

Coolum Creek Conservation Park

Management Statement

2026



Queensland
Government

This management statement has not been co-designed with First Nations partners. This document has been prepared by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation to provide management guidance and adaptive management until such a time as the department can engage with First Nations partners in the co-design of a management instrument.

Management statements are prepared under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. These documents may also include management direction for other State tenure for which QPWS has management responsibility.

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Contents

- 1. Introduction3
- 2. Park overview4
- 3. Key values5
 - 3.1 Wetland habitat..... 7
- 4. Management direction9
 - 4.1 Management directions 10
- 5. Glossary12
- Appendix 113

1. Introduction

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), within the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI), applies a contemporary management process that is based on international best practice and targets management towards the most important features of each park: their 'key values'.

The Values-Based Management Framework (VBMF) is an adaptive management cycle that incorporates planning, prioritising, doing, monitoring, evaluating and reporting into all areas of our business. This enables the agency to be more flexible and proactive and to improve management effectiveness over time. A glossary of VBMF terms and concepts used within this document is provided at the end of this document (Section 5 – Glossary).

As a land manager, QPWS has a custodial obligation to ensure our estate is managed to provide appropriate and safe access, protect life and property, be a good neighbour and work cooperatively with partners across the landscape. The agency does this as part of setting the 'levels of service' for each park. Levels of service is a management standard that considers an area's values, threatening processes, custodial obligations, risks and overall management complexity.

This management statement has been prepared by QPWS to provide management guidance and adaptive management until such a time as the department can engage with First Nations partners in co-design of a management instrument.

2. Park overview

The following figure and table (Figure 1, Table 1) provide an overview of information related to the park including locality, legislative framework and applicable plans/agreements.

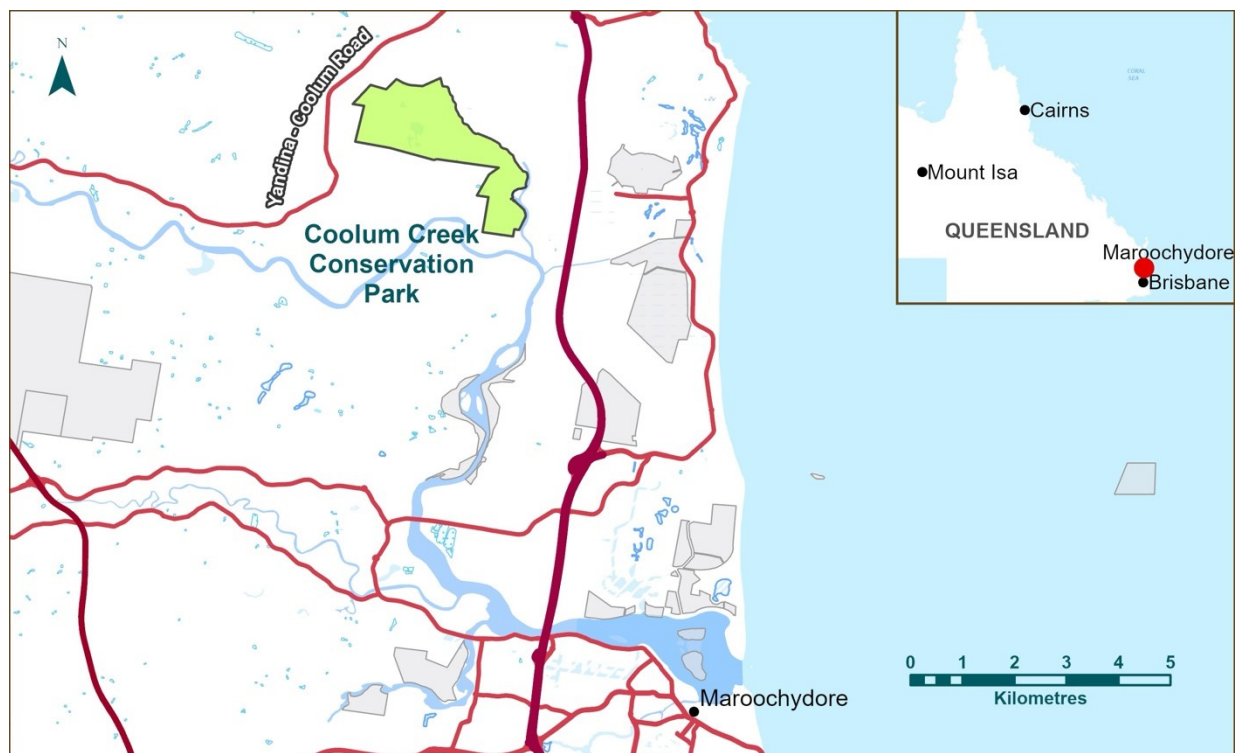


Figure 1. Locality of Coolum Creek Conservation Park

Table 1. Overview of Coolum Creek Conservation Park

Park size	Coolum Creek Conservation Park	342.4 ha
Bioregion	South Eastern Queensland	
QPWS region	South East Queensland	
Local government area	Sunshine Coast Regional	
State electorate	Ninderry	
Relevant legislation	<i>Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003</i>	
	<i>Biosecurity Act 2014</i>	
	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (Cwlth)	
	<i>Native Title Act 1993</i> (Cwlth)	
	<i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i>	
Plans and agreements	<i>A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia</i>	
	<i>The Action Plan for Australian Mammals 2012</i>	
	<i>National Recovery Plan for the Water Mouse (Xeromys myoides) 2022</i>	

3. Key values

All parks, forests and reserves contain a range of natural, cultural, social and economic values that contribute to the state's comprehensive and representative protected area and forest estate. The VBMF provides a framework for identifying and protecting the most important of these—referred to as *key values*—which in turn guides the allocation of management resources.

The location of each key value is shown in Figure 2. An assessment of each key value—including its current and desired condition, trend, and the confidence level of the assessment—is presented in the following tables and can be interpreted using Table 2. The assessment also outlines the main threats to each key value and provides broad strategic management direction to address these threats and achieve desired outcomes over time.

Table 2. Description of condition and trend icons used in the key values assessment

Condition of key value	Good  The value is in good condition and is likely to be maintained for the foreseeable future, provided that current measures are maintained	Good with some concern  The value is likely to be maintained over the long term with minor additional conservation measures to address existing concerns	Significant concern  The value is threatened by a number of current or potential threats. Significant additional conservation measures are required to preserve the value over the medium to long term	Critical  The value is severely threatened. Urgent additional large-scale conservation measures are required or the value may be lost
Trend of key value condition	Improving 	Stable 	Deteriorating 	No consistent trend 
Assessment confidence	Inferred 	Limited 	Adequate 	

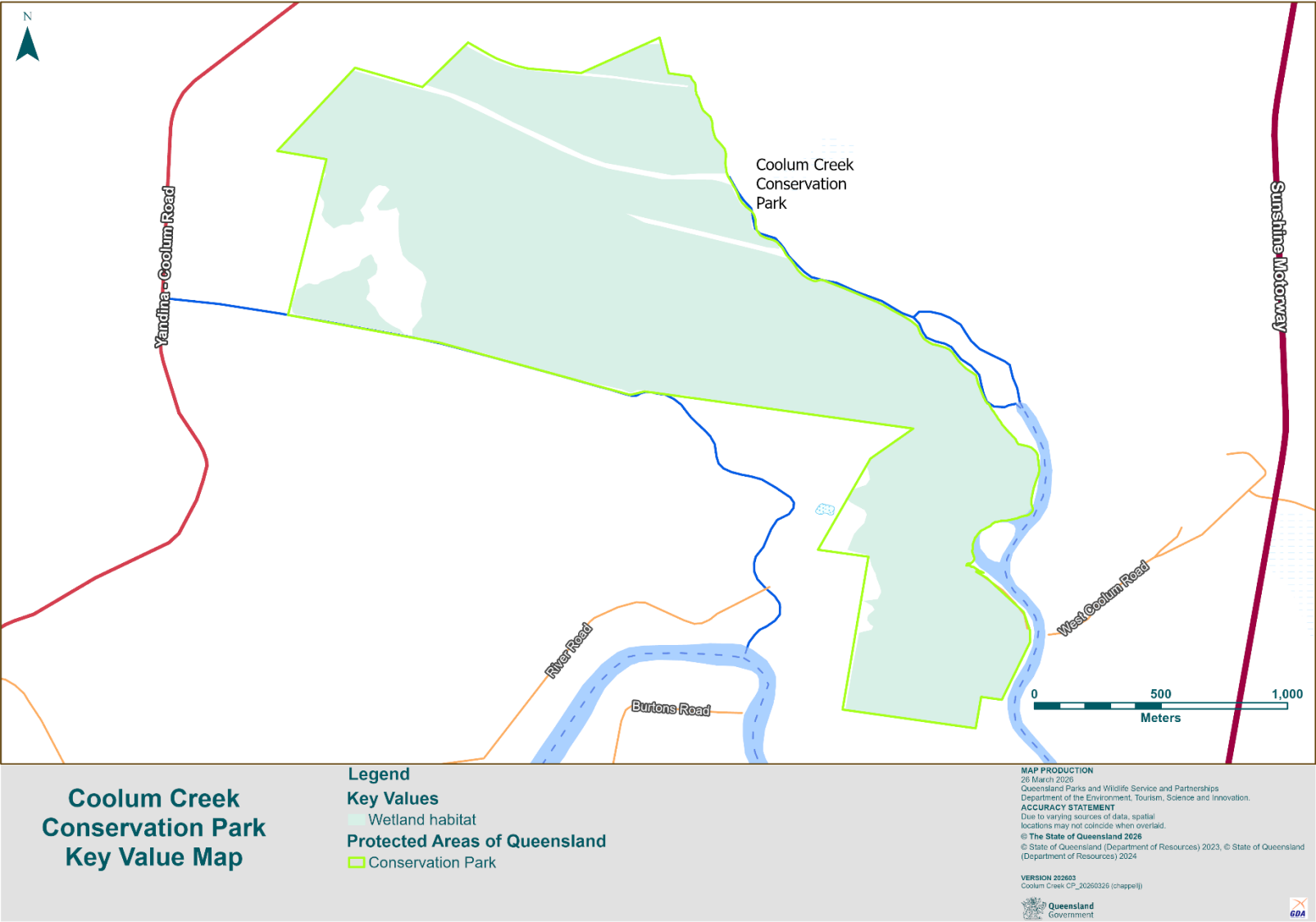


Figure 2.Coolum Creek Conservation Park key values

3.1 Wetland habitat

Key value category	Key value description	Current condition	Assessment confidence	Current trend	Assessment confidence	Desired condition (short term)	Desired condition (long term)
Significant ecosystem	Wetland habitat extends across most of the park (95 per cent) and is contiguous with the Coolum Creek and Lower Maroochy River wetland system which is listed in <i>A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia</i>. The majority of the park's wetland (74.73 per cent) is swamp paperbark forest that is seasonally inundated. While this endangered regional ecosystem (12.3.20) is found in 19 protected areas in Queensland, this park has the highest representation at 41.79 per cent of that protected. Within the swamp paperbark forest there are also freshwater swamp areas with sedges and grasses. Intertidal wetland covers 14.7 per cent of the park and includes mangrove forests and casuarina woodlands. The park's wetland provides habitat for vulnerable water mouse <i>Xeromys myoides</i>, two ferns with special least concern status and three migratory birds. There are four regional ecosystems within this wetland habitat. Regional ecosystem 12.3.20: <i>Melaleuca quinquenervia</i>, <i>Casuarina glauca</i> +/- <i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i>, <i>E. siderophloia</i>, <i>M. styphelioides</i> open forest on low coastal alluvial plains has endangered biodiversity status and covers 260.22 hectares (74.73 per cent) of the park — this is 7.59 per cent of the regional ecosystem remaining in Queensland and 41.79 per cent of that within the protected area estate. Regional ecosystem 12.1.1: <i>Casuarina glauca</i> woodland on margins of marine clay plains has of concern biodiversity status and covers 12.58 hectares (3.61 per cent) of the park. Regional ecosystem 12.3.8: Swamps with <i>Cyperus</i> spp., <i>Schoenoplectus</i> spp. and <i>Eleocharis</i> spp. has of concern biodiversity status and covers 7.29 hectares (2.09 per cent) of the park. Regional ecosystem 12.1.3: Mangrove shrubland to low closed forest on marine clay plains and estuaries has no concern at present biodiversity status and covers 38.73 hectares (11.12 per cent) of the park. Regional ecosystem 12.3.5: <i>Melaleuca quinquenervia</i> open forest on coastal alluvium has no concern at present biodiversity status and covers a small 0.83 hectare area (0.24 per cent) of the park.	Good with some concern 	Limited 	Stable 	Inferred 	Good with some concern 	Good 
Desired outcome The wetland habitat is healthy with clean water, diverse native species, natural hydrology and stable vegetation supporting thriving biodiversity, water quality, cultural and community needs.							

Threats to key value

Threat process	Threat category	Description	Threat level	Threat rating
Changed fire frequency of intensity	Natural system modifications	Most of the park (78.60 per cent) contains regional ecosystems that need fire to be healthy, including the endangered melaleuca open forest. There is no fire history for the park and no planned burns have been undertaken.	Primary	Medium
Bushfire	Natural system modifications	While there are no records of bushfires in the park, there is the potential for bushfires to impact the park. Burns undertaken by neighbours along the eastern boundary have encroached into the park. There are introduced grasses in the surrounding landscape which may be present in the park. Invasive grasses, particularly high biomass grasses can increase the bushfire risk.	Secondary	Medium
Introduced weeds	Invasive and other problematic species, genes and diseases	Groundsel is a Category 3 weed that has been recorded from the park. It is a densely branched shrub to three meters, that flowers late March to early April, with seeds drifting readily in the breeze. Seeds can remain dormant for several years. In melaleuca wetlands groundsel can form a dense understory, suppressing growth of native sedges and other species. It can become abundant along watercourses if not controlled. Access to the park is challenging for control activities as there is no road access, access by vessel is required and the region does not have any vessels.	Secondary	Medium
Introduced weeds	Invasive and other problematic species, genes and diseases	While there are only four pest plants recorded in the Department's Wildnet database, there are likely to be other pests present within the park. Introduced grasses are present in the surrounding landscape and may be present in the park. Introduced invasive grasses, particularly high biomass grasses can increase the bushfire risk. Pest plants are readily transported during flood events.	Other	Low
Introduced animals	Invasive and other problematic species, genes and diseases	Foxes and wild dogs are both known to be present in the landscape and are likely to be in or transit through the park. The National Recovery Plan for the water mouse identifies the fox as a primary threat to water mouse where their distribution overlaps.	Secondary	Low
Hydrological modification	Natural system modifications	The park's wetlands are influenced by land use and modifications in the surrounding catchment. Much of the surrounding land has been modified for agriculture (sugar cane, grazing) and through the council-led 'Blue Heart' initiative where agricultural land that was formally cleared, drained and used for sugar cane farming is transitioning into a mixture of wetland habits as old floodgates, bunds and weirs deteriorate and tidal flows return. Permits have been issued for opening water gates and other barriers to water flows. New surrounding land uses may also impact hydrology, such as a newly developed golf course.	Other	Low

Strategic management directions

Strategic management direction	Priority*
Maintain the structural elements and age class variation of melaleuca forest and casuarina woodland through the targeted application of fire.	3
Protect melaleuca forest and casuarina woodland through targeted use of fire to mitigate the spread and impacts of bushfire.	3
Protect the swamp sedges and grasses through appropriate fire management in the surrounding melaleuca forest.	3
Reduce the impact of foxes and dogs on water mouse.	3
Reduce the impact of invasive grasses on wetland habitat.	4
Reduce the impact of groundsel on wetland habitat through feasible control options in collaboration with Sunshine Coast Regional Council and other neighbours.	4
Monitor condition and hydrological changes to wetland habitat to assess impacts and determine future management.	3

Key value priority: 1 – Critical, 2 – Very high, 3 – High, 4 – Moderate, 5 – Desirable (see Appendix 1)

4. Management direction

QPWS manages protected areas and forests to protect their values and deliver our custodial obligations as a land manager. A levels of service (LoS) assessment allows QPWS to consider the management of each park in a state-wide context and determine desired levels of management effort for each park in a consistent and equitable way. An LoS assessment lets QPWS staff and the public know what level of management activity to expect on each park, forest or reserve. There are six LoS ratings ranging from 'below acceptable' to 'exceptional', and an 'acceptable' rating is the minimum standard required to deliver good management and meet our legislative and custodial obligations.

This section provides a strategic management direction for each management theme, identifying its current LoS and desired LoS, which can be interpreted using Figure 3.

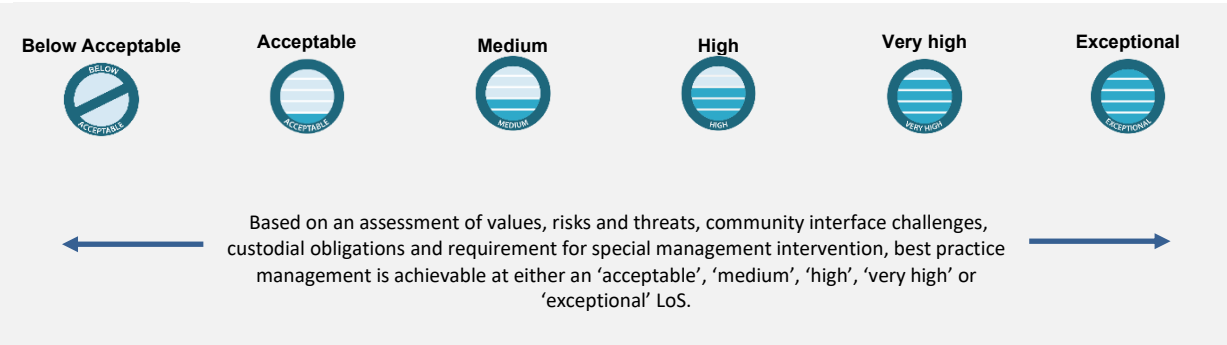


Figure 3. Description of LoS icons

4.1 Management directions

Management theme	Current	Desired	Strategic management direction	Priority (1–5) *
Fire management			Improve the current knowledge and understanding of all fire dependent ecosystems within the wetland habitat.	3
			Improve understanding of the likely impacts of changing hydrology, fire regime and pests on the wetland habitat.	3
			Improve the current level of consultation and relationships with neighbours for annual fire preparedness, including planned burns and maintenance of fire breaks.	3
			Improve collaboration through increased engagement with the Area Bushfire Management Group, Kabi Kabi Rangers, Sunshine Coast Regional Council and other neighbours, to support a shared responsibility approach to fire management.	3
			Improve the current approach to fire management by increasing the priority for implementing conservation planned burns for key values.	3
			Improve fire management in the park through preparation of an area fire strategy.	3
Pest management			Improve the knowledge of pest species that might threaten key values.	3
			Improve knowledge and understanding of current and emerging weeds and their impacts on key values, including distribution and extent; prioritise invasive grasses, groundsel, foxes and dogs.	3
			Improve consultation with key stakeholders for the development of the annual pest program.	3
			Improve current approach to pest management through partnering with Sunshine Coast Regional Council and Kabi Kabi Rangers to undertake pest control and natural values management.	3
			Investigate opportunities to partner with community and natural resource groups to undertake pest control and natural values management.	3
			Improve the priority for pest management through increased operational capacity to target identified pest threats in key values, including access to the park.	3
			Improve the coordination of cross-landscape pest management programs with relevant stakeholders, including prioritising programs that target protecting key values.	3
Natural values management			Improve the knowledge and understanding of locations where water mouse are present in the park.	3
			Improve knowledge of the condition of the vegetation communities through the collation of historical vegetation monitoring and management of the health check program.	3
			Improve consultation with centric units, research institutions and local community natural resource groups to support natural values management and develop monitoring programs for key values.	3
			Continue to strengthen the relationship with Sunshine Coast Regional Council and other Blue Heart partners.	3

Management theme	Current	Desired	Strategic management direction	Priority (1–5) *
Post-contact cultural heritage management			Maintain a contemporary knowledge of the park's post-contact cultural heritage and management requirements.	4
Visitor management			Maintain current approach to visitor management.	4
			Increase consultation with Sunshine Coast Regional Council about visitor planning such as the Nambour to Coolum Recreation Trail.	4
Community, partnerships and other interests			Maintain contemporary knowledge of all stakeholders and management requirements.	4
			Improve current approach to community, partnerships and other interests through regular communication with Sunshine Coast Regional Council to develop collaborative work programs.	3
			Improve the existing relationship with the Kabi Kabi Peoples Aboriginal Corporation by extending communication and on ground park management to Coolum Creek Conservation Park.	3
Field management capability			Maintain a contemporary knowledge base to deliver required management.	4
			Maintain current levels consultation with regional support units regarding field management capacity.	4
			Improve current field management capability and capacity by working with other work units to prioritise work programs and obtain assistance with vessel access to the park.	4
Operational planning and management support			Maintain knowledge of available operational planning and management support within the region to guide and support park management operations.	4
			Improve operational capacity by engaging with other regional and centric business groups to inform and support delivery of on-ground operational actions and key values management.	4
			Increase operational planning for key management priorities including fire and pest management.	4

*Level of Service priority: 1 – extremely urgent and extremely necessary, 2 – very necessary and very urgent, 3 - moderately necessary and moderately urgent, 4 – somewhat necessary and somewhat urgent, 5 – optional and not urgent (see Appendix 1)

5. Glossary

The following glossary contains VBMF terms and concepts used within this document.

Term	Description
Adaptive management	The process of adjusting and improving how we manage parks, forests and reserves after assessing the outcomes of previous strategies and on-ground actions.
Condition and trend	The condition of a key value is assessed as either good, good with some concern, significant concern or critical. Trend describes what is happening to the condition: is it improving, stable or deteriorating? A key value's current condition is determined during the planning process. A desired condition is a realistic goal for the future condition of the key value. The ongoing condition and trend of key values is assessed with regular health checks, or monitoring and scientific assessment.
Custodial obligations	The legal and policy requirements QPWS has as a land manager to ensure that parks, forests and reserves are managed properly and lawfully. This includes protecting life and property, maintaining biosecurity, building positive relationships with adjacent communities and landholders, and safeguarding the values of the land.
Desired outcome	A statement in the key value and management direction statements about moving from the current status (condition or LoS) to a desired status. The goal for management.
Health check	Basic form of monitoring that uses indicators and visual assessments to regularly evaluate the condition of key values. Regular health checks ensure QPWS can respond quickly to adverse change and redirect management priorities.
Key value	A natural, cultural, social or economic value that is most important, significant, unique or irreplaceable and helps define the essence of the area. If lost, it would diminish what makes the area distinct from others.
Level of service (LoS)	Management standards for maintaining an area based on its values, threats and the complexity of management. There are six LoS ratings ranging from 'below acceptable' to 'exceptional', noting that an 'acceptable' rating is the minimum standard required to deliver good management and meet our custodial obligations under law as a land manager. A 'current' LoS rating is the level at the time of planning, the 'desired' LoS is where we want to be.
Management direction	An assessment of the current and desired LoS for each management theme, with prioritised strategic management directions.
Management instrument	A management plan or management statement.
Management theme	Common management themes across parks, forests and reserves, including fire management; pest management; natural values management; post-contact cultural heritage management; visitor management; community, partnerships and other interests; field management capability; operational planning and management support.
Strategic management direction	A broad strategy aimed at mitigating or removing a threat to a key value and maintaining or improving the condition of a park's value; or addressing the gap between the current LoS and desired LoS for a management theme.
Threat or threatening process and threat rating	Based on IUCN's classifications, QPWS has identified threatening processes that have the potential to affect Queensland's values (e.g. natural systems modifications, invasive species). Current and potential threats to key values are identified and given a threat rating based on a combination of the extent of the impact, the severity of the impact and the urgency of action.

Appendix 1

Term	Description
Priority rating (key value SMDs)	A rating given to a strategic management direction according to the need for action to prevent further decline, stabilise current condition, or restore and enhance values, with consideration given to legislative obligations, cost, and social, economic and political factors.
	Critical (1) – Loss or very significant decline in the condition of the key value is highly likely if action is not taken OR significant improvement in the condition of the key value is highly likely if action is taken.
	Very high (2) – Significant decline in the condition of the key value is likely if action is not taken OR significant improvement in the condition of the key value is likely if action is taken.
	High (3) – Decline in the condition of the key value is likely if action is not taken OR improvement in the condition of the key value is likely if action is taken.
	Moderate (4) – Some decline in the condition of the key value is possible if action is not taken OR some improvement in the condition of the key value is possible if action is taken.
	Desirable (5) – While decline in the condition of the key value is not likely in the short term, the action, if taken, would help build long-term resilience of the key value.
Priority rating (LoS SMDs)	A rating given to an LoS or custodial obligation strategic management direction. A scale from 1 (extremely urgent) to 5 (not urgent or optional) is assigned, with consideration given to legislative obligations, cost, and social, economic and political factors.