



Wet Tropics Walking Strategy



October 2001





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The Wet Tropics Management Authority appreciates the support of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service in the development of this Walking Strategy, as well as the input from Sport and Recreation Queensland, the tourism industry, Rainforest Aboriginal people, local government, conservation groups, bushwalking clubs and other interested members of the public.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ARF	Australian Rainforest Foundation
ASC	Atherton Shire Council
CCC	Cairns City Council
CSC	Cardwell Shire Council
CKSC	Cook Shire Council
CPA	Cairns Port Authority
DSC	Douglas Shire Council
EPA	Environment Protection Agency
ESC	Eacham Shire Council
FNQROC	Far North Qld. Regional Organisation of Councils
HBSC	Hinchinbrook Shire Council
HSC	Herberton Shire Council
HTN	FNQ Heritage Trails Network
INF	Interim Negotiating Forum
JSC	Johnstone Shire Council
LG	Local Government
MSC	Mareeba Shire Council
NBTS	Wet Tropics Nature Based Tourism Strategy
NRM	Department of Natural Resources and Mines
PSG	Program Support Group (Rainforest CRC)
QPWS	Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
Rainforest CRC	Rainforest Cooperative Research Centre
TTNQ	Tropical Tourism North Queensland
WTMA	Wet Tropics Management Authority
WTMP	Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998
WWCC	Wujal Wujal Community Council
YCC	Yarrabah Community Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Walking Strategy proposes to create a high quality walking network where walkers can learn about and appreciate the region's natural and cultural heritage values and enjoy a range of recreational and educational experiences. The cooperative process to manage this network of diverse walking experiences will include the Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA), Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), local government land managers, Rainforest Aboriginal people, walkers, private walk managers, the tourism industry, conservation groups, researchers and other stakeholders (see Figure 1, *pviii*).

The tourism industry and local communities will benefit from a network of walks throughout the region, including the development of tourist 'icon' walks such as long distance and canopy walks. Privately managed walks, which often offer experiences unavailable in the public sector, will be included in the strategy to increase the diversity of walking experiences. Rainforest Aboriginal people will benefit from the implementation of the strategy through improved opportunities for their participation and employment in walk management and associated cultural tourism on their traditional lands.

Agreed standards, priorities and desired outcomes will improve the management of walks. These address such issues as track construction and maintenance; monitoring of environmental, social and managerial factors; and visitor needs, satisfaction, and safety. Improved asset management will enable better allocation of available resources and demonstrate any need for additional funding.

Walkers will benefit from readily available information about managed walks and improved directional and educational signs on walks. Research into visitor demand, visitor satisfaction and biophysical impacts will assist management in meeting walker needs and maintaining a healthy walk environment.

The benefits of walking

Walking provides people with the time, freedom and flexibility to interact intimately with the wide range of Wet Tropics environments. Walking plays a vital role in presenting the Wet Tropics World Heritage values. It can increase public awareness and understanding of the need for the conservation and protection of the Wet Tropics as a natural and Aboriginal cultural landscape. Walking also provides social, recreational and educational benefits for all sectors of the community and caters for diverse interests and capabilities. It is a popular activity, undertaken by the majority of visitors, and contributes significantly to providing employment and economic benefits for the Wet Tropics region.

A network of diverse walking experiences

The primary strategy to achieve these benefits is to provide a network of diverse walking experiences. A diversity of walks will allow walkers to experience a wide variety of:

- features such as waterfalls, swimming holes, vegetation and habitat types,
- educational themes such as Aboriginal culture, local history and wildlife viewing,
- localities throughout the Wet Tropics region,
- risk, adventure, remoteness, social interaction and solitude to match their abilities and expectations,
- natural, social and managerial walk settings.

Cooperative management and Aboriginal participation

The Walking Strategy operates under the broad policy framework provided by the Wet Tropics Nature Based Tourism Strategy (NBTS). The Walking Strategy sets in place a process to coordinate management of walking experiences throughout the Wet Tropics region, both inside and adjoining the World Heritage Area. This means developing cooperative working relationships between WTMA, QPWS, other government agencies, local governments, private walk managers and Aboriginal groups. Coordinated management must also include other stakeholders such as bushwalkers, the tourism industry, local communities and conservation groups. Rainforest Aboriginal people have a special interest in walking management due to the cultural significance of many walking tracks and the opportunities for employment through tourism and track construction and maintenance. Communications and actions between government agencies will be improved. A Walking Advisory Group will provide expert advice for the strategy's implementation. Community advisory groups will ensure that knowledge and participation in walking and its management is shared throughout the region.

Information, interpretation and promotion

Appropriate and accessible information about walks is vital to assist walkers to choose walks which suit their needs and abilities. It is also a valuable management tool to distribute walkers and ensure they are well prepared for safe walking. A database of managed walks will be developed to enable walkers to search a website for walk information. This will complement the numerous books, brochures and visitor centres already providing information. Educational information about the many aspects of the Wet Tropics environment and history will also be available on particular walks.

Asset and risk management

Two major concerns for land managers are the cost of construction and maintenance of tracks and the safety of walkers. There is a need for increased funding for the construction of new walks and the upgrading and maintenance of currently managed walks. This includes funds for ongoing consultation with Aboriginal groups and other stakeholders. A spectrum of different walking experiences will be provided and walkers will be informed of their varying degrees of responsibility for their own safety depending on the type of walk undertaken. A track classification system correlates different kinds of walking tracks with a range of service standards, walk settings and degrees of safety and risk management. It will act as a guide to management of individual walks. Track management plans will be developed to deal with the particular management issues for each walk.

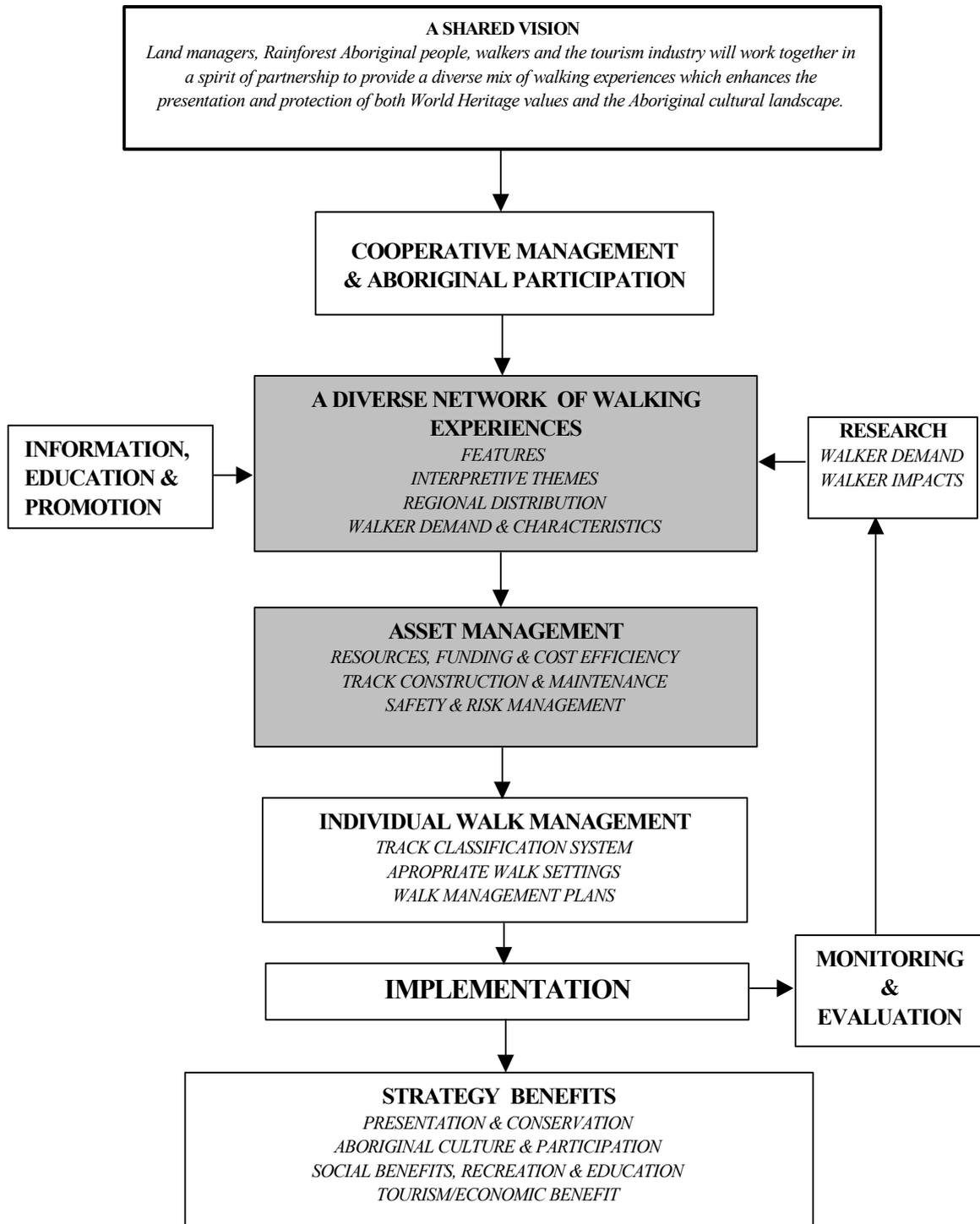
Monitoring, research and permit allocation

Walks will be regularly monitored to maintain the desired experience. This includes monitoring track conditions, vegetation damage, wildlife disturbance, visitor numbers, satisfaction and behaviour, and Aboriginal concerns. A rapid assessment monitoring process will be developed which can be easily used by local rangers or walkers. Research will be undertaken into walker use, satisfaction and demand, prevention of adverse environmental impacts, and the economic and social benefits of walking. The issuing of commercial activity permits will be coordinated and include Aboriginal consultation. Permit allocation will be used to help limit walker numbers where necessary to prevent adverse impacts occurring.

Implementation

WTMA, QPWS and local government will implement most of the strategy's actions. A Walking Advisory Group made up of representatives from stakeholder groups will provide expert advice to WTMA and land managers about the strategy's implementation as well as communicating with the public and interest groups about walking issues. Rainforest Aboriginal people will be consulted when setting priorities and making decisions about particular walks and as part of broader discussions about their country. The implementation process will be flexible and coordinate available funds, projects and management agencies to achieve the aims of the strategy. The implementation of the Walking Strategy will be reviewed annually. The strategy includes an implementation schedule and lists major priorities for the first year. Each managed and potential walk is depicted on the map and Appendix A identifies issues and actions for each walk.

FIGURE 1
THE MANAGEMENT PROCESS



A SHARED VISION

The Wet Tropics Management Authority, land managers, Rainforest Aboriginal people, walkers and the tourism industry will work together in a spirit of partnership to provide a diverse mix of walking experiences which enhances the presentation, enjoyment and protection of both World Heritage values and the Aboriginal cultural landscape.

PART A - INTRODUCTION

1 OBJECTIVES

This Walking Strategy has been developed over the past two years to guide cooperative management and the future development and maintenance of walks throughout the Wet Tropics region. It proposes to create a high quality walking network where walkers can appreciate the region's natural and cultural heritage values and enjoy a range of recreational and educational experiences.

The principal objectives of the Walking Strategy are to:

- ➔ create a coordinated management process and regional policy framework for the management of walking in and around the Wet Tropics WHA,
- ➔ enhance cooperation between WTMA, land managers, walkers, Aboriginal people and the tourism industry,
- ➔ encourage and facilitate the effective and equitable participation of rainforest Aboriginal people in the management of walking,
- ➔ provide a network of diverse walking experiences, catering for the range of interests, capabilities and needs of the local community and visitors,
- ➔ ensure all walks meet appropriate safety standards,
- ➔ provide walkers with high quality, easily accessible information about the diversity of Wet Tropics walks,
- ➔ develop educational information about the Wet Tropics region, its natural and cultural values and its management and protection,
- ➔ establish a comprehensive asset management approach to the management of walking infrastructure which specifies maintenance or upgrading requirements,
- ➔ identify the capital and recurrent financial resources needed to maintain a high quality network of walking experiences,
- ➔ protect Aboriginal and other cultural heritage and sites associated with walks,
- ➔ maximise the social and economic benefits of walking,
- ➔ minimise any adverse environmental impacts of walking,
- ➔ ensure coordinated monitoring and research into the sustainable use of walking tracks, walker satisfaction and demand for diverse walking opportunities.

2 THE BENEFITS OF WALKING IN THE WET TROPICS

2.1 Presentation

The primary goal for management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (WHA) is:

‘to provide for the implementation of Australia’s international duty for the protection, conservation, presentation, rehabilitation and transmission to future generations of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area (Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993 (Qld)).’

Walking contributes immensely to achieving the presentation component of World Heritage management. It is the most suitable and popular means for visitors and the local community to enjoy and gain an understanding of the natural and cultural values of the Wet Tropics.

Walking provides people with the time and space to interact intimately with the various Wet Tropics environments and features, from the coastal mangroves and beaches to the mountain rainforest, creeks and waterfalls. Many special features and habitats of the Wet Tropics are only accessible by walking. For some this is due to their remoteness and the rugged nature of the terrain. For other features walks have been created to insulate them from such factors as roads, cars and noise to enhance the natural quality and enjoyment of the visitor experience.

Walks offer an excellent opportunity to present the many Wet Tropics attributes through specialised interpretation and information. Walkers may also have the opportunity to learn about particular aspects and themes of an area, such as its vegetation, wildlife, history or Aboriginal culture. Walks have also been promoted recently by government as an ideal way to preserve and promote aspects of Australia’s natural and cultural heritage.

2.2 Conservation of natural values

Walking provides people with opportunities to increase their understanding and awareness of the natural significance of the Wet Tropics. This contributes to its conservation and protection by ensuring that Australians and international visitors appreciate its ecological importance. Conservation of the following natural values which contribute to the area’s World Heritage listing is especially important:

- the most complete and diverse living record of plant evolutionary stages, especially primitive flowering plants,
- a living record of the ecological and evolutionary processes which shaped the flora and fauna of Australia,
- highly significant levels of diversity, endemism and threatened species for both plants and animals,

- a wide variety of rainforest communities due to variations in rainfall, elevation, soil types and drainage,
- natural areas or features of superlative natural beauty.

The World Heritage Area conserves an extraordinary diversity of plants and animals. It contains 65% of Australia's fern species, 30% of its orchid species, 35% of its mammal species, 58% of its butterfly species, 41% of its freshwater fish species and 48% of its bird species. Many of the area's fauna and flora are endemic to the region and many are rare and endangered. Well known examples are the cassowary and mahogany glider.

Walking and associated educational material can also teach people about ways to manage the World Heritage Area and surrounds appropriately for transmission to future generations. People can see and learn about the effects of threatening processes such as weeds, feral animals, forest clearing and fragmentation and changes to fire and drainage patterns. They can also find out about rehabilitation of wildlife corridors and other ways of assisting conservation in and around the World Heritage Area.

2.3 An Aboriginal cultural landscape

Interpretation along walks also has the potential to promote the understanding and revitalisation of Rainforest Aboriginal culture. The Wet Tropics is a 'living' cultural landscape for Rainforest Aboriginal people. Many walks are part of a network of Aboriginal walking tracks, connecting places such as campsites, hunting areas and ceremonial grounds. Aboriginal people view these tracks as cultural sites, a manifestation of their connections with nature through dreaming tracks. Aboriginal people often guided the original settlers, miners and loggers. Their tracks were adopted for use by non-Aboriginal people and some are now in common use.

Aboriginal people's involvement in both tourism and the management of walking has the potential to enhance their links with country and culture and establish an improved economic base for local communities. There is increasing recognition and understanding of the native title rights and interests of traditional land owners. This necessitates a more coordinated and proactive approach to promote Aboriginal involvement in management and mitigate the potential impacts of walking activities on the Aboriginal cultural landscape.

2.4 Social, recreational and educational benefits

Walking provides enormous social benefits to the Wet Tropics region. It offers opportunities for recreation and the appreciation and enjoyment of the Wet Tropics region. If properly managed, walking is entirely compatible with the conservation and protection of World Heritage values and the Aboriginal cultural landscape.

Walks cater for a wide variety of abilities and interests. Opportunities range from short, popular boardwalks with wheelchair access to remote tracks where more intrepid walkers can experience adventure and challenge. While some walks are designed and managed to cater for large numbers of tourists, many others remain used exclusively by locals. Many walks are easily accessible for people to escape the urban environment for a few hours or a weekend and interact with a variety of natural environments. Walking is often the predominant recreational activity, but it can also provide access to other recreation activities such as swimming, river rafting and camping.

Walking offers an opportunity for outdoor education. This includes learning about the Wet Tropics environment and climate as well as the skills required for living and camping outdoors. Many schools, clubs and tourism ventures operate programs which encourage the development of knowledge and skills for bushwalking, nature studies, leadership, and personal and social development.

Walking can provide community education about historical and current activities and facets of life within of the Wet Tropics region. This includes education about Aboriginal history and stories, European exploration, mining, logging, settlement and road building. Themes such as the creation of the Wet Tropics WHA and its management can also be explained along walks.

2.5 Economic benefits

Walking is one of the primary activities associated with nature based tourism in the Wet Tropics. Some walks such as Marrdja in the Daintree or the Mossman Gorge loops are major tourist attractions in themselves, providing opportunities to experience and learn about rainforest. Some such as Barron Falls or the Cathedral Fig provide access to view popular features. Other walks such as the Goldfield Track offer recreational and adventure opportunities for both visitors and locals in the Wet Tropics region.

Walking is a significant activity and attraction for one of the region's major industries. Driml (1997) estimates that the total contribution of tourism to the Wet Tropics was over \$750 million per year. Many tourism operators rely on walks in the rainforest to satisfy the needs of their tourists. Local governments are increasingly realising the importance of walks to attract both visitors and regional residents, providing economic benefits to their shire. The construction and maintenance of walks offers significant employment opportunities within the region.

It is in the community's interest to conserve and protect the Wet Tropics natural and cultural resources in order to ensure that walking and the economic benefits which flow from it are sustainable.

3 SCOPE OF THE STRATEGY

3.1 Selection of walking opportunities

3.1.1 The Wet Tropics region

This strategy takes an holistic, regional approach to walking management and considers walking opportunities within the entire Wet Tropics bioregion. The strategy outlines ways to coordinate and link walking management across administrative and legislative jurisdictions. The attached map indicates the area covered by the strategy, incorporating the Wet Tropics WHA and adjoining lands.

3.1.2 Current walking use

Given the thick vegetation and steep terrain of much of the Wet Tropics, walking opportunities are almost always associated with existing tracks or roads. There are a multitude of these throughout the Wet Tropics, ranging from short tourist boardwalks to longer unmarked tracks. Most walking within the Wet Tropics region is known to be on short, marked and managed tracks - the vast majority being concentrated on relatively few of these marked walks. Protection through Partnerships (1997) identifies that 'about 95% of the 1.5 million annual walks in the area take place on just 25 tracks which total 40km'.

3.1.3 Managed walks

The Walking Strategy deals specifically with defined tracks and marked routes which are actively managed by state or local government agencies and private land owners within the region. The strategy also includes some popular walks where walking is promoted or permitted as an activity, but where track management is minimal. This applies to some beach walks and popular roads or logging tracks.

3.1.4 Unmanaged walks

The Walking Strategy does not include a lot of unmanaged walks which are popular with bushwalkers or may be Aboriginal cultural tracks. These are sometimes well known and used by locals and bushwalking clubs, but are presently unsuitable and unsafe for general visitors due to a lack of information or management.

3.1.5 Potential walks

Some unmanaged walks have been included in the strategy as potential walks which are intended to become managed in the future to meet walker demand. Other potential walks may become new walks to meet demand not yet catered for by existing tracks.

3.1.6 Privately managed walks

There are a variety of walks on privately owned land, often run as part of commercial operations for the public. These walks can offer different experiences to those offered by public land managers and must be taken into consideration when planning for regional diversity. They will be included in the strategy subject to an agreement with the landholder/operator that the walks be managed in a manner consistent with this strategy. This may include meeting appropriate safety, environmental and interpretation standards. In future such agreements may also be tied to accreditation standards which are currently being developed for commercial tour guides.

3.2 Aboriginal consultation

Rainforest Aboriginal people have been involved in the development of this strategy and have provided a substantial report on their expectations and concerns. Aboriginal traditional owners have been consulted regarding the inclusion of specific walking tracks on their country. There is scope for additional walks to be included as land tenure and management agreements are finalised and where Aboriginal groups develop tourism and cultural education on their country.

3.3 Policy and legislative frameworks

3.3.1 Policy framework

The Walking Strategy concentrates specifically on those issues affecting the management of walking. It lies beneath the overarching policy framework of:

- the Wet Tropics Nature Based Tourism Strategy 2000 (NBTS),
- the *Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998 (WTMP)*,
- Protection Through Partnerships - Policies for the Implementation of the Wet Tropics Management Plan 1997.

The NBTS provides broad policies and strategic directions for the future management of nature based tourism and recreation within the Wet Tropics. Many walks are directly linked to NBTS sites and the management of walks and sites will be coordinated.

Protection Through Partnerships (section 3.5) details policies and actions to achieve 'a range of walking opportunities consistent with the protection of World Heritage values'. The *Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998* also regulates a range of specific activities that have potential to adversely impact on World Heritage values or the enjoyment of these values. 'Building or maintaining a walking track or associated structure' [section 33(f)] is one of those activities. Walk settings (see Establishing desired settings, p42) must be consistent with management zones, and associated physical and social settings established under the *WTMP*. Under section 62 the Walking Strategy will be used as guideline when assessing permit applications.

The strategy outlines ways to improve coordination between the various planning regimes within the Wet Tropics to ensure that all plans involving walking are complementary and linked to a broader regional approach.

3.3.2 Legislative framework

The Walking Strategy has been developed in the context of a variety of legislation. The major legislation directly affecting walking management in the Wet Tropics includes the:

- *Wet Tropics World Heritage and Protection and Management Act (Qld) 1993,*
- *Wet Tropics Management Plan (Qld) 1998,*
- *Forestry Act (Qld) 1959,*
- *Nature Conservation Act (Qld) 1992,*
- *Native Title Act (Cwlth) 1993*
- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act (Cwlth) 1984*
- *Cultural Record (Landscapes Queensland and Queensland Estate) Act (Qld) 1987.*

Nothing in this strategy in is any way intended to pre-empt or substitute for statutory requirements. These requirements may include:

- assessment of environmental and cultural impacts,
- protection of Aboriginal and other cultural heritage and sites,
- the participation of Aboriginal people in walking management.

3.4 Demand for walking

There is little comprehensive statistical data available to measure demand for walking in the Wet Tropics or to assess a need for particular types of walks. A survey by Tourism Queensland (2000) indicated that there was a strong demand for long distance walks. Trends in other areas of Australia and local anecdotal evidence also suggest that there is an increasing demand for a variety of different types of walks. All stakeholders in the development of the strategy have recognised the growing importance of walking as a recreational and tourist asset to the local communities and economies. The strategy identifies the need for more detailed research into current and future demand for walking.

PART B - MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

1 COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING

Background

The majority of on ground management and planning of walking tracks within the Wet Tropics is undertaken by either:

- QPWS whose protected areas are primarily subject to the *Nature Conservation Act (Qld) 1992* or the *Forestry Act (Qld) 1959*,
- Local Governments who are primarily subject to the *Integrated Planning Act (Qld) 1997*,
- Private and commercial interests.

All land management within the WHA is subject to the *Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998*.

The State Government has recently committed to a transfer of the majority of state forest lands within the Wet Tropics bioregion to a tenure under the Nature Conservation Act within the next five years. In conjunction with these tenure transfers, those sections of the Department of Natural Resources which managed tenures under the Forestry Act have now been incorporated into QPWS.

While the majority of walks are managed by QPWS, local government is playing an increasingly active and important role in promoting walk development, often in conjunction with government agencies. For instance, Mareeba Shire Council is working with QPWS in the Kuranda/Barron Gorge area to develop appropriate roads, carparks, infrastructure and a network of walking tracks. Cairns City Council maintains a range of nature based walks around the city area. Several southern councils are working with the Heritage Trails Network and QPWS to develop a long distance walking network in the Tully Gorge/South Johnstone/Ravenshoe area. Several shires such as Herberton, Atherton and Mareeba have developed strategies for walks in their local regions.

Aboriginal people are seeking to increase their role in walking management through negotiations for joint management agreements, indigenous land use agreements and involvement in commercial tourism operations. The tourism industry has also begun to participate in the maintenance and monitoring of some walks.

Issues and actions

1. To date there has been no effective, coordinated, regional planning and management of walking by WTMA and government agencies. This applies to on ground management, research, monitoring, funding, information and interpretation.
 - ➔ *Coordinate and improve communication and actions between WTMA and government land managers.*

2. Implementation of the strategy will require contributions from those who are knowledgeable about walking management and environmental protection and have the time and commitment to devote to dealing with walking issues.
 - ➔ *Establish a Walking Advisory Group to provide expert advice to assist the strategy's implementation. It will consist of two bushwalkers and a representative each from WTMA, QPWS, the tourism industry, Aboriginal groups, conservation groups and FNQROC.*

3. There is a need to enhance formal and informal links between QPWS, WTMA, and others interested in walking management. Planning for walking needs community participation at a local level to deal with specific local issues and to share knowledge and interest in walking and its management.
 - ➔ *Ensure local participation in walking management through community advisory groups.*

Actions	Timetable	Lead agencies	Key partners
1. Coordinate and improve communication and actions between WTMA and government land managers	Year 1	WTMA, QPWS	Other government agencies
2. Establish Walking Advisory Group	Year 1	WTMA	QPWS, key people with walk expertise
3. Ensure local participation in walking management through community advisory groups	Year 1,2	QPWS	WTMA, local communities

2 ABORIGINAL PARTICIPATION

Background

Rainforest Aboriginal people have a special interest in walking management. Some of the current walks, especially longer ones and those leading to significant features, follow traditional Aboriginal routes which connect all facets of their life and culture. For instance, walking tracks allow Aboriginal owners to access hunting and gathering areas, visit friends and family, conduct trade, attend ceremonies and maintain kinship and marriage connections. The walks are often seen as significant cultural sites, manifesting people's connections with nature through dreaming tracks. Other shorter walks, such as interpretation loops, may not follow traditional routes, but are often on traditional Aboriginal land.

Under both Common Law and *The Native Title Act (Cwlth) 1993* Aboriginal people maintain their rights to traditional use and management of land unless these rights have been subsequently extinguished or clash with established leases. Much of the Wet Tropics and surrounding areas are potentially claimable under Native Title.

The selection of routes and the construction and upgrading of existing walking tracks and associated infrastructure are acts which may significantly affect traditional land use. Where the *Native Title Act* applies, these acts require notification of Aboriginal owners about the proposed changes. Maintenance of an existing track is considered a 'low impact future act' and does not require Aboriginal consultation. Any track or associated area registered as a cultural site is also protected under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act (Cwlth) 1984* and the *Cultural Record (Landscapes Queensland and Queensland Estate) Act (Qld) 1987*.

WTMA and QPWS must also meet their respective legislative obligations with regard to consultation with Aboriginal people. Together with Aboriginal people, they have developed protocols which require Aboriginal participation in planning, permit assessment and development activities.

WTMA and QPWS are already attempting to cater for Aboriginal aspirations and will continue to address Aboriginal interests within their resource capacity. Aboriginal involvement in walk management is currently being promoted through a variety of land use and cooperative management agreements.

Issues and actions

1. Rainforest Aboriginal people have expressed a desire to participate in all aspects of walking management and associated tourism. While many Aboriginal concerns relate to broader issues, some have specific relevance to walking management. Aboriginal owners have expressed a wish that management agencies:
 - assess the cultural heritage values of walks and the potential adverse impacts of walking (see Evaluation and impact assessment, p47),

- refine and put into action agreed protocols for consultation and negotiation about walking track routes, construction and maintenance,
 - ensure such protocols operate across management agency boundaries,
 - ensure the cultural integrity of walking tracks is maintained and degradation and desecration of specific cultural sites does not occur,
 - facilitate economic opportunities for Aboriginal communities in cultural tourism and walking track construction and maintenance,
 - involve Aboriginal people in the issuing of permits for designated activities associated with walking such as commercial operations, research and interpretation.
- ➔ *Ensure walk management incorporates the outcomes of the Interim Negotiating Forum (INF) regarding issues such as appropriate consultation, employment and training, and permits.*

2. Management agencies:

- have limited resources to consult as fully as desired by Aboriginal owners,
 - are sometimes unclear about who speaks for a given country and how to initiate consultation,
 - are often required to work within statutory time restrictions (in issuing permits for instance) and become frustrated when Aboriginal groups fail to respond to requests for timely contributions,
 - have limited resources to employ or train additional Aboriginal rangers or contract workers for ongoing track construction and maintenance,
 - find it difficult if they are required to hire and train different workers for each clan group area.
- ➔ *To address management concerns:*
- *provide cross cultural training for land managers and Aboriginal organisations and representatives, especially on consultation and permit requirements,*
 - *seek funding for Aboriginal liaison officers who can facilitate proper consultation with traditional owners and provide indigenous perspectives for planning exercises,*
 - *seek resources to train and employ Aboriginal track workers, either as full time employees, contract workers for the life of a project or workers on particular clan lands.*

Actions	Timetable	Lead agencies	Key partners
1. Incorporate the outcomes of the INF regarding issues such as appropriate consultation, employment and training, and permits.	Year 2 Ongoing	QPWS, WTMA, INF	Aboriginal groups
2. Provide cross cultural training for land managers and Aboriginal people Seek funding for Aboriginal liaison officers Seek resources to train and employ track workers	Year 2 Ongoing Ongoing	QPWS	Aboriginal groups, WTMA

3 A DIVERSITY OF WALKING EXPERIENCES

A primary management strategy to achieve the World Heritage goals of presentation and conservation is to create a diversity of nature based experiences for walkers. Such diversity should respond to walker demands and expectations as well as reflecting management goals and priorities.

The many factors which contribute to a diversity of walking experiences are outlined in Figure 2 and include:

- themes and natural features along a walk,
- local and regional walk diversity,
- walker needs, expectations and characteristics,
- the natural, social, managerial and Aboriginal cultural settings of the walk.

3.1 A diversity of walk features and educational themes

A walk's natural and cultural features and educational themes are important in creating walk diversity because they provide the primary motivation for visitor use.

Natural features of a Wet Tropics walk may include waterfalls, swimming holes, wetlands, beaches, large rainforest trees, mangroves, lakes, lookouts, craters and mountain tops.

Educational themes may relate to aspects of particular features or may underlie the entire walking experience. Some examples are Aboriginal cultural associations and stories, interpretation of rainforest vegetation, information about habitats and ecosystems, ecosystem management, local history about mining or logging, wildlife viewing and life cycles, or the geology of a gorge or waterfall.

For instance, Barron Falls Lookout provides access to an extended railway platform which provides views of the falls and gorge as a central feature. Interpretive themes include Aboriginal history, the building of the railway and the geology of the gorge.

Walk managers aim to provide a diversity of walking themes and features to satisfy demand for a wide range of experiences and maximise people's understanding and appreciation of all aspects of the Wet Tropics.

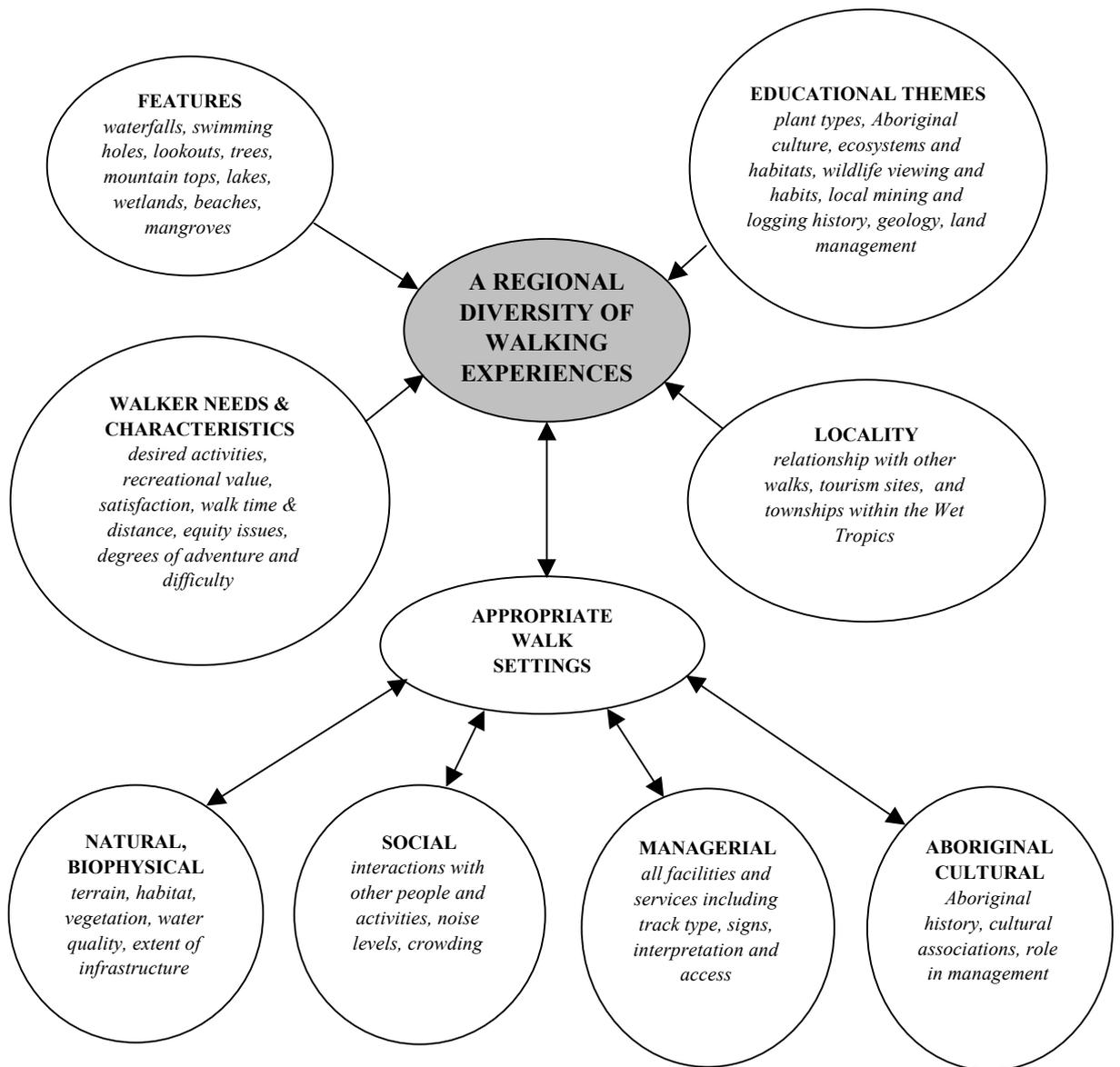
3.2 A diversity of walker characteristics, expectations and needs

Background

A diversity of walking experiences should meet the varied characteristics, abilities, expectations, and recreational and educational needs of walkers throughout the Wet Tropics.

FIGURE 2

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO A DIVERSITY OF WALKING EXPERIENCES



Issues and actions

1. Walking tracks, infrastructure and interpretation must cater for walkers with a wide range of capabilities and characteristics.
 - ➔ *In order to satisfy a diversity of walker capabilities and characteristics, ensure that walks offer a range of:*
 - *distances and times for walks.*
 - *degrees of challenge, adventure, comfort, risk, preparation and self-reliance. This may depend on track type and surface, vegetation density, walker numbers and remoteness,*
 - *opportunities for different group sizes and degrees of social interaction,*
 - *equitable opportunities for people with disabilities, including wheelchair access.*

Actions	Timetable	Lead agencies	Key partners
1. Provide walks which cater for diverse range of abilities and characteristics	Ongoing	QPWS, LG	Other walk managers

3.3 Regional diversity

Background

Presently, the majority of tourists to the Wet Tropics visit areas around Cairns and Kuranda, go north to the rainforests at Mossman and the Daintree and go west to the lakes, dams and waterfalls of the Tablelands. In order to meet existing visitor demand, funding to date has mostly been directed to build new walks and infrastructure in the Barron Falls and Daintree areas.

Other areas of the Wet Tropics remain relatively little visited. The Visitor Management Guidelines Map for Protection Through Partnerships and the NBTS have both identified the potential to create walking opportunities in other areas, particularly in the southern Wet Tropics.

Issues

1. Tourism groups, local governments, government agencies and Aboriginal groups in the Wet Tropics area wish to promote walking opportunities to support the local economy in such towns as Cardwell, Ingham and Innisfail to the south and Atherton, Herberton and Ravenshoe on the Tablelands.
 - ➔ *Develop walks in southern areas of the Wet Tropics, especially 'icon' walks such as the proposed canopy walk and long distance walks.*
2. Some tour operators want access to areas where visitors can enjoy longer, remote walks away from more crowded areas.
 - ➔ *Investigate further opportunities for commercial operators to access remote areas for walking. Initial areas for investigation include:*

- *the Kirrama Range,*
- *Paluma,*
- *Bloomfield.*

3. Variations in climate and weather conditions across the Wet Tropics offer walkers different experiences throughout the year.

➔ *Investigate opportunities to provide and promote walks which take advantage of the cooler Tablelands climate and the drier weather in the western areas of the Wet Tropics, especially during the wet season.*

Actions	Timetable	Lead agencies	Key partners
1. Develop walks in the southern Wet Tropics, especially 'icon' walks	Year 1 Ongoing	HTN, WTMA, QPWS	LG, Aboriginal groups
2. Investigate further opportunities for commercial operators to access remote areas for walking	Year 3	HTN, WTMA, QPWS	LG, Aboriginal groups
3. Investigate opportunities to provide cooler, drier walk options in the western Wet Tropics and Tablelands	Year 1	LG, WTMA, QPWS	Aboriginal groups

3.4 Diverse walks needed in the Wet Tropics

3.4.1 Long distance walks

Background

Long distance walks provide walkers with opportunities for adventure, isolation and time to explore and interact with a variety of Wet Tropics environments. They also offer opportunities for bush camping and outdoor education. For the purposes of this strategy, long distance walks are any walks which involve overnight camping or accommodation, being of more than one day's duration.

The steep terrain, hot and humid weather, biting insects and seasonal access mean that long walks and overnight camping in the Wet Tropics will have a limited market. There are few existing examples of long, managed walks within the Wet Tropics. However, the popularity of the Thorsborne Trail on Hinchinbrook Island suggests that further scope exists for long distance walks in remote areas. Overnight walks such as the Bartle Frere and the Goldfield Tracks are very well used by visitors each year, indicating a need for more short, overnight walks. Anecdotal evidence from local bushwalkers and school groups suggests that many of them use various other unmanaged tracks for overnight walks. Public consultation for the draft strategy reveals a desire from the local community for more marked routes and rough tracks to be managed for long distance walking. It is thought that such types of walks would require less infrastructure and maintenance and be relatively cheap to maintain.

The tourism industry, WTMA, QPWS, local government and walkers have all expressed support for the concept of developing more long distance walks in the Wet Tropics region. Long distance walks are viewed as important 'icon' walks (such as the Milford Track in New Zealand or the Cradle Mountain Track in Tasmania) to attract visitors to the Wet Tropics. The Far North Queensland Heritage Trails Network is currently working with several Shire Councils, WTMA and QPWS to develop a network of 'icon' long distance walks in the southern Wet Tropics consistent with the strategy. There has also been funding allocated by QPWS to establish 'Great Walks of Queensland'.

Three major categories of long distance walks have been identified (see map for potential long walks):

- overnight walks,
- longer networks of linked walks made up of accessible, short sections with camping or accommodation opportunities. The Bibbulmun Track in southern Western Australia is a successful example of this style of walk development,
- remote long distance walks of several days duration with overnight camping, similar to the popular Thorsborne Trail.

Issues and actions

1. Managed walks with overnight camping are uncommon in the Wet Tropics. Various options already exist which require only the linking or upgrading of existing tracks.

➔ *Develop overnight walks linking existing tracks, all with easy motorised access. Identified options include:*

- *Bartle Frere East and West and Russell River Circuit,*
- *Mission Beach, linking Bicton Hill, Cutten Brothers and the Kennedy Track along the coast with Lacey Creek and the Licuala Walk inland to form a loop track,*
- *Murray Falls linked to Bilyana Track, Kirrama Road, Kents Track and Sullivans Track. The Gayjil and Djuburriny Tracks to be linked when re-established.*

2. The proposed networks of linked walks offer a variety of benefits:

- they can be used for day walks, overnight camping and long distance walks,
- walkers can select the number of sections they wish to undertake according to their fitness or time available,
- walkers can select specific sections with features of special interest to them,
- there are already many existing tracks which could be linked,
- land managers can have improved access for maintenance and search and rescue requirements,
- opportunities are created to provide accommodation, transport services and other supporting infrastructure at the beginning and end of sections to assist in the development of local economies,
- commercial operators can make easy use of selected parts of the network for guided walks.

- ➔ *Develop major walk networks which offer long walks of several days or more as well as shorter day walks. Identified options include:*
 - *Cairns/Kuranda/Lamb Range/Davies Creek,*
 - *Tully Gorge/South Johnstone/Ravenshoe.*

- 3. Remote long distance walks of several days duration offer a unique opportunity to experience the Wet Tropics as a natural and cultural landscape. However, there are factors which adversely affect the development of further long distance walks:
 - they will only be used by a small percentage of visitors,
 - building and maintaining any new, extended tracks is expensive,
 - transport and access to remote trackheads is often difficult and seasonal,
 - extreme rainfall variation can mean that remote, long walks are either too wet and inaccessible or too dry for much of the year.

- ➔ *Develop remote, long distance walks with overnight camping or accommodation provided. Identified options include:*
 - *Downey Creek Walk*
 - *Blue Water to Paluma*
 - *Wallaman Falls to Abergowrie*

Actions	Timetable	Lead agencies	Key partners
1. Develop further overnight walks.	Year 1 Ongoing	QPWS, HTN, WTMA	LG, Aboriginal groups
2. Develop networks of linked walks	Year 1 Ongoing	QPWS, HTN, WTMA	LG, Aboriginal groups
3. Develop remote long distance walks	Year 2 Ongoing	QPWS, HTN, WTMA	LG, Aboriginal groups

3.4.2 Heritage walks

Background

A vast number of managed and unmanaged walks in the Wet Tropics have historical and cultural heritage significance. The ten kilometre Dalrymple Track, which has been recently reopened, provides a good example. It follows the path of an important traditional Aboriginal walking track and was developed as a transport and stock road in the 1860's. An old stone bridge remains intact from that time.

There is marked visitor interest in local history associated with the early explorers, World War Two, old mail runs and industries such as logging and mining. The Wet Tropics region is rich in examples and relics of these various eras, industries and ways of life.

The success of the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park has demonstrated the potential to develop further opportunities for visitors to gain knowledge and experience of Aboriginal culture and to meet Aboriginal guides. The Kuku Yalanji walk at Mossman Gorge, the Menmuny Museum Boardwalk at Yarrabah and the use of Aboriginal guides at the Malanda Falls rainforest walk have already proved popular with visitors and given local Aboriginal people the chance to share knowledge and history of their country with visitors.

Various Aboriginal groups have expressed interest in developing tracks on their country as guided walks. The Heritage Trails Network has recently provided funding to develop an Aboriginal cultural walk at Echo Creek. Wabunga Wayemba (Charmillon Falls) is awaiting interpretative information.

The Heritage Trails Network is currently considering funding for a network of long distance heritage walks in the southern Wet Tropics (see Long distance walks, p17, and Walk networks, p25).

Issues and actions

1. Rainforest Aboriginal people are keen to develop their own cultural tracks and increase their participation in the tourism industry (see Aboriginal participation, p12). This may involve Aboriginal people working as guides for land managers or local government agencies or conducting their own commercial operations.

➔ *Identify further opportunities for the development of Aboriginal guided walks and cultural interpretive walks.*

2. There is scope for more walks to display the many historical features in the Wet Tropics and educate people about them.

➔ *Identify walks suitable for development of educational material about local history.*

Action	Timetable	Lead agencies	Key partners
1. Identify further Aboriginal guided walks and interpretation	Year 1 Ongoing	QPWS, WTMA, Aboriginal groups	HTN, LG
2. Identify walks suitable for the development of educational material about local history	Year 1 Ongoing	QPWS, WTMA	HTN, LG

3.4.3 Canopy walks

Background

Canopy walks offer the opportunity to experience life in the rainforest canopy, learn about a unique ecosystem and obtain views of the neighbouring landscape over the canopy. They have been successfully developed as commercially viable tourist attractions in other protected areas of Australia such as the Valley of the Giants near Walpole in South Western Australia and the Tree Top Walk in Lamington National Park.

While walks such as Skyrail and the Barron Falls Lookout offer some similar experiences, canopy walks have yet to be developed within the Wet Tropics. The Heritage Trails Network provided funding to Johnstone Shire Council to evaluate the economic feasibility of a canopy walk. Discussions are now under way between HTN, Johnstone Shire Council, Aboriginal owners, QPWS and WTMA regarding construction of a canopy walk in the Palmerston region.

Issues and actions

1. Some of the issues affecting the development of canopy walks include:
 - the expense and difficulty of erecting high quality canopy walks,
 - their economic feasibility and the chance to recover costs through visitor payments,
 - their appropriate number and location of within the Wet Tropics region,
 - any potential impacts on World Heritage values,
 - the effects of developing ‘icon’ walks on surrounding areas,
 - whether such facilities should be operated by land management agencies or private commercial operators, or a combination of both,
 - the wider economic benefits of a such heavily visited facilities.
- ➔ *Investigate options to develop ‘icon’ canopy walks for the Wet Tropics. Options outside the WHA should also be considered.*

Actions	Timetable	Lead agencies	Key partners
1. Investigate options to develop ‘icon’ canopy walks for the Wet Tropics	Year 1	HTN, QPWS, WTMA, LG	Aboriginal groups, Tourism industry

3.4.4 Guided walks

Background

Guided walks are usually offered by commercial operators and private land owners. A tour guide provides an entertaining and interactive means of introducing walkers to particular themes and features of a walk. Some of those currently available include spotlighting for wildlife, botanical education, birdwatching and Aboriginal cultural walks.

Issues and actions

1. There is currently a lack of coordination between public and private walk managers regarding regional promotion and management of their walks.
 - ➔ *Include more private guided and specialised walks in the strategy.*
2. The tourism industry has indicated a preference for the development of walks which offer a comprehensive range of walking experiences. This could include a range of walk distances and environments, interpretation, ranger guided tours and adjacent picnic, toilet and carparking facilities to cater for large numbers of visitors.
 - ➔ *Identify suitable walks for the development of tourism facilities and guiding services.*

Actions	Timetable	Lead agencies	Key partners
1. Include more commercial, private walks in the strategy	Year 1	WTMA	AST, TTNQ, Tourism operators

2. Identify suitable walks for development of tourism facilities and guiding services	Year 2	WTMA QPWS	Tourism industry
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3.5 Specific walk priorities

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

3.5.1 Short walks and half day walks

Wabunga Wayemba (QPWS)

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

Echo Creek (Private)

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

Hasties Swamp (QPWS)

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

Millstream Link (QPWS)

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

Bump Track (QPWS)

The Bump Track is the only managed walk between Cairns and Port Douglas. A walk up or down the range on an old road, it offers access to Mowbray Falls and views to the coast. There is an opportunity to create an educational walk, focusing on its historical use by Aboriginal people and white settlers. It has the potential to link with other walks in the Mowbray Valley in future.

Palmerston Canopy Walk (QPWS)

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

Privately managed walks

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

3.5.2 Day walks

Dalrymple Gap Track (QPWS)

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

Mission Beach Circuit (QPWS, JSC, CSC)

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

Wooroonooran National Park walks - Palmerston section (QPWS)

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

Barron Gorge National Park network (QPWS, MSC, CCC)

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

Lambs Head (QPWS)

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

3.5.3 Overnight walks

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

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

Goldfield Track (QPWS, CCC)

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

Cedar Bay South (QPWS, Private)

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

3.5.4 Walk networks

Tully Gorge /Ravenshoe/South Johnstone network (QPWS, HSC, CSC, JSC, ESC)

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

Cairns/Kuranda/Lamb Range network (QPWS, MSC, CCC, ESC)

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

Murray Falls/Kirrama Range network (QPWS)

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

3.5.5 Remote long walks

Downey Creek Walk (QPWS)

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

Bluewater to Paluma (QPWS)

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

3.5.6 Other walk priorities

Bloomfield Catchment Area

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

Daintree and Mossman areas

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

4 INFORMATION, EDUCATION & PROMOTION

4.1 On site information and education

Background

On site visitor information may include educational signs, track direction signs and markers, walk pamphlets and registration forms, regulatory signs, ranger talks and tour guide interpretation. The type and amount of information provided will vary according to the type of walking experience being offered. For instance, heavily used, short boardwalks could be expected to offer various signs or brochures with maps, educational information and safety rules. However, information on remote, rough tracks may be restricted to directional signs. Visitor information is important as a management tool to alert walkers to:

- Wet Tropics walks with diverse features, themes and experiences,
- an understanding and appreciation of World Heritage values,
- Aboriginal culture and its connections to walking tracks and the landscape,
- safety and orientation measures,
- appropriate walker preparedness and behaviour,
- specific track information.

Issues and actions

1. There is a need for appropriate signs and information on walks because:
 - some walks are lacking any signs for identification, safety and directions,
 - it can be difficult to locate walks due to lack of local directional signs,
 - there is no consistency in the way that information about the distances and type of walk is provided. For instance, some distances are one way, some return, some are for a loop track and some for tracks which later divide,
 - information is rarely provided about the degree of difficulty and time taken to complete a walk,
 - information pamphlets and registration sheets are sometimes missing.
- ➔ *Conduct an audit of current walks and install additional signs to ensure:*
- *walker safety and ease of finding trackheads and directions,*
 - *walkers are aware of how long each walk is, the potential time taken and how it suits their abilities,*
 - *a map, diagram or wording indicates whether walks are return, loop or linked walks,*
 - *self registration forms and information are provided where appropriate.*

2. Some walkers desire a management presence on walks to supplement existing educational material and foster healthy and positive interactions between rangers and the public.
 - ➔ *Increase ranger presence on selected walks to provide additional information and education and occasional guided tours (see also Guided walks, p21, and Monitoring, p49).*

3. Educational information is desirable on some walks. Some themes are currently little represented and the quality of interpretation is inconsistent and substandard in some cases.
 - ➔ *Identify walks which need educational signs. Research walker interests and presentation techniques to maximise the benefits of interpretation.*

4. There is often no quality control for tour guides and interpretation can be inaccurate or inappropriate. An investigation into accreditation of tour operators and guides is currently being undertaken under the NBTS.
 - ➔ *Develop interpretation guidelines for an accreditation scheme for tour operators and guides to ensure the highest standard of interpretation and information.*

5. Aboriginal people are particularly concerned that presentation of cultural information be accurate and appropriate.
 - ➔ *Improve presentation of Aboriginal cultural interpretation by:*
 - *ensuring proper consultation with traditional owners regarding on site information and interpretation,*
 - *providing more Aboriginal cultural information for suitable walks,*
 - *using Aboriginal names for walks,*
 - *incorporating Aboriginal cultural information and cross cultural training into future accreditation schemes,*
 - *requiring the use of Aboriginal tour guides for some Aboriginal cultural walks.*

Actions	Timetable	Lead agencies	Key partners
1. Conduct an audit of current walks and install directional and safety signs as needed	Year 1,2,3	QPWS, LG	WTMA
2. Increase ranger presence on selected walks	Ongoing	QPWS, LG	WTMA, Aboriginal groups, Tourism industry
3. Identify walks which need educational signs	Year 2	QPWS, LG	WTMA, Aboriginal groups
4. Develop interpretation guidelines as part of an accreditation scheme	Year 3	WTMA, QPWS, tourism industry	QPWS, LG, Aboriginal groups
5. Improve presentation of Aboriginal cultural interpretation	Ongoing	QPWS	WTMA, Aboriginal groups

4.2 Off site information and promotion

Background

Off site information and promotion includes land managers' walk pamphlets and internet sites, tourism industry marketing, and several books with Wet Tropics walking information (listed below). The function of such material extends beyond marketing and incorporates management objectives to:

- promote walking as an ideal way to experience the Wet Tropics,
- provide accurate information about climate, minimal impact walking, safety, permit requirements, seasonal variations, environmental and World Heritage values, and Aboriginal cultural connections,
- provide specific information on all walks such as features and themes, degree of difficulty, track type, gradient, transport needs and walk route maps in order to enable walkers to choose an experience to suit their needs,
- enhance visitor enjoyment by allowing them to choose experiences which match their expectations and abilities,
- ensure that walkers understand the intended experience, their behaviour is appropriate and they are suitably prepared,
- better distribute visitors throughout the region,
- inform and educate walkers about the reasons for the environmental protection and management of much of the Wet Tropics walking areas.

Many of these walking issues are common to other tourism activities within the Wet Tropics. WTMA and the tourism industry are already working together to develop a Tourism Partnerships Program. It aims to enhance the quality and accuracy of tourism information and ensure that tourism marketing is consistent with visitor expectations and the goals of land managers as outlined in the NBTS.

Public information currently available about walking in the Wet Tropics includes:

- *Tropical Walking Tracks, Cairns and Kuranda* by Kym Dungey and Jane Whytlaw, 2000,
- *Tropical Walking Tracks, Atherton Tablelands* by Kym Dungey and Jane Whytlaw, 2000,
- *Tropical Walking Tracks, The Cassowary Coast* by Kym Dungey and Jane Whytlaw, 2001,
- *The Travellers Guide to North Queensland, Cairns and surrounds* by Paul Curtis, 1996,
- *50 Walks in North Queensland* by Tyrone T. Thomas, 1994,
- *Atherton Tableland - Over 150 Attractions, Places and Activities*, Karl-Heinz Seelig, 2001,
- the Wet Tropics web site - www.wettropics.gov.au,
- individual brochures and visitor information sheets available from QPWS and local governments.

It should be noted that some walks may not be actively promoted in order to minimise possible adverse social or environmental impacts. For instance, many locals have expressed a preference that Behana Gorge not be promoted for visitors so it remains a less crowded walk for local use.

Issues and actions

1. The promotion of walking in the Wet Tropics lacks cohesion and direction. There is no comprehensive, consistent source of information about walks.
 - ➔ *Collate a database of walking information relevant to visitor requirements, management strategies and Aboriginal perspectives.*
2. Walking promotion and information is currently limited in its availability, forms and languages.
 - ➔ *Provide walking information and promotional material which enables walkers to easily learn about and select appropriate walks (see Table 1, p32). Walk information should be available:*
 - *on the internet. It is envisaged that the current walks database developed during this strategy can be adapted to enable visitors to search on the web for suitable walks to meet their needs and capabilities (see Table 1, p32),*
 - *in tourism guide books. These include those used by travellers such as Lonely Planet, as well as local productions focusing on walks in the Wet Tropics,*
 - *in management and tourism brochures and information sheets,*
 - *from all management agencies and tourism information services,*
 - *in various languages as required to suit demands of international tourists.*
3. Walkers need information about walk options, track conditions, access, transport and temporary closures.
 - ➔ *Ensure that relevant and up to date walk information is provided to tourist visitor centres.*
4. The safety and enjoyment of walkers can be markedly improved by the provision of high quality pre-walk information. It is important that walkers are made aware of their increasing responsibility for their own safety when walks are managed for a more adventurous and natural experience.
 - ➔ *Provide walkers, especially on longer routes, with information covering such issues as their safety responsibilities, minimal impact walking, climate, degree of difficulty, suitable gear and footwear, required experience, current weather or track conditions, available transport to the walk and any emergency safety procedures (see Permits, p53, for links to booking systems).*

5. Inaccurate and inappropriate promotional material can lead to disappointment and misbehaviour amongst walkers whose expectations are not met. This can be a cause of a variety of adverse impacts. For instance, problems such as overcrowding, vegetation damage and vandalism can result from excessive marketing of a walk designed for small numbers of people. Aboriginal people also have concerns regarding appropriate promotion of their culture.

- ➔ *Evaluate the accuracy and suitability of walk information to ensure it:*
- *is consistent with management objectives,*
 - *encourages the appropriate use of available walking opportunities,*
 - *is culturally appropriate.*

Actions	Timetable	Lead agencies	Key partners
1. Collate a database of walking information relevant to visitor requirements, management strategies and Aboriginal perspectives	Year 1 Ongoing	WTMA	QPWS, LG, Aboriginal groups, TTNQ
2. Promote walking information through a variety of media	Year 2 Ongoing	WTMA, tourism industry	QPWS, LG, Aboriginal groups
3. Ensure that relevant and up to date walk information is provided to tourist visitor centres.	Ongoing	QPWS, LG,	Tourism industry, WTMA
4. Provide walkers with safety and minimal impact walking information where necessary	Year 1	QPWS, LG	Tourism industry
5. Evaluate accuracy and suitability of walk information	Year 1	QPWS, LG	WTMA, Rainforest CRC, Aboriginal groups

TABLE 1**PROMOTING FEATURES AND THEMES OF WALKS**

(an example of how some diverse *managed* and *potential* walks from the Tablelands can be promoted for visitors to the Wet Tropics - see Off site information and promotion, p29).

Features, themes and visitor needs	Time taken		
	Short 1 hour or less (Easy)	Medium 1 hour up to half day (Moderate)	Long full day/overnight (Strenuous)
Waterfalls	Davies Creek Falls Circuit Emerald Creek Falls Carrington Falls Tully Falls, Vision Falls Dinner Falls, Tchupala Falls Millstream Falls Little Millstream Falls Millaa Millaa Falls Wallicher Falls	Karang Garee Nandroya Falls Circuit	Windin Falls Koolmoon Creek Walk Cannabullen Creek Walk
Lakes	Lake Euramoo Pelican Point Revegetation Torpedo Bay Walk	Lake Barrine Circuit Lake Eacham	
Lookouts	Eyrie Lookout Mareeba Wetlands Mt Edith Walk	North Johnstone Lookout Bally Knob	Lambs Head
Swimming holes	Davies Creek Falls Lake Eacham	Walters Waterhole	
Wetlands	Hasties Swamp Mareeba Wetlands	Mareeba Wetlands	
Creeks	Mobo Creek Tully Weir	Downfall to Kauri Creek Breach Creek (A Road) Henrietta Creek to K Tree Kauri Creek	Koolmoon Creek Walk Cannabullen Creek Walk Cochable Causeway
Trees	Curtain Fig Tree Cathedral Fig Tree Gadgarra Red Cedar Lake Barrine (Kauri Pines) Clohesy River Fig	Yungaburra to Curtain Fig Pelican Point Revegetation	
Mountain tops and hill tops	Mt Edith Walk	Mount Haig (B Road) Mt Baldy Mt Fisher	Lambs Head Bartle Frere West
Craters	The Crater Mobo Creek Crater		
Recreation and Adventure		Bradlaugh Escape Walk Old Herberton Coach Road Cedar Camp Road Mena Creek	Lambs Head Mt Edith (C Road) Bare Hill to Copperlode Clohesy R.to Copperlode Downey Creek Bartle Frere West Koolmoon Creek Walk Cannabullen Creek Walk
Rainforest viewing & interpretation	Lake Barrine Rainforest Walk Malanda Falls Rainforest Malanda Falls Tulip Oak Wongabel Botanical Walk		Downey Creek Walk
Guided walks	Malanda Falls Rainforest		
Historical		Bradlaugh Escape walk	Stewart Head Walk
Aboriginal cultural	Malanda Falls Rainforest Bare Hill	Wabunga Wayemba	
Birdwatching	Hasties Swamp		

5 ASSET MANAGEMENT

5.1 Managing resources for walking tracks

Background

Funding for planning, construction and maintenance of walks comes mainly from state and federal government departments and programs. These funds are usually administered by state land management agencies and local governments. The Walking Strategy provides a coordinated management framework to make the best use of available resources to provide walk diversity, satisfy walker demand and meet the strategy's goals.

The creation of new walks usually relies on grants for capital works. These grants, such as the Heritage Trails Network initiatives, do not usually include money for ongoing maintenance. Funding for walk maintenance and upgrades is usually provided from recurrent budgets, or from disaster funding following appraisal of damage from wet season storms.

Resource allocation and estimation of costs are complicated by the many factors which can influence the construction and maintenance walking tracks. These include the type of construction, maintenance methods, the terrain and vegetation, associated facilities, remoteness, labour costs, consultation costs, the type and volume of use and extent of risk management.

The tourism industry has advocated the benefits of private sector involvement in the development and management of facilities and services associated with walks, especially 'icon' walks such as canopy walks and long distance walks. This could include a range of activities, from providing transport and accommodation for walks to commercial opportunities and sponsorship of walks. Non-government organisations have also expressed an interest in being involved in raising funds for walk construction and maintenance and associated activities and infrastructure. For instance, the Australian Rainforest Foundation is a not-for-profit body which aims to raise money from the corporate sector to invest in rainforest conservation and management.

Conservation groups have forewarned of their objections to private sector involvement in the development, management and sponsorship of walks in the World Heritage Area and other protected areas.

Issues and actions

1. Funding is currently being obtained for walks throughout the Wet Tropics by different agencies through a variety of funding sources as opportunities arise. Planning and development of new walks has tended to occur at a local level without any overall strategic planning framework.

- ➔ *Ensure that expenditure on walks reflects the strategy's guidelines and priorities for development and maintenance of walks.*
2. There is a strong view that presently managed walks need to be brought up to desired standards before further walks are built. However, most additional funding made available for walks continues to be tied to the development of new walks.
 - ➔ *Combine the development of new walking opportunities with bringing currently managed tracks up to desired standards. For instance, some proposed long distance walking networks, funded through the Heritage Trails Network will make use of existing managed tracks.*
 3. Land managers have poor knowledge of the current condition and value of walking infrastructure assets.
 - ➔ *Develop an asset management approach to walking infrastructure to determine:

 - *its present condition and replacement value,*
 - *costs to maintain and monitor currently managed tracks to approved standards,*
 - *the cost of construction of new tracks and infrastructure identified in the strategy.**
 4. Funding allocated for new walks is often limited to capital works, or is tied to programs such as employment and training. The significant costs of maintenance and consultation are not included.
 - ➔ *Include costs for ongoing maintenance and Aboriginal and community consultation when developing budgets for the construction of new walks.*
 5. The concept of user pays has been suggested to contribute to the cost of development and maintenance of walks, especially 'icon' walks such as a canopy walk which will cater for a large number of walkers and involve high construction costs.
 - ➔ *Investigate appropriate contributions from walkers and commercial operators through fees for particular walks such as a canopy walk and through commercial activity permits. (An investigation into permits and user pays is being undertaken at a state wide level).*
 6. There are conflicting views as to the role and scope of private sector involvement in the development and management of walks in the World Heritage Area.
 - ➔ *Investigate appropriate ways of using private funds and commercial services to enhance walk management and opportunities which do not lead to the public being alienated from a public resource.*

Actions	Timetable	Lead agencies	Key partners
1. Ensure that expenditure on walks reflects the strategy's guidelines and priorities	Ongoing	QPWS	WTMA, LG, Aboriginal groups, Tourism industry
2. Combine development of new tracks with upgrades and maintenance of existing ones	Ongoing	QPWS, LG	WTMA, HTN
3. Develop an asset management approach to walking management	Year 2 Ongoing	QPWS	WTMA
4. Include maintenance and consultation costs in walk budgets	Ongoing	QPWS	WTMA
5. Investigate options for funding contribution from walkers and commercial operators for particular walks	Year 2	QPWS	Tourism industry WTMA
6. Investigate appropriate ways of using private funds and commercial services to enhance walk management	Ongoing	WTMA, QPWS	Tourism Industry, Conservation Groups, ARF

5.2 Construction and maintenance of tracks and other infrastructure

Background

The type of track construction and its maintenance requirements are of special concern to land managers because they:

- are a primary influence on walkers' experiences,
- comprise much of the initial and ongoing costs of creating and managing a walk,
- play an important role in selection of walking routes,
- directly contribute to walker safety and risk management,
- are relevant to the nature and extent of environmental impacts.

Where walking facilities are provided, land managers have a duty to ensure such facilities are designed, constructed and maintained to appropriate service and safety standards.

This strategy sets in place regional and local priorities across management agency boundaries for construction and maintenance of walking tracks and associated infrastructure (see Implementation process, p55 and Appendix A). As part of an ongoing process, the strategy identifies:

- which walks need increased maintenance of tracks to resolve safety and environmental issues,
- which currently unmanaged walks should become actively managed,
- where new walking tracks need to be created,
- the desired standards for construction and maintenance of each track.

While land managers remain responsible for walk construction and maintenance, some have developed cooperative arrangements with tour operators and walkers to look after and monitor a few longer walks. Some land managers are also working with training and employment programs to assist in track construction and maintenance. Many members of the public have indicated the willingness of local groups to 'adopt' a track.

Issues and actions

1. Land managers are generally recognised as having insufficient resources and personnel to properly maintain the existing array of walking opportunities. Although disaster relief funding has occasionally provided resources for track work, existing operational budgets generally do not include funds for desired levels of track management (see also *Managing resources for walking tracks*, p33). This means that management agencies have been forced to shut down some tracks for environmental and safety reasons and are reluctant to spend money on construction of new walking opportunities when they are already struggling to maintain existing walks. Some walking infrastructure such as tracks, signs and interpretative infrastructure is aging and deteriorating. Tracks, especially, show signs of damage such as erosion and loss of surface materials.
 - ➔ *Bring currently managed walks up to desired standards as a highest priority.*
2. Management agencies and local governments generally build tracks to specified national standards. However, track construction and alignment in the Wet Tropics may require adjustments to these standards due to such environmental factors as extreme volumes and intensity of rainfall, high humidity, steep terrain and easily eroded soils.
 - ➔ *Adapt current standards of construction and maintenance to better deal with Wet Tropics environmental conditions. Assess and monitor previous work done on tracks to identify the most successful methods and determine suitable standards.*
3. There is sometimes conflict over how tracks are maintained. Track maintenance can harden the track and infrastructure over time, slowly changing the nature of a walk. For instance, the walking experience may be changed by the addition of steps, drainage and hardened surfaces deemed necessary to prevent erosion. The use of motorised vehicles to maintain tracks may cause them to be widened and hardened to suit management purposes.
 - ➔ *Determine an appropriate style of maintenance and development to enhance each desired walking experience, taking into consideration the cost and personnel required.*
4. Local government, tour operators, regular walkers and local volunteers have all expressed an interest in assisting with track maintenance and monitoring, especially in areas where land managers have limited resources and personnel.
 - ➔ *Reduce costs by coordinating the assistance of local governments, commercial operators, bushwalkers, volunteer groups and employment and training programs to maintain or monitor particular tracks. Provide accredited training for volunteers to enable them to work to recognised standards and work with minimal supervision.*

5. Walk planning and construction often makes use of existing roads and tracks which were constructed or aligned for logging or vehicles rather than walkers.
 - ➔ *Ensure that the design and alignment of walking tracks reflects the desired experience and showcases appropriate features and themes rather than merely following pre-existing roads and tracks.*

6. Some walkers object to walking on old roads as a part of their remote 'wilderness' experience.
 - ➔ *Convert old roads which are managed as walks to narrower tracks and promote regrowth to rehabilitate the remainder of the road where practicable and affordable. (The option of developing a separate walking track should be considered where the road is already badly degraded).*

7. Campsites can be especially susceptible to adverse impacts from walkers. Issues such as litter, toilet waste, water quality, overcrowding, erosion, vegetation damage and wildlife interaction can be concentrated at campsites. Campsites on longer walks such as the summit of Bartle Frere are often remote and difficult to maintain.
 - ➔ *Design campsites and provide facilities such as toilets or shelters where necessary to minimise maintenance and adverse impacts. Ensure walk plans deal specifically with issues at particular campsites (see Developing walk management plans, p43).*

Actions	Timetable	Lead agencies	Key partners
1. Bring currently managed walks up to desired standards as a highest priority	Ongoing	QPWS, LG	WTMA
2. Adapt current standards of construction and maintenance to better deal with Wet Tropics environmental conditions	Year 1	QPWS	WTMA
3. Determine an appropriate style of maintenance and development to enhance each desired walking experience	Year 2 Ongoing	QPWS, LG	WTMA
4. Use local government, volunteers, employment programs and walkers to assist in walk maintenance	Ongoing	QPWS	LG, Walkers, Tourism industry, Volunteers
5. Ensure that the design and alignment of walking tracks reflects the desired experience and shows off appropriate features and themes	Ongoing	QPWS, LG, HTN	WTMA, Tourism industry
6. Convert old roads which are managed as walks to narrower tracks and promote regrowth to rehabilitate the remainder of the road where practicable and affordable	Ongoing	QPWS, LG	WTMA
7. Design campsites and provide facilities where necessary to minimise maintenance and adverse impacts	Ongoing	QPWS, HTN	WTMA

6 MANAGING INDIVIDUAL WALKS

The three stages for managing individual walks are outlined below:

1. Classify the type of walk,
2. Establish desired settings,
3. Develop a walk management plan.

6.1 Classifying track types, service standards and safety

Background

Similar to those developed in other areas of Australia and New Zealand, this strategy establishes a track classification system (see Table 2, p40) which outlines a spectrum of track types which correlate with:

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

The track classification system will be used by walk managers as a basis for management of individual walks until walk management plans are completed (see Developing walk management plans, p43). It will help managers correlate the desired walking experience with appropriate track conditions and service standards and to answer questions such as:

- what is an appropriate track construction and surface?
- what is an appropriate width and style of maintenance for a track?
- what signs and infrastructure are necessary and appropriate?
- how often should a track be monitored?

A spectrum of recreational and adventurous walking opportunities with attendant challenges and risk factors will be created to meet walker demand. Land managers and walkers will continue to share responsibility for safety. However, these responsibilities will vary with different types of walks. For instance, walkers must take a greater level of responsibility for their own safety in remote areas than on a popular boardwalk. It is extremely important that walkers be informed and accept responsibility for the risks associated with particular walks.

The track classification system can only be a guide to walk management and service and safety standards. The type of track can vary markedly along a particular walk and still cater for a particular experience or purpose. The track may change due to:

- differences in habitat such as swamps or steep hillsides,
- environmental factors such erosion,
- managerial factors such as the need for lookouts or information points along a track,
- historical factors such as the presence of pre-existing roadways and tracks which become, or are incorporated into, new walks,

- safety needs on particular sections or sites along a track.
- Other aspects of the track classification system such as facilities or signs may also vary enormously along a walk.

Issues and actions

1. Walk managers need to know the standards which should be applied in building or maintaining walking tracks so that they are safe and provide the desired walking experience.
 - ➔ *Ensure rangers and other land managers are informed about the use of the track classification system.*
2. Walk planning can sometimes be overly influenced by fear of litigation regarding safety. This can lead to undesirable hardening of tracks, excessive signs and infrastructure, and incremental changes in walk settings and experience.
 - ➔ *Use the track classification system as a guide to inform and justify decisions about appropriate risk management for walks, rather than trying to eliminate risk altogether.*
3. Some walks are on beaches or designated roads (management or presentation roads, for instance) where the type of track does not relate to the desired walk experience.
 - ➔ *Manage walks on roads and beaches according to the desired experience rather than according to a track class. This can be done through use of settings and walk management plans (as detailed in following sections).*

Actions	Timetable	Lead agencies	Key partners
1. Ensure rangers and other land managers are informed about the use of the track classification system	Year 1 Ongoing	QPWS, LG	WTMA
2. Use the track classification system as a guide for appropriate risk management	Ongoing	QPWS, LG	WTMA, Tourism industry
3. Manage beach and road walks according to the desired walk experience	Ongoing	QPWS, LG	WTMA

TABLE 2
TRACK CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

Track classification & service standards	Pathway 1	Pathway 2	Graded Track	Rough Track	Marked Route
Track formation & surface	Broad hard surfaced track suitable for wheelchair use or people with little mobility.	Generally a modified hardened surface, well maintained.	Generally a modified surface, sections may be hardened. Kept mostly clear of intrusions and obstacles.	Generally distinct, but without hardened surfaces or major modifications to the ground. Encounter with fallen debris and other obstacles likely.	Limited modification to the natural environment, therefore limited clearance along track. Encounter with fallen debris and other obstacles likely.
Track width (approx.)	1200mm or wider	1200mm or wider	900 to 1200mm.	500mm to 900mm.	Approximately 500mm.
Gradient/steps	Flat, steps allowed only with alternative ramp.	Generally flat, some use of steps.	May exceed 1:10 for short sections, steps may be common.	May be steep, steps provided only for environmental and maintenance considerations.	May encounter steep natural gradients and unmodified surfaces.
Signs	Signs for management and education may be used frequently.	Signs for management and education may be used frequently.	Signs and track markers may be used for direction. Limited education signs.	Minimal signs for track marking, management and directional purposes.	Limited signs, mostly for management purposes.
Infrastructure	Facilities along the track may include lookout platforms, seats and rails.	Facilities along the track may include lookout platforms, seats and rails.	Facilities generally not provided except for specific safety and environmental considerations or to maximise scenic views.	Facilities generally not provided except for specific safety and environmental considerations or to maximise scenic views.	Facilities generally not provided.
Campsites	Any campsites will be designated and have toilet facilities.	Any campsites will be designated and have toilet facilities.	Any campsites will be designated and have toilet facilities.	Campsites may be designated and facilities provided where needed due to environmental issues or high walker numbers.	Campsites may be designated and facilities provided where needed due to environmental issues or high walker numbers.
Vegetation clearance	Vegetation should be kept clear of total track width and above head height. Fallen vegetation to be cleared as soon as possible.	Vegetation should be kept clear of total track width and above head height. Fallen vegetation to be cleared as soon as possible.	Vegetation should be cleared for total track width. Fallen vegetation to be cleared regularly.	Vegetation should be cleared for track width. Clear track only after inspections or major weather disturbances.	Vegetation should be cleared to enable markers to be visible. Clear track only after inspections or major weather disturbances.
Desired monitoring frequency	Regular inspections.	Regular inspections.	Regular inspections.	Infrequent inspections.	Infrequent inspections.
Safety & risk management	Safety standards to suit all members of the public.	Safety standards to suit all able bodied members of the public.	Safety standards to suit fit and healthy members of the public.	Safety standards to suit fit and experienced walkers.	Safety standards to suit very fit and experienced walkers.
Maintenance style	Machinery and vehicles may be used for maintenance and patrol.	Machinery and small vehicles may be used for maintenance and patrol.	Machinery and small vehicles may be used for maintenance and patrol.	Foot patrols and hand tool maintenance.	Foot patrols and hand tool maintenance.

TABLE 2
TRACK CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

Track classification & settings & sites	Pathway 1	Pathway 2	Graded Track	Rough Track	Marked Route
Biophysical (natural) setting	Natural setting, always close to roads, carparks and facilities.	Natural setting, generally close to roads, carparks and facilities.	Natural setting, usually remote from road.	Highly natural setting remote from road.	Highly natural setting remote from road.
Social setting	Large numbers of visitors can expect frequent encounters with others. Possibly suitable for other activities such as cycling.	Large numbers of visitors can expect frequent encounters with others. Possibly suitable for other activities such as cycling.	Users can expect regular encounters with others. Not suitable for other activities.	Users can expect opportunities for solitude with some encounters with others. Not suitable for other activities.	Users can expect frequent opportunities for solitude with few encounters from others. Not suitable for other activities.
Managerial setting	High level of facilities, track infrastructure, interpretation, with ranger presence sometimes. Well signposted and promoted.	High level of facilities, track infrastructure, interpretation, with ranger presence sometimes. Well signposted and promoted.	Track infrastructure at appropriate sites for interpretation or safety reasons. Well signposted and promoted.	Track infrastructure only at appropriate sites for safety such as bridges or lookouts, for example. Little signposted. Promotion to include safety and minimal impact walking information.	Little if any track infrastructure apart from markers. Little signposted. Promotion to include safety and minimal impact walking information.
NBTS site categories	Generally associated with Icon 1,2 and Recreation 2 sites.	Generally associated with Icon 1,2 and Recreation 2 sites.	Generally associated with Icon 1 and Recreation 1 sites.	Generally associated with Core Natural 1,2 and Recreation 1 sites.	Generally associated with Core Natural 1 sites.
Distance	Usually less than 2km.	Usually less than 2km.	Usually 1km to 5km.	Usually longer than 5km.	Usually longer than 5km.
Examples	Marrdja Boardwalk Cathedral Fig Tree Dubuji Boardwalk	Jindalba Boardwalk Licuala Rainforest Circuit Malanda Falls Rainforest Walk	Nandroya Falls Circuit Babinda Boulders - Devils Pool Walk Wallaman Falls Rock Pools Track	Smiths Track Lambs Head Dalrymple Gap Track	Bartle Frere East and West Bluff Track Sullivans Track

6.2 Establishing desired settings

Background

The different track classes roughly correlate to a range of natural, social and managerial settings (see Table 2, p40). These settings and the many factors which contribute to them provide land managers with a more detailed understanding of the walking experience. QPWS and WTMA have agreed to adopt a common approach for establishing landscape settings on a state wide basis. The Walking Strategy has also included an Aboriginal setting to provide Aboriginal perspectives on walk management and to complement the conservation and social values of the land management settings. The settings are briefly summarised below:

Biophysical or natural setting

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

Social setting

This includes factors affecting a walkers social experience such as remoteness or crowding, interactions with other people or activities and noise levels.

Managerial setting

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

Aboriginal cultural setting

This includes the Aboriginal history, use, perceptions, cultural associations and stories about a walk. It would also link with some managerial settings when considering interpretation of Aboriginal culture and provision of Aboriginal guides and talks.

Issues and actions

1. The settings approach has recently been adopted and few walks have been assessed as yet.

→ *Audit present settings.*
2. Walk diversity and high walker satisfaction levels in the Wet Tropics depend on maintaining a wide range of settings to enhance walkers' experiences and meet walker demand and management priorities.

➔ *Map the desired diversity of walking experiences and their different natural, social, managerial and Aboriginal settings.*

3. Without careful management, aspects of a walk's settings can change incrementally over time until they no longer reflect the desired experience of the walk. Walkers who have previously enjoyed a walk may now find it unattractive.

➔ *Actively monitor settings to maintain the desired walking experience (see Monitoring, p49, for details).*

Actions	Timetable	Lead agencies	Key partners
1. Audit present settings	Years 1,2,3	QPWS, LG,	Aboriginal groups, WTMA
2. Establish and map the desired landscape settings and diversity of walking experiences	Years 1,2,3	QPWS, LG	Aboriginal groups, WTMA
3. Actively monitor settings to maintain desired walking experience	Ongoing	QPWS, LG	Aboriginal groups, WTMA

6.3 Developing walk management plans

Background

The majority of recently developed and upgraded walks throughout the Wet Tropics have been elaborately planned on an individual basis. For instance, the development and upgrading of three boardwalks in the Daintree followed thorough consultation and environmental assessment. A detailed walk development plan has been produced for Barron Gorge National Park. Herberton Shire Council has produced extensive plans and procedures for developing three proposed walks from the Herberton township. However, many walks have evolved from old tracks and have become commonly used and managed without any individual planning.

Issues and actions

1. As described above, the track classification system will guide the management of particular walks. However, effective walk management still needs to be planned on an individual basis to cater for variation along each track and to incorporate all important factors which contribute to the overall walking experience.

➔ *Develop walk management plans for individual walks according to priorities (see Appendix A). Plans could include:*

Visitor focused information

- *desired walk experience,*
- *walk type (eg loop, one way), length and degree of difficulty of walk,*
- *information on features, themes and vegetation types,*
- *off site walk information such as guide books, web sites and brochures,*
- *on site walk information at the trackhead and along the walk,*
- *links to other walks,*
- *other track uses such as mountain bikes or cars,*
- *required walker preparation and fitness,*
- *promotional information supplied to prospective walkers,*
- *on and off site facilities and services,*
- *access and transport to the walk,*
- *regulatory requirements such as permits for access.*

Management focused information

- *track classifications for the walk (and variation between sections of the walk),*
- *appropriate biophysical, social and managerial settings,*
- *soil type,*
- *type of track construction and surface,*
- *width and length,*
- *walker numbers and any limits to numbers,*
- *documentation of the history of maintenance and construction work,*
- *maintenance costs, needs, methods, style, and schedule,*
- *priority and cost of proposed works,*
- *types of signs and information available,*
- *ranger presence,*
- *interpretation needs,*
- *infrastructure, campsites and associated site facilities,*
- *conservation, protection and rehabilitation of the track and environs,*
- *threatening processes,*
- *safety management,*
- *multiple use,*
- *monitoring and research information and needs.*

Aboriginal information

- *traditional owners,*
- *native title representative body,*
- *participation in management and management agreements,*
- *history and information for the track,*
- *protection of cultural heritage sites and values,*
- *employment opportunities.*

Actions	Timetable	Lead agencies	Key partners
1. Develop individual walk management plans	Year 1, 2, 3	WTMA, QPWS, LG	Aboriginal groups tourism industry

6.4 Some special issues for walk management plans

Whilst most issues covered in walk management plans have been addressed elsewhere in the strategy, some still require special mention.

6.4.1 Multiple use tracks

Background

Generally walking tracks are not used for other types of recreation. However, sometimes walk management plans must deal with tracks used as a road or already used for purposes other than walking. For example, the Clohesy River Road is managed as a presentation restricted road and is used by tour operator vehicles and mountain bikes. The Bump Track is a gazetted road and can be used by horses and bikes. Wide, stable tracks such as old logging roads can often be used for such different activities without any conflict.

Issues and actions

1. Multiple use of tracks and roads by mountain bikes, horses, trail bikes and four wheel drives may cause conflict with walkers.
 - ➔ *Minimise multiple use conflicts on particular walks by:*
 - *ensuring all track users are alerted to other potential activities,*
 - *allowing multiple use of walks only where the track can safely cater for different activities,*
 - *detering unauthorised use of tracks through signs and track management.*
2. Unauthorised use of several designated walking tracks by mountain bikers, especially in the Cairns region, has caused track damage in some locations.
 - ➔ *Identify specific tracks for mountain bike use. (A review of mountain bike use in the Cairns region is currently under way).*

Actions	Timetable	Lead agencies	Key partners
1. Minimise multiple use conflicts with walkers	Ongoing	QPWS, WTMA	Key activity groups
2. Identify specific tracks for mountain bike use.	Ongoing	QPWS	Cairns Mountain Bike Strategy

6.4.2 Access to walks

Background

Access to walks is a vital component of walk management for a variety of reasons because:

- some walks may be closed for some or all of the wet season because access is dangerous or impossible,
- some popular walks are only accessible through private roads and lands,
- different standards and lengths of access roads can influence the number of people who visit a particular walk,
- the availability of public or commercial transport to walks will influence the numbers and types of visitors who can go walking,
- proximity to major highways and traffic can adversely affect the natural and social qualities of a walk,
- trackheads and associated facilities close to busy, major roads may endanger walker safety,
- carpark capacity at trackheads can limit walker numbers.

Issues and actions

1. Some potentially popular walks are currently unmanaged and little used because access through private lands is limited or impossible.
 - ➔ *WTMA and land managers should negotiate agreements with landowners regarding access through private lands to potentially popular walks.*
2. There is a need to consider vehicle access to trackheads in the management of walks.
 - ➔ *WTMA and land managers will consult with the Department of Main Roads and local governments to ensure that:*
 - *access to walks is in a mutually agreed location,*
 - *where practicable, access to walks is from minor roads with less traffic travelling at lower speeds than on major roads,*
 - *walker safety and convenience is maximised,*
 - *the standard of access roads is suitable for the type of walk,*
 - *road signs to the walk are sufficient,*
 - *any car parks and associated facilities are properly designed.*
3. Visitors need to know the condition and availability of road access and transport options to walks.
 - ➔ *Walk information should describe road access, available transport and how to obtain up to date information on road conditions or closures (see Information, education and promotion, p27).*

Actions	Timetable	Lead agencies	Key partners
1. WTMA and land managers will negotiate agreements with landowners regarding access to popular walks through private land.	Ongoing	WTMA, QPWS	Private Landowners, LG
2. WTMA and land managers will consult with Dept Main Roads and local governments about road access to trackheads.	Ongoing	QPWS, WTMA	DMR, LG,
3. Walk information should describe road access, available transport and how to obtain current information	Ongoing	QPWS	DMR, LG, WTMA, Tourism Industry

6.4.3 Evaluation and impact assessment

Background

It is important that the natural and cultural heritage values of individual walks be identified. As described in earlier chapters, these may include World Heritage values, other natural attributes, Aboriginal cultural and historical values and non-Aboriginal heritage values. An assessment of such values is vital for their protection, and is often required under legislation (see Policy and legislative frameworks, p8). For instance, the construction or upgrading of a walk requires environmental and cultural assessment before it can proceed. The level of assessment required will vary with the type of walk and its construction. Assessment of natural and cultural values is also important for effective interpretation and monitoring (see Information, education and promotion, p 27, and Monitoring, p49).

Issues and actions

1. Some currently managed walks have not been adequately assessed for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage values. Managers may be unaware that adverse impacts are occurring.
 - ➔ *Assess walks where there is concern about adverse impacts on their cultural values.*
2. Many managed walks have evolved without any assessment of their natural values.
 - ➔ *Assess walks where there is concern about adverse impacts on their natural values.*

Actions	Timetable	Lead agencies	Key partners
1. Assess walks where there is concern about adverse impacts on their cultural values	Years 1,2,3	WTMA, QPWS	Aboriginal groups, EPA
2. Assess walks where there is concern about adverse impacts on their natural values	Years 1,2,3	WTMA, QPWS	Aboriginal groups, EPA

6.4.4 Safety

Background

As discussed above, walker safety is a major concern for land managers when designing, constructing and maintaining walks. Especially for longer walks, safety can be maximised by providing walkers with appropriate information about weather conditions, track length and degree of difficulty, suitable clothing and equipment and required experience (see Off site information and promotion, p29). Permits and booking systems have been suggested as mechanisms to improve safety on some more remote walks (see Permits, p53).

Issues and actions

1. There are a multitude of other safety issues which may need to be addressed in the individual management plans for long walks. These include search and rescue costs and responsibilities, carrying of EPIRBs or mobile phones, walking solo, navigation skills, walker registration, return notification, bushfires and carrying of first aid kits.

➔ *Identify and address particular safety issues for individual long walks*

Actions	Timetable	Lead agencies	Key partners
1. Identify and address particular safety issues for individual long walks	Year 1	QPWS, LG	WTMA, tourism industry

7 MONITORING

Background

Monitoring walks means regularly assessing the general condition of walks to maintain the desired walking experience. This may include monitoring to:

- maintain appropriate walk settings,
- measure and minimise environmental and social impacts,
- ensure track conditions remain safe,
- manage for appropriate behaviour,
- determine walker satisfaction and whether the walking experience provided equates with their needs, expectations and abilities,
- assess vegetation damage and wildlife disturbance,
- identify Aboriginal people's perspectives on walk management,
- discover demand for experiences which are unavailable,
- set permit conditions and limits to walker numbers.

Monitoring of track conditions also needs to include specific detail such as erosion sites, rotting wooden infrastructure, drainage problems, logs across the track and graffiti.

Issues and actions

1. While monitoring programs focus primarily on tracks and infrastructure with regard to safety and environmental degradation, monitoring the walkers' experience as a whole is rarely undertaken.
 - ➔ *Train rangers and other walk managers to monitor desired settings. This will include monitoring of visitor perceptions and behaviour (see Research, p51), as well as the condition of tracks and infrastructure.*
2. Monitoring is often sporadic and inconsistent. Many walkers have expressed concern at the lack of ranger presence along walks to monitor conditions and behaviour.
 - ➔ *Regularly monitor walks consistent with their risk management and visitor use for each walk (see Table 2, p40). This will often mean an increased ranger presence along walks (see also Information, education and promotion, p27).*
3. If regular walk monitoring is to provide useful and timely feedback, it should be straight forward, easy to implement and cost efficient.
 - ➔ *Develop rapid assessment monitoring processes suitable for use by local rangers or walkers.*

4. The desired natural, social and managerial settings of the walking experience can be dramatically altered by excessive visitor numbers. Too many walkers can cause overcrowding or misbehaviour. Managers may be forced to respond by hardening tracks and adding infrastructure and signs.

➔ *Monitor walker numbers and behaviour to establish and maintain acceptable limits to walker numbers(See also Research, p51).*

5. Current monitoring programs often fail to incorporate Aboriginal cultural interests, perspectives and concerns.

➔ *Ensure the participation of Aboriginal people in monitoring of Aboriginal cultural interests and concerns regarding walking.*

6. It is more difficult and expensive to monitor track conditions and walker behaviour on remote tracks.

➔ *Use walkers, especially commercial tour operators, to assist in monitoring programs of track conditions and walker characteristics, satisfaction and needs. This can be achieved by:*

- *asking walkers to fill out survey sheets after walks,*
- *setting relevant permit conditions and agreements for use of walks.*

Actions	Timetable	Lead agencies	Key partners
1. Train rangers and other walk managers to monitor walk settings to maintain the desired walk experience	Year 1 Ongoing	QPWS	
2. Monitor at regular intervals and increase ranger presence consistent with risk management	Ongoing	QPWS	
3. Develop rapid assessment monitoring processes	Year 1 Ongoing	QPWS	Rainforest CRC, tourism industry
4. Monitor visitor numbers and behaviour on walks to establish and maintain acceptable limits to walker numbers	Year 3	QPWS	Rainforest CRC, tourism industry, WTMA
5. Ensure Aboriginal participation in monitoring	Ongoing	QPWS	Rainforest CRC, tourism industry, WTMA
6. Use walkers to assist in monitoring programs	Ongoing	QPWS	walkers, tourism industry

8 RESEARCH

Background

There is little available scientific research which has focused on walking in the Wet Tropics. The Rainforest Cooperative Research Centre has undertaken a number of studies into visitor use, impacts and perceptions in the region. WTMA has recently prepared a Wet Tropics Research and Information Needs report which identifies tourism and visitor management as one of the key areas where research is required.

WTMA is currently working with the Rainforest CRC to develop a visitor management system based on a combination of comprehensive monitoring at selected sites and walks combined with regional visitor survey information. Walking tracks have been included in studies investigating the effects on rainforest ecosystems of fragmentation and corridors such as roads and powerlines. There are also several studies under way on the economic benefits and environmental impacts of long distance walks.

Other research into wildlife, weeds, feral animals and pathogens can also have implications for walking management. For instance, studies into the nature, extent and spread of *Phytophthora cinnamoni* (cinnamon fungus) - the cause of rainforest dieback in the Koombooloomba and Kirrama areas - have indicated that walkers may transport the fungus which lives in soil. Walking can also spread weeds and may adversely affect wildlife.

Issues and actions

1. The results of research into walker impacts, demand and satisfaction should be applicable to on ground monitoring and provide timely and useful information.
 - ➔ *Coordinate available research funds, particularly those from WTMA and land managers, to ensure research specifically addresses the needs of walk managers.*
2. There is little relevant information or research into walkers' experiences, use of tracks, behaviour, demand and satisfaction levels in the Wet Tropics region. This will be useful when assessing priorities for managing current walks or creating new ones.
 - ➔ *Undertake research on walker demand and satisfaction to provide information regarding:*
 - *current use of available walking tracks,*
 - *existing and projected demand for different walking experiences,*
 - *walker numbers, characteristics, preferences and satisfaction levels,*
 - *links between walker behaviour and satisfaction,*
 - *information requirements of walkers,*
 - *the role of walk promotion in determining visitor expectations and needs,*

- *effective and cost efficient presentation techniques,*
 - *specific Aboriginal and local community needs and aspirations regarding walking.*
3. There is a need to identify potential adverse impacts on walks. The following concerns have been identified:
- erosion and other track damage,
 - protection of cultural heritage,
 - possible spread of *Phytophthora cinnamoni* or other pathogens,
 - damage to vegetation including direct removal of plants,
 - invasion by weeds and feral animals (especially pigs),
 - overcrowding and misbehaviour,
 - conflicts with other users such as four wheel drivers and mountain bikers,
 - conflict between walkers and native animals such as cassowaries.
- ➔ *Undertake research to measure and monitor walker impacts and their relationship to walker behaviour, including:*
- *minimal impact walking procedures in the Wet Tropics environment,*
 - *methods of measuring walker impacts,*
 - *thresholds (or limits of acceptable change) to enable management to address impacts before irreparable damage is done,*
 - *monitoring procedures which are practical, user friendly and cost efficient,*
 - *acceptable limits to walker numbers where necessary.*
4. There is little information about the economic benefits of walking as an activity in the Wet Tropics or the viability of construction and operation of new walks, especially 'icon' walks such as canopy walks and long distance walks.
- ➔ *Undertake research into the economic and social benefits of:*
- *walking as an activity in Wet Tropics,*
 - *the development of 'icon' sites such as the canopy and long distance walks,*
 - *the role of walks in the development of local tourism,*
 - *the potential for Aboriginal cultural walks and tourism,*
 - *walkers' willingness to pay for particular walks and services.*

Actions	Timetable	Lead agencies	Key partners
1. Coordinate available research funds, particularly those from WTMA and land managers, to ensure research specifically addresses the needs of walk managers.	Ongoing	Rainforest CRC, WTMA	PSGs, QPWS
2. Undertake research on walker demand and satisfaction	Year 1, 2 Ongoing	Rainforest CRC, WTMA	PSGs, QPWS
3. Undertake research to measure and monitor walker impacts and their relationship to walker behaviour	Year 1, 2 Ongoing	Rainforest CRC, WTMA	PSGs, QPWS
4. Undertake research into the economic and social benefits of walking	Year 3 Ongoing	Rainforest CRC, WTMA	Tourism industry, PSGs, all other stakeholders

9 PERMITS

Background

The *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and the *Forestry Act 1959* do not require a permit for walking on public land except where exclusion areas are set up for safety reasons or the protection of environmental or cultural heritage. However, walkers may require permits for such activities such as:

- commercial activities, including tourism operations,
- camping (whether in designated camping areas or other areas),
- entering a “Restricted Access Area” or “Prohibited Access Area”,
- organised group activities, including public events and competitive events,
- vehicle access along certain roads to reach the beginning of a walk.

Issues and actions

1. Aboriginal people have requested involvement in all aspects of issuing permits to enable them to:
 - ensure protection of cultural sites,
 - ensure appropriate presentation of Aboriginal culture by commercial operators,
 - gain some economic reward for the use of their country and culture for tourism.

➔ *Develop protocols for appropriate Aboriginal participation in the management of commercial activities (see Aboriginal participation, p12).*
2. Commercial activity permits to some popular walks are oversubscribed and would cause significant overcrowding and environmental problems if full capacity is reached.

➔ *Develop options to prevent reservation of unused commercial activity permits.*
3. There is a need for managers to limit total walker numbers and group sizes where necessary to maintain desired walking experiences. It is also important that managers are able to ensure that walkers are well prepared for the walk and aware of current track and weather conditions.

➔ *Introduce permit requirement and booking systems on specific walks (the Thorsborne Trail already has a booking system). Numbers on some walks could be controlled by limiting permits for road access.*

4. Commercial operators taking longer walks across management boundaries require permits which may contain different conditions.

➔ *Establish consistency and coordinated management in permit allocation across land management tenures (this is currently being trialed as part of a state wide review of permit allocation).*

5. Some walks may require specialised knowledge or experience to be undertaken safely and with sensitivity to Aboriginal or environmental concerns.

➔ *Investigate the need to link accreditation with permits for commercial operators accessing remote or sensitive areas.*

Actions	Timetable	Lead agencies	Key partners
1. Develop protocols for Aboriginal participation in commercial activity permit management	Year 2	INF	Aboriginal groups, QPWS, WTMA, Tourism industry
2. Develop options to prevent reservation of unused commercial activity permits	Year 2	QPWS	Tourism industry
3. Introduce permits and booking systems to control walker numbers on specific walks	Year 2	QPWS	Tourism industry
4. Establish consistency and coordinated management in permit allocation and conditions across land management tenures	Year 3	QPWS	Tourism industry, WTMA
5. Investigate the need to link accreditation with permits for commercial operators accessing remote or sensitive areas	Year 1	WTMA, QPWS	Tourism industry, Aboriginal groups

PART C - IMPLEMENTATION

1 IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

1.1 Communication and coordination

WTMA, QPWS and local government land managers will implement most of the strategy's actions. A Walking Advisory Group made up of stakeholder representatives will provide expert advice to land managers about the strategy's implementation. Community advisory groups will enhance communication with the public about walking issues (see Cooperative management and planning, p10).

1.2 Aboriginal participation

Rainforest Aboriginal people will be consulted when setting priorities and making decisions about particular walks. Aboriginal people may also be consulted about walks on their country as part of broader discussions about their land. This may be part of joint management, indigenous land use or cooperative management agreements.

1.3 Funding

Progress on actions will be dependent on available funding. The implementation process will be flexible with a coordinated approach across management agencies. The strategy will provide a sound basis for seeking funding for priority needs.

1.4 Evaluation and review

The implementation of the Walking Strategy will be reviewed annually. The review will be the basis for annual works programs for walks in the Wet Tropics region. The walk list (see The Walk List, p57, and Appendix A) will also be evaluated and updated regularly to include newly managed walks and amend issues and actions as appropriate.

1.5 Information and promotion

An important aspect of the Walking Strategy's implementation will be to tell people about what has been achieved. Information can be easily distributed through tourism industry newsletters, Wet Tropics newspapers and consultative groups.

2 SETTING PRIORITIES

2.1 Strategy actions

A schedule for implementing each strategy action has been identified in the action tables in Part B. This implementation schedule will be reviewed annually. Listed below is a summary of the major strategy actions which will be commenced in the first year:

Walk diversity

- Assess the feasibility of and develop additional walks needed to provide diversity (see the map for potential walks and options for longer walks).
- Liaise with managers of private walks to include their walks in the strategy.

Individual walk management

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

Walk information

- Collect information about walks and make it available so that walkers can find walks which suit their needs and abilities.
- Provide walk information signs which advise people how far and difficult a walk is and clear direction along the track.
- Identify walks which need more education signs.

Walk construction and maintenance

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

Cooperative management

- Coordinate communication between WTMA and land managers.
- Establish a Walking Advisory Group.
- Consult with Aboriginal people regarding individual walks and regional planning.

Research and monitoring

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

2.2 Individual walks and walk management plans

2.2.1 The map

The attached map shows the location and distribution of managed walks and potential managed walks within the Wet Tropics region. Long distance walks and networks are highlighted.

2.2.2 The walk list (Appendix A)

Appendix A lists managed and potential managed walks within the Wet Tropics region. Walks have been divided into five regions - North Tropics, Cairns/Kuranda, Central Coast, Tablelands and South Tropics. For each walk the table provides:

- the management agency,
- a desired track classification (see Table 2, p40),
- a brief summary of the issues affecting management and any actions required,
- a priority of high, medium or low for addressing the actions and issues for each walk through walk management plans.

2.2.3 Criteria for priorities

Setting priorities to address walk issues and actions through management plans attempts to be both proactive in meeting the aims of the strategy and flexible in reacting to new initiatives and available funding. Priorities have been set to make the most cost-effective use of available resources and existing assets to:

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

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