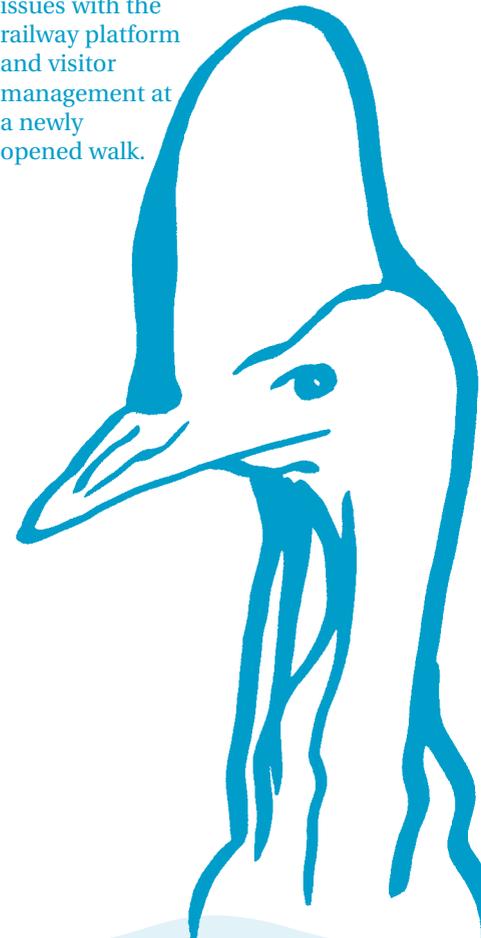
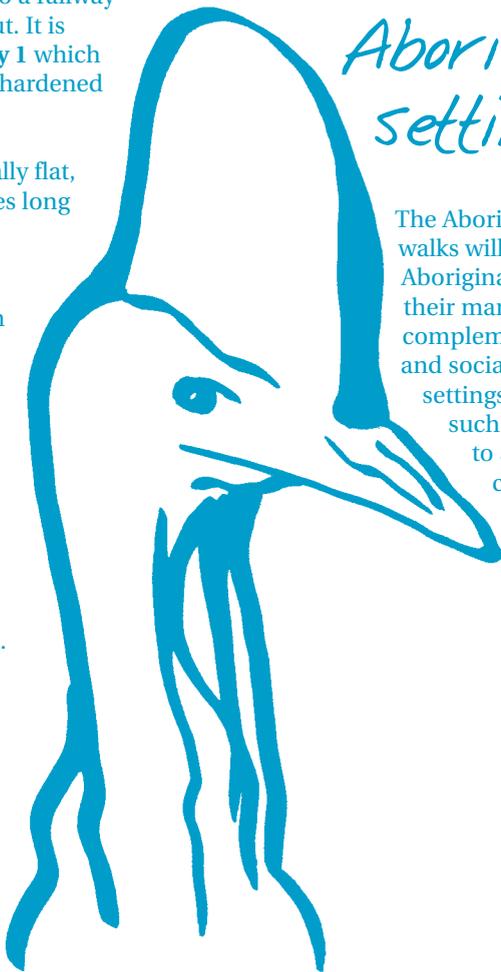
Walk management plans outline the full management regime for individual walks. They enable managers to focus on specific issues and variations along a walk to complement the general management approach of the track class and settings. For both tracks this may include access to the walks and information about them, links to other walks and maintenance costs and methods.

The plan for **Smiths Track** may include details about specific features such as the trees at Cadagi Corner, Aboriginal sites or historical sites. It may also deal with such management issues as access from Kamerunga, the need for specific signs, the use of Djabugay rangers to maintain and monitor the track, safety at the railway line crossing and conflicts of use with mountain bikes.

For **Barron Falls Lookout** a walk management plan may involve details of educational and warning signs, safety issues with the railway platform and visitor management at a newly opened walk.

## Aboriginal setting

The Aboriginal setting for both walks will incorporate Aboriginal perspectives into their management to complement the conservation and social values of the other settings. This includes factors such as aligning the route to avoid significant cultural sites in the area and using Aboriginal names for various sections of the track.



# Track Classification System

Service Standards & Settings	Pathway 1	Pathway 2
<b>Track Formation &amp; Surface</b>	Broad hard surfaced track suitable for wheelchair use or people with little mobility.	Generally a modified hardened surface, well maintained.
<b>Track Width (Approx.)</b>	1200mm or wider.	1200mm or wider.
<b>Gradient/Steps</b>	Flat, steps allowed only with alternative ramp.	Generally flat, some use of steps.
<b>Signs</b>	Signs for management and education may be used frequently.	Signs for management and education may be used frequently.
<b>Infrastructure</b>	Facilities along the track may include lookout platforms, seats and rails.	Facilities along the track may include lookout platforms, seats and rails.
<b>Campsites</b>	Any campsites will be designated and have toilet facilities.	Any campsites will be designated and have toilet facilities.
<b>Vegetation Clearance</b>	Vegetation should be kept clear of total track width and above head height. Fallen vegetation to be cleared as soon as possible.	Vegetation should be kept clear of total track width and above head height. Fallen vegetation to be cleared as soon as possible.
<b>Monitoring</b>	Regular inspection.	Regular inspection.
<b>Safety &amp; Risk Management</b>	Safety standards to suit all members of the public.	Safety standards to suit all able bodied members of the public.
<b>Maintenance Style</b>	Machinery and vehicles may be used for maintenance and patrol.	Machinery and small vehicles may be used for maintenance and patrol.
<b>Biophysical (Natural) Setting</b>	Natural setting, always close to roads, carparks and facilities.	Natural setting, generally close to roads, carparks and facilities.
<b>Social Setting</b>	Large numbers of visitors can expect frequent encounters with others. Possibly suitable for other activities such as cycling.	Large numbers of visitors can expect frequent encounters with others. Possibly suitable for other activities such as cycling.
<b>Managerial Setting</b>	High level of facilities, track infrastructure, interpretation, with ranger presence sometimes. Well signposted and promoted.	High level of facilities, track infrastructure, interpretation, with ranger presence sometimes. Well signposted and promoted.
<b>Distance</b>	Usually less than 2km.	Usually less than 2km.
<b>Examples</b>	Marrdja Boardwalk Cathedral Fig Tree Dubuji Boardwalk	Jindalba Boardwalk Licuala Rainforest Circuit Malanda Falls Rainforest Walk

# Track Classification System

Graded Track	Rough Track	Marked Route
Generally a modified surface, sections may be hardened. Kept mostly clear of intrusions and obstacles.	Generally distinct, but without hardened surfaces or major modifications to the ground. Encounter with fallen debris and other obstacles likely.	Limited modification to the natural environment, therefore limited clearance along track. Encounter with fallen debris and other obstacles likely.
900 to 1200mm.	500mm to 900mm.	Approximately 500mm.
May exceed 1:10 for short sections, steps may be common.	May be steep, steps provided only for environmental and maintenance considerations.	May encounter steep natural gradients and unmodified surfaces.
Signs and track markers may be used for direction. Limited education signs.	Minimal signs for track marking, management and directional purposes.	Limited signs, mostly for management purposes.
Facilities generally not provided except for specific safety and environmental considerations or to maximise scenic views.	Facilities generally not provided except for specific safety and environmental considerations or to maximise scenic views.	Facilities generally not provided.
Any campsites will be designated and have toilet facilities.	Campsites may be designated and facilities provided where needed due to environmental issues or high walker numbers.	Campsites may be designated and facilities provided where needed due to environmental issues or high walker numbers.
Vegetation should be cleared for total track width. Fallen vegetation to be cleared regularly.	Vegetation should be cleared for track width. Clear track only after inspections or major weather disturbances.	Vegetation should be cleared to enable markers to be visible. Clear track only after inspections or major weather disturbances.
Regular inspection.	Infrequent inspection.	Infrequent inspection.
Safety standards to suit fit and healthy members of the public.	Safety standards to suit fit and experienced walkers.	Safety standards to suit very fit and experienced walkers.
Machinery and small vehicles may be used for maintenance and patrol.	Foot patrols and hand tool maintenance.	Foot patrols and hand tool maintenance.
Natural setting, usually remote from road.	Highly natural setting remote from road.	Highly natural setting remote from road.
Users can expect regular encounters with others.	Users can expect frequent opportunities for solitude with some encounters from others. Not suitable for other activities.	Users can expect frequent opportunities for solitude with few encounters from others. Not suitable for other activities.
Track infrastructure at appropriate sites for interpretation or safety reasons. Well signposted and promoted.	Track infrastructure only at appropriate sites for safety such as bridges or lookouts, for example. Little signposted. Promotion to include safety and minimal impact walking information.	Little if any track infrastructure apart from markers. Little signposted. Promotion to include safety and minimal impact walking information.
Usually 1km to 5km.	Usually longer than 5km.	Usually longer than 5km.
Nandroya Falls Circuit	Smiths Track	Bartle Frere East and West
Babinda Boulders - Devil's Pool Walk	Lambs Head	Bluff Track
Wallaman Falls Rock Pools Track	Dalrymple Gap Track	Sullivans Track

# Implementation

## Coordination

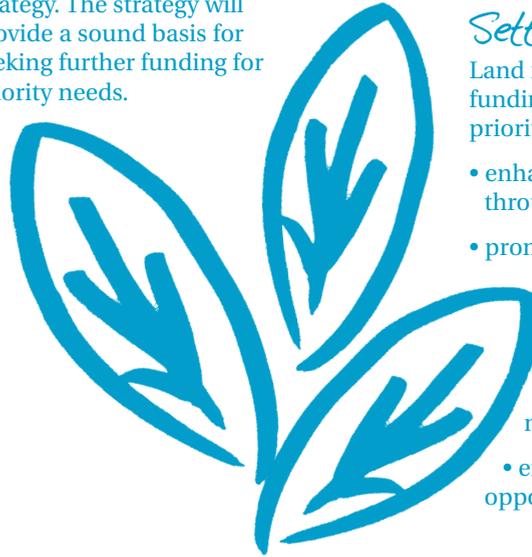
The Wet Tropics Management Authority, QPWS and local government will implement most of the strategy's actions. A Walking Advisory Group, made up of representatives from stakeholder groups, will provide expert advice to land managers about the strategy's implementation. Community advisory groups will enhance communication with the public about walking issues.

## Aboriginal participation

Rainforest Aboriginal people will be consulted when setting priorities and making decisions about particular walks. Aboriginal people will also be consulted about walks on their country as part of a broader discussion about their land.

## Funding

Progress on actions will be dependent on available funding. The implementation process will be flexible and coordinate available funds between management agencies to achieve the aims of the strategy. The strategy will provide a sound basis for seeking further funding for priority needs.



## Evaluation and review

The implementation of the Walking Strategy will be reviewed annually. The review will be the basis for development of annual works programs for walks in the Wet Tropics region.

## Setting walk priorities

Land managers will allocate available funding and resources to meet the priorities of the strategy to:

- enhance the diversity of walks available throughout the Wet Tropics,
- promote safe, enjoyable walking,
- ensure the environment and cultural landscape are protected,
- encourage Aboriginal participation in tourism and management,
- enhance regional economic opportunities.

## Priorities to be commenced in the first year

### Walk diversity

- Assess the feasibility of and develop additional walks needed to provide diversity (see the map for potential walks and proposals for longer walks).
- Talk with managers of private walks to see if they want their walks to be included in the strategy.

### Individual walk management

- Ensure rangers are informed about the track classification system and how to measure and monitor settings.
- Complete an audit of settings for priority walks.
- Design walk management plans, concentrating on those walks with issues which need resolving promptly.

### Walk information

- Collect walking information and make it available to help people find walks to suit their needs and abilities.
- Provide walk information signs to make walks safe and easy to find.
- Identify walks which need more educational signs.

### Walk construction and maintenance

- Maintain or upgrade high priority managed walks to desired standards.
- Research and develop guidelines for adapting construction and maintenance standards to suit the Wet Tropics.

### Cooperative management

- Coordinate communication and actions between government land managers.
- Establish a Walking Advisory Group and community advisory groups.
- Consult with Aboriginal people regarding individual walks and regional planning.

### Research and monitoring

- Develop a visitor monitoring system and trial at selected sites.
- Undertake a demand study for walking by both visitors and the local community.

