

Yalwal Management Plan



December 1999

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FOREWORD:

Cr Greg Watson,
Mayor.

SUPPORT COMMENT:

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

SUPPORT COMMENT:

Axel Tinnie,
Regional Director,
Sydney/South Coast Region,
Dept. of Land and Water Conservation.

INTRODUCTION:

Background

The rapid deterioration of the Yalwal area in recent years has been a matter of major concern to responsible authorities and members of the general public. Yalwal is a place of historic and environmental significance in the region and its Danjera Dam will play an increasingly important role within Shoalhaven's water supply system. (See Fig. 1). The City Council supported by the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) and the Department of Land & Water Conservation (DLWC) together with the user representative Yalwal Consultative Committee has determined that positive action to protect this valuable area is now essential.

Ease of access combined with a rugged bushland setting have made Yalwal a focal point for users of off-road vehicles and trail bikes. Most of the people who come to the area appreciate its natural and historic values and act responsibly. Regrettably, a minority see only an opportunity to camp, drive and ride in a manner which is resulting in track erosion, destruction of vegetation and loss of amenity to other visitors through noise and hazardous activities. The lack of clear guidelines for users and adequate resources for management have led to an "anything goes" attitude by an irresponsible minority which will get worse unless appropriate action is taken.

Responsibility

Responsibility for the publicly owned parts of the Yalwal area is divided. Three authorities – Shoalhaven City Council, NPWS and the DLWC – are involved, each with their own objectives and management systems. This division of responsibility has been one of the main obstacles to an overall approach to management of the area being implemented in the past.

Policies and other proposals set out in this document are designed to address these problems by providing clear guidelines for the public and the co-ordination of policies and management by the responsible authorities. In developing these it was recognised that a balance had to be struck between the needs of users and the requirements of conservation and protection.

Implementation

The management plan will be implemented in stages. Stage 1 which is restricted to Council land and addresses the more urgent problems, has already been initiated. Stage 2 and 3 have been adopted in draft form only at this time and will be the subject of further consideration by the relevant authorities after consultation with the public and the consultative committee appointed for this task.

Studies

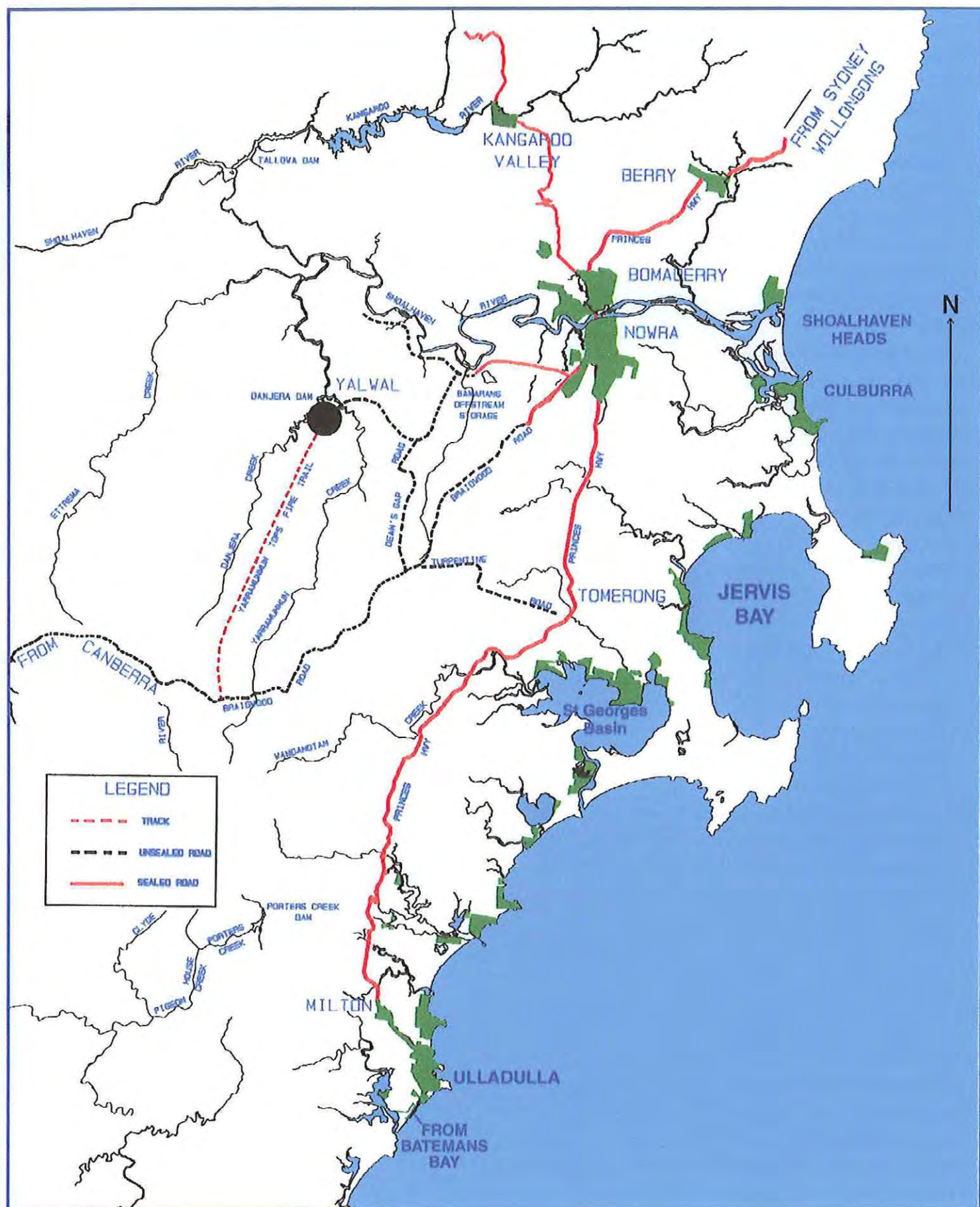
Four specialist studies were undertaken to provide current information and expert opinion to ensure consistency with the vision and objectives in the formation of the management plan. The objectives of the studies are described below:

1. Flora and Fauna
 - To describe the flora and fauna in the subject area and their relationship with the environment.

- To identify any species that may be rare or endangered and make recommendations on how they may be safeguarded.
2. Aboriginal Archaeology
- Assess the impacts of current uses of the area on any Aboriginal sites at or adjacent the Yalwal area.
 - Ascertain the view of relevant Aboriginal communities and to document any place of cultural significance to them.
 - To recommend future management of any sites found based on their local and regional significance.
3. Post Contact Heritage
- Provide an inventory of items of non-Aboriginal culture that remain at Yalwal and within its immediate environs together with an account of how they fitted into the social, economic and industrial life of the area.
 - Recommend how these items may be presented to the public in an interesting yet safe manner without causing damage to the items or the natural and cultural environs.
4. Potential for Tourism
- Assess the potential of Yalwal as a centre for tourist activities compatible with its environs and the water quality of Danjera Dam.
 - Advise the most appropriate tourist activities having regard to other responsibilities for management of the area.

The outcomes of the above studies are summarised in Attachment No. 2.

YALWAL MANAGEMENT PLAN



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Fig. 1
LOCALITY PLAN

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

This plan has been prepared over the last two years by input from agencies, individuals and representatives of community groups with an interest in the Yalwal area, its conservation and management for the enjoyment of present and future residents of Shoalhaven and visitors. The following people making up the Yalwal Consultative Committee are appreciated for their commitment to the vision of Yalwal.

- Shoalhaven Bushwalkers Don Raffell
- Shoalhaven Historical Society John Berry
- Australian Conservation Foundation May Leach
- Australian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy Brian Whitehead
- Shoalhaven 4WD Club
- NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service Sue Feary
- NSW Department of Land and Water Conservation Karen Fowler
- Shoalhaven City Council John Gould
Bill Tomkinson
Cr. Greg Watson (Mayor
1999-2003)
Paul Bland Councillor
1995-99
SCC Councillors

The above were assisted by Russ Evans who was engaged by Shoalhaven City Council, but also provided enthusiasm from his knowledge and appreciation of the Yalwal area.

VISION FOR YALWAL:

- A place where people may capture something of the pioneering spirit of the early settlers and miners who helped lay the economic foundation in the Shoalhaven district.
- An opportunity to enjoy almost pristine bushland typical of the plateau, valleys and streams of the south coast of NSW and ready access to its underlying geology.
- An example of how public visitation and tourism may be achieved and managed without damage to the natural and cultural environments or threat to the integrity of the adjacent water supply.

A Plan of the Future Vision for Yalwal is shown in Figure 2.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN:

Primary Objective

- To ensure that the Danjera water supply system is safeguarded against pollution, siltation and other threats to its integrity.

Other Objectives:

(Subject to compatibility with primary objective)

- To protect the natural and cultural environments of the area from damage through inappropriate human activities and other factors.
- To identify recreational and economically viable tourist opportunities compatible with sound management policies for water storage and natural and cultural values.
- To provide for outcomes which are economically sound and feasible to administer.

SUMMARY:

Shoalhaven City Council after consultation with National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Department of Land & Water Conservation has resolved to adopt a management plan for Yalwal and its environs. Council took this action to ensure that the Danjera Dam water storage and the area's natural and cultural and other attributes can be protected from harm arising from inappropriate uses and activities.

There is clear evidence that ground cover and vegetation have been damaged and destroyed through concentrated vehicle use, and erosion is well advanced in some locations. The situation is likely to deteriorate even more, unless action is taken to stop further damage by vehicles and trail bikes. It will also be necessary to make changes to current patterns of camping to minimise the risk of polluting the adjacent water storage.

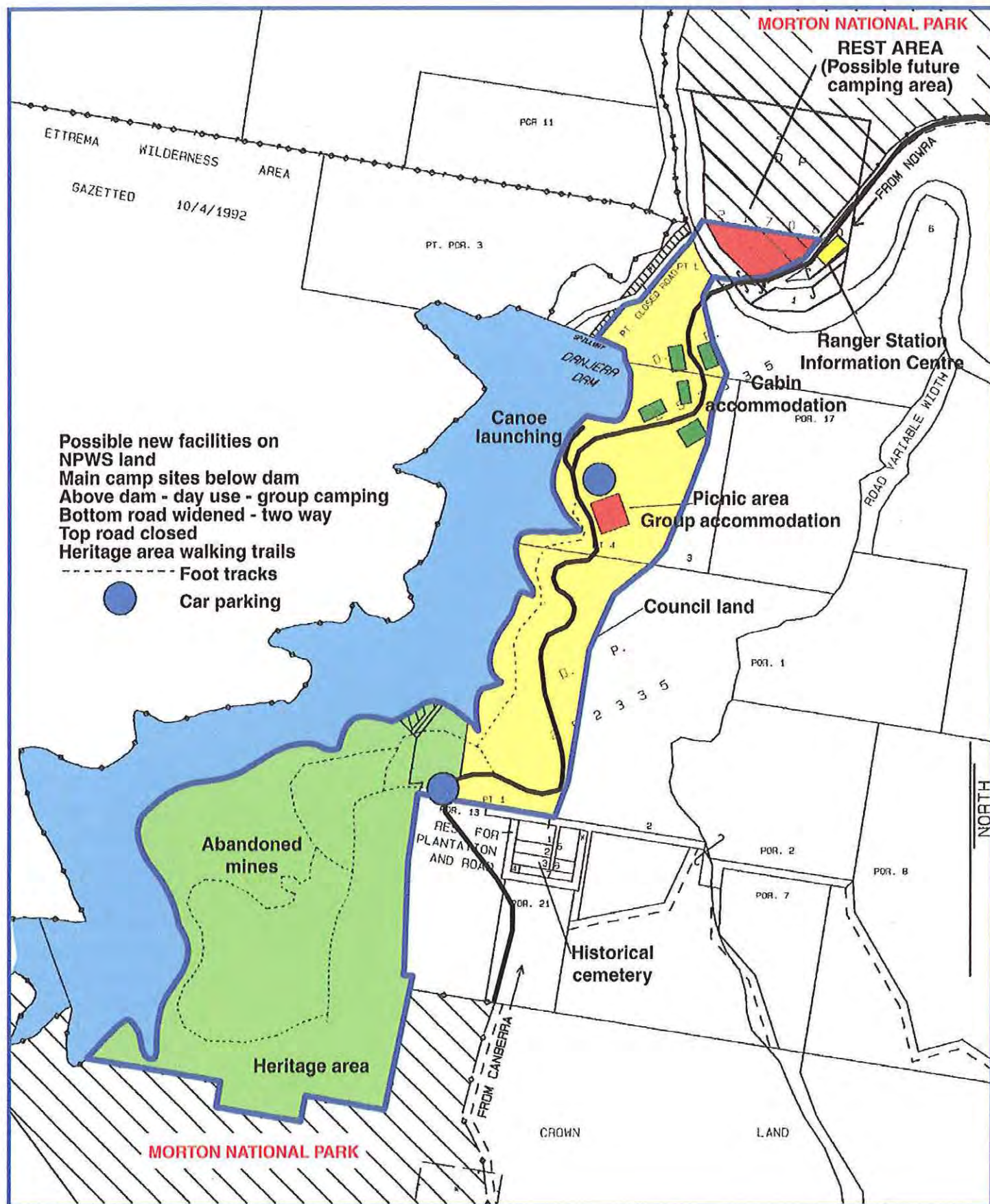
Because other authorities have an interest in the area, it was considered essential that the management plan be prepared in concert with them and with the support of a committee drawn from the wider community.

Stage 1 of the plan – controls over Council land adjacent to the water storage – was implemented as a matter of urgency because of the damage being inflicted by the concentrated use of vehicles. A final decision on other aspects of the plan will not be made until there is further consultation with the public, community organisations and relevant government bodies (Stage of the draft plan involves capital expenditure for site improvements and the possibility of additional tourist developments).

The proposed changes to the current pattern or usage will be the subject of on-going public briefings, with a view to the community becoming fully aware of the intent of, and the reasoning behind the management objectives. Obviously, additional strains will be placed on Council's resources to manage and supervise these changes. This however may be offset in part by granting reciprocal rights to the field staff of the three public bodies involved – Council, NPWS and DLWC – to act on each others behalf within the area plus minimising duplication of effort.

Any future use and developments in the area are to be consistent with the adopted management plan and the Shoalhaven LEP zoning (and proposed amendments).

YALWAL MANAGEMENT PLAN



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Fig. 2
Future Plan

MANAGEMENT PLAN & STAGING:

The strategic plan which was previously adopted by Council had three stages, the first of which has already been partially implemented. Subsequent future action will depend on the outcome of further input by the Yalwal Consultative Committee, consultation with the general public, community groups and government agencies with an interest in Yalwal.

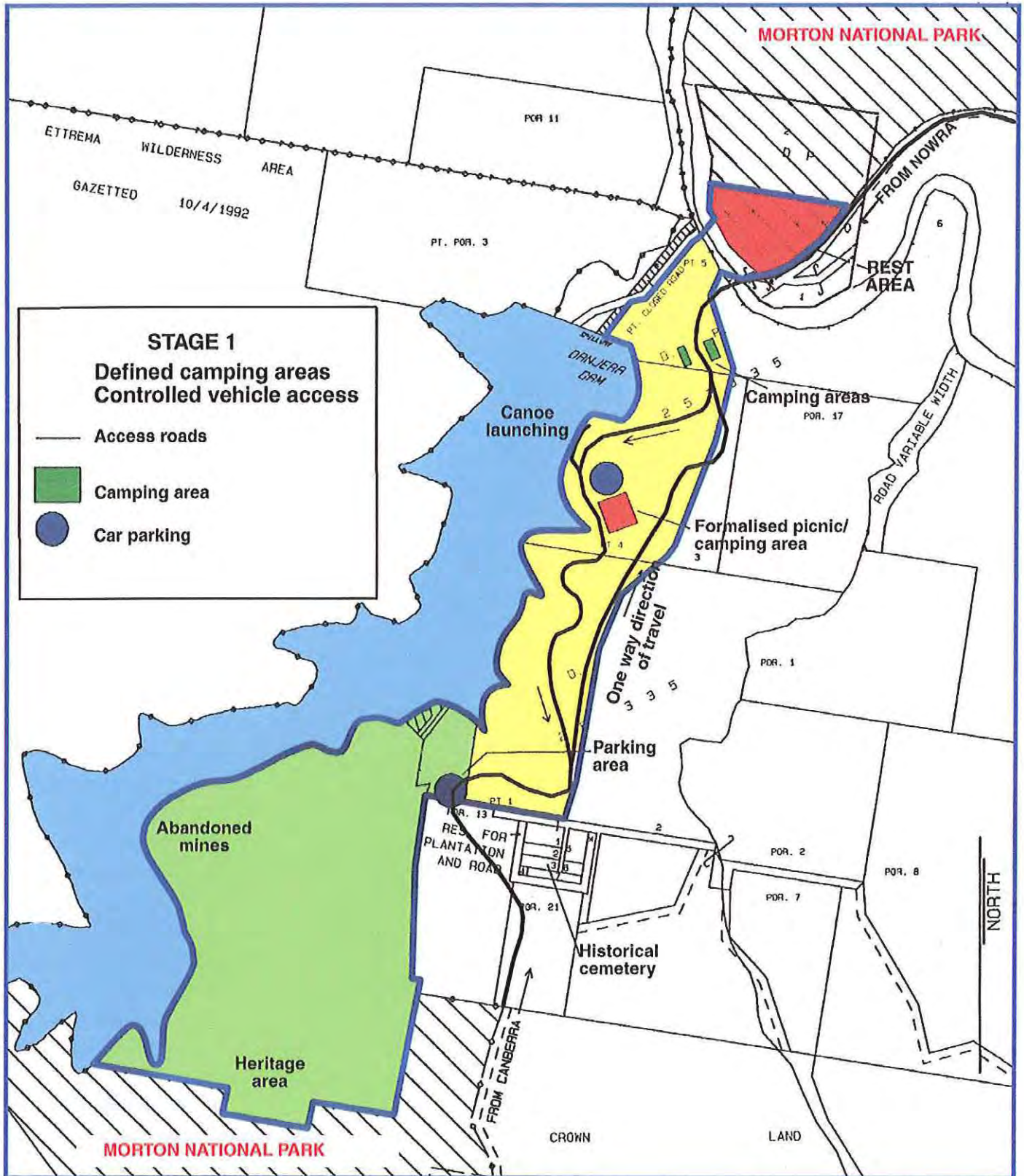
STAGE 1:

Stage 1 affects Council controlled land only and deals with the most urgent problems. The elements of Stage 1 of the management plan are:-

- (a) All vehicles, including motor cycles will be required to travel only on roads and tracks designated for this purpose (see Fig. 3). Barriers are to be erected to block off tracks where vehicles may not enter. (Action completed)
- (b) Camping above the wall of the dam to be restricted to the picnic ground which is the only area of Yalwal with toilet facilities. (Action completed)
- (c) As an interim measure, camping will be permitted on designated areas downstream of the dam wall where run-off cannot enter the stored waters. (Action completed)
- (d) Signs to be erected at strategic locations to set out the requirements and to explain why they are necessary. (Action completed)
- (e) An explanatory pamphlet to be published and distributed in key locations. (Action completed)
- (f) Yalwal and its environments to be listed as a "Heritage Area" in the Local Environment and Regional Plans and other steps to be taken to protect the area's historic and cultural values.
- (g) A programme for the restoration of damaged areas to be drawn up and funds secured for this purpose. The revegetation plan will incorporate recommendation from the Flora & Fauna report by Kevin Mills & Associates particularly the use of indigenous species.
- (h) The co-operation of NPWS and DLWC to be sought to develop a joint approach to the supervision of the area. This will include reciprocal authority to enforce policies on all public land at Yalwal irrespective of territorial boundaries.
- (i) Joint action to be taken within NPWS and DLWC on a programme for weed control.

Implementation of Stage 1 commenced in December 1998 with those elements completed as noted above.

YALWAL MANAGEMENT PLAN



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Fig. 3
Stage 1

FUTURE ACTIONS:

The form and timing of actions subsequent to the implementation of Stage 1 will depend to a large extent on factors outside the control of Council as many of the initiatives involve other organisations. Consequently the following recommendations have not been divided into arbitrary phases.

The implementation of these actions upon finalisation of this plan, following a review by the Consultative Committee, public exhibition and acceptance by all participating agencies, will be governed by the progress which is made in securing the necessary agreements, approvals and finance.

Recommendations

1. Follow up items f), g), h) and i) of Stage 1 as soon as possible.
2. Proposal by NPWS to establish basic toilet facilities on land east of Yaramunmun Creek bridge (See NPWS draft management plan for Morton National Park) be supported with the additional recommendation that NPWS cater for over-night campers.
3. The picnic area adjacent Danjera Dam be upgraded to cater for group camping with a basic covered eating shelter and kitchen to be part of the facilities. This work to be contingent on arrangements for the management of wastes meeting the requirement of Health authorities. The work also to include a landscape plan to soften and make more interesting the appearance of the area than it currently presents.
4. The lower access road to the picnic area be upgraded to take two way traffic and the top road (on the ridge) closed except for authorised vehicles (see Fig. 3).
5. A conservation plan be prepared covering the concentration of mine workings and all necessary steps taken to protect this area.
6. Suitable walking routes through the mines area be identified following the preparation of a Hazards Analysis to delineate the sites which may be suitable for public inspection. Information signs to be placed at all significant historical sites. All vehicles be excluded except for those authorised to enter.
7. Additional walking routes be established within Council and NPWS land to give access to points of interest.
8. Vehicle parking areas to be established at strategic locations.
9. The local aboriginal community to be consulted at relevant stages and given the opportunity to participate in the ongoing operations in the Yalwal area if they so wish and a suitable programme arranged.

10. The possibility of establishing a permanently manned ranger station for use by participating agencies at Yalwal be assessed, and suitable funding be sought.
11. Economic viability and other aspects of constructing and operating built tourist accommodation at Yalwal to be assessed. The type of tourism design and materials of buildings and operating systems etc. to be compatible with the environmental and cultural values of the locality as identified in the specialist studies (see Attachment 5. References). An example would be the creation of a "Mining Heritage Park" on the old Mining Heritage Area to recreate the history of the area.
12. Development which may take place to be based on the principles of "Sustainable Development". This may include the use of solar and or wind powered generation. Waste removal systems are to be "environmentally sensitive" of the adjacent water storage.
13. A system of walking trails and routes throughout the surrounding area be established in consultation with NPWS.

A summary of the elements and actions for Phase 1 and Future Actions is shown in Table 1.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE:

There are three agencies with management responsibility of public land in the Yalwal area.

- Shoalhaven City Council – land immediately adjacent the eastern bank of Danjera Dam.
- Department of Land & Water Conservation – land designated as heritage area.
- NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service – land designated as Morton National Park -Rest Area..

The lands under this plan is shown on Figure 2 and will be managed co-operatively by the three agencies through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU will define the roles and responsibilities of each agency and will be signed off by the appropriate person in each agency.

The MOU will require the establishment of a Yalwal Management Group comprising representatives of the three agencies and be responsible for:

- Strategic Planning
- Policy Development
- Management Performance, and
- Provision of Funding

for the development and management of the designated lands.

The Group will set up a Yalwal Contact Group (or groups) comprising representatives of user organisations that will have an advisory role to the Group for:

- Management
- Planning
- Implementing
- Monitoring, and
- Reporting to the Board

The Contact Group(s) may be permanent or project based and would be invited to Group meetings at least annually or at other times as considered necessary by the Group.

In reference to the Heritage Area, it is proposed that the land be gazetted by DLWC under the provisions of the Crown Lands Act as a reserve for “Heritage Purposes and Environment Protection”, with Shoalhaven City Council being appointed as the Trust Manager.

The proposed management structure is shown in Figure 4.

The charter of the Yalwal Management Group will be developed by the three agencies and amended as necessary.

Management structure

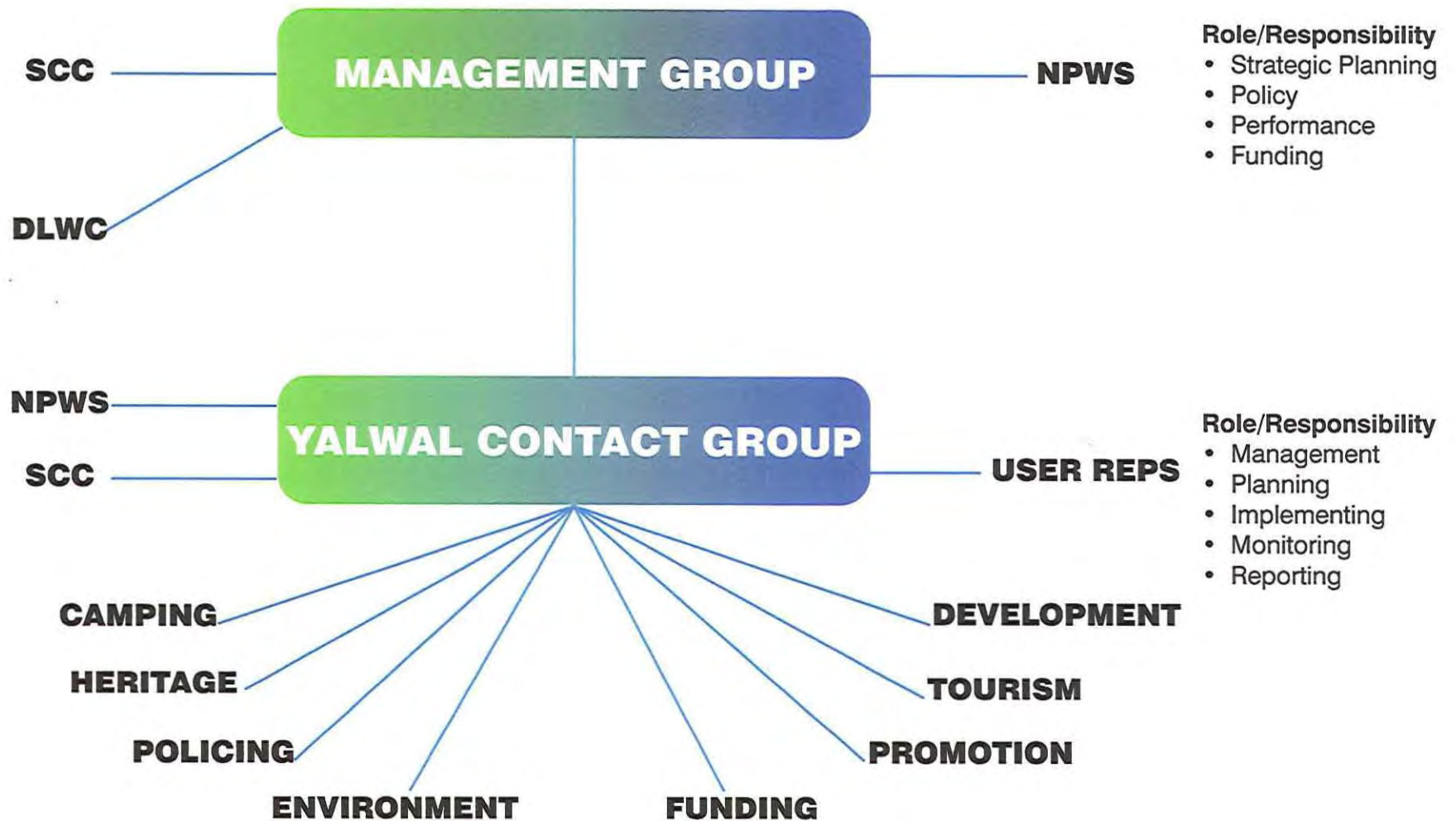


Fig. 4

MANAGEMENT PLAN SUMMARY – TABLE 1

Element	Stage 1 Actions	Future Actions
Access	All vehicles, including motor cycles will be required to travel only on roads and tracks designated for this purpose (see Fig. 2). Barriers to be erected to block off tracks where vehicles may not enter. Signs to be erected at strategic locations to set out the requirements and to explain why they are necessary.	The lower access road to the picnic area be upgraded to take two way traffic and the top road (on the ridge) closed except for authorised vehicles (see Fig. 3). Vehicle parking areas to be established at strategic locations. Additional walking routes be established within Council and NPWS land to give access to points of interest. A system of walking routes throughout the surrounding area be identified in consultation with NPWS.
Tourism	Camping above the wall of the dam to be restricted to the picnic ground which is the only area of Yalwal with toilet facilities. As an interim measure, camping will be permitted on designated areas downstream of the dam wall where run-off cannot enter the stored waters. Yalwal and its environments to be reserved for “Heritage and Environmental purposes” in the Local Environment in Regional Plans and other steps to be taken to protect the area’s historic and cultural values.	Proposal by NPWS to establish basic visitor facilities on land east of Yaramunmun Creek bridge (See NPWS draft management plan for Morton National Park) be supported with the additional recommendation that the area cater for over-night campers. The picnic area adjacent Danjera Dam be upgraded to cater for group camping with a basic covered eating shelter and kitchen to be part of the facilities. This work to be contingent on arrangements for the management of wastes meeting the requirement of Health authorities. Work also to include a landscape plan to soften and make more interesting the appearance of the area than it currently presents. Suitable walking routes through the mines area be identified following the preparation of a Hazards Analysis to delineate the sites which may be suitable for public inspection. Information signs to be placed at all significant historical sites. All vehicles be excluded except for those authorised to enter. Economic viability and other aspects of constructing and operating built tourist accommodation at Yalwal to be assessed. The type of tourism design and materials of buildings and operating systems etc. to be compatible with the environmental and

Element	Stage 1 Actions	Future Actions
		cultural values of the locality as identified in the specialist studies (see Section 5 references). An example would be the creation of a “Mine Heritage Park” at the Mine Heritage Area to recreate the history of the area. Development which may take place to be based on the principles of “sustainable development”. This may include the use of solar and or wind powered generation. Waste removal systems are to be “environmentally sensitive to the adjacent water storage.
Communications	An explanatory pamphlet to be published and distributed in key locations. The co-operation of NPWS and DLWC to be sought to develop a joint approach to the supervision of the area. This will include reciprocal authority to enforce policies on <u>all</u> public land at Yalwal irrespective of territorial boundaries.	The local aboriginal community to be consulted at relevant stages and given the opportunity to participate in the ongoing operations in the Yalwal area if they so wish, and a suitable programme arranged. The possibility of establishing a permanently manned ranger station for use by participating agencies at Yalwal be assessed and suitable funding to be sought
Restoration/ Conservation	Yalwal and its environments to be listed as a “Heritage Area: and the Local Environment and Regional Plans and other steps to be taken to protect its historic and cultural values. A programme for the restoration of damaged areas to be drawn up and funds secured for this purpose. The use of indigenous species identified in Kevin Mills & Associates Flora & Fauna Report be maximised. Joint action to be taken within NPWS and DLWC on a programme for weed control.	A conservation plan be prepared covering the concentration of mine workings and all necessary steps taken to protect this area.

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1. BACKGROUND TO THE PLAN**
- 2. SURVEY AND ASSESSMENT**
- 3. ISSUES AND ACTIONS**
- 4. PLANNING PROCEDURES**
- 5. REFERENCES**

ATTACHMENT NO. 1

BACKGROUND TO THE PLAN

1. Protection of Danjera Dam Water Supply
2. History and Heritage
3. The Natural Environment
4. Current (Pre 1999) Usage
5. Public Concerns

BACKGROUND TO THE PLAN

A number of factors contributed to the decision to adopt a management plan for Yalwal and its environs. Chief amongst them are –

1. PROTECTION OF DANJERA DAM

This was built by the City Council in the nineteen sixties to supplement its northern water supply in times of low water flow in the Shoalhaven River. The dam wall was built across Danjera Creek a short distance down-stream from the site of the old mining village. Residential allotments which still remained in private ownership were acquired and a number of parcels of Crown land were transferred to Council by the State Government. An extant mining lease, which was still being worked, was also revoked at this time.

Danjera Dam has a maximum capacity of 7,800 ML and the stored waters extend about 7km up-stream to Belmore Flat. It has a maximum height of 30m and a length of 278m. It draws its water from a catchment of 114 square kilometres, most of which falls within the Morton National Park. A picnic area with basic toilet facilities was established soon after the dam was built. It is seldom used for this purpose and has become the *de facto* camping ground.

From the time of its opening in 1972, there have been only a few occasions when it has become necessary to release water to supplement the river flow for the pumps located at Burrier. When the water is required, it flows from the dam along the Danjera and Yalwal Creeks into the Shoalhaven and on to Burrier – a distance of 28km. There is a loss of water through evaporation and percolation but the system's designers offset this by increasing the dam's capacity thus avoiding the capital and operating costs of a new pipeline and pumps. This situation is likely to change in the future as demand for water rises and economic and environmental constraints make it more difficult to provide alternative sources of water. An additional factor is the responsibility to maintain the quality of the waterways below the dam. This will require periodic releases to maintain an "environmental" flow even if this is not needed for water supply purposes.

All these factors point to the need to safeguard the integrity of Danjera Dam and its catchment. The latter should be relatively secure as it falls within a National Park (See Figures 1 and 2). The dam itself, however, is a different matter. At present the tracks and hills around it are badly scoured through the actions of off-road vehicles and trail bikes. This leads to further erosion and siltation of the stored waters. Compounding this is the possibility of pollution from *ad hoc* camping around the dam – sometimes right up to the water's edge. Phase 1 of the management plan has been designed to minimise these impacts.

2. HISTORY AND HERITAGE

Aboriginal

The original inhabitants of the Yalwal area were called the Wandandian people whose country extended from the Shoalhaven River to Ulladulla. They belonged to a broad language group known as Dhurga, but probably spoke a local dialect. Models of Aboriginal society and economy from other parts of south eastern NSW suggest that the Wandandian people would have concentrated much of their activity on the rich resources of the Shoalhaven River and coastline, with seasonal forays into the steep rugged country that characterises Yalwal.

Reconstruction of the Aboriginal history of an area requires information from several sources including archaeological sites, written records of early explorers and settlers and the oral histories of the descendants of the first inhabitants.

Archaeological research has demonstrated that Aboriginal people have occupied the NSW south coast and forested hinterland for at least 20,000 years although the sparseness of cultural material in the inland sites indicates that occupation away from the coast was sporadic. A number of sites have been recorded in the Yalwal area comprising small scatters of stone artefacts and grooves in sandstone resulting from the grinding of stone axes to produce a high polish and the desired shape. A large but highly dispersed scatter of stone artefacts on a ridge above the junction of Yarramunmun and Yalwal creeks suggests that this may have been the major focus for Aboriginal settlement, with smaller sites adjacent to Yalwal Creek reflecting movement through the valley by groups hunting or travelling. No sites have been excavated but the antiquity of occupation can be surmised from the nature of the stone tool assemblages which suggest a date after 5,000 years ago, when the sea level had stabilised at its present level.

Detailed research into the post white settlement Aboriginal history of Yalwal has not been carried out, but Aboriginal people were known to be on the Shoalhaven River in 1815 when records show that three cedar getters were killed by local Aborigines. Lists of blanket issues and censuses show that numerous Aboriginal people were in the Shoalhaven during the rest of the 19th and 20th centuries, but no specific mention is made of Aborigines from Yalwal or a 'Yalwal tribe'. Further research is required to complete the picture of the interaction between Aboriginal and white people during the early days of settlement at Yalwal.

Early European

Earliest recorded European exploration in the general area was by river when Kent and Meehan travelled up the Shoalhaven to its tidal limit in 1805. This was followed by an overland expedition by Charles Throsby in 1818. Whilst not actually passing through Yalwal he would have been able to see its rugged valleys and ridges from the heights above Kangaroo Valley and from Mount Scanzi. It is not clear who led the first official expedition into the area now known as Yalwal but the locality was charted – although not with any great detail – in time for inclusion in Major Mitchell's famous 1834 *Map of the Nineteen Counties*. The first grant of land for

settlement was probably made around 1840 and, in 1841, Dr Kenneth McKenzie secured the property which became known as *Yalwal Station* along Yalwal Creek.

Mining

At the turn of the century, the Yalwal gold field was a major contributor to the economy of the Shoalhaven district. It is still the area's most important relic of the industry of that period but is little known to a large part of the local population. Whilst most people know that there were gold mines in the locality, few have actually visited the site of the workings and gained an appreciation of their extent.

The possibility that the Yalwal district held precious minerals was known as early as 1849 when silver bearing Galena was discovered. The presence of gold bearing rock was noted shortly afterwards – virtually at the same time as the discovery in 1851 of the Ophir goldfield near Bathurst by Hargreaves and Lister. However, it was not until 1870 that a significant operation to win the metal was commenced when Sivewright, Brakewell and Donovan set up sluices around Danjera Creek to extract alluvial gold. The first Claim to mine reef gold was made in 1871 over a large rock outcrop called *The Bluff* which is on the western side of Danjera Creek and now within Morton National Park. Other Claims and mines followed and by 1878 there were sufficient people in the locality to warrant the construction of a store and a move to have a post office established. By this time, however, the spread out and sporadic nature of the gold pockets was beginning to make tunnel mining a hit or miss affair.

Ultimately, it was realised that the surest way to win the elusive gold was by quarrying requiring larger volumes of the ore to be processed. This meant larger amounts of capital were needed to set up operations and shortage of capital remained one of the besetting problems of the field for its entire life time.

Three substantial processing plants were established. One was located on the western side of Danjera Creek and serviced the first mine, the *Pinnacle* and its neighbour the *Eclipse*. The others were built close to each other on the eastern side of the creek, primarily to process ore from the *Pioneer* and *Homeward Bound* mines but, no doubt, also did work for other companies. An intricate network of tunnels, inclines and tramways was used to transport ore from the workings to the plants and the remains of much of this can be seen today (see Fig. 3). Initially, water wheels were used to power the processing but, eventually, this gave way to the use of stationary steam engines. As the field grew, more sophisticated processes for refining the ore were used including the use of cyanide.

The biggest concentration of mine workings was located on a ridge west of Sawpit Creek and cemetery. Most of the mines are above the water level of Danjera Dam but the sites of the processing plants are mostly under water but a few walls, anchor blocks and other relics remain. Other mines were established further afield up the Danjera valley and in other locations.

At its peak, the gold field must have been quite impressive. One observer estimated that as many as 300 stampers were in operation at one time to crush the ore and make it ready for final processing. The field was, however, relatively short lived. By the early years of the new century a number of factors, including an economic depression and a drought, resulted in a rapid decline of the major operations culminating in a virtual cessation of work during World War 1. Some sporadic mining took place between the wars and a small company was still operating when the dam was under construction in the late nineteen sixties. Its leases were cancelled because of the dam but its four stamper battery can still be seen at the waters' edge some distance west of the cemetery.

Although a number of the mine operators were controlled from Sydney and Melbourne, a good proportion were locally based. They could be individual lease holders or syndicates who worked the Claims themselves or leased them to others. In both situations the profits helped to establish a viable local economy based on the town of Nowra. The building "Meroogal", now in the ownership of the Historic Houses Trust, was financed, at least in part, by profits made from Yalwal by a local investor. Provision of services to the mines and the village also helped to lay this economic foundation.

The Village

Yalwal was officially proclaimed a "village" on December 10th 1892. The plan of survey shows the village in two parts, the larger section was located a short distance down-stream from the Pinnacle and Eclipse mines with the other part over a kilometre further up the Danjera Creek (see Fig. 4). Most of the dwellings and other buildings were established on the lower section which is now almost completely covered by the waters of Danjera Dam. Very few of the allotments on the upper section appear to have been built on.

The number of people living in the village at its peak has been the subject of speculation over the years. The most reliable estimates suggest that it never exceeded 400 at any one time. Typical of other mining towns throughout the country, the population rose and fell with the fortunes of the gold field. In 1901 there were 350 people at Yalwal but by 1911 this had dropped to 106.

Yalwal appeared to have a strong community spirit and its people strove to improve the settlements facilities and services. Access to Nowra, the nearest established town, was far from easy. A constant thread running through the accounts of this period refer to the difficulties of travel along the connecting road, especially the steep gradient between Yalwal Gap and Yarramunmun Creek. One section of this was so steep that a "zig zag" was incorporated – the remains of which can be seen today as part of the *Two Rivers Walking Track*. A petition to the Colonial government for a more uniformly graded road down from Yalwal Gap was successful and this is the line of the present road. A new, high level bridge was built across Yarramunmun Creek in 1894 to overcome delays caused by the stream's periodic flooding.

The community was successful in other ways and secured a school, post office, telegraph line and eventually a telephone service. By 1891, the village had three stores, a twenty room hotel, a School of Arts and a regular coach and mail service to Nowra. There was also a sports field on an area known as Tombstones Flat and it is recorded that around 200 people attended a sports carnival there in 1890!

Decline was rapid. By 1911 there were only 22 occupied dwellings in Yalwal and the community was struggling to retain its hard won facilities and services. The all important school was closed temporarily in 1911 following an outbreak of diphtheria when three children from the same family – the Pawnees – died within 48 hours of each other. It was re-opened later in the year, closed again in 1918 to be opened once again in 1923 but closed for the last time in 1925. Likewise, the postal service declined as demand and revenues fell. The final blow was struck in 1939 when the great bush-fires of that year swept through the village burning most of the structures which still remained and killing one man.

3. THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The area around Yalwal still retains some of its pristine quality despite a great deal of human activity over the last 150 years. Large tracts still remain in public ownership and much of this has been incorporated within the Morton National Park. Some of the elements of this environment are:

Geology and Geomorphology

This distinctive shape of the valleys around Yalwal is derived from the erosion of the sandstone cap by the Yarramunmun, Danjera and other waterways which eventually run into the Shoalhaven River. Variations in the hardness and consistency of the rock encountered as the stream eats its way through the strata frequently create benches along the valley slopes which is another characteristic of the district (see Fig. 5).

Only a few streams cut their way completely through the sandstone layers to reveal the under-lying volcanics. The fact that this happened in the Yalwal region made gold bearing rock accessible for exploitation close to the surface. It also makes the area significant as an outdoor classroom for students of geology as it is one of the few places reasonably close to the Sydney-Wollongong metropolitan area where the under-lying volcanic can be seen readily.

The geology of Yalwal itself has been described as “complex volcanics” but it is more homogenous in nearby locations. Further up the Danjera granite gives way to rhyolite and back to granite again. Down-stream from the Danjera – Yarramunmun junction the dominant rocks are granite and porphyry whilst at Grassy Gully – a much smaller gold field near the Shoalhaven River – the precious metal was found in crushed rhyolite.

Landscape

The combination of vertical sandstone escarpments, steep scree slopes and sharply incised valleys provides an impressive vista from any high vantage point. The ruggedness of the area and its aura of remoteness explain why it is popular for camping, walking and “off-road” driving and riding.

Flora and Fauna

A study of the area, carried out as a precursor to this plan, noted that it is a combination of native forest, regrowth trees and cleared land. The native vegetation, habitats and animal life appear to be typical of the wider area surrounding Yalwal. More details are provided in Section which deals with the reports from the various Consultants.

4. CURRENT USAGE

Four Wheel Drive Vehicles and Trail Bikes

Users of these vehicles currently predominate in the area. It is not difficult to understand why this is the situation in view of its accessibility to the largest metropolitan centre in Australia. Yalwal is no more than three hours driving time from the southern suburbs of Sydney and less than two hours from Wollongong. Construction of the F5 Freeway as an alternative to the Hume Highway has brought the Shoalhaven district much closer to the expanding south western suburbs of Sydney in recent years in terms of driving time. Shoalhaven has, in fact, been described as the first large open space available to the people of Sydney in a southerly direction.

This spatial relationship combined with a huge upsurge in the popularity of four wheel drive vehicles and trial bikes has placed great pressure on bushland at the fringe of urban areas. Over the years authorities responsible for managing such lands have often reacted by banning vehicles from large tracts of land or placing other restrictions on them. The effect of this has been to push people who enjoy these activities into areas where these controls are non-existent or minimal. Until recently, Yalwal was regarded as one of these locations. Public authorities like Shoalhaven City Council are, therefore, forced to make hard decision between catering for legitimate recreational activities and the need to protect and conserve vulnerable areas.

The decision to control the use of vehicles at Yalwal was not made lightly and came about largely through the rapid deterioration of ground cover in recent years particularly in a number of specific areas. In addition to this many of the surrounding tracks have been eroded so much that ruts in excess of 500mm deep are commonplace. Much of this activity has taken place right on the edge of the water supply dam or at least within a few hundred metres of it. In striking the balance between the recreational needs of some and protecting the water supply of the community at large, Council came to the conclusion that its prime responsibility is to safeguard the water supply.

It must be emphasised that the controls which are being exercised are for the relatively small area around Danjera Dam. The much wider question of vehicle use in the surrounding country falls outside this management plan.

Camping

When the dam was constructed in the sixties no provision was made for camping but a picnic ground with a basic toilet facility was established. This is now seldom used for this purpose but has become one of a number of *de facto* camp sites spread throughout the area. It is not intended that camping in Yalwal should be banned but it is considered necessary to apply reasonable controls to minimise pollution of the adjacent water storage.

Bushwalking

The recently developed *Two Rivers Track*, which connects the Shoalhaven and Clyde Rivers, runs through Yalwal which is one of its track heads. Many other walking routes may be accessed from this point leading in all directions including one well known walk to the eastern rim of the Ettrema Gorge. The proximity of the Morton National Park and the Ettrema Wilderness will ensure that this area remains popular for walking although there is some loss of amenity from trail bike noise on weekends and holidays.

Historic Sites Visitation

Apart from “off-road” driving and riding this is probably the most popular reason for visiting Yalwal. For most people the cemetery is the only visible sign of the locality’s history. Lack of information and a rather steep track mean that many visitors miss seeing the extensive mine workings west of Sawpit Creek.

Fishing

Up to this time this has not been a significant activity. An organisation set up to encourage fresh water fishing – “Southern Bass Inc.” – hopes to change this situation and has released six thousand Bass fingerlings into Danjera Dam.

Grazing

A large tract of land to the east of Danjera Dam is privately owned and used for the grazing of cattle (see Fig 10). On it is a group of farm buildings and one which is the original Butcher’s shop of the village.

5. PUBLIC CONCERNS

Concern over the future of Yalwal is not a recent phenomenon. As long ago as 1988 the Shoalhaven Conservation Society prepared a report on the damage being caused by inappropriate activities and the lack of effective management. It also proposed that that natural, cultural and recreational values of Yalwal could best be protected by declaring it a State Recreation Area.

Following this initiative, a committee was established with members from Council, several government departments and public interest groups. A number of meetings were held and agreement reached that a problem existed and greater effort should be put into management of the area. However, there were no tangible results from the committee's deliberations – possibly because responsibility for the area was divided between Council and several government agencies. Since that time, the level of activity in the area has increased and damage to the environment made worse. Another factor has also emerged – public sensitivity to the quality of water supplies. Recent events in Sydney have made it clear that a more vigorous attitude to the protection of catchments and water supply systems will be expected by the public.

Complaints about the current usage of the area include:

- Destruction of grass and other vegetation by concentrated trail bike use
- Excessive noise – particularly from trail bikes – on weekends and holidays.
- Hazard from bikes being ridden close to camp sites and people.
- Damage to tracks, particularly the access road to the old mines.

On the other hand, many people appreciate the informality and spaciousness of Yalwal for relaxed camping and would be concerned if there is an excess of regulation and control.

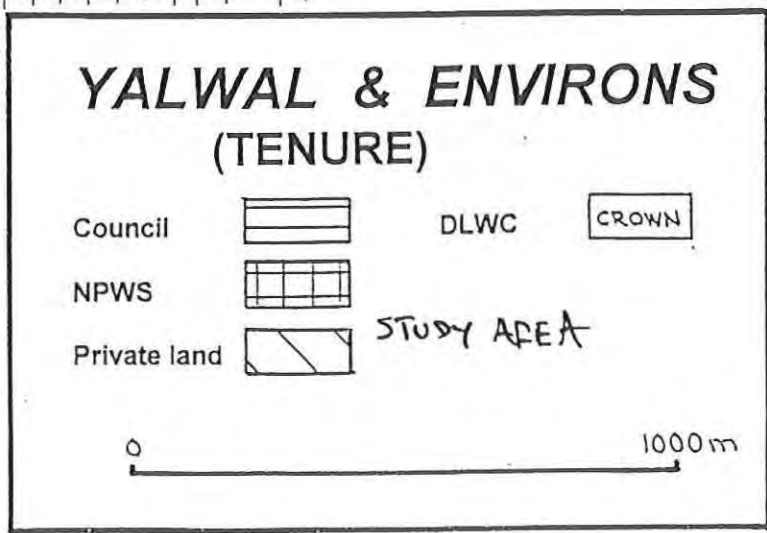
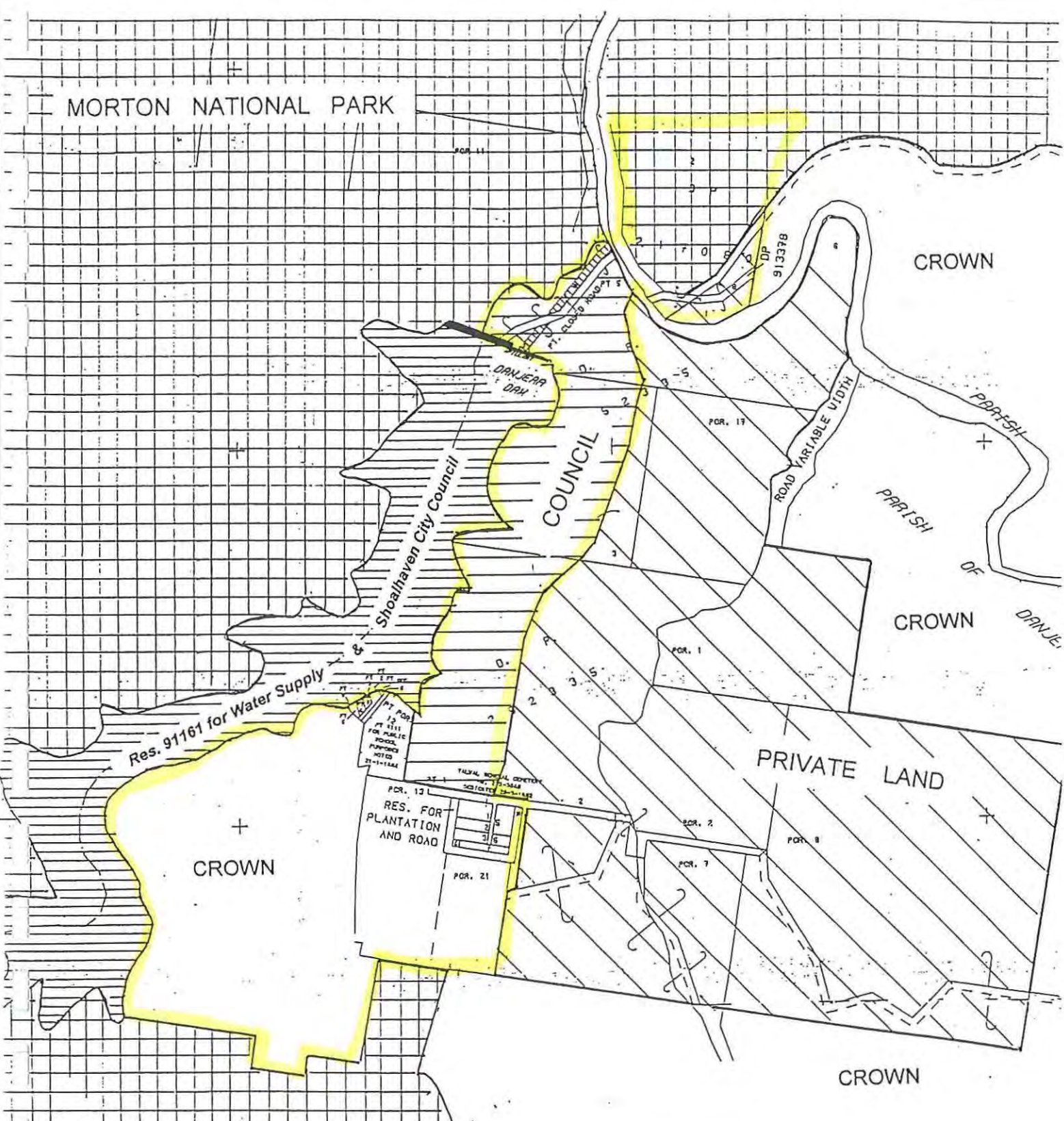
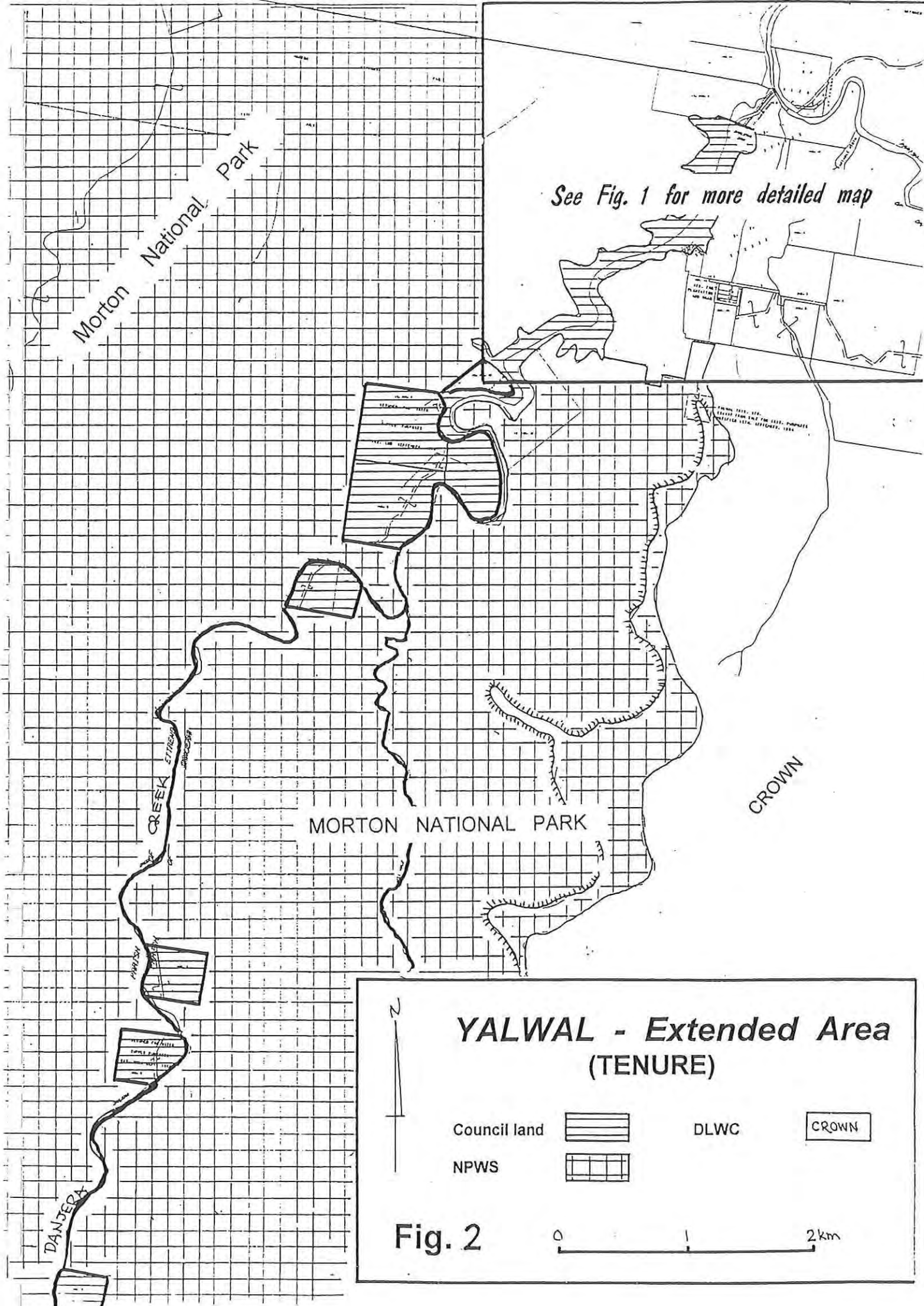
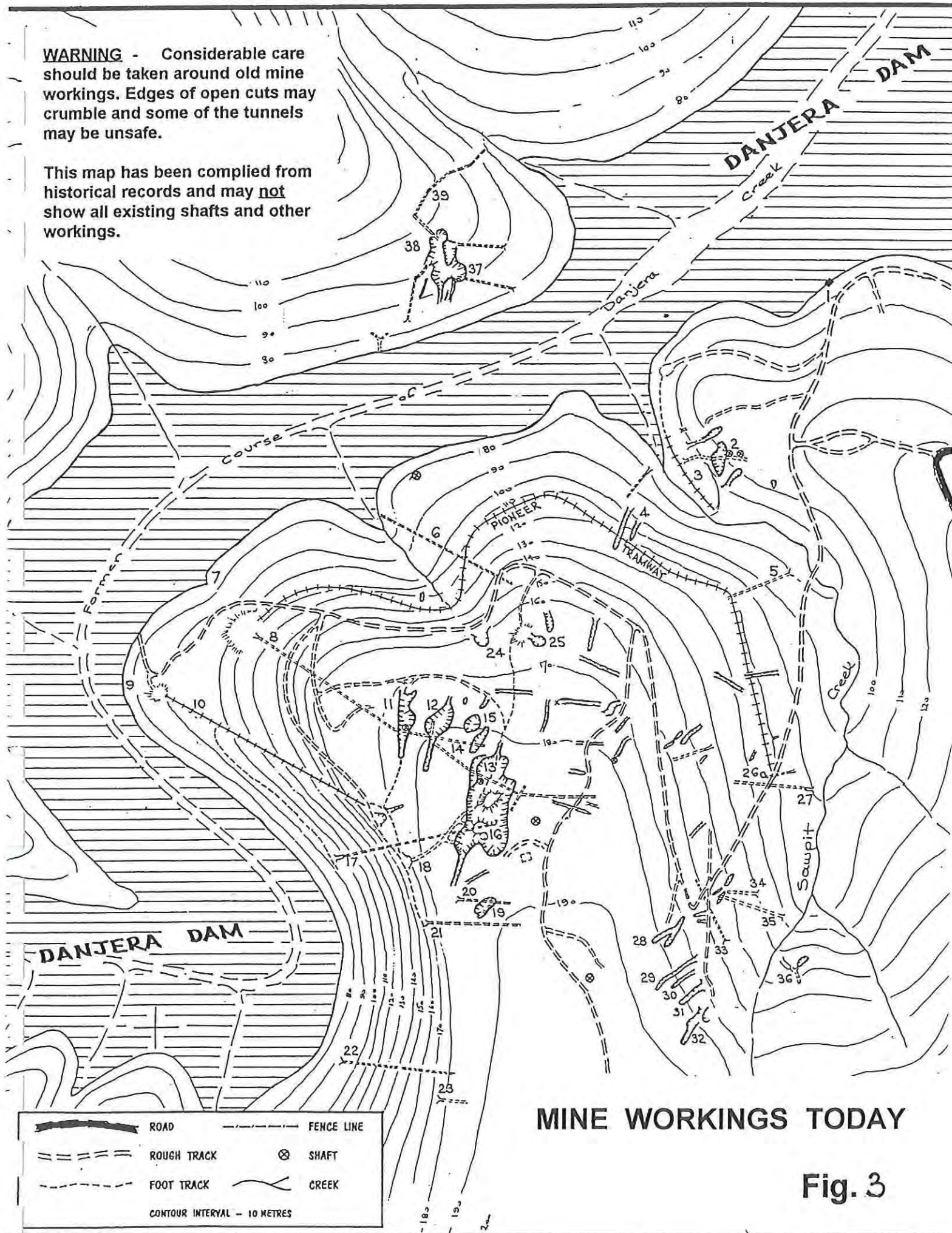


Fig. 1



WARNING - Considerable care should be taken around old mine workings. Edges of open cuts may crumble and some of the tunnels may be unsafe.

This map has been compiled from historical records and may not show all existing shafts and other workings.



MINE WORKINGS TODAY

Fig. 3

PLAN

Showing Gold Workings, &c., in the
VILLAGE OF YALWAL

Scale 0 4 8 Chains

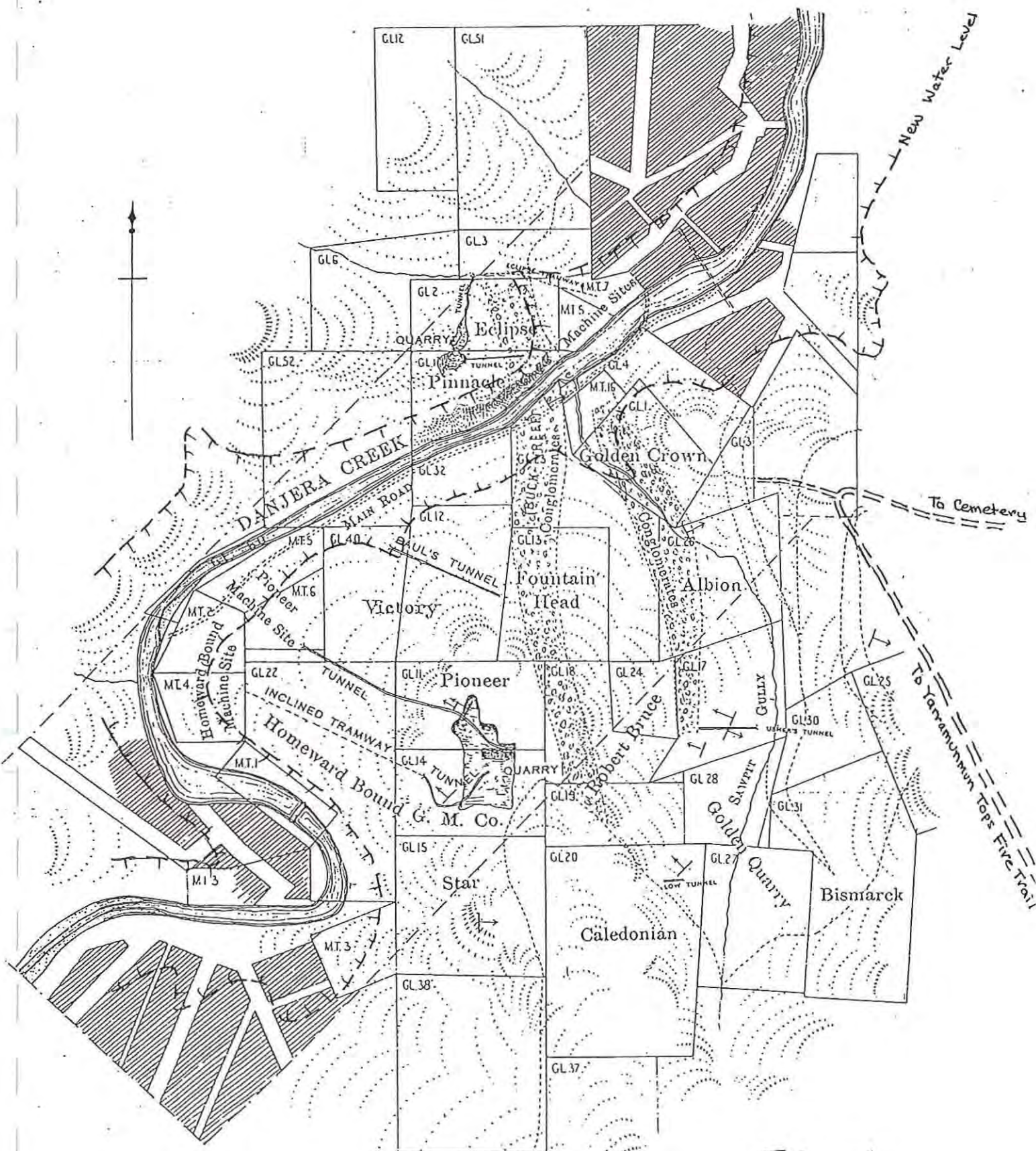
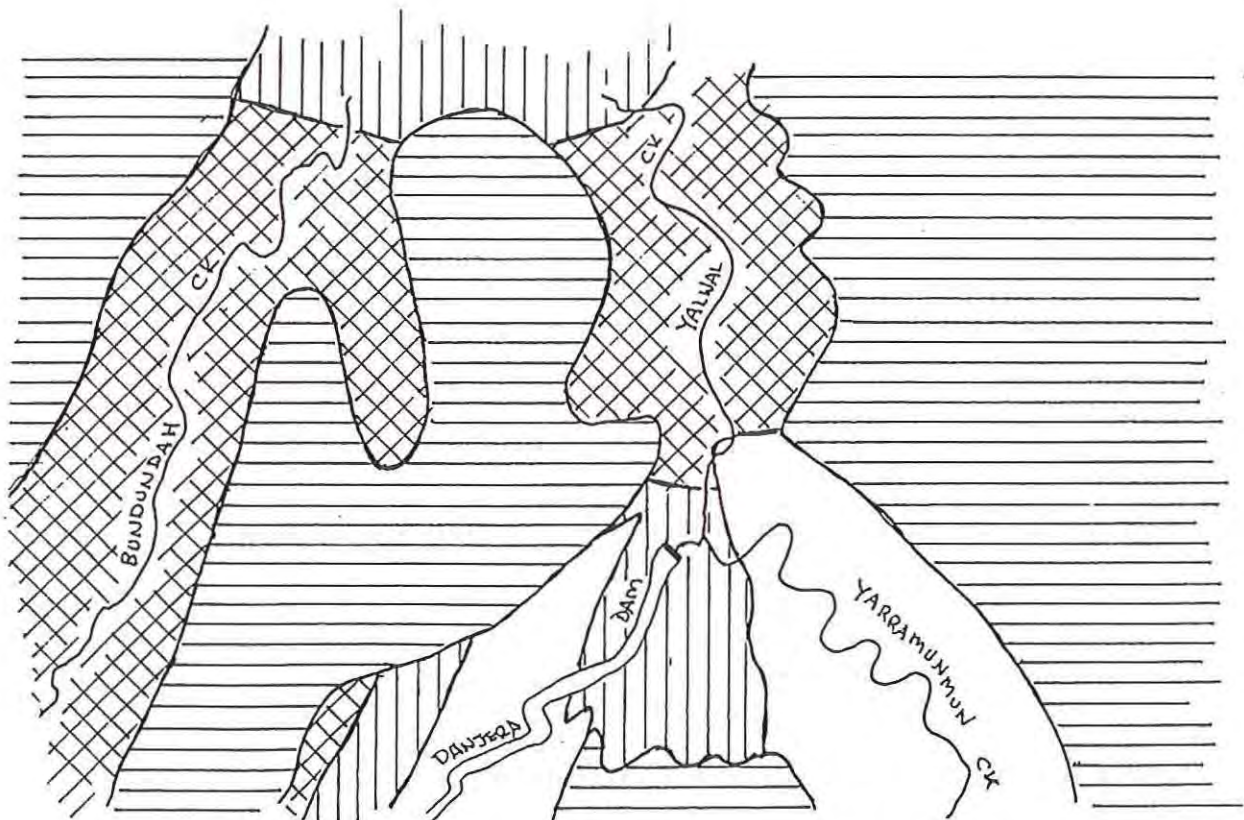
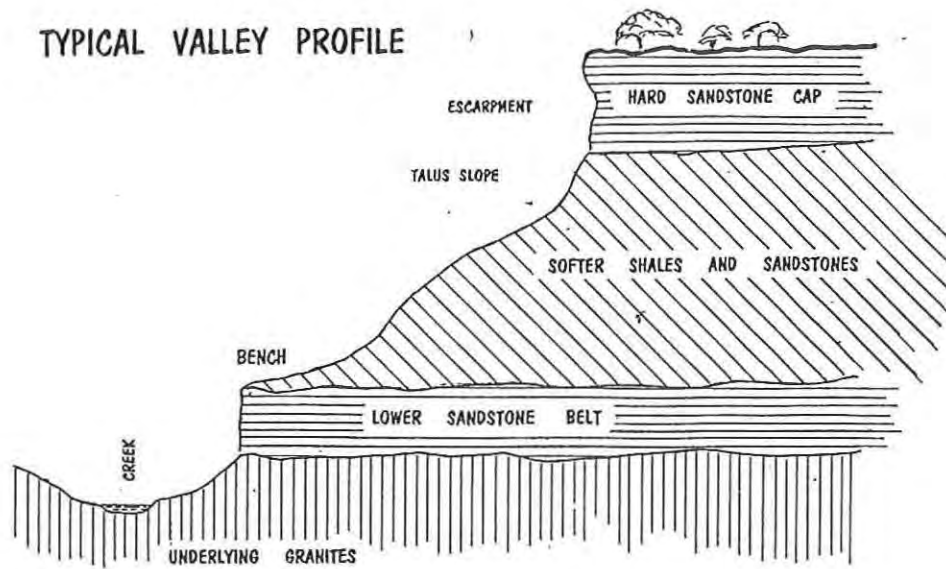


Fig. 4

TYPICAL VALLEY PROFILE



GEOLOGY OF YALWAL AREA *(From Newmont 1973)*

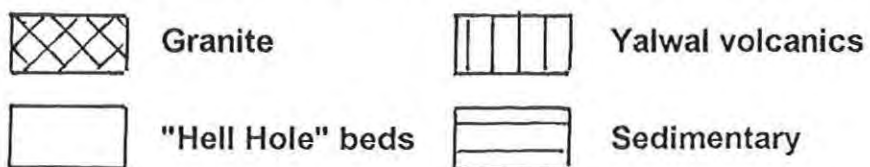


Fig. 5



YALWAL SIGNAGE





SOUTH EAST CORNER OF PICNIC AREA



TRACK EROSION NEAR MINES

ATTACHMENT NO. 2

SURVEY AND ASSESSMENT

- 1. Flora and Fauna**
- 2. Aboriginal Archaeology**
- 3. Post Contact Heritage**
- 4. Potential for Tourism**

SURVEY AND ASSESSMENT

To secure a better understanding of the area and the factors which affect it, a number of studies have been commissioned. The following is a summary of their findings –

1. FLORA AND FAUNA

A consultancy commissioned to provide a report on the fauna and flora of the study area identified the Yalwal area as comprising a combination of native forest, regrowth vegetation and cleared land (Kevin Mills and Associates 1998). Based on aerial photographs and field survey, the report concluded that the vegetation was highly atypical due to the localised existence of soils derived from volcanic rocks rather than from the more wide spread sandstone. Yalwal is also unusual in that it has a relatively low rainfall which influences the distribution of certain communities and their response to fire.

The distribution of the five main vegetation communities in the area is strongly influenced by the underlying geology:

Ironwood warm temperate rainforest restricted to deep gullies

Forest Red Gum – Angophora forest mainly on the Yalwal Volcanics

Grey Gum-Stringy Bark forest/woodland on rocky dry ridges

River Oak forest along the creeks

Wattle forest regrowth on previously cleared land.

No rare or threatened plants were found during the survey but five regionally rare species are known to occur at Yalwal.

Despite severe drought conditions at the time surveys were undertaken, 12 species of native mammals were recorded, reflecting the diversity of habitats and the proximity of the study area to large tracts of undisturbed forest habitat. The presence of one threatened species, the Yellow Bellied Sheathtailed bat was confirmed and other endangered species are likely to be present. Other bat species frequent the old mine tunnels.

Fifty two bird species were recorded, but due to the dry conditions, few reptiles and amphibians. Little research has been conducted on the fish and freshwater invertebrates; nine fish species were recorded in 1998 below Danjera Dam, including the recent appearance of the introduced Mosquito Fish. Freshwater mussels have also been observed along the banks of Yalwal Creek.

Comment on Human Impact

The adverse effect of uncontrolled vehicle use in the area was noted as a matter of considerable concern. Other activities observed as having a current or potentially adverse effect on the natural environment included dumping of rubbish, inadequate toilet facilities, stock grazing in the upper Danjera and lack of weed management. A number of specific recommendations were provided as a guide for future management of the area.

2. ABORIGINAL ARCHAEOLOGY

An archaeological survey of the area covered by the Yalwal Management Plan has been carried out by a consultant archaeologist. A predictive model of where sites are most likely to occur, was constructed based on landform and topography and these areas were inspected for evidence of past Aboriginal occupation. No sites were found during the survey, which could be due to poor ground visibility at the time of the survey or to their previous destruction during construction of Danjera Dam. Alternatively occupation may have been concentrated at the junction of the Yarramunmun and Yalwal Creeks and along Yalwal Creek as indicated by sites recorded at these locations, with little settlement elsewhere in the Yalwal area.

Although no sites were recorded in the areas identified for future development, care must be taken during any earthworks to ensure that any sites that may be present are not damaged. If sites are found, works must cease and the National Parks and Wildlife Service notified.

Yalwal falls within the boundaries of the Nowra Local Aboriginal Land Council and a representative from the Land Council assisted in the archaeological investigation. The Land Council has expressed an interest in being involved in future management of Yalwal and wish to be kept informed of progress in planning and management for the area.

3. POST CONTACT HERITAGE

The study provides a comprehensive inventory of visible mine workings around Yalwal and a coherent account of the area's history. Reference to the more far flung mine workings were made but not commented on in detail as these fell outside the consultant's brief. The history of the gold field has been divided into a series of epochs –

- Discovery to Proclamation 1849 to 1878
- From Reefing to Quarrying 1878 to 1881
- Decline and Revival 1812 to 1888
- The Age of Capital 1888 to 1904
- Yalwal in Decay 1904 to 1921
- Brief Revivals, Steady Decline 1921 to present time

The consultants have assessed the site using the criteria followed by the Australian Heritage Commission. They have concluded that there is a clear case for the area to receive appropriate protection as a historic and cultural site of significance. Specific recommendations are made along guide-lines provided by the "Burra Charter".

4. POTENTIAL FOR TOURISM

The study was divided into two parts. The initial work concentrated on the area's characteristics, market potential, etc. to determine if more detailed work was warranted to examine more specific options. Commissioning of Part 2 will depend upon further consideration of the earlier study and the management plan in general. The following is an outline of the findings of the study plus observations from other sources –

- *Yalwal is well located to be a starting point for people who wish to enjoy large expanses of bushland and wilderness. It is one of the few places within Shoalhaven with this juxtaposition of private/public land where facilities can be built with National Parks and Wilderness (see Fig. 11). Provision of accommodation should be supported by ready access to walking trails, canoe trips, maps, information, etc. for a commercial enterprise to be financially viable.*
- *There may be difficulties in establishing a viable concern based on the current predominant usages of the area.*

ATTACHMENT NO. 3

ISSUES AND ACTIONS

1. Hazard and Damage from Inappropriate Vehicle Use
2. Overnight Camping
3. Mining Heritage
4. Supervision
5. Services
6. Economic Opportunities

ISSUES AND ACTIONS

The following are a series of specific issues which have been considered and the actions which are proposed to be taken –

1 – Hazard and Damage from Inappropriate Vehicle Use

Seen as a major problem with particular concern over damage caused by the concentration of trail bikes in a limited area. Campers and other users have complained about noise and trail bikes being ridden in a hazardous and inconsiderate manner.

Action proposed –

- *Delineate roads and tracks which may be used by vehicles – including trail bikes – and ban their use elsewhere.*

2 – Overnight Camping

Considered to be an appropriate use but only in locations where pollution of Danjera Dam can be avoided and facilities can be made available to meet health standards.

Actions proposed –

- *Initially, restrict any camping above the dam wall to the old picnic area where there is a toilet facility.*
- *Allow camping below the dam wall on defined areas which can be supervised and monitored.*
- *Support moves by NPWS to establish camping facilities on its land on the eastern side of Yarramunmun Creek.*

3 – Mining Heritage

The mine workings are extensive and of considerable historic and cultural importance. At present they are not safeguarded by any specific plan or policy. Access by vehicle is very difficult and causes track damage. Foot access is feasible but steep. Some workings may be hazardous.

Actions proposed -

- *DLWC asked to prepare a Conservation Plan for the mines, seek Heritage listing and protection under the Local and Regional Environmental Plans.*
- *Mines area to be made, unsafe areas identified and measure taken for public safety. Foot access to be improved.*

4 – Supervision

Changes to the current use pattern will not occur unless there is a significant increase on the level of supervision at Yalwal which involves additional costs. There are three separate authorities with responsibility for Yalwal and its environs. Adoption of a joint approach to management would lead to savings by minimising duplication of effort.

Actions proposed –

- *Seek reciprocal rights for Council, NPWS and DLWC Rangers and/or field staff to exercise authority on all public land at Yalwal irrespective territorial boundaries.*
- *Examine feasibility of a permanent Ranger station at Yalwal for use by all authorities and jointly funded by them.*

5 – Services

Services at Yalwal are very limited. Water is pumped directly from the dam to serve the picnic area which also has an irregular pick up of garbage. There is a telephone mast on the top of a ridge to service private property. Mobile phones have to be used on high ground to secure a connection. There is no electricity and connection to the grid would require a new line approximately 13km in length.

These problems could be turned into opportunities to demonstrate how new and environmentally friendly technologies can be used to provide services to remote areas.

Actions proposed –

- *Solar, wind and other renewable sources of energy be used if Phases 2 and 3 of the plan proceed as outlined.*
- *Environmentally friendly and cost effective systems be used for the disposal of sewage and garbage.*
- *The possible use of the existing telephone mast as a repeater for mobile telephones be examined. If this is not feasible then alternatives to be investigated.*

6 – Economic Opportunities

The cost to the public of managing the area would be reduced if a viable recreation/tourist development could be established. Any development would have to be compatible with the environmental and cultural values of the area. Economic viability may not be feasible in the short term but this requires further assessment.

One benefit to the tourism industry within Shoalhaven is the opportunity to provide accommodation and recreational activities outside the district's traditional summer holiday season.

Action proposed –

- *Continue the assessment of recreational opportunities within Phases 2 and 3 of the management plan.*

ATTACHEMENT NO. 4

PLANNING PROCEDURES

1. Mineral Resources
2. Wilderness
3. Aboriginal Land Claim
5. Tourism
6. Planning Controls

PLANNING PROCEDURES

The matter in which the management plan has been prepared has been dictated, in no small part, by the fact that control over the area is divided. This was the principal stumbling block stopping the 1988 committee from achieving its objective. From the outset, it was determined that, this time, the same problem would not be allowed to lead to the same result. Consequently, the co-operation and support of the relevant agencies was sought and secured at all stages of the process.

Whilst the Water Services Department of Shoalhaven City Council acted as the sponsor and provided the logistic and financial support for the project the *Working Group*, which supervised the plan preparation, drew its members from the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Department of Land and Water Conservation as well as Council. Additional input was received from a *Consultative Committee* which was made up of representatives of a number of community groups which have an interest in Yalwal. Recommendations from the Working Group were placed before Shoalhaven City Council which adopted the plan of management by resolution. It was only able to make definitive decisions on land within its jurisdiction but it has endorsed a series of recommendations to other authorities.

Before decisions could be made a range of issues had to be taken into consideration. They included –

1. Mineral Resources

The NSW Department of Mineral Resources had a major interest in the Yalwal area up to the time the Danjera valley was flooded for water storage and for some years afterwards. It issued several exploration licences in the seventies – including one to BHP. No mines were established following these investigations and the change to circumstances over the last twenty years would make any future mining very unlikely. Nevertheless, consultation with the Department of mineral resources will be required at some stage.

2. Wilderness

The Ettrema Wilderness has been expanded over the National Park in recent years up to the boundary of Yalwal. A small area on the eastern side of the bridge over Yarramunmun Creek has been left out of the proclaimed Wilderness to allow NPWS latitude to accommodate other uses. Further Extensions into Crown land are proposed but a decision has been held in abeyance pending the resolution of an Aboriginal Land Claim.

The Wilderness proclamations – existing or proposed – do not have a direct impact on the area subject to this plan but may have an impact on the type of activities which could be centred on Yalwal.

3. Aboriginal Land Claim

Large tracts of land to the east and south of Yalwal are subject to claims under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act of 1983. Like the Wilderness areas they do not encroach upon Yalwal itself but could have a bearing on future use of the surrounding area. Dialogue is taking place with the local Aboriginal community and the NSW Land Council. Some of the options for the future could involve work opportunities for local Aborigines.

4. Tourism

In 1983, the City Council obtained a Permissive Occupancy over a number of trails in the surrounding area for the use of off-road vehicles. Negotiations are currently under way to have these rights terminated.

5. Planning Controls

The zoning within the current Local Environmental Plan is *Rural 1(a)* which allows a wide range of activities. Under the new draft LEP the zoning will be *Catchment Protection 7(c)* which is more restrictive but modifications to the draft will allow compatible tourist activities to take place. There is no conflict with the Illawarra Regional Plan.

ATTACHMENT NO. 5

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