



## DUNGOG COMMON RESERVE

# THE VISION

## A nationally recognised & culturally significant, recreation destination

The Dungog Common Reserve is currently managed by a Board of Crown Land Managers, appointed by the Minister for Lands and Water. The purpose of the board is for environmental and heritage protection, public recreation, rural services and tourist facilities.

The Dungog Common Reserve Board is responsible for the stewardship and management of the Dungog Common Reserve.

For more information, visit  
[dungogcommon.org](http://dungogcommon.org)

*The Dungog Common Recreation Reserve Land Manager acknowledges the stories, traditions and living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on this land and we commit to building a brighter future together.*

A woman with long hair is running on a grassy hill. In the background, there are rolling hills and mountains under a blue sky with some clouds. The text '2022 - 25 STRATEGIC PLAN' is written in white on a red banner in the top right corner.

## 2022 - 25 STRATEGIC PLAN

# FOUR GOALS

**1.**

### **A Destination For All**

Build and preserve a vibrant community recreational facility and make accessible to a range of user groups.

**2.**

### **Leading Land Manager**

Create an effective model and structure for administering and managing Aboriginal land, focused on delivering positive outcomes for the whole community.

**3.**

### **Working In Partnership**

Authentic engagement with our community, partners, user groups, governments and industry so that the Dungog Common Reserve can play a valuable part in realising enhanced recreation, environmental, and social outcomes for Dungog.

**4.**

### **Financial & Organisational Sustainability**

Transform the Dungog Common Reserve to create and maintain reliable recurring revenue streams to meet the needs of the organisation. Organisational sustainability will be created through governance to meet social, economic and environmental objectives.



## COMMON VS RESERVE



## MAIN

## USES

## What's in a name?

Dungog Common Reserve is a premier cultural and adventure recreation destination for the enjoyment of all. Numerous bike riders, bushwalkers, horse riders and trail runners now make regular use of this outstanding nature destination, while dedicated Landcare volunteers gather weekly to maintain its lands. This was not always the case.

	Dungog "Common"	Dungog "Reserve"
Legislation	Commons Management Act 1989	Crown Lands Act 2016
Enjoyment by all	No	Enjoyment by all
Firewood	Commoners could collect firewood with permission	Not allowed
Motor bikes	Undefined	Not allowed
Environmental protection	Undefined	Specifically required
Livestock grazing	Allowed	Not encouraged
Access	Lands leased to one person/company, access restricted	Access provided to all for recreation purposes
4WD access	Undefined	Not allowed or restricted
Management board	Local Commoners elected to a board to manage the Common	Reserve trust board drawn from the community
Tourism focus	Not encouraged	Encouraged
Access	Undefined	Safe access encouraged, management of risks and safe interactions of users

# 150 YEARS

## DUNGOG COMMON TIMELINE

The journey from a  
Dungog Temporary Common  
to a Recreation Reserve  
to leased Aboriginal owned  
land will reach its 150 years  
landmark in 2024.

It all officially began in  
March of 1874...

1874

**Crown Lands Occupation Act 1861**,  
Temporary Common in Dungog **reserved**  
and gazetted on 6 March 1874 as  
"unalienated and unappropriated Crown  
Lands devoted to temporary commonage".

1895

**1895: Crown Lands Act 1884**,  
the "temporary commonage" usage is  
**revoked** and the Dungog Temporary  
Common **reserved** "from sale for temporary  
common for the use of the residents at  
Dungog", gazetted on 30 November 1895.

1972

**1972:**  
**Crown Lands Consolidation Act 1913**,  
the *Dungog Common lands designation*  
as a temporary common is revoked on  
23 June 1972.

1973

**1973:** A long-term, **99-year grazing licence**  
over the Common lands is granted to  
Olympian Champion Kevin Bacon from  
Chichester, commencing in 1973.

1983

**1983: Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983**  
(ALRA), introduced to compensate  
Aboriginal people in NSW for dispossession  
of their land. The ALRA allows the Aboriginal  
Community to form Land Councils and  
make Aboriginal Land Claims on Crown  
Land. The lands known as the Dungog  
Common is Crown Land and subject to  
these Aboriginal Land Claims.

1993

**1993:** the **Native Title Act 1993** is passed  
by the Australian Parliament, the purpose  
of, which is "to provide a national system  
for the recognition and protection of native  
title and for its co-existence with the  
national land management system".

2006

**2006 & 2010:**  
**The Karuah Local Aboriginal Land Council**  
(KLALC) and the NSW Aboriginal Land Council  
lodge separate Aboriginal Land Claims on the  
Dungog Common Crown Lands.

2014

**2014:**  
**Dungog Common Recreation Reserve Trust** is  
officially gazetted on 3 October 2014, and a first  
Land Manager Board appointed to manage its  
various recreational activities.

2021

**2021:** The NSW Government enters into a  
**Statement of Intent (Agreement) with the  
Karuah LALC** in May 2021 to resolve all  
of their outstanding Aboriginal Land Claims  
on the Common. This Agreement has  
two key parts:

1. The land which forms the Common  
will be transferred to the Karuah LALC in  
a staged process over the next five years,
2. The community will continue to have  
access to and use the Common now  
and into the future, beginning with a  
20-year lease-back to the local Recreation  
Reserve entity.

2022

**2022 & 2023:**  
**Native Title Act 1993**, until such time  
as Native Title interests are resolved,  
no new structures can be constructed  
on the Common. This includes any  
proposed new mountain biking tracks.

General repair and maintenance of  
existing infrastructures and trails, land  
care, fire prevention and environmental  
protection measures are permissible.  
The Land Manager is underway with an  
application to resolve native title issues.

2024

**2024 & beyond:** The majority of the Common  
is currently zoned for the purposes of  
environmental protection and recreation  
(E3). The agreement with the Karuah LALC  
doesn't impact this in any way. If the KLALC  
ever choose to exercise their right to sell the  
Common (in any part or as a whole), they've  
agreed the NSW Government will have first  
right of refusal to purchase any land that  
forms the Common back from them.



## SHARED HISTORIES



# OUR COUNTRY

### **First Nations Peoples have thrived on the lands of the Dungog Region for over 40,000 years.**

It is widely accepted that the land, which the Dungog Common includes, is that of the Gringai from the Gathang language group. The boundaries of Gringai Country are not the same as district boundaries established post contact. Gringai boundaries were rather informed by language, social practices, family groups, songlines and other concepts tied to cultural knowledge.

Gringai Peoples hold close ties with the Karuah, Worimi and Wanaruah Nations. From the time of first contact in 1801, followed by land grants and settlement in the region around 1837, the Gringai history was forever changed by the irreversible effects of colonisation.

The Dungog Region after colonial settlement became known for its primary production and timber. The timbers were particularly prized and can be found in many prominent buildings such as the Sydney Opera House and the Australian Parliament House.

### **In recent times, there has been a shift in the recognition of the importance of acknowledging our shared histories and the effects of colonisation on First Nations Peoples.**

Through changes in society, current generations have come to acknowledge the complex and often uncomfortable truths of our shared past. Equally, the current inhabitants of this country are keen to learn and experience contemporary Indigenous culture, knowledge and language, moving forward together.

The Dungog Common Reserve aims to present this rich tapestry of our shared histories.

The Gringai people are believed to have had campsites and held ceremonies on the Common, while other local sites of significance include the historic Dungog Rifle Range and an old Silver Mine. For many years, the Common was licenced for horse grazing by local Olympic Champion rider Kevin Bacon.

**Together, we have much to learn from our shared histories at the Common. This tradition will continue to evolve as we navigate through the transition of ownership from Crown Lands to the Karuah Local Aboriginal Land Council, and the establishment of the Dungog Common Reserve as a nationally recognised and culturally significant recreation destination.**

**NATIONALLY  
RECOGNISED**



# PLANNING

**The Vision adopted by the Land Manager aims to create a 'nationally recognised and culturally significant recreation destination' for the Dungog Common Reserve.**

This implies the offer of quality accesses, facilities and infrastructure.

A Reserve Masterplan is being developed with an initial focus on improving parking near trail heads and recreational areas, as well as enhanced events facilities.

## Map Key

- 1 Carparking (~65 spaces)
- 2 Reserved access road
- 3 MTB Skills Loop
- 4 Terraced sandstone seating provides elevated lookout
- 5 Existing amenities
- 6 Existing trails
- 7 Shuttle bus turning area
- 8 Shuttle bus/disabled access road
- 9 Asphalt pump track
- 10 Overflow/coach parking
- 11 Orchard & Community garden
- 12 Existing trees to be retained

Accessing with Country



Event Spaces



Mountain Paths





**CULTURALLY  
SIGNIFICANT**

# ART & CULTURE



**The Dungog Common Reserve is well placed to become a culturally significant destination, with a rich and diverse range of arts, cultural, and recreational offerings.**

This vision promises to further transform our community as a hub of creativity, innovation, and enjoyment.

By leveraging the Reserve's arts, cultural and natural assets, our goal is to create an atmosphere that fosters creativity, celebrates diversity and promotes healthy living.

We aim to provide locals and visitors alike with an immersive experience that showcases an open air sculpture and mural gallery, shared community spaces and a diverse range of trails that encourage numerous outdoor activities. We envision a place where people can come to recharge, learn and connect with others.

We believe that by investing in our community's cultural and recreational assets, we can create a vibrant and sustainable future for the whole community.

Our partnership with Sculpture on the Farm spurred this exciting new direction in 2019. Additionally, the installation of two superb carved Aboriginal totems in 2020, by Karuah master carver, David Kirk, the multi-year contemporary mural project planned for a section of the Hunter Water pipeline and other yet imagined cultural and creative projects, cemented this vision.

**Together with our rich shared histories we aim to understand, inspire and enrich the lives of all those who visit.**



**RECREATION  
DESTINATION**

# FLOW TRACKS

**A Development Application (DA) for the construction of a new car park and entrance along Common Road has been lodged.**

The project will support Dungog's popular mountain bike park by permitting the building of a third downhill flow track and a nearby 'return to the top' trail.

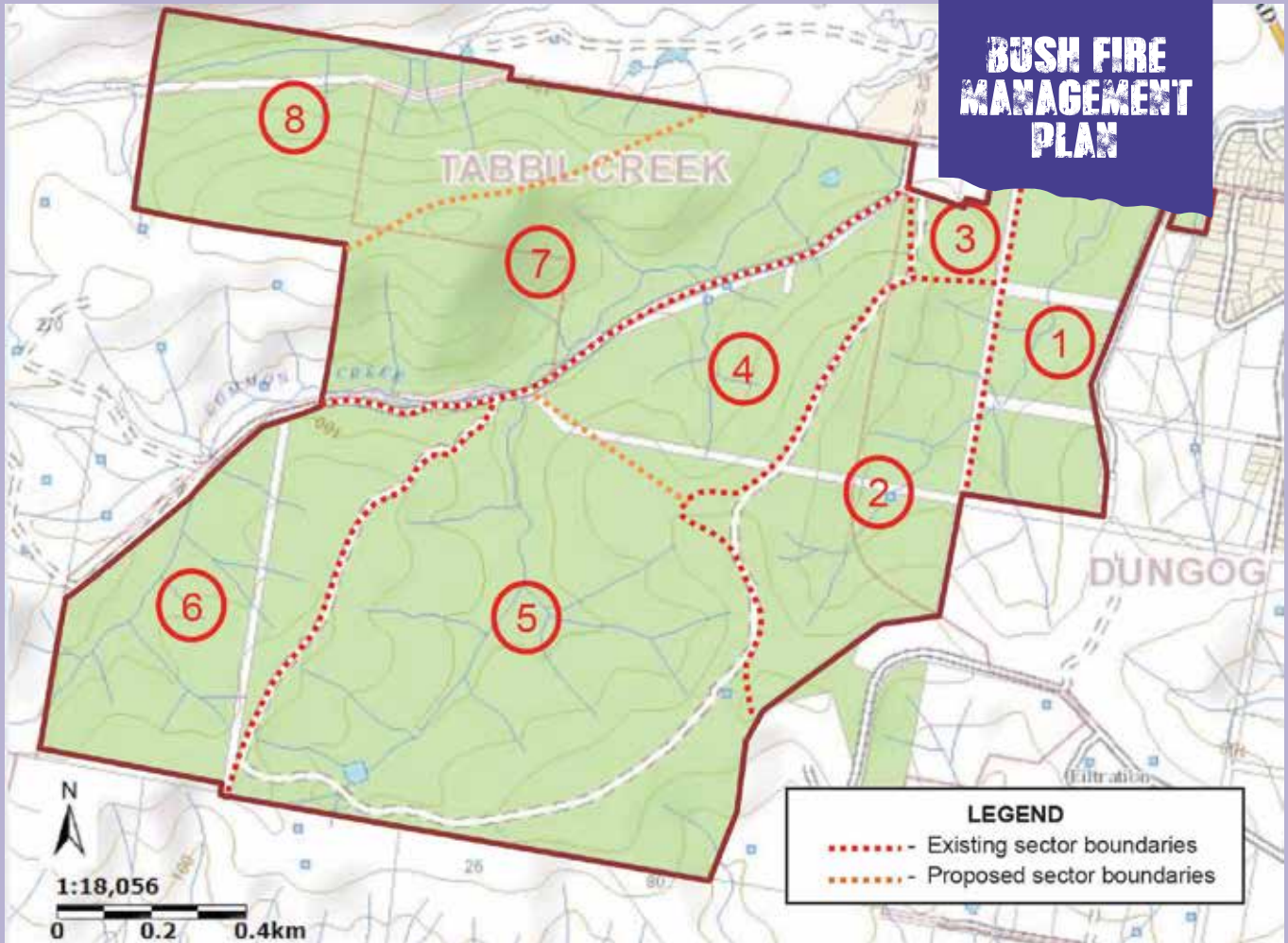
Significant environmental, cultural and engineering studies were carried out in support of this DA, including:

- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report
- Biodiversity Development Assessment Report
- Threatened Species Surveys
- Flow Track and Car Park Survey Plan
- Storm water Management Plan

These studies have confirmed that the Dungog Common Reserve is home to a rich and thriving biodiversity that includes Koala habitat and a flourishing Slaty Red Gum tree concentration, two threatened species.

The Reserve is also a bird-watching paradise hosting an abundant avian life, from the smaller bats and honeyeaters to the colourful parrots and cockatoos, to the iconic Australian masked owl and Wedge-tailed eagle.

## BUSH FIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN



# PREVENTION

The Bushfire Management Plan (Feb. 2023) provides a set of 22 planned actions, all associated with managing the risk of bushfires occurring on the approximately 265 hectares (650 acres) of the Dungog Common Reserve. The Plan was developed over a period of several months with the assistance of the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) and local environmental experts.

The Reserve is managed for both recreation and conservation objectives, the diverse range of objectives and multiple stakeholders making the careful management of the lands complex.

The majority of the Reserve sits within the jurisdiction of the RFS, while a smaller 20 ha portion on its eastern side (Rifle Range Paddock) sits within the jurisdiction of Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW). The border between the two essentially follows the Hunter Water pipeline.

### Seven key recommended actions are:

1. Ensure that fire breaks between fire management sectors are maintained.
2. Review the Grazing Management Plan in light of this Bushfire Management Plan and construct additional fencing as required to enable controlled grazing.
3. Identify and implement appropriate fuel reduction strategies in each Fire Management Sector.
4. Develop and maintain identified boundary fire breaks.
5. Ensure fire truck access is maintained by an annual inspection, including the review of all access roads and transit paths.
6. Erect bushfire danger awareness signage at main entrance and/or amenities.
7. Work closely with the local RFS and FRNSW brigades to increase their familiarisation with the Dungog Common Reserve and this Plan.



**CARING  
FOR THE  
LAND**

Vegetation  
protection  
area  
Melaleuca nodosa

# LANDCARE

**The Dungog Commoners Landcare group actively aims to sustainably manage and conserve the natural resources on the Dungog Common Reserve.**

They help to reduce soil erosion, manage weed removal, re-vegetation and preserve the natural biodiversity of the local ecosystems. Additionally, Landcare initiatives involve education and awareness-raising activities that help to foster a deeper appreciation

and understanding of the importance of localised environmental conservation.

The Local Landcare group works together with Karuah Rangers to care for Country. This is a recent component of the land management strategies on the Reserve.

Aboriginal people have cared for this Country for over 40,000 years and by continuing this relationship Karuah Rangers are caring for the land, preserving their cultural heritage and

contributing to the sustainable management and conservation of this nature reserve.

Dungog Commoners Landcare and Karuah Rangers aim to protect and preserve Dungog Common Reserve's habitat and ecosystems.

**Landcare volunteers typically spend two mornings per week at the Reserve, working between 8am and 11am. New members are welcome. For more information visit [dungogcommon.org/landcare](http://dungogcommon.org/landcare)**

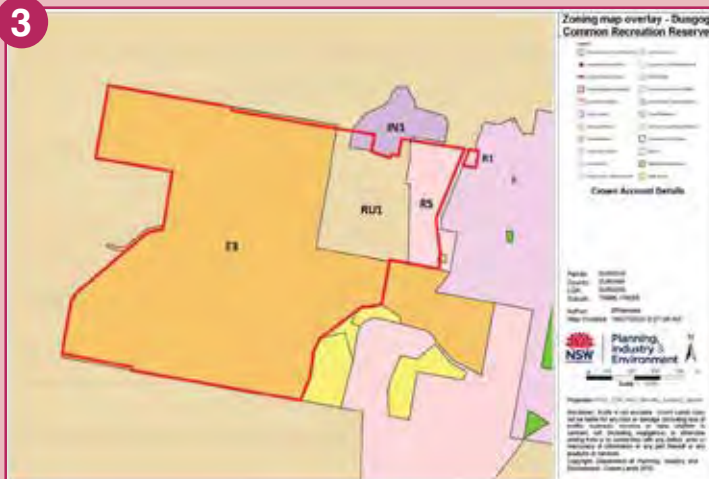
1



2



3



4



## Map context

1. Location Map
2. Grazing Map
3. Zoning Overlay
4. DA Study Area

## DESTINATION PLANNING



# THE FUTURE

Creating a 'nationally recognised and culturally significant recreation destination' implies the offer of quality recreation facilities, with the right mix of leisure pursuits and a financially sustainable model to support these operations. A Reserve master planning exercise has recently begun and is exploring what this future might look like.

The initial focus has been on improving parking areas near entrances and trail heads, to cater for all users including disabled visitors and horse floats. Ancillary recreational facilities and other public amenities are also being considered. To date, the following needs and potential additional recreational uses have been identified and will be subjected to further review:

- Improved trailhead parking areas with way finding and orientational signage
- A dedicated and improved secondary entrance from Short Street
- Additional picnic shelters in high activity hubs
- An event space facility and terraced area showcasing the Reserve's best views
- Improved interpretation of the Reserve's rich natural and historical heritage
- A dedicated recreation area for community garden activities, and
- A dedicated recreation area for archery activities

**What else would you like to see on the Dungog Common Reserve?**