

Cathedral Range State Park

November 1998



Management Plan

This 1998 plan was evaluated in 2009 and will continue to be implemented for a further five years.



This Management Plan for Cathedral Range State Park is approved for implementation. Its purpose is to direct all aspects of management of the Park until the plan is reviewed. A Draft Management Plan was published in March 1998. Fifteen submissions were received in response to the Draft Plan.

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FOREWORD

Cathedral Range State Park encompasses the spectacular and rugged Razorback and peaks of the Cathedral Range, the clear waters and tranquil valley of the Little River and the steep forested slopes of the Blue Range.

Bushwalking, camping, climbing and abseiling are among the outstanding recreational opportunities available.

The Park's easy access brings high visitor numbers. Young people seeking skills in bushwalking and climbing often have their first experiences of these activities at Cathedral Range, and the Park also attracts many educational groups. Cathedral Range State Park is in fact an excellent example of the ways in which an area can be used for recreation, education and protection of natural ecosystems.

Under the Plan, park management will concentrate on conserving natural, cultural and scenic features, and at the same time provide for a range of recreational activities.

Facilities and services will be managed to increase people's enjoyment and appreciation of the special values of the Park.

As a result of the Plan's implementation, I am confident that the Park's many features will be protected and visitor enjoyment enhanced. I look forward to the community's support for the future management of Cathedral Range State Park.

Marie Tehan MP
Minister for Conservation
and Land Management

APPROVED MANAGEMENT PLAN

This Management Plan, prepared under section 17 of the *National Parks Act 1975* (Vic.), is approved for implementation.

It provides the basis and direction for the future management of Cathedral Range State Park. It was finalised following consideration of the 15 submissions received on the Draft Plan, which was published in March 1998.

Rod Gowans
**Acting Director of
National Parks**

Mark Stone
**Chief Executive
Parks Victoria**

SUMMARY

Cathedral Range State Park (3616 ha) encompasses the Cathedral Range and the Little River Valley.

The Park contains a wide variety of vegetation alliances and has some significant species which require special management.

Highlights of the Park include the rugged Razorback and peaks of the Cathedral Range, the valley of the Little River and the steep forested slopes of the Blue Range.

Among the outstanding recreational opportunities are bushwalking, camping, climbing and abseiling.

The Park attracts many educational groups, and is an excellent example of the ways in which an area can be used for recreation, education and protection of natural ecosystems.

These features, and the Park's easy access, have led to high visitor numbers. Young people seeking skills in bushwalking and climbing often have their first experiences of these activities at Cathedral Range.

Park management will concentrate on the conservation of the natural, cultural and scenic features of the Park, and at the same time provide for a range of recreational activities.

Facilities and services will be managed to increase people's enjoyment and appreciation of the special values of the Park.

Major management directions for the Park are summarised below.

- Significant flora and fauna will be given special protection.
- Pest plant and animal management strategies will be implemented to eradicate or control pest species.
- The Cooks Mill site will be managed to provide protection and interpretation.
- Recreation facilities at campsites will be rationalised and enhanced, particularly at Cooks Mill, The Farmyard and Sugarloaf Saddle.
- Climbing sites will be monitored for erosion and other impacts.
- The Park will be promoted as a conservation reserve with outstanding scenery, natural history and recreational opportunities in a mountain setting.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and planning area

Cathedral Range State Park (3616 ha) is about 100 km north-east of Melbourne. It encompasses the Cathedral Range, which lies parallel to and east of the Maroondah Highway between the small townships of Buxton and Taggerty. The major approach is along Cathedral Lane, signposted from the Highway, or alternatively via Mt Margaret Road off the Buxton-Marysville Road (figure 1).

This management plan covers the Cathedral Range State Park.

1.2 Regional context

Cathedral Range State Park is one of a number of parks that attract a wide range of visitors because of their relative proximity to Melbourne, easy accessibility and range of recreational opportunities.

Other parks and attractions within the region include:

- Yarra Ranges National Park to the south, which allows for a range of recreational pursuits, with picnic areas, walks, scenic drives and cross-country ski trails;
- Lake Eildon National Park and Lake Eildon to the north, which attract many visitors for fishing, boating, camping and walking;
- Alpine National Park, which offers a diverse range of activities including walking, camping, vehicle touring, horse riding and cross-country skiing;
- Marysville State Forest, including the Lady Talbot Forest Drive which, together with the section in Yarra Ranges National Park, offers scenic views of the forest, many waterfalls and fern gullies;
- Marysville township, with a variety of walks to local beauty spots such as Steavensons and Keppel Falls;
- the popular alpine resort of Lake Mountain, which attracts a large number of visitors, including school groups, and in conjunction with the adjacent Yarra Ranges National

Park offers a range of winter and summer attractions.

Many school groups use Cathedral Range State Park as an alternative outdoor recreation venue when snow conditions are such that skiing is not a viable activity. Some school and commercial tour groups offer activities such as bushwalking and four-wheel driving between Lake Mountain and Cathedral Range State Park.

1.3 Significance of the Park

Cathedral Range State Park makes a valuable contribution to Victoria's parks system, which aims to protect viable representative samples of the State's natural environments occurring on public land. Parks also provide opportunities for visitors to enjoy and appreciate natural and cultural values, and many make important contributions to the State's tourism.

The Park is assigned the IUCN Category II (National Parks) of the United Nations' List of National Parks and Protected Areas. Category II areas are managed primarily for ecosystem conservation and appropriate recreation.

Cathedral Range State Park is listed on the Register of the National Estate in recognition of the area's outstanding values, particularly its high scenic and recreation values and range of vegetation types. The Australian Heritage Commission is in the process of developing or upgrading official statements for places listed prior to 1991.

The Cathedral Range is also listed by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) for its unusual geomorphology, unusual plants, superb views and Little River Gorge.

The Park contains an interesting range of vegetation as a result of variations in topography, soils and rainfall. There is a significant occurrence of Myrtle Beech. The steeply sloping range is an impressive landmark rising from the plains adjacent to the highway.

The Cathedral Range has been popular for recreation for many years. As early as the 1930s it was being actively used by walking

clubs, and it was Victoria's first rock climbing area. Walking tracks lead to the high peaks on the range from which spectacular views of the surrounding countryside are obtained.

Significant features of the Park are listed below.

Natural values

- Natural rugged beauty of the sandstone ridges and peaks of the Cathedral Range.
- The clear mountain streams, the Little River Gorge and river valley, and the gorge area south of Neds Peak.
- The diverse vegetation resulting from changes in topography, soils and rainfall.
- A wide range of fauna, including four threatened species.

Cultural values

- Artefacts of Aboriginal origin.
- The remains of Cooks Mill, which demonstrate past land use of timber felling and saw-milling.
- Remains of past climbing history.

Tourism and recreational values

- Opportunities to experience a mountain environment within easy driving distance of Melbourne.
- A variety of popular walking routes ranging in difficulty from easy to rugged.
- Opportunities for rock climbing on the Sugarloaf and other rock faces.
- Pleasant areas for family bush camping.

1.4 Creation of the Park

Cathedral Range State Park (3570 ha) was proclaimed on 26 April 1979 and included on Schedule Three (Other Parks) of the National Parks Act as a result of the *National Parks (Amendment) Act 1978* (Vic.). It was transferred to schedule Two B (State Parks) in 1989. Additions were made to the Park in 1986 (7 ha) and 1997 (39 ha).

The Park was created and extended following Government decisions on the former Land Conservation Council's (LCC) Melbourne Study Area Final Recommendations (LCC 1977, 1994).

1.5 Legislation and guidelines

Cathedral Range State Park is reserved and managed under the provisions of the National Parks Act. The Act requires the Director to preserve and protect the natural condition of the Park and its natural and other features, and to provide for the use of the Park by the public for enjoyment, recreation and education, and for research.

The former LCC (1977) recommended that the Park provide for recreation and education associated with the enjoyment and understanding of natural environments, and conserve and protect natural ecosystems. It also recommended that during periods of high fire danger the Little River Gorge should be closed to the public.

The Park is managed in accordance with Parks Victoria guidelines and with other procedures and guidelines, including:

- the Draft Alexandra Fire Protection Plan (CNR 1995b);
- Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Land (CNR 1995a).

1.6 Park management aims

Sections 4 (Objects) and 17 of the National Parks Act provide the main basis for management of the Park. The following management aims are derived from those sections, and as such broadly govern all aspects of park management.

Resource conservation

- Preserve and protect the natural environment.
- Allow natural environmental processes to continue with the minimum of interference.
- Maintain biodiversity.
- Conserve features of archaeological, historical and cultural significance.

Park protection

- Protect water catchments and streams.
- Protect human life, the Park and adjacent lands from injury by fire.
- Eradicate, or otherwise control, introduced plants, animals and diseases.

The Park visit

- Provide opportunities for appropriate recreation and tourism.
- Promote and encourage an appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of the Park's natural and cultural values and its recreational opportunities.

- Encourage appropriate Park use and visitor behaviour, and foster a conservation ethic in visitors.
- Take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of visitors.

Other

- Encourage, and where appropriate provide for, scientific research, surveys and monitoring that will contribute to a better understanding and management of the Park.
- Co-operate with local, State and interstate government authorities, the community and other interested organisations to assist in the management of the Park.

2 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

2.1 Park vision

A future visitor to Cathedral Range State Park finds a well managed, well-known and loved Park within easy driving distance of Melbourne which caters for a large number of visitors without detriment to the environment or to the visitor experience. Visitors come to enjoy mountain scenery, clear mountain streams and self-reliant recreational and adventure pursuits.

Through careful management, visitors can safely enjoy a variety of outdoor experiences. Walkers are well catered for with a range of walking tracks to and along the rugged range, as well as self-guided nature and cultural walks. Rock climbing is a favourite pursuit for many visitors, and family camping remains a popular pastime along the Little River valley.

The Park attracts many educational groups, whose presence in the Park is managed to minimise their impact and engender respect for our natural areas. The Park is an excellent example of how an area can be used for recreation, education and protection of natural ecosystems.

2.2 Management directions

Major management directions for the Park are outlined below.

Resource conservation

- Areas of high conservation significance, in particular sites with significant flora, fauna and cultural features, will be given special protection.
- Further flora and fauna research and survey will be encouraged.

Park protection

- A Park Fire Management Plan will be developed. The plan will be in accordance with the Alexandra Region Fire Protection Plan (as approved). Emphasis will be placed on expanding knowledge of the ecological impacts of fire on the flora and fauna.

- Management strategies for pest plants and animals, detailing key sites, target species and methods of control, will be implemented.

The Park visit

- The Park will continue to provide opportunities for recreation and tourism, particularly camping, bushwalking, climbing and abseiling in a mountain environment.
- The walking track network will be upgraded, sections of eroded or poorly located tracks being rehabilitated or relocated.
- Day visitor and camping sites will be rationalised to protect the streamside environment, prevent erosion and ensure visitor safety.

Community awareness and involvement

- Co-operation with local Government, public authorities, community groups and land owners in conserving flora, fauna and habitat within and adjacent to the Park, will be fostered.
- Park neighbours will be encouraged to assist in park protection.
- Commercial providers of services to education groups will be encouraged to promote appropriate environmental ethics.

2.3 Zoning

A park management zoning scheme has been developed to:

- provide a geographic framework in which to manage the Park;
- indicate which management directions have priority in different parts of the Park;

TABLE 1 MANAGEMENT ZONES

	CONSERVATION ZONE	CONSERVATION AND RECREATION ZONE
AREA/LOCATION	657 ha, 18% of the Park, consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the catchment of the upper Little River, which includes the Little River Gorge and Myrtle Beech Closed Forest; the riparian zone along the lower Little River and MacLennans Gully between the stream and existing roads or, where no road exists, between the stream and the border of the riparian vegetation. 	2959 ha, 82% of the Park. The remainder of the Park.
DESCRIPTION	Sensitive natural areas unable to sustain impacts from dispersed recreation.	Important natural areas with scope for low impact recreation opportunities.
GENERAL MANAGEMENT AIM	Protect sensitive natural environments and provide for minimal impact recreation activities and simple visitor facilities, subject to ensuring minimal interference to natural processes.	Protect less sensitive natural environments and provide for sustainable dispersed recreation activities and small scale recreation facilities without significant impact on natural processes.

- indicate the types and levels of use appropriate throughout the Park;
- assist in minimising existing and potential conflicts between uses and activities, or between these and the protection of park values;
- provide a basis for assessing the suitability of future activities and development proposals.

Two management zones apply to the Park: Conservation, and Conservation and Recreation.

Table 1 specifies the management zones, and figure 2 shows their location.

3 RESOURCE CONSERVATION

3.1 Geological and landform features

The landforms of the Park are dominated by the sharp ridge of the Cathedral Range, which is some 7 km long and 1.5 km wide. The range rises nearly 500 m above the Acheron River valley and is a major scenic feature of the area. The highest peak in the Park is Sugarloaf Peak, which rises to 923 m at the southern end of the range, followed by Cathedral North peak (814 m) at the other end of the range.

The range is formed largely of sandstone and shales laid down during the Upper Silurian period, 400 to 415 million years ago. During the last major period of deformation, known as the Tabberabberan Orogeny, the Cathedral sandstones were folded on a NNW-SSE trend. The softer shales and sandstone beds then eroded, leaving the harder sandstones which form the peaks of the range. The Little River valley consists of shales and sandstones.

Podzolic soils overlie the sandstone and shale areas. These soils tend to be shallow and prone to sheet and gully erosion.

The eastern portion of the Park is the western edge of the Cerberian Caldera and consists of volcanic and sedimentary formations from the Upper Devonian Period. These areas have red clay soils that tend to be deep, well drained and resistant to erosion.

The Park contains many rocky ridges, outcrops and cliffs, and has two remote and rugged gorges.

Aim

- Minimise impacts from visitors, management and educational activities on significant geological features, especially rock outcrops.

Management strategy

- *Monitor visitor and management activities (section 5.2.8) and take appropriate action to ensure that they do not cause adverse effects.*

3.2 Rivers and streams

Little River and Storm Creek, which flow through the Park, meet near Cooks Mill and are both permanent streams. Water levels can be quite high after heavy rain, and flooding is common during such periods. The last such episode was in 1996 when floods caused extensive damage to Little River Road. The Little River Falls (in the Little River Gorge) are not generally accessible.

The Little River flows north-west and joins the Acheron River at Taggerty. The town water supply for Taggerty is drawn directly from the Little River and is used without treatment. Picnic and camping sites adjacent to the Little River in the Park are very popular with campers and visitors, and have the potential to affect water quality in the Little River. Access to the river from campsites and day visitor areas has developed in an ad hoc manner and led to some degradation of streamside vegetation.

There are a number of other creeks on the western side of the Cathedral Range but these are not significantly influenced by activities within the Park.

Aim

- Conserve the water quality and aesthetic qualities of rivers and streams within the Park.

Management strategies

- *Implement strategies to protect river and stream values while providing appropriate opportunities for recreation (section 5.2).*
- *Control visitor access to rivers by defining access tracks and points.*
- *Monitor water quality in Little River and take appropriate action as required.*

3.3 Vegetation

A feature of the Park is its wide variety of vegetation communities, ranging from Manna

Gum Tall Open Forest along the Little River to Myrtle Beech Closed Forest above 900 m.

Although no alliance is considered rare or endangered, the existence of 11 alliances within a relatively small area is significant. There are also interesting abrupt transitions between communities, such as between Messmate and Mountain Ash at Sugarloaf Saddle (NPS 1984).

The majority of the Park is covered by Red Stringybark/Broad-leaved Peppermint/Long-leaved Box Open Forest, which occurs on the dry rocky slopes. Narrow-leaf Peppermint/Candlebark Gum Open Forest is found along the moist, more fertile river valleys.

Pockets of Myrtle Beech are found in the upper reaches of the Little River, and there is a small stand of Snow Gum on the summit of Sugarloaf Peak. A stand of Alpine Ash extends into the Park near Sugarloaf Saddle on volcanic soils on the slopes of the Blue Range.

The existence of Myrtle Beech together with Woolly Tea-tree has been noted as a significant occurrence in the Park (NPS 1984). This community is not well represented in existing parks and reserves; its only other known location is in Baw Baw National Park.

A feature of the Park is the intactness of the riparian vegetation along the Little River. It supports many easily seen fauna and some significant flora species but is prone to disturbance pressure from Park visitors.

Three species considered rare in Victoria have been recorded in the Park: Bristle-fern, which is also considered rare nationally, Slender Tick-trefoil, and a variety of Common Tussock-grass (appendix I).

The area that is now Park has been subject to disturbance from previous land uses, including grazing and logging. Some vegetation survey work has been undertaken previously (NPS 1984).

The sedge community in and adjacent to the Blackwood camping area is highly disturbed and requires protection, together with another sedge community in foothill forest on the west

side of Tweed Spur Track near Cooks Mill (Smith et al. 1996).

Aims

- Conserve indigenous plant communities in their natural condition and maintain genetic diversity.
- Provide special protection for significant species and communities.
- Revegetate disturbed and cleared areas.

Management strategies

- *Manage Flora and Fauna Guarantee listed species in accordance with approved action statements.*
- *Protect significant communities and species (including the sedge communities) from visitor impacts by restricting or otherwise managing visitor access and activities where required.*
- *Encourage further surveys of and research into significant plants and communities in the Park to improve knowledge of their management requirements.*
- *Determine ecological burning requirements for the conservation of flora (section 4.1).*

3.4 Fauna

The vegetation, topography and climates in the Park create a range of faunal habitats. A comprehensive fauna survey of the Park was undertaken in 1996 (Smith et al. 1996). Twenty-three native mammal species, 11 reptiles, four amphibians, one fish species and 104 native bird species are recorded in the Park (Smith et al. 1996; NPS 1984). Four threatened species are recorded in the Park (appendix II).

Common mammal species found in the Park are the Eastern Grey Kangaroo and Common Wombat. Occasional sightings of Platypus have been made in the Little River. Long-nosed Bandicoots have been recorded within the riparian zone.

Smith et al. (1996) noted a number of species recorded in areas adjacent to the Park for which suitable habitat exists within the Park and identified a number of actions to determine the status of these species. Among these species are Leadbeater's Possum and Brush-tailed Phascogale, both of which are listed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (Vic.). In accordance with the Flora and Fauna Guarantee action statement for Leadbeater's Possum, a reserve system for the species is currently being devised. One reserve option being considered includes a section of the Park.

The Superb Lyrebird is common throughout the Park, and the Farmhouse campsite was reputedly so named because Lyrebirds in the area mimicked the sounds of domestic stock in the valley below (NPS 1984). Peregrine Falcons have been sighted hunting in the area. The cliffs and crags on the Cathedral Range offer suitable nesting habitat; abandoned nest sites were located in the spring of 1995 (Smith et al. 1996). Powerful Owls were observed roosting at two locations on the Little River, and it is likely that at least one pair is resident within the Park. Satin Bowerbirds were also observed in full colour close to the Cooks Mill campground.

The Mountain Galaxias was recorded in the Little River system within the Park upstream of the Little River falls during the fauna survey. The falls probably form a barrier to upstream movement of trout, a major predator of galaxias.

Sambar are an introduced species of deer considered wildlife under the *Wildlife Act 1975* (Vic.). Sambar are present in low numbers but the population needs to be monitored. If erosion or vegetation damage is caused, control programs may be required.

Aims

- Protect native fauna communities and maintain genetic diversity.
- Provide special protection for significant fauna species.
- Increase knowledge of the distribution and management requirements of significant fauna species.

Management strategies

- *Manage Flora and Fauna Guarantee listed species in accordance with approved action statements, including implementing the proposed Leadbeater's Possum reserve system.*
- *Encourage fauna surveys, particularly for Peregrine Falcon, Powerful Owl, Leadbeater's Possum, Brush-tailed Phascogale, bandicoots, fish and invertebrates.*
- *Encourage the use of a nest box program as part of any survey for Brush-tailed Phascogale or Leadbeater's Possum.*
- *Encourage research into the management requirements of the Park's fauna and implement management actions as required.*
- *Determine ecological burning requirements for the conservation of fauna species (section 4.1).*
- *Investigate measures to conserve native fish populations within the Park.*
- *Monitor the effect of deer populations and take appropriate action if erosion or vegetation damage is evident.*

3.5 Landscape

The rugged ridge of the Cathedral Range rises steeply from the Acheron River valley and contrasts with the Acheron Valley's predominantly cleared landscape. This contrast enhances the visual quality of the landscape along the Maroondah Highway, a major tourist route from which the Cathedral Range and its steep scree slopes are clearly visible. The steep dry slopes, rocky peaks and cliffs form a striking panorama when viewed from either side of the Cathedral Range. The distinctive cone of Sugarloaf Peak is clearly visible from both within and outside the Park.

Inspirational views are available from the Cathedral Range and Sugarloaf Peak. The steep forested slopes of the Blue Range and the

craggy Cathedral Range create an imposing backdrop for visitors traversing the Park.

In recognition of the Cathedral Range's landscape importance, the proposed Planning Scheme prepared by the Shire of Murrindindi includes a Significant Landscape Overlay on areas adjoining the Park. This overlay will require development on land adjoining Cathedral Range State Park to take landscape values into consideration.

Potential impacts on landscapes viewed from the Park include further subdivision of farmland to the west and north, logging of adjacent State forests, and other adjacent land uses.

An inlier within the Park contains a pine plantation, and future logging of this would significantly affect the landscape values of the Park. Developments along the Little River Valley may be visible from the Cathedral Range and their visual effect must be considered.

Aims

- Protect and enhance landscape quality where possible, especially when seen from major access routes and viewing points.
- Minimise, rehabilitate, remove or ameliorate undesirable visual intrusions.

Management strategies

- *Protect and enhance landscape values, particularly as seen from key viewpoints such as the Jawbones and Sugarloaf Peak.*
- *Ensure that all new developments within the Park are planned and designed to minimise their impact on landscape values.*
- *Liaise with the owner of the inlier property to minimise any effects of logging and other work on landscape values.*
- *Liaise with the Shire of Murrindindi regarding any planning permits on land adjacent to the Park which may affect the Park.*
- *Liaise with the Forests Service to consider the landscape value of the Park with regard*

to logging and other management actions in adjoining State forest.

3.6 Cultural heritage

The Aboriginal people once associated with the area which includes the Cathedral Range were members of the Taungurong people. The Acheron River valley west of the Park was known as an important area for them. Two sites, one an isolated artefact and the other a scarred tree, have been recorded in the Park by Aboriginal Affairs Victoria. The Park has not been comprehensively surveyed, and so the scarcity of Aboriginal archaeological sites or historical places may indicate lack of survey rather than that the Park is devoid of heritage values.

The Corranderk Koori Cooperative in Healesville is the relevant authority for cultural heritage in the Park. All Aboriginal sites, places and objects are protected under State and Commonwealth legislation. These Acts are the *Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act 1972* (Vic.) and the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984* (Cwlth).

European settlement of the area began with the selection of the Acheron Run just north of the present Park in 1839. The steep slopes and rocky soils of the Park area discouraged early settlement, although the Taggerty Run, which included the Cathedral Range area, was selected in 1846. The lease changed hands a number of times before the majority of the lease area was sold around 1878; the poorer quality land was retained by the Crown. This area was then leased for grazing until the 1930s, when it was surrendered.

Logging and milling occurred in the Little River and Storm Creek catchments from the 1930s to the early 1970s. The site near the junction of Storm Creek and the Little River, now known as Cooks Mill, was chosen as the location for the Cathedral Mill in 1938. Difficulties in extracting fresh timber emerged once the more accessible timber in the Storm Creek catchment had been logged. The mill licence was transferred to William Cook Pty Ltd in 1944, though logging did not resume until 1951. By

1955 the mill had ceased operating, and it has been partially dismantled. Logging continued in the area, logs being carted to William Cook's mill in Thornton. Even though the business changed hands, logging continued in the Little River/Storm Creek area until late 1971 (Evans 1995).

A number of overgrown extraction tracks can be found, and the Cooks Mill area contains remnants of concrete foundations and steel relics. The previous Management Plan for the Park recommended that the site should be interpreted (NPS 1984).

Aims

- Protect significant cultural and historic sites.

- Improve access to, and appreciation and understanding of, historic sites, consistent with safety of visitors.

Management strategies

- *Identify, assess and manage historic places according to Parks Victoria guidelines.*
- *Finalise and implement the strategy for the conservation, management and interpretation of the Cooks Mill Historic Area.*
- *Encourage research into the Park's Aboriginal history.*
- *Investigate and document Aboriginal history and identify, protect, and manage sites in accordance with Parks Victoria guidelines and in consultation with the Corranderk Koori Cooperative and Aboriginal Affairs Victoria.*

4 PARK PROTECTION

4.1 Fire management

The National Parks Act requires the Director of National Parks to ensure that appropriate and sufficient measures are taken to protect parks from injury by fire.

Current fire protection measures are in accordance with the Alexandra Region Draft Fire Protection Plan (CNR 1995b). Under that plan the Park is designated as an area 'not to be burnt'. There are no easily identifiable fire management units and questions have arisen as to the value of Lowerson and Green Hill tracks as fire protection lines.

The concentration of visitor facilities along the Little River Valley, the single road access and steep and rocky topography of the Park are important features when considering visitor safety during a fire.

There have been relatively few fires within the Park. Because of the lack of major fires, the Park contains a forest age class which is poorly represented in the general area and is significant for its potential to develop into Old Growth Forest if it remains unburnt (Smith et al. 1996).

Aims

- Protect human life, property and park values from injury by fire.
- Maintain fire regimes appropriate for the conservation of native flora and fauna and natural ecological processes within the Park.
- Minimise the adverse effects of fires and fire suppression methods.

Management strategies

- *Develop a Park Fire Management Plan which addresses:*
 - *ecological burning to protect flora and fauna species in accordance with approved plans;*
 - *procedures for ensuring the safety of Park visitors in the event of a fire threatening the Park, including suitable fire protection works;*
 - *closure of the Park on days of extreme fire danger;*

- *suitable suppression methods in sensitive areas such as steep slopes, high ridges, scenic areas, sites of significance and recreation areas.*
- *Inform Park visitors of fire regulations and restrictions on the use of fire within the Park.*
- *Liaise with NRE in the finalisation of the Alexandra Region Draft Fire Protection Plan to ensure protection of park values.*
- *Rehabilitate fire control lines and other disturbed areas resulting from fires and fire suppression activities as soon as possible after any fire, in accordance with the Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Lands (CNR 1995a).*

4.2 Pest plants and animals, and diseases

A number of pest plants are present within the Park. Species considered to be major threats are Blackberry, Tutsan, Japanese Honeysuckle and Monterey Pine. There are extensive infestations of Blackberry along the Little River Valley. Pine plantations on the outskirts of the Park and in the inlier block have resulted in pine wildling invasion in some areas.

Introduced predators such as foxes, cats and dogs are an increasing problem. A small population of feral goats has been observed in the vicinity of Little Cathedral.

A detailed investigation for pathogens within the Park has not been undertaken. There has been no recorded occurrence of Cinnamon Fungus in the Park. The presence of Myrtle Wilt has been suspected though not confirmed, and further investigation is required. Myrtle Wilt has been recommended for listing under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act as a potentially threatening process.

Proposed management strategies for the control of both pest plants and pest animals, targeting specific areas, have been prepared (Nixon 1996a; 1996b).

Aims

- Control and where possible eradicate non-indigenous plants and animals.
- Minimise the impact of pest control programs on native fauna and flora.
- Protect the Park from other threats and diseases.

Management strategies

- *Undertake control efforts as detailed in the proposed management strategies for pest plant and animal species in the Park, in accordance with Parks Victoria guidelines.*
- *Control Japanese Honeysuckle where it occurs in riparian vegetation.*
- *Restore native vegetation to prevent the recurrence of weed invasion once weeds have been removed.*
- *Monitor Myrtle Beech for the presence of Myrtle Wilt.*
- *Identify and record the presence of any pathogens within the Park and take appropriate action.*
- *Liaise with adjoining land owners and the Forests Service in the conduct of pest plant and animal control programs.*

4.3 Soil conservation

The combination of steep slopes, rocky outcrops and skeletal soils makes the Park susceptible to erosion. Care is required in locating tracks and other visitor facilities. Some existing recreation sites and walking tracks are poorly located. To reduce erosion, vegetation must be retained on steep slopes, and roads and tracks must be maintained. Seasonal closures of roads and tracks may be necessary to protect them from damage during periods of adverse weather.

Aim

- Prevent and control soil erosion.

Management strategies

- *Minimise soil disturbance during wildfire suppression, road maintenance and facility development works, in accordance with Parks Victoria guidelines.*
- *Prevent erosion of vehicle and tracks by implementing seasonal closures as required (section 5.2.1).*
- *Ensure that tracks and visitor facilities are located, designed and constructed to minimise the risk of soil erosion.*
- *Monitor the condition of walking tracks and relocate or rehabilitate eroded or poorly located tracks (section 5.2.4).*
- *Revegetate any disturbed areas with indigenous species in accordance with Parks Victoria guidelines.*

5 THE PARK VISIT

5.1 The Park visitor

Cathedral Range State Park is a natural setting in which visitors can undertake a range of activities. Most day visitor sites in the Little River valley are easily accessible to car-based visitors, but much of the Park is only accessible to the more adventurous. The main experiences are:

- Easily accessible car-based recreational activities such as camping, nature walks and picnicking.
- Opportunities for more adventurous visitors who can seek enjoyment through bushwalking, climbing, cycling, walk-in camping and nature study.

Visitors to the Park, who come predominantly from Melbourne, are estimated to exceed 50 000 per year. Most travel to the Park by car, though a few walk in.

The topography of the Park confines most visitors to the areas along the Little River valley. The main picnic and camping areas are heavily used, particularly in the summer. There has been some degradation through soil compaction, vegetation trampling and firewood collection for campfires.

The Park is within Tourism Victoria's Goulburn Murray Waters tourism region. The Park is therefore part of an area which has a wealth of features ranging from the Murray River to the Eildon Reservoir and Lake Eildon National Park.

Providing for the visitor

Cathedral Range State Park will continue to offer visitors an escape to a bushland setting to experience nature-based recreation close to Melbourne.

The Park will continue to offer opportunities for its three distinct groups of visitors:

- car-based visitors who enjoy accessible attractions such as Cooks Mill, Neds Gully and Sugarloaf Peak;

- self-reliant visitors seeking adventure experiences in harder to access areas who come to bushwalk, climb and abseil;
- education based groups such as schools, scouts and community groups who come to enjoy outdoor and adventure activities with an educational focus on the environment, human impact and land management issues.

To cater for visitors, emphasis will be placed on provision of facilities which will help maintain the secluded, low-key atmosphere of the Park. Park management will ensure quality visitor experiences and at the same time conserve and protect the natural environment. Existing and proposed visitor facilities are shown in figure 3 and table 4.

Visitor surveys, including customer satisfaction monitoring, will continue to be carried out.

Aim

- Provide for visitors in accordance with the above overview of visitor management.

Management strategies

- *Permit recreational activities in accordance with table 2.*
- *Provide and maintain facilities and services which highlight, but are in keeping with, the areas distinctive character (section 5.2 and tables 2 and 3).*
- *Apply current market survey findings on visitor profiles, patterns of behaviour, expectations and preferences.*
- *Determine appropriate levels of recreational activity consistent with protecting visitor experiences and park values.*
- *Monitor visitor use and numbers, and provide facilities consistent with appropriate levels of use.*

TABLE 2 SUMMARY OF RECREATION ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY	CONSERVATION ZONE	CONSERVATION AND RECREATION ZONE
Picnicking	Yes	Yes
Camping - designated areas only	No	Yes
Camping - dispersed	No	No
Walking	YC (5.2.4)	YC (5.2.4)
Bicycle riding	YC (5.2.6)	YC (5.2.6)
2WD scenic driving	YC (5.2.1)	YC (5.2.1)
4WD touring	YC (5.2.1)	YC (5.2.1)
Horse riding	No	No
Orienteering/Rogaining	YC (5.2.7)	YC (5.2.7)
Rock climbing/Abseiling	YC (5.2.8)	YC (5.2.8)
Fishing	Yes	NA
Firewood collection - for use in Park only	No	No
Hunting	No	No
Dogs	No	No

Yes Activity is permitted

YC Activity is permitted under conditions - refer to relevant section for details

No Activity is not appropriate

NA Not applicable

- *Encourage all visitors to adopt minimal impact techniques and to adhere to codes of conduct appropriate to their activity.*

5.2 Visitor recreation activities and facilities

5.2.1 Vehicle access

Most visitors approach the Park from the north off the MaroonDAH Highway. Signs direct vehicles from the MaroonDAH Highway along Cathedral Lane to the main entrance of the Park at Little River Road. The Little River Road, which closely follows the route of the Little River, is narrow and winding, and has a loose surface in places. Sections of it are inappropriately located and occasionally flooded. The road was heavily damaged by flooding in 1996. Speeding vehicles have been a problem and caution is required.

Access from Marysville and the south is via Mount Margaret Road and Cerberus Road,

which branches off the Marysville-Buxton Road. This access is signposted and is an attractive route, winding through State forest for most of its length until the Park boundary is reached.

The road and track network is detailed in table 3 and figure 3. Little River Road and Cerberus Road provide the main two-wheel drive vehicle access and are gravel roads suitable for all year round access. Cerberus Road is managed in conjunction with the Forests Service. Tweed Spur Road provides four-wheel drive access between the Park and the Blue Range and is subject to seasonal closure.

Lowersons Track also links the Park with the Blue Range and gives access to the Conservation Zone. This road is maintained as a Management Vehicle Only track as it is steep in sections and unsuitable for public use.

Green Hill Fire Track enters the Park near Sugarloaf Saddle. This road is maintained by the Forests Service and is popular with people hiking between the Park and Lake Mountain.

Aim

- Provide and maintain an appropriate network of roads and tracks for visitor use and management purposes.

Management strategies

- *Permit use of and manage roads and tracks in accordance with table 3.*
- *In consultation with Victoria Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs and other groups as required, apply temporary or seasonal closures to roads and tracks to ensure public safety and minimise environmental disturbance.*
- *Allow seasonal four-wheel drive access along Tweed Spur Road.*
- *Liaise with the Shire of Murrindindi on the maintenance of roads leading to the Park.*

5.2.2 Day visits

The Park is relatively close to Melbourne and is popular for both day visitors and bushwalking enthusiasts. Many come to bushwalk (section 5.2.4), others to enjoy the serenity of the bush and tranquil surroundings. The main day visitor areas are at Cooks Mill and Sugarloaf Saddle. Various other sites along the Little River have been developed through ad hoc use and are placing pressure on the riparian vegetation (sections 3.2 and 3.3). Table 4 gives details of the visitor facilities within the Park.

Firewood collection has led to the depletion of fallen and dead timber throughout the Park, particularly around day visitor and camping areas (section 5.2.3).

Aim

- Manage day visitor facilities to provide for a variety of visitor experiences and levels of activity consistent with protecting park values.

Management strategies

- *Provide facilities for day visitors in accordance with table 4 and figure 3.*
- *Rationalise car parks and picnic areas in the riparian zone along Little River.*
- *Allow fires only in fireplaces provided and encourage the use of portable gas or liquid fuel stoves.*
- *Prohibit the collection of firewood and investigate the commercial provision of firewood.*
- *Provide visitors with information on fire risk and the ecological role of fallen timber.*
- *Maintain the existing 'Take your rubbish home' strategy for all visitor sites.*

5.2.3 Camping

Because of its proximity to Melbourne and its easy access, Cathedral Range State Park is a popular camping area. Many of the camping areas are showing signs of heavy use and some intrusion into bush areas as a result of lack of definition of camping sites, removal of fallen timber and cutting of standing timber for firewood.

Sugarloaf Saddle has toilets, picnic tables and fireplaces but lacks a water supply. Vehicle-based camping is currently permitted in a small camping area close to the road and day visitor facilities.

Vehicle-based camping (including caravans) is permitted at Cooks Mill and Blackwood Flat. Cooks Mill site is the most popular area for camping in the Park. To protect the riparian zone of the Little River, camping is not permitted within a 20 m buffer.

The campsite at Blackwood Flat includes an open grass/sedge area. There are concerns about the proximity of the road and potential

TABLE 3 MANAGEMENT OF ROADS AND WALKING TRACKS

ROAD OR TRACK	CLASS AND STATUS	FUTURE MANAGEMENT
ROADS		
Little River Road	2WD all weather road, open to public vehicles	Investigate possible relocation of road away from Little River.
Cerberus Road	2WD all weather road, open to public vehicles	Continue to maintain in liaison with the Forests Service as a 2WD all weather road open to public vehicles.
Tweed Spur Road	4WD dry weather only. Open to public vehicles but subject to seasonal closure	No change.
Lowerson Track	4WD Management Vehicle Only	Maintain as a strategic fire break and management vehicle access track.
Green Hill Fire Track	4WD Management Vehicle Only	Maintain as a strategic fire break and management vehicle access track.
WALKING TRACKS		
Wells Cave Track	Grade D track	Improve directional signage. Provide trail head signage noting that walkers require experience in rugged conditions and bush navigation. Provide appropriate signage to climbing sites.
Canyon Track	Grade D track	Improve section in the vicinity of The Boulders. Provide trail head signage noting that walkers require experience in rugged conditions and bush navigation.
Razorback Ridge Track	Grade D track	Relocate difficult and eroded sections of track. Provide trail head signage noting that walkers require experience in rugged conditions and bush navigation.
Jawbone Creek Track	Grade C track	Investigate realignment to minimise erosion.
Cooks Mill-Jawbones Car Park Track	Route follows Cerberus Road and sections of Grade B track	Close existing sections of walking track; provide an alternative Grade C walking track between Cooks Mill and Jawbones car park.
Cathedral Mount Track	Grade D track	Relocate difficult and eroded sections of track. Close track if relocation is not possible. Provide trail head signage noting that walkers require experience in rugged conditions and bush navigation.
Little Cathedral Track	Grade C track	Relocate difficult and eroded sections of track.
Neds Saddle-Farmyard Track	Grade C track	Relocate difficult and eroded sections of track.
North Jawbone Track	Grade D track	No change.

Table 3 (cont.)

ROAD OR TRACK	CLASS AND STATUS	FUTURE MANAGEMENT
South Jawbone Track	Grade D track	No change.
Neds Gully Track	Grade D track	No change.
Neds Peak Track	Grade D track	Close.
Cooks Mill Nature Walk and Heritage Trail	Grade B track	Under construction.
Little River Walk	Grade C track	No change.

WALKING TRACK STANDARDS

Grade A1 Fully sealed surface or boardwalk, width 1.5-2 m.

Grade A2 Track well drained with a good surface, up to 1.5 m wide.

Grade B Track well defined, and benched and drained, up to 1 m wide.

Grade C Track defined through use, may be benched, drained and cleared in sections.

Grade D Track or footpath defined through use but with no basic construction.

for accidents as well as the disturbance to the sedge community (section 3.3).

Neds Gully is on the western side of Little River but its car park is on the eastern side. Campers have to carry their equipment across a footbridge. There is no information available at the site about walks.

The Farmyard, located on the saddle between the North and South Jawbones, is a popular walk-in camping area. This area lacks toilet facilities. The lack of vehicle access, rugged terrain and lack of a suitable water supply make the provision and servicing of any facilities difficult.

An honesty fee system operates for camping within the Park. There are dispensers for camping permits at the Cathedral Lane and Cerberus Road entrances to the Park.

Over time, camping has had an adverse impact on areas of the Park. Soil compaction, clearing of vegetation and removal of wood for campfires are ongoing problems, and campfires are a potential source of wildfire. Traffic movement and congestion at busy periods can have an adverse effect on the visitor experience.

Dispersed camping (camping outside designated camping areas) is not currently permitted in the Park. However, a number of groups are known to camp within the Park outside the designated

camping areas. Some groups have found that the designated campsites do not supply the outdoor experience they are seeking and prefer to camp elsewhere. Camping in areas which are not serviced or maintained can have deleterious effects on the environment, and creates a risk for campers in those areas in relation to fire, risk mitigation and search and rescue operations.

Aims

- Provide for vehicle based and walk-in bush camping.
- Protect visitor and camper safety.

Management strategies

- *Close and rehabilitate Sugarloaf Saddle camping area and manage as a day visitor area.*
- *Rationalise camping sites in the Blackwood Flat camping area to protect the sedge community.*
- *Define the boundaries of the Neds Gully and Farmyard camping areas.*

TABLE 4 EXISTING AND PROPOSED VISITOR FACILITIES

SITE	CAMPING AREA	TOILET	PICNIC TABLES	FIRE PLACE	GAS BBQ	CAR PARK	WATER	INFO BOARD	MANAGEMENT ACTIONS AND COMMENT
Park Entrance - Cathedral Lane	-	-	-	R	-	E	-	E	Maintain as entrance station
Little River I	-	-	-	R	-	-	-	-	Close and rehabilitate
Little River II	-	-	-	R	-	-	-	-	Close and rehabilitate
Little River III (bridge)	-	-	-	R	-	R	-	-	Close and rehabilitate
Little River IV	-	-	-	R	-	E	E*	-	Maintain as day visitor area
Neds Gully	E	E	-	E	-	E	E*	P	Provide trail head signage
Blackwood Flat	E	E	-	E	-	E	E*	-	Rationalise campsites
Cooks Mill	E	E	E	E	E	E	E*	P	Provide visitor orientation information
Jawbone Car Park	-	-	-	-	-	E	-	P	Provide trail head signage
Sugarloaf Saddle	R	E	E	R	-	E	E	E	Rehabilitate campsites, maintain as a day visitor area
The Farmyard	E	P	-	-	-	-	E*	-	Rationalise campsites, investigate suitable toilet facilities

KEY: E Existing facility to be maintained
P Proposed facility to be provided
R Remove existing facility
- Not available
* Water available from a river or stream

- *Provide designated walk-in camping areas for school groups and commercial tour groups.*
- *Maintain a 20 m vegetated buffer between Little River and camping areas.*
- *Monitor the impact of camping and visitors on Little River. Relocate campsites and facilities where these are found to be having an impact on water quality or riparian vegetation.*
- *Ensure that campers receive the same advice as day visitors on the use and impacts of fires and the desirability of using portable gas or liquid fuel stoves (section 5.2.2).*
- *Monitor campsite use at Cooks Mill, and if required relocate sites and restrict access to minimise disturbance to riparian vegetation.*
- *Investigate visitor numbers and use patterns at The Farmyard, and provide appropriate toilet facilities.*
- *Ensure that camping facilities do not detract from the scenic amenity of the Park or contribute to erosion problems.*
- *Continue to discourage dispersed camping.*

5.2.4 Bushwalking

Bushwalking is a popular activity in the Park. There are a number of tracks, the most popular of which lead to and along the Razorback. Many tracks are on steep slopes and are prone to erosion. Most of the walking in the Park, particularly The Razorback between Sugarloaf Peak and The Farmyard, is along ill-defined tracks through rugged terrain, and is suitable only for experienced bushwalkers.

A popular circular walk is from the Jawbones car park via the Farmyard and Neds Saddle to Neds Gully and back along the Little River Track to Cooks Mill. From Cooks Mill, walkers can return to the Jawbones car park via Cerberus Road. A foot track gives walkers some alternative to walking on the road, but

finishes at a point along the road beyond the Jawbones car park and still requires walkers to use substantial sections of the road.

A nature and heritage trail is being developed in the Cooks Mill area by the Friends of Cathedral Range.

A number of short routes lead to climbing sites. These routes are generally used by only a small number of climbers but some have the potential to confuse walkers.

Because of the rugged terrain and erodible soils, the Park is generally unsuitable for off-track walking.

Aim

- Provide a range of bushwalking opportunities while minimising impacts on park values.

Management strategies

- *Maintain walking tracks in accordance with table 3. Relocate or close sections of eroded or poorly located tracks.*
- *Provide appropriate signage and printed information to ensure that walkers remain on designated walking tracks (section 5.3).*
- *Provide trail head signage at Sugarloaf Saddle, Neds Gully and Jawbones car park advising that walkers intending to undertake walks in the Range need experience in rugged conditions and bush navigation (section 5.5).*
- *Investigate the opportunity for providing additional easy walking opportunities in the vicinity of the Neds Gully or Cooks Mill camping areas.*

5.2.5 Horse riding

There is little demand for horse riding in the Park as better opportunities exist in adjacent State forest. Horse riding has never been permitted in the Park.

Aim

- Protect the Park's environment and visitor experiences.

Management strategy

- *Continue to prohibit horse riding.*

5.2.6 Cycling

Cycling is popular along the roads within the Park. Bikes are generally transported in and used along the Little River and Cerberus Roads and within campsites. Due to the nature of the terrain, the Park is not suitable for off-road cycling. Cycling is not permitted on walking tracks or management vehicle only tracks.

Aim

- Provide access for cycling while minimising environmental impact and conflict with other Park users.

Management strategy

- *Permit cycling on roads open to public vehicles.*

5.2.7 Orienteering and rogaining

The Park has been used in the past for orienteering and rogaining, although these activities are more popular in adjacent State forest and on private property. Decisions on the acceptability of particular events are made according to the proposed intensity and timing of events. The terrain and erodible soils, and potential to disrupt the experiences of other visitors, may limit the opportunity for some events.

Aim

- Provide for orienteering and rogaining opportunities where appropriate in the Park, giving consideration to the effects on the environment and the experiences of other visitors.

Management strategy

- *Permit orienteering and rogaining events in accordance with the appropriate Parks Victoria guideline and the following conditions:*
 - *sensitive areas to be marked out of bounds;*
 - *no off-track access to be permitted in the Conservation Zone;*

- *events deemed to have a significant effect on the environment or the experiences of other Park visitors not to be permitted.*

5.2.8 Rock climbing and abseiling

A number of sites within the Park have been popular with climbers for many years. Regular and heavy use of some sites has led to signs of degradation, particularly to trees at the tops of climbs which are used for climbing and abseiling anchor points, and at the base of popular climbs where there is evidence of soil compaction and erosion. The number of climbing sites has increased as the sport has gained in popularity, and tracks have been created by climbers seeking access to new sites.

A number of areas — notably in the vicinity of Sugarloaf Peak — are very popular with instructional groups from schools and outdoor education centres. The Boulders, Craggy Face, Mushroom Rock and Sugarloaf Mainface sites are used for beginner classes and basic instruction. To ensure equity of access for the many groups wishing to climb, a booking system has been implemented.

Several safety issues were identified during an assessment of these climbing sites, including the use of trees for anchor points and access tracks (Marsh & MacLennan 1996). These issues are addressed in section 5.5.

The use of fixed equipment is actively discouraged under park guidelines. Many climbing routes have had anchor points installed over the years.

Other climbing areas in the Park include Bissetts Pinnacles, North and South Jawbones, Ten Fathom Ridge, Neds Peak and Sunset Strip (between North Cathedral and Little Cathedral).

Aims

- Provide for rock climbing and abseiling in the Park, at the same time minimising impacts on park values.
- Prevent erosion and environmental degradation at climbing sites.

Management strategies

- *Allow rock climbing and abseiling in accordance with Parks Victoria guidelines.*
- *Encourage users to use clean climbing techniques and conform to the relevant codes of conduct for their activities.*
- *Monitor the effect of rock climbing and abseiling activities on the environment and the experiences of other visitors. In particular:*
 - *monitor cliff sites for Peregrine Falcon activity, and close climbing and abseiling sites as required;*
 - *monitor all climbing sites and access tracks, using appropriate methods such as photo monitoring points, and close as required.*
- *Liaise with users on the operation of the booking system and amend where necessary.*
- *Provide suitable track access to climbing areas (section 5.2.4).*
- *Undertake rehabilitation work at degraded climb sites in association with user groups.*
- *Delineate the limit of developed climbing sites and prohibit the development of new climbing areas, particularly in the Sugarloaf area.*
- *Do not permit the use of trees as anchors.*

5.2.9 Dogs

Dogs pose a threat in conservation areas and can disrupt native fauna and visitors. Most Park visitors object to seeing non-native fauna as it degrades their natural experience and makes native wildlife more difficult to observe. There is little demand for taking dogs into the Park and many opportunities for this activity exist outside the Park. Dogs have never been permitted in the Park.

Aim

- Protect fauna and visitor experiences within the Park.

Management strategy

- *Continue to prohibit dogs in the Park.*

5.2.10 Fishing

Fishing is relatively popular in Little River and Storm Creek. In the past it appears to have had little effect on the Park's river environments. Fishing has the potential to damage stream banks if river access is not controlled.

Aim

- Provide access for fishing while minimising environmental impact and conflict with other Park users.

Management strategies

- *Continue to permit fishing in the Park.*
- *Monitor access to streamside locations and restrict access if necessary.*

5.3 Visitor information and interpretation

Two leaflets for the Park, one a camping guide the other a walking track guide, are available to visitors. Orientation information is provided in information shelters at the Park entrances at Cathedral Lane and Sugarloaf Saddle. A saleable Park map at 1:25 000 scale and with information and illustrations is also available. The Park is signposted from the major roads and there are track information signs within the Park.

Quality information and interpretative services help orientate visitors, guide visitor use, assist in managing activities and increase knowledge of cultural history.

Aims

- Orientate visitors to the Park and its features.
- Enhance visitors' enjoyment and understanding of the Park's natural and cultural values.

Management strategies

- *Provide adequate visitor orientation information and safety messages at key visitor sites (table 4).*
- *Update visitor leaflets to ensure consistent information on gradings of tracks and walks (section 5.2.4).*
- *Develop an interpretation strategy for the Park.*
- *Liaise with education service providers on the provision of interpretation services (section 6.3).*
- *Include information in leaflets and on information boards about potential hazards in the Park.*
- *Establish and implement monitoring and maintenance schedules for all interpretative facilities.*
- *Regularly evaluate information and interpretative services related to the Park.*

5.4 Commercial tourism

The Park is ideally placed for nature-based tourism. Activities offered by commercial operators concentrate mainly on bushwalking, camping, climbing and abseiling activities. The major commercial operators are outdoor education companies which have a major education component in their operations.

Aim

- Provide opportunities for commercial tourism services consistent with park management objectives.

Management strategies

- *Manage commercial operators in accordance with Parks Victoria guidelines.*
- *Encourage commercial operators to assist in the protection of park values and the management of its facilities, and ensure that they comply with Park regulations and Parks Victoria guidelines.*

- *Supply information on the Park to commercial operators to ensure the integrity and accuracy of information given to clients.*
- *Liaise with operators on a regular basis to address problems and concerns.*

5.5 Public safety

Visitor safety is a consideration in all aspects of management. The topography and bushland nature of the Park carry inherent risks to Park users, and in parts of the Park these are increased by remoteness and lack of access. Cliffs, rocky areas, slippery slopes, large untracked areas and remnants of logging mills present potential hazards. Risks will be minimised through specific management actions, including maintenance of facilities to a high standard and continuation of an ongoing risk mitigation program (Marsh & Maclellan 1996).

Aim

- Promote and encourage safe practices among staff and visitors to the Park.

Management strategies

- *Prepare and implement a strategy in response to risk assessments including:*
 - *upgrading of signs and information leaflets to ensure consistent information on grades of walking tracks (section 5.3);*
 - *awareness of safety and potential hazards;*
 - *dangers of dropping tree boughs (section 5.3);*
 - *traffic hazards;*
 - *Cooks Mill ruins (section 5.2.4);*
 - *The Sugarloaf Peak climbing areas (section 5.2.8).*
- *Instigate risk mitigation strategies in accordance with Parks Victoria guidelines.*
- *Discourage access to dangerous sites but accept some adventure and risk taking in accordance with Parks Victoria guidelines. Consider closing sites if risk becomes unacceptable.*

- *Encourage visitors to seek information on activities they intend to undertake, including associated risks.*
- *Ensure that Park staff are sufficiently trained for, and have the ability to assist in, emergency situations, and co-operate with emergency service organisations.*
- *Develop an emergency response plan for the Park.*
- *Contribute to emergency management planning for search and rescue within the Park.*

6 COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT

6.1 Friends and volunteers

Friends and volunteers are very important because they foster community support for parks. Interested groups such as the Friends of Cathedral Range State Park, Scout and school groups and the Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers are among those who make valuable contributions to park management projects. Their assistance is welcomed and encouraged.

Aim

- Encourage volunteer involvement in managing the Park.

Management strategies

- *Continue to support and encourage the Friends of Cathedral Range State Park.*
- *Develop and evaluate a long-term volunteer strategy which incorporates the skills and interests of volunteer, school and community groups in park management activities.*

6.2 Community awareness and Park neighbours

Private land to the west and north of the Park is primarily managed as small hobby farms and for agriculture and tourism services. State forest abuts the Park to the east and south. A privately owned pine plantation is enclosed by the Park (section 7.2). A number of issues requiring liaison and co-operation with adjoining landholders are addressed elsewhere (section 7.2).

Aims

- Liaise with Park neighbours on issues affecting the Park and adjoining land.
- Encourage conservation and sound land management practices on land adjoining the Park.

Management strategies

- *Maintain liaison with local community groups and land owners and involve them, as appropriate, in relevant aspects of planning and managing the Park.*
- *Apply, and encourage the application of, the Good Neighbour Policy to management issues on or near the boundary of the Park (section 4.2).*

6.3 Schools education

A number of school groups use the Park, largely through services offered by commercial providers.

Aim

- Encourage commercial providers of education services to promote appropriate environmental and park management philosophies.

Management strategy

- *Support providers of education services and provide them and other enquirers with information relating to the Park and park management guidelines and techniques.*

7 OTHER ISSUES

7.1 Authorised uses

A trigonometric survey point is located within the Park approximately 200 m north of Cathedral Peak on the Range. Access is required occasionally for maintenance.

There are two former gravel pits within the Park. One is used to store road maintenance equipment. Gravel is no longer extracted.

Military and police training has been undertaken in the Park.

Aims

- Minimise the impact of public utilities in the Park.
- Ensure appropriate use and licensing of existing and any proposed new utilities.
- Allow for appropriate training by Defence Force and Police Services.

Management strategies

- *Ensure that existing and future public utilities are covered by a Section 27 consent in accordance with Parks Victoria guidelines.*
- *Continue to prohibit gravel extraction within the Park.*
- *Rehabilitate disused gravel pits.*
- *Allow training by military personnel and police in accordance with Parks Victoria guidelines.*

7.2 Boundaries and adjacent uses

Private land adjacent to the Park is used for a variety of agricultural and tourism purposes. Many have the potential to affect the Park's landscape, especially when viewed from the main Cathedral Range.

State forest, bordering the eastern and southern sides of the Park, is managed in accordance with the Central Highlands Forest Management Plan (NRE 1997).

A 70 ha freehold inlier planted with pines is in the centre of the Park. The inlier is in two parts, separated by the Little River and Little River Road. The owner proposes to log this plantation in 1999, which will have significant access, traffic and landscape impacts on the Park. Purchase of the block for inclusion in the Park would remove a source of pine wildings. The block would also be an ideal site for camping for individuals and groups in an area of lower environmental value, and allow existing camp sites in high conservation areas in the Park to be closed and rehabilitated.

There is an area to the north and east of the Park that is under constant pressure for subdivision to 40 ha blocks. If allowed, this would have an impact on landscape values and experiences from the Park.

Deer can now be hunted up to the Park boundary, after rescinding in 1996 of the Central Highlands Sanctuary, which abutted the eastern boundary of the Park.

Aim

- Minimise the impact of adjacent uses on park values.

Management strategies

- *Liaise with the Shire of Murrindindi and NRE on planning permits affecting land adjacent to the Park.*
- *Liaise with the owners of the freehold inlier on matters relevant to park management.*
- *Investigate options for the purchase and development of the private property inlier as a camping and/or education area. In the event of purchase, rationalise existing camping areas in high conservation value areas.*
- *Monitor hunting activities on the eastern boundary of the Park and take appropriate action to prevent incursion of hunting into the Park.*

8 IMPLEMENTATION

A three-year rolling implementation program will be prepared for the Park to ensure efficient implementation of this Plan. Priorities for management are identified in table 5 as an initial step in this process.

TABLE 5 PRIORITY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES	SECTION IN PLAN
Resource conservation	
Protect the Little River from the impacts of camping and visitors.	3.2, 5.2.3, 5.2.10
Protect the riparian zone along Little River and other significant communities.	3.2, 3.3
Park protection	
Develop a fire management plan.	4.1
Undertake control efforts for pest plant and animals as detailed in proposed management strategies.	4.2
The Park visit	
Rationalise car parks and picnic areas in the riparian strip along the Little River.	5.2.2
Close and rehabilitate Sugarloaf Saddle camping area and rationalise Blackwood Flat camping area, and manage as day visitor areas only.	5.2.3
Provide appropriate trail head signage at selected sites.	5.2.4
Maintain walking tracks.	5.2.4
Undertake rehabilitation works at degraded climbing sites.	5.2.8
Implement risk mitigation strategies.	5.5
Monitoring and research	
Monitor Myrtle Beech for Myrtle Wilt.	4.2
Monitor Cooks Mill campsites, and relocate sites to minimise disturbance of riparian vegetation.	5.2.3
Monitor the effect of rock climbing and abseiling activities on the environment and on other visitors.	5.2.8
Encourage surveys of and research into significant flora and fauna in the Park.	3.3, 3.4
Determine flora and fauna ecological burning requirements.	3.3, 3.4, 4.1
Maintain visitor monitoring.	5.1

REFERENCES

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- NRE (database) 1997b Flora Information System, Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Melbourne.
- NRE (1998) *Threatened Vertebrate Fauna in Victoria - 1998*. Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Victoria
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APPENDIX I SIGNIFICANT FLORA

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	STATUS
<i>Poa labillardieri</i> var. <i>acris</i>	Common Tussock-grass	rare in Victoria
<i>Cystopteris tasmanica</i>	Bristle-fern	rare in Victoria and Australia
<i>Desmodium variens</i>	Slender Tick-trefoil	rare in Victoria

Source: NRE database (1998b).

APPENDIX II THREATENED FAUNA

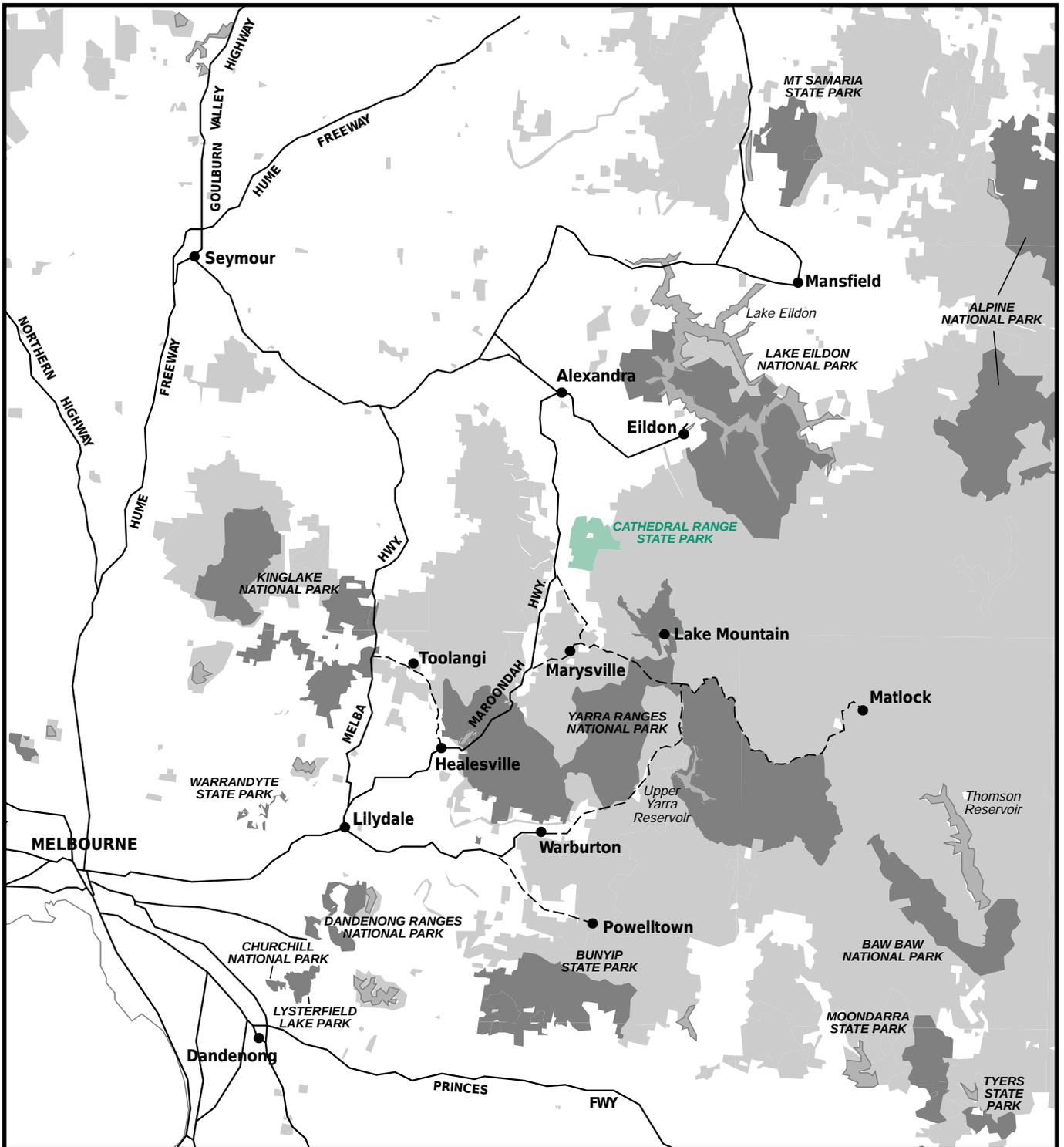
SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	STATUS
Mammal		
<i>Sminthopsis murina</i>	Common Dunnart	DD
Birds		
<i>Ninox strenua</i>	Powerful Owl	End*
<i>Tyto tenebricosa</i>	Sooty Owl	Vul*
Fish		
<i>Galaxias olidus</i>	Mountain Galaxias	DD

Source: Smith et al. (1996); NPS (1984); NRE database (1998a).

Status (NRE 1998):

DD Data deficient in Victoria
 End Endangered in Victoria
 Vul Vulnerable in Victoria

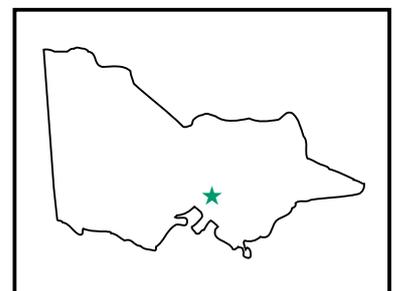
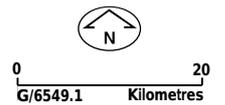
* Listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act.



CATHEDRAL RANGE STATE PARK

FIGURE 1 REGIONAL LOCALITY PLAN

- Highway
- Other road
- Parks
- Other Public Land



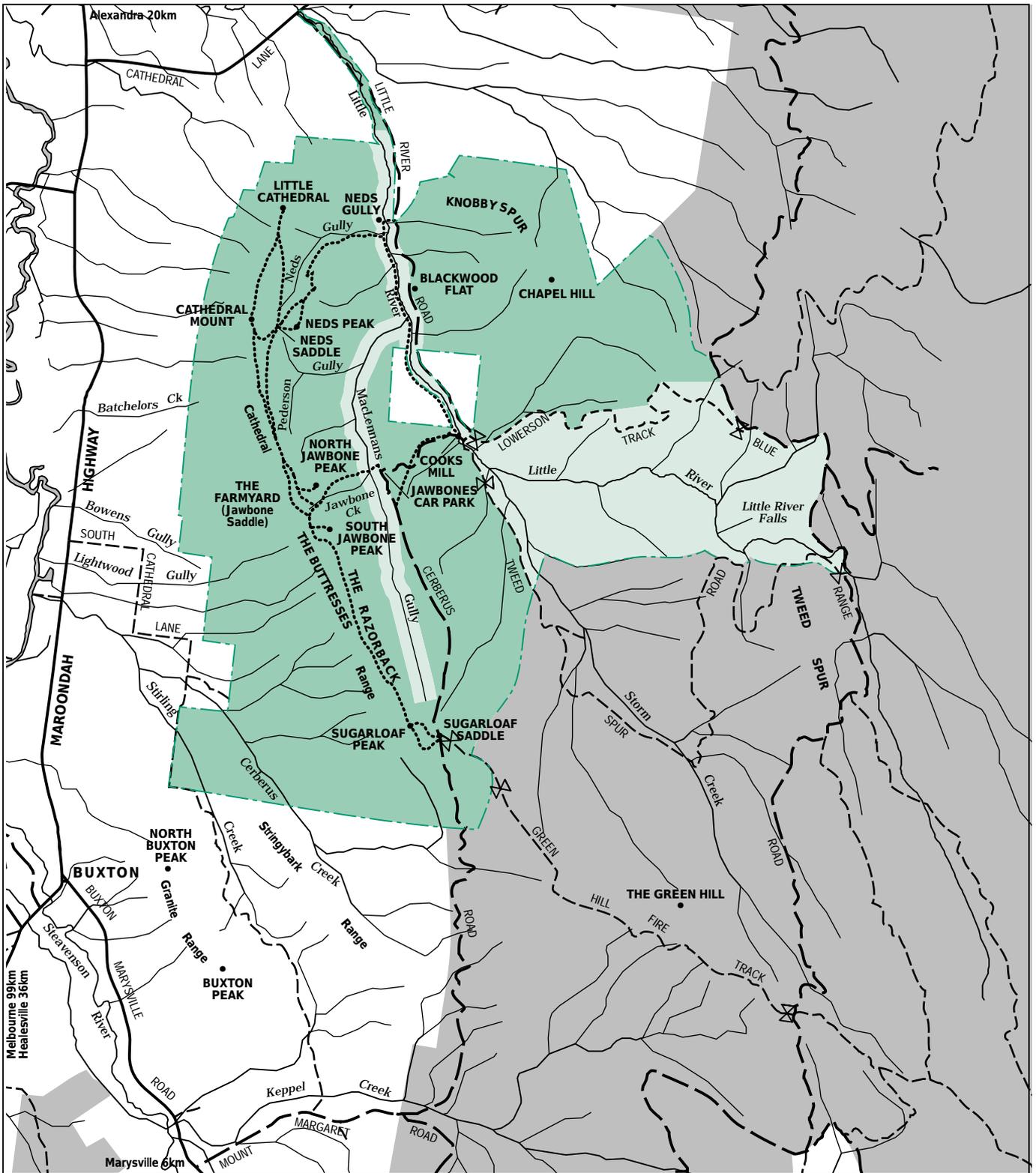
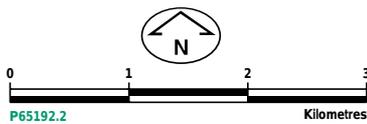


FIGURE 2
CATHEDRAL RANGE STATE PARK
MANAGEMENT ZONES

- Major sealed road
- - - Major unsealed road
- - - - Vehicle track
- - - - Management Vehicle Only track
- Walking track
- - - - State Park boundary
- State Forest
- ⊗ Gate



ZONES

- Conservation
- Conservation and Recreation

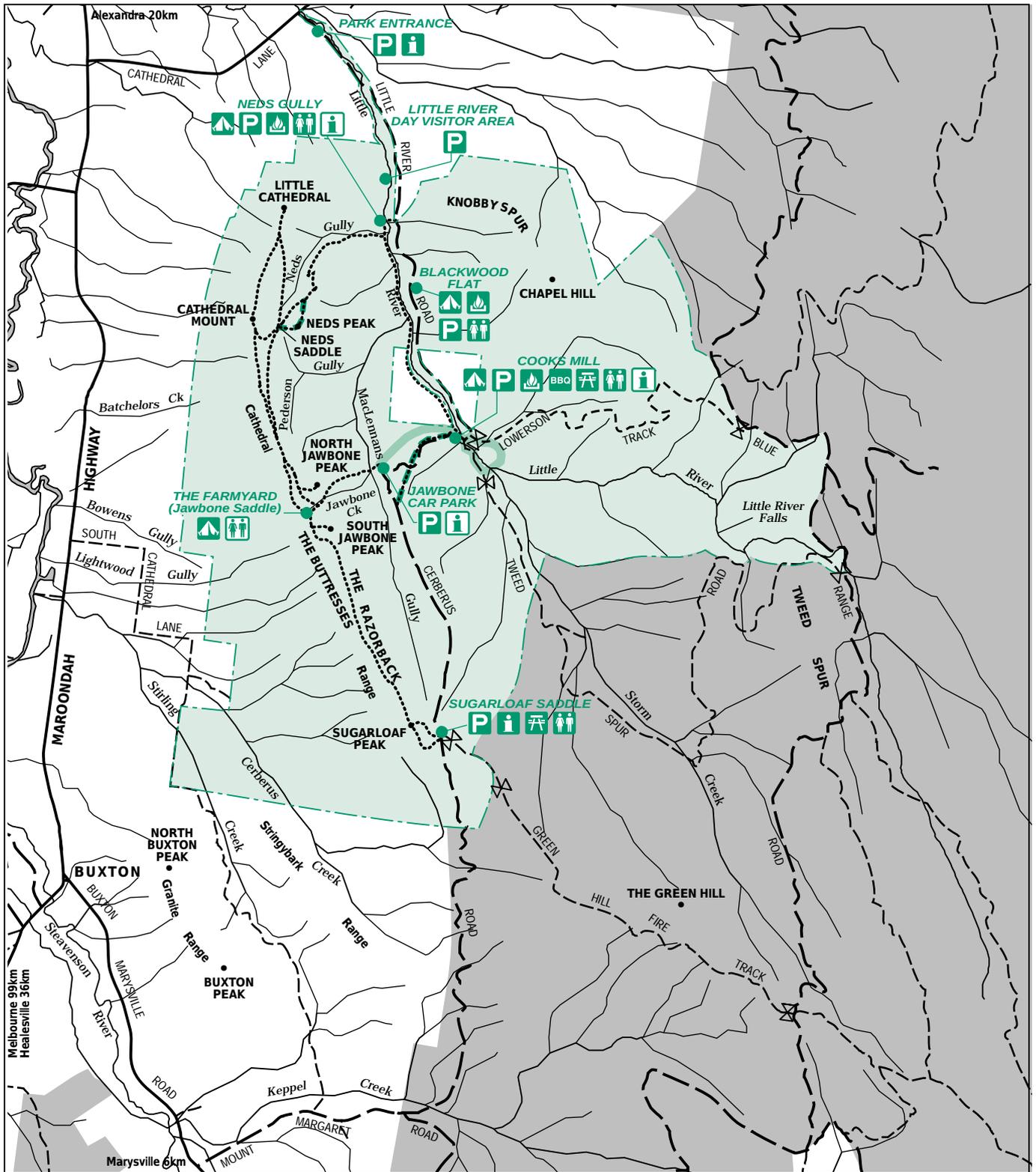


FIGURE 3
CATHEDRAL RANGE STATE PARK
VISITOR FACILITIES AND ACCESS

- Major sealed road
- - - Major unsealed road
- - - - Vehicle track
- - - - Management Vehicle Only track
- Walking track
- ▭ State Park
- ▭ State Forest
- ⊗ Gate

- EXISTING VISITOR FACILITIES**
- Camping
 - Carpark
 - Fireplace
 - Gas barbeque
 - Information board
 - Picnic table
 - Toilet

- PROPOSED VISITOR FACILITIES**
- Information board
 - Toilet

- ACCESS MANAGEMENT**
- Proposed walking track
 - Track to be closed

