Noosa Trail Masterplan

APRIL 2020

TOURISM NOOSA

The *Noosa Trail Masterplan* was prepared by TRC Tourism for Tourism Noosa.

Acknowledgments

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the region, the Kabi Kabi people. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the region.

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Executive Summary

Located in the northern region of the Sunshine Coast, Noosa Shire offers a range of outdoor adventure opportunities. Trails are the fundamental means to explore and enjoy these unique places, offering a multitude of experiences.

An extensive network of tracks and trails enhance outdoor recreation opportunities such as the Noosa Trail Network, foreshore pathways and parklands, facilitating social interaction, healthy lifestyles and appreciation and protection of Noosa's natural, cultural and community assets. These tracks and trails contribute to the lifestyle of residents and the experience of visitors.

Trails are an important feature of the region both from a tourism and community health and wellbeing perspective. The region is ideally situated to prosper in the growth and economic benefits of trails.

The need for a *Noosa Trail Masterplan* is an important recommendation included in the *Noosa Sport and Active Recreation Plan 2018*. The Masterplan is guided by the vision outlined in that document, focused on creating "increased opportunities for everyone to participate in sport and active recreation, so they can achieve life-long physical and mental health benefits."

The Masterplan will directly respond to the recommendation to establish a framework for "the future development, management, opportunities and key actions necessary for walking and bike trails on the Noosa Trail Network."

The Masterplan will also address the three guiding principles of the Noosa Biosphere Reserve, namely economic development, education and learning, and conservation.

The Noosa Trail Network has existed as a managed recreational resource for more than 20 years, its establishment bolstered by upgrades and maintenance throughout the ensuing years. However, with significant growth in outdoor active tourism, especially in trail-based activities, and the flow-on opportunity for economic and nature-based tourism development, the need to re-evaluate Noosa's trails, infrastructure and trail support services is timely.

It is well recognised that a high-quality tracks and trails network delivers substantial health and wellbeing outcomes for residents of the Noosa region as well as an opportunity for economic growth, especially for the tourism sector. A quality trail network equals a healthier community across many baseline measures, and while the Noosa Trail Network benefits from being hosted within world-class landscapes and welcoming communities, the current status of the trail network requires significant improvement to realise its potential.

The consultancy Common Ground Trails conducted the initial research and development of the framework for the *Noosa Trail Masterplan* which included extensive community and stakeholder consultation. TRC Tourism has further reviewed, revised and added recommendations and focus areas based on further consultations and findings.

This document outlines the intent to grow, connect and leverage on the current trails in the Noosa Shire with a particular focus on the Noosa Trail Network which is located in the Noosa hinterland.

The *Noosa Trail Masterplan* is an initiative of:

TOURISM NOOSA

Supported by and in partnership with:

NOOSA COUNCIL

noosa biosphere

Noosa & District Landcare

1 Trails Strategy Overview

The following strategies have been identified as critical to achieving an innovative evolution of the Noosa Trail Network inclusive of improved environmental, economic, tourism and active community outcomes while conserving indigenous culture, flora, fauna and natural landscape values:

All strategies should lead towards growing visitation and economic opportunities along with an increase in community usage and associated health, wellbeing and regional liveability markers.

1.

Wholesale redesigning and holistic master planning of the Noosa Trail Network with a focus on quality experiences and accessibility and connectivity for multiple user groups (walkers/runners, off-road and back country cyclists, horse riders).

2.

Designation of, and planning for, the creation of a Trail Town Centre to formalise a focused hub for trail network users with the specific development of rider-centric services, information and access to multiple trailheads.

3.

Better coordination and communication between land managers, government and non-government stakeholders, user groups and their representatives in order to support the trail network across management, sustainability, servicing and promotion.

4.

Specific focus on the needs, wants and facilitation requirements of users according to each group's specific activity, with a particular focus on mountain biking, walking and trail running as strong growth areas.

5.

Creating sustainable management, maintenance and funding models.

6.

Identification of grant funding for near-future trail development.

7.

Supporting and enabling Kabi Kabi tourism capability with cultural heritage educational opportunities and direct tourism opportunities.

8.

Identification of trail-based event opportunities and relevant ongoing support mechanisms to assist growth in trail-based events.

9.

Ongoing support and facilitation of larger organised user groups including attracting and servicing education-based and corporate groups.

10.

Wholesale redevelopment of trail infrastructure including trail signage and interpretation across the network.

11.

Redevelopment of branding, promotion and supporting collateral for the Noosa Trail Network in order to better represent the varied and high-quality recreational offering in a more focused, cohesive and attractive manner.

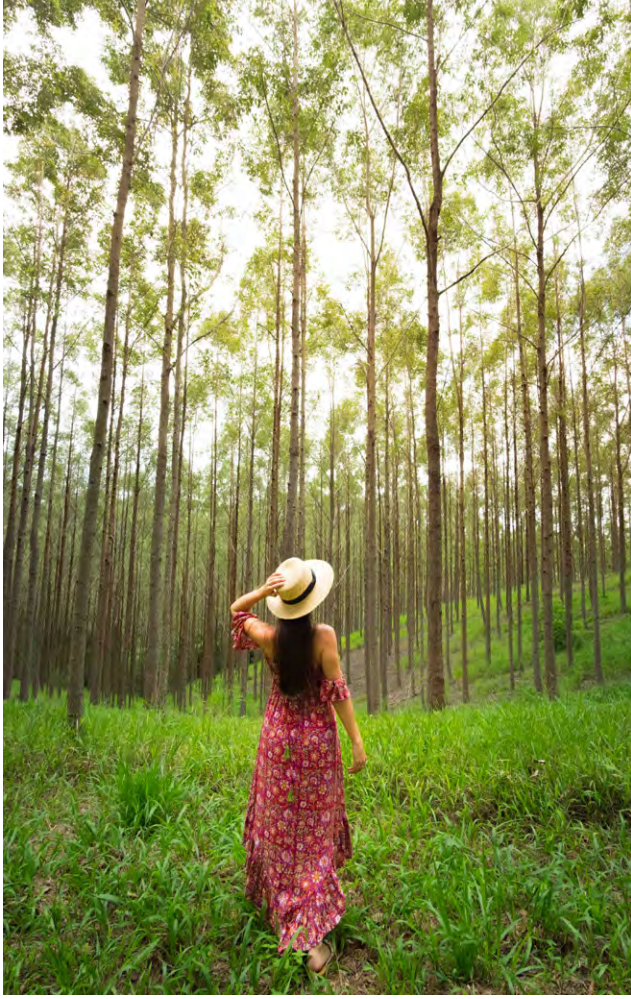
12.

Establishing stronger mechanisms for engaging and supporting local businesses critical to the success of the growing trail-based recreation economy around the world.

2 Vision and Objectives

The vision for the future of the Noosa Trail Network is:

> The Noosa region will become a vibrant destination for outdoor active recreation centred on a diverse range of high-quality trails. It will offer visitors and locals accessible and immersive trail experiences via designated trail towns, centres and networks along with a suite of supporting trail-focused services."



Primary objectives for the Masterplan are categorised as:

1. Trail network

Develop, upgrade and maintain a high-quality trail network catering for all trail users and activity types.

2. Trail user experience

Ensure quality trail user experiences that will deliver social, economic and nature-based tourism benefits to the community.

3. Trail infrastructure and services

Develop well-planned and designed facilities and services appropriate to scale and significance of trails and clusters of trails, aimed at encouraging use of the trail network.

4. Governance and management

Optimise governance and management structures across trail landowners, stakeholder groups and regional partners to ensure the Noosa region is positioned as a compelling trails destination.

General strategies as outlined will each be identified against one of these four objectives.

The *Noosa Trail Masterplan* will also specifically form a response to Strategy 2 of the *Noosa Sport and Active Recreation Plan 2018: "Plan sport and recreation facilities and spaces to meet existing and future trends, needs and demands"* as well as the stated actions:

2.4 Develop and promote a Noosa Trail Network Masterplan that promotes the sustainable usage of the trail network.

2.5 Work towards a regionally connected network of trails that accommodates equestrian, cycle and walking activities. e.g. coastal and hinterland trail networks.

2.8 Continue to develop maintenance and improvement plans for informal recreation venues/facilities such as skate parks and trail networks based on demand and in line with any relevant master planning.

The *Noosa Trail Masterplan* will reference important opportunities and 'game changers' as outlined in Tourism Noosa's *Tourism Strategy 2017-2022* which are:

- Facilitate product development that meets consumer demands for authenticity and nature-based experiences
- Promote the range of hinterland, nature-based and adventure experiences to help disperse visitors throughout the region
- A proactive approach to product development and the creation of new experiences, particularly eco-experiences that showcase Noosa's unique natural environment
- Ignite Noosa's authentic nature offering and outdoor experiences to shift perceptions of the range of activities available.

A further aim of the Trail Masterplan will be to encourage and promote the sustainable use of Noosa Biosphere landscapes in line with the UNESCO Man in the Biosphere program's guideline pillars of economic development, education and environmental stewardship. Supporting the work of the Noosa Biosphere Reserve Foundation, the Plan will address ways to prevent misuse of environmental assets through improving trails, infrastructure requirements and positive 'passive surveillance' outcomes as well as addressing issues such as erosion and revegetation.

It will identify economic benefits for the community such as funding models, sustainable tourism and jobs, trail markings and educational information encompassing our Kabi Kabi cultural heritage story, township history and local flora and fauna.

3 Consultancy

This project has been undertaken in two stages. Common Ground Trails undertook consultation, stakeholder engagement, site visits and assessment from January to September 2019. Tourism Noosa then commissioned TRC Tourism to review progress and recommendations made by Common Ground Trails with the objective of confirming and/or adjusting final draft strategic directions. The outcomes form the *Noosa Trail Masterplan Draft*.

Consultation

Five stakeholder meetings were held with attendees including community trail users, commercial users, bike clubs, key government stakeholders, horse groups, community business groups and generally interested users. An online trail user survey was also distributed to the wider community and responses recorded, and stand-alone correspondence and meetings were held with a broad range of stakeholders.

Stakeholder and community consultation undertaken by Common Ground Trails as part of development of the draft Masterplan, along with follow-up consultation by TRC Tourism, contributed to a better understanding of existing issues including:

- Existing trails and extent of use
- Local constraints and aspirations
- Potential locations suitable for trail development
- Opportunities for ongoing management

Overall, consultation highlighted the increasing demand for high-quality trail experiences.

Insights from consultation included:

- There is significant opportunity for trails to attract tourists and visitors to the Noosa region
- Trail planning processes need to consider necessary support infrastructure for trails and the needs of different trail users
- There needs to be a focus on quality of trail experience rather than quantity, incorporating points of interest and significant ‘destinations’ where possible
- Trail developments should not rely solely on land managers’ funding from existing budgets; new opportunities and models to generate funding should be explored
- Consideration needs to be given to start and end points of trails, with preference given to placing trailheads within or close to towns so that economic benefits from trail users are maximised and efficiencies in infrastructure such as carparks are achieved
- Shared trails currently present some issues, with conflict between users apparent
- Trail development should consider the use of degraded areas and rationalisation of existing trails to minimise environmental impacts
- There is high existing demand for trails in the Noosa region and many potential new experiences not currently offered
- There is a lack of variety of trail type and classification
- More information needs to be made readily available on where trails are located and the experience on offer
- There is a lack of shade and amenities at trailheads
- Accessibility of trails is an issue with limited public transport and a majority of one-way trails requiring transport logistics
- Trail maintenance not sufficient for future growth in use
- Safety issues around fire, shared use and road crossings need to be carefully considered
- Trail signage needs an overhaul, wayfinding is lacking, and availability of trail condition and closures information is hard to find.

Consultation

In order to develop a Trail Masterplan for the Noosa Shire the following methodology was employed:

Project definition

In consultation with the Project Control Group, the project's underlying philosophy, goals and aspirations were identified. Relevant facilities both national and state were benchmarked for their characteristics and relevant literature was reviewed.

Stakeholder and Community consultation

Meetings and workshops were conducted with key stakeholders and trail user groups. A trail use survey was conducted including an online survey and an interactive map allowing respondents to place pins on specific locations and detail existing issues and potential trail opportunities.

Trails audit and detailed gap analysis

On-ground audits were conducted of existing trails and potential locations, including assessment of associated infrastructure and marketing. Assessment was made of trail demand and comparison to current supply.

Constraint definition and opportunity planning

Identified and reviewed the region's opportunities and constraints including potential facilities, existing trails and social, cultural, environmental and physical constraints.

Prioritisation framework

Developed a comprehensive prioritisation framework to assess identified locations and opportunities. Determined the location significance hierarchy and priorities for development.

Preliminary findings review

Preparation and presentation of preliminary findings identifying constraints, opportunities and proposed priorities to project control group.

Peer review

Further on-site assessments along with stakeholder and Project Control Group consultations were undertaken by consultancy TRC Tourism with reference to preliminary draft reports, reviewing of initial findings and further recommendations made.

Review and handover

Draft documentation, targeted review and final documentation and distribution of *Draft Noosa Trail Masterplan*.

Launch

Final *Noosa Trail Masterplan* launch to stakeholders and community with dedicated presentation.

4 Project Background

Figure 1. Map of QLD Region

The Shire of Noosa is a local government area located 130 kilometres north of Brisbane in the Sunshine Coast district of South East Queensland, Australia.

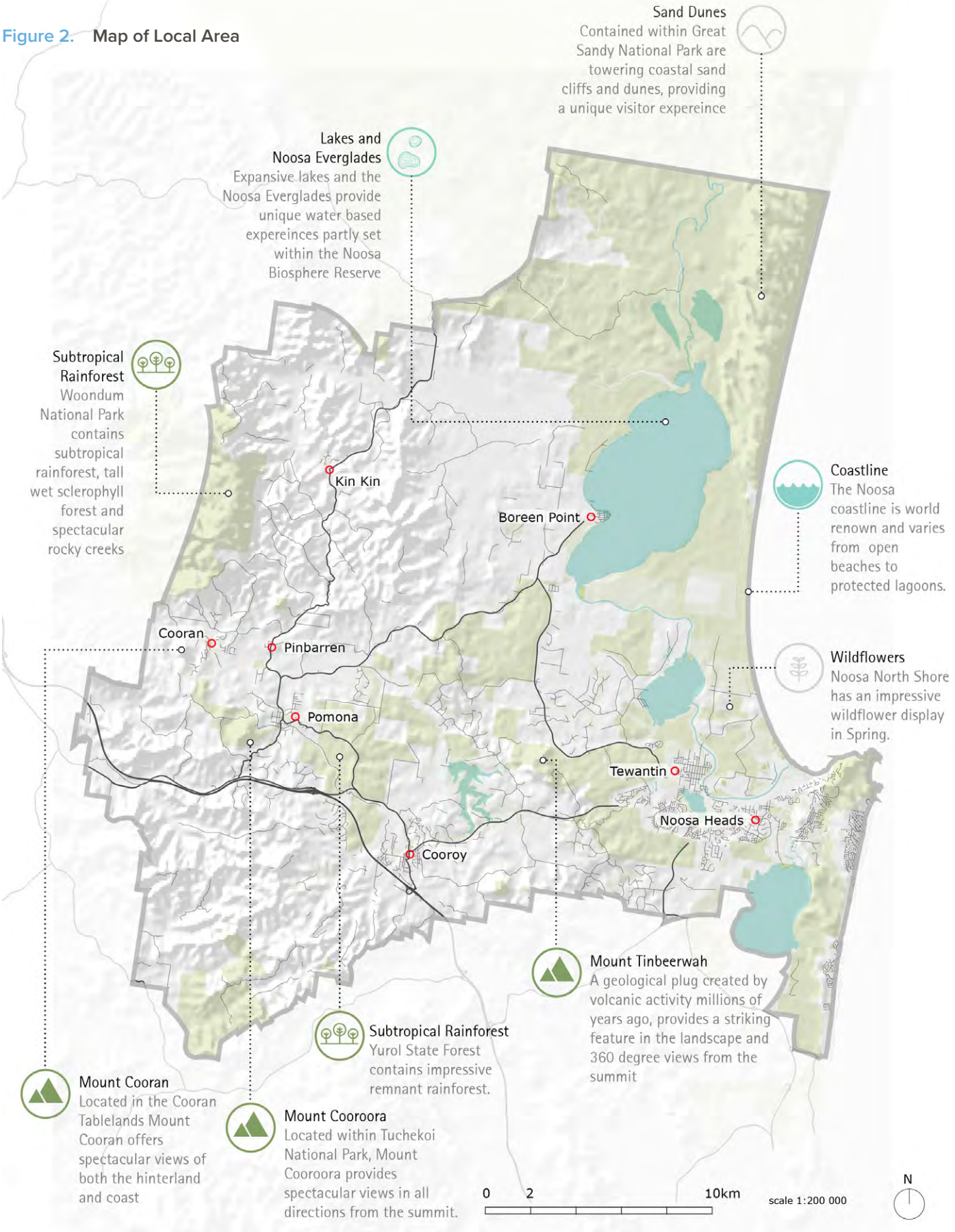
The primary settlement of Noosa Heads is located 35km north of Maroochydore, and 30km north of Maroochydore Airport.

The shire covers an area of 868.7 square kilometres.

It is recognised as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and has a proud history of preserving its natural environment. Thirty-five percent of the Shire is protected as either national park, reserve or conservation area.

The Noosa region was originally home to several Kabi Kabi clans. The Carbarah and Dulingbara in the North, and the Kabi Kabi to the west. In 2003 the Australian Federal Court determined (title claim QC2013/003) that the native title holders for the Noosa area are the Kabi Kabi First Nation people.

Figure 2. Map of Local Area



Project Coverage

The Noosa Trail Network describes a defined set of eight scenic hinterland routes suitable for walking, horse riding or mountain biking. The trails pass through national park, state forest, private property, council parks and road reserves. Trail motorbike riders, 4WDs and dogs are not permitted on many sections of the trails.

The trail network in part links the townships of Kin Kin, Cooran, Pomona and Cooroy, and extends into the Tewantin and Noosa community outskirts. This project references but does not specifically plan for or advise on other trails in the Noosa Shire i.e. Cooloola Great Walk trails, Noosa National Park trails.

Figure 3. Map of Noosa Trail Network – Usage Hubs and Linkages

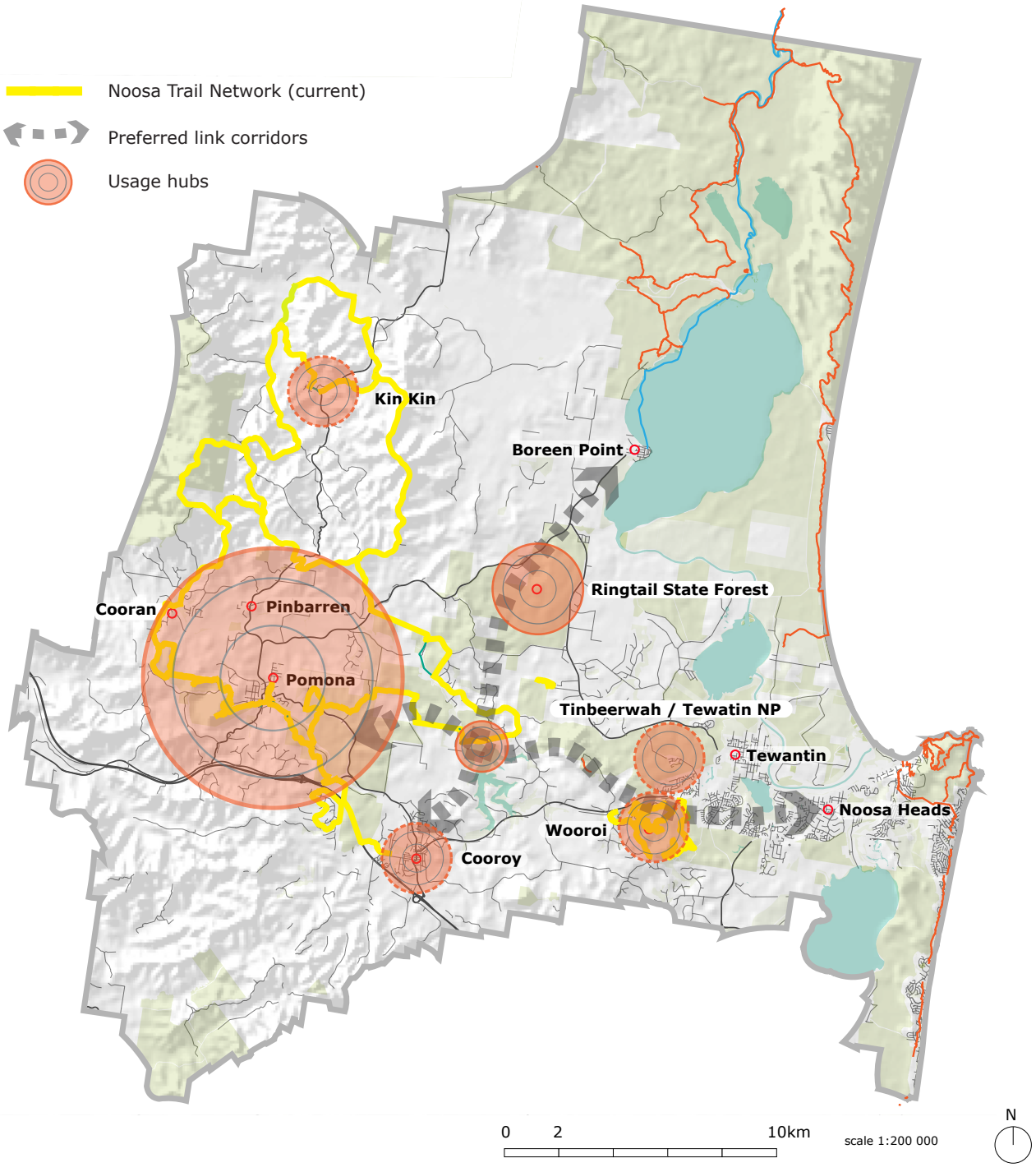


Table 1. Noosa Trail Network Trails

	Trail	Distance (KM)	Type	Start – Finish
1	**Kin Kin Countryside Loop**	14	Circuit	Kin Kin – Kin Kin
2	**Scenic Trail**	25	One way	Kin Kin – Cooran
3	**Kin Kin to Cooran via Western Branch Rd**	27	One way	Kin Kin – Cooran
4	**Coroora Trail**	9	One way	Pomona – Cooran
5	**Mac'n'Back**	15	One way	Lake Macdonald – Pomona
6	**Cooroy Wanderer**	11	One way	Cooroy – Pomona
7	**Cudgerie Loop**	5	Circuit	Cudgerie – Cudgerie
8	**Kin Kin to Lake Macdonald**	27	One way	Kin Kin – Lake Macdonald

Demographics

More than 55,000 people call Noosa home,[1] however this swells significantly in peak holiday periods. Between January and March 2019 over 344,600 visitors overnighted in Noosa, with a further 390,000 day visitors in the same period.[2] While the resident population of Noosa Shire is relatively small and anticipated growth is limited, there are growing communities nearby who rely on various services, facilities and recreational opportunities within the Noosa Shire.

Over half a million people are expected to live on the Sunshine Coast by the year 2036 and greater Brisbane is expected to be home to nearly 3.5 million by the same time.[3] The median age in Noosa is 45.9 years with over 27% of the population under 25 years of age.[4]

Prioritising trails in the Noosa region will provide opportunities for locals and visitors alike to engage in nature-based recreation leading to healthy communities.

1 www.noosa.qld.gov.au/business/economy-id-statistics
2 Tourism Research Australia 2019, National Visitor Survey
3 Noosa Council 2019
4 Noosa Council 2019

Noosa Visitation

Information extrapolated from the National Visitor Survey (NVS) and International Visitor Survey (IVS) year ending September 2019 and provided by Tourism Noosa provides the following overview:

Noosa's Overnight Visitor Market

Overnight (domestic & international) visitor numbers, nights and spend increased on the previous year

- Visitors: +14.2% to 1.2m
- Spend: +18% to $1.05b
- Nights: +22.5% to 5.2m

Over the past five years (since 2014) there has been steady growth in the overnight visitor market, with a 42% growth in visitors, 58% growth in spend and 43% growth in nights.

Table 2. Visitors, Nights, Spend

		Day Trip	Domestic Overnight (includes interate)	International
Visitors	1.992 million	46%	45%	18%
Nights	4.7 million		79%	21%
Spend	$899.8 million	8%	82%	10%

In regard to activities undertaken whilst in the region, the table 3 provides a breakdown for the top trail-based activities undertaken by domestic overnight, international overnight and day trip visitors.

Analysis of the visitation data provides the following insights:

- Visiting national parks/state parks is the most popular activity across all markets, which could be related to the ease of access, proximity to major tourism nodes and interest in park features.
- There has been steady growth in activity participation across all markets over the last four years, in keeping with general visitation increases.
- The greatest activity growth for domestic overnight visitors was in cycling, which tripled over the four-year period.
- International overnight visitors have the greatest participation rates in stopover activities, with visitors engaging in multiple activities during their stay.
- The data is unreliable for the day trip visitor, however those activities with consistent data show steady growth (particularly for water activities/sports).

Table 3. Activities undertaken whilst in the region ('000)[5]

Activity	2014	2015	2016	2017
Domestic Overnight				
Visit National Parks/State Parks	193.6	240.6	233.8	251
Visit Botanical or Other Public Gardens	26.3	41.8	18.4	33.1
Bushwalking/Rainforest Walk	120.7	222.1	189.3	215.1
Water Activities/Sports	68.3	84.1	94.8	123
Cycling	9.8	16.4	18.2	31.8
TOTAL PARTICIPATION	**418.7**	**605**	**554.5**	**654**
TOTAL VISITATION	**758.3**	**862.2**	**877.1**	**893.2**
International Overnight				
Visit National Parks/State Parks	108.9	109.1	136.8	146.6
Visit Botanical or Other Public Gardens	85.4	97.5	107.3	113.9
Bushwalking/Rainforest Walk	87.9	93.6	114.3	124.3
Sailing, Windsurfing, Kayaking	40.1	48.1	56.2	55.5
Cycling	20.7	18.9	25.5	31.6
TOTAL PARTICIPATION	**343**	**367.2**	**440.1**	**471.9**
TOTAL VISITATION	**130.5**	**134.1**	**159.9**	**171.6**
Day Trip				
Visit National Parks/State Parks	62.7	108.2	132.5	119.4
Visit Botanical or Other Public Gardens	0	51.3	20.7	0
Bushwalking/Rainforest Walk	91.6	195.8	79.9	120
Water Activities/Sports	5.8	99	78.3	42.6
Cycling	0	27.2	26.6	13.3
TOTAL PARTICIPATION	**160.1**	**481.5**	**338**	**295.3**
TOTAL VISITATION	**1030.4**	**1379.5**	**1098.0**	**948.6**

*Please Note: Survey respondents could give multiple responses regarding activities, but these are seen as their main purpose for visiting. International responses are for their entire trip, not just their stopover in Noosa and/or Sunshine Coast.

5 Tourism Research Australia 2019, National Visitor Survey (NVS) and International Visitor Survey (IVS)

Trail Visitation

Trail users come from a variety of backgrounds and are categorised according to whether trail usage was their primary motivation for travel or as an incidental activity.

There are three distinct trail user markets that include locals, 'destination trail users' and 'trail users while on holiday'. Further research will need to be undertaken to determine the size and potential for growth of these markets, as well as the benefits and impacts resulting from increased visitation to the Noosa region.

Locals

The local trail user market includes trail users who reside in or near the Noosa region. There is potential for sustainable growth in participation within the local trail user markets through ensuring appropriate and sufficient trails are provided and appropriately promoted, and community volunteer sporting and trail care groups are encouraged and supported.

Destination Trail Users

The destination trail user market includes experienced trail users who regularly travel with the trails as a primary motivator. They have likely visited other Australian or international trails destinations. They seek high quality trails with good supporting infrastructure in iconic/scenic locations. These users are usually found in trails destinations and seek good terrain. Locations that combine desirable terrain with tourist activities and infrastructure have the best market appeal for destination trail users. This group also includes event participants who travel to a destination specifically for the event; this may include pre or post event trail-based activity for event participants who spend additional time in a destination, training, familiarising (for events) and visiting other attractions.

Trail Users While on Holidays

The trail users while on holidays market includes typically less experienced trail users, whose primary motivator for travel is not the trails. They generally comprise the leisure market and represent the largest market potential. This market view trail use as a secondary motivation for their visit and will participate in trail activities incidentally. They will likely hire equipment as required. They may place less emphasis on the trail and more on accessibility of the facility, the setting and nearby attractions and amenities. These users are usually found in 'holiday' destinations and are seeking a unique holiday experience, relating to either culture, nature, cities, comfort, leisure, cafes/restaurants etc. Locations that combine these tourist attractions with trail opportunities have the best market appeal for this market segment.

Table 4. Key Markets/Trail Users[6]

Identified Tourism Market	Destination Trail Users	Trail Users while on Holidays
Experience seekers:		
International visitors that prefer to travel to new and different places	Y	Y
Highly predisposed to Australia's offer	Y	Y
More likely to stay longer, spend more and disperse to regional areas	Y	
Found amongst all age groups, income levels and geographic locations	Y	Y
And are seeking:		
Authentic personal experiences	Y	Y
Social interactions	Y	Y
Meeting and interacting with the locals	Y	Y
Experiencing something different from their normal day-to-day life	Y	Y
Understanding and learning about different lifestyles and cultures	Y	Y
Participating in the lifestyle and experiencing it, rather than observing it	Y	Y
Challenging themselves – physically, emotionally and/or mentally	Y	
Visiting authentic destinations that are not necessarily part of the tourist route	Y	Y
Exposure to unique and compelling experiences	Y	Y
Dedicated discoverers:		
Visitors travelling primarily for learning and new experiences	Y	Y
Those who want to discover something new	Y	Y
Aspirational achievers:		
Visitors travelling primarily for relaxation and indulgence		Y
Those who view travel and holidays as a reward for their hard work and success in life	Y	Y

6 Tourism Research Australia 2019, National Visitor Survey (NVS) and International Visitor Survey (IVS)

Market Segmentation Comparison

When assessed against the segments of the key markets identified by Tourism Australia[7] it can be seen that the two types of trail tourists ('Destination' and 'On Holiday') share many common traits.

Market Motivators and Needs

Depending on the market, different motivators and experiences will be placed as the primary decision for engaging in the activity. Different user groups are driven by varying motivators, depending on whether or not they are undertaking travel or using the trails for recreation.

Further research is required to understand the primary motivators for travel for all trail activities. The needs of the various markets will be different for different trail user groups and need to be considered when developing a location. Broadly, the primary motivators are controllable factors that influence destination choice, and can include:

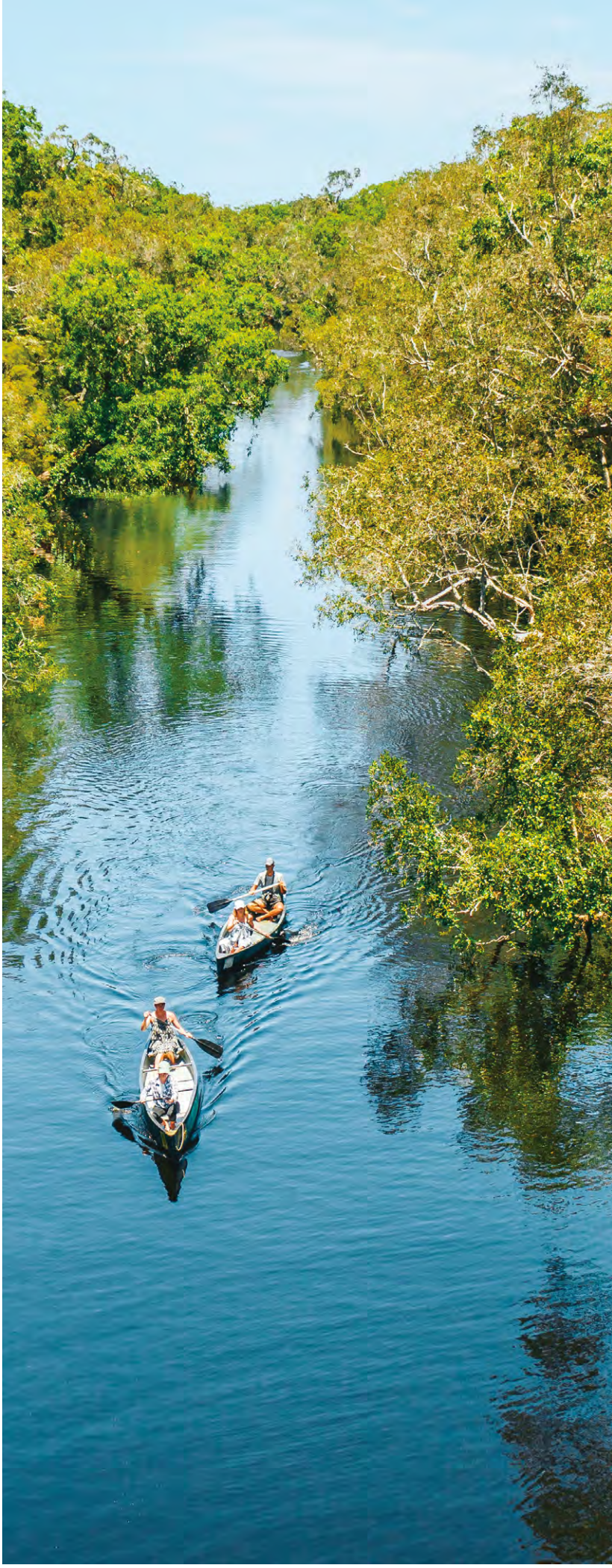
Diversity: a large quantity and variety of trail types and classifications located in varied terrain and topography.

Uniqueness: iconic, memorable and fun experiences in a unique setting. Typically, in a natural landscape, with high visual and emotional value and often connected to an attraction.

Quality: a range of high-quality experiences, predominantly on purpose-designed tracks. Also relates to the provision of quality information, services and infrastructure.

Accessibility: trails located within close proximity of residences and short-stay accommodation. Also relates to the provision of cohesive, well-signed, mapped and promoted trails. Connectivity to other trails, transport, services and infrastructure increases accessibility from the trails. Visitor services to improve accessibility for less experienced users.

Community: an established user group community offering market credibility, a sense of belonging and camaraderie through events, volunteer support and social engagement.



7 www.tourismaustralia.com

Events

Social and competitive events contribute to the creation of strong trail user communities. Events can be a major motivator for some cohorts within each trail user type and often play a significant part in increasing participation.

Suitable trails and adequate infrastructure are required to run national and regional events. Social events require less specific infrastructure but still require quality trails and visitor services. Trail-based events held in the Noosa Shire in 2019 are outlined below. The region has the potential in terms of setting and location to host more selected events across all trail types'.

Table 5. Summary of trail-based events held in Noosa Shire in 2019

Walking		
Great Noosa Trail Walk	Noosa Trail Network	Social event capped at 150 participants. Walkers undertake the walk at their own pace, trail guides are on the route providing assistance and information, accommodation is provided in camping grounds at Kin Kin and Cooran, participants can also choose to organise their own accommodation.
Wild Women on Top Coastrek		A 30km/60km challenge walk.
Trail Running		
Pomona King of the Mountain Festival	Pomona	An event with 40 years of history, participants race from the centre of town up to the top of Mount Cooroora and back. Festival also includes family fun run, relay, mountain bike ride, skate park competition and markets.
Cycling		
Noosa Classic	Noosa Heads	Road cycling event offering three distances – 160km, 120km or 65km.
Noosa Strade Bianche Gran Fondo	Noosa Hinterland	In the vein of the famed L'EROICA in Italy, Noosa Strade Bianche is a celebration of vintage cycles riding 144km. Recently a gravel bike ride event "The Dirt Noosa Grand Fondo" has been introduced.
Multisport		
Noosa Triathlon	Noosa Heads	Five-day event, celebrating sports, healthy lifestyles, fitness and fun. Nationally significant triathlon event and a series of other events including swim, run and rides.
Wild Women Adventure Race	Pomona	Adventure race for women only, 20-30km mountain bike, 8-15km trail running/trekking and 1-3km of kayaking/paddling and basic navigation. First ever 'Zero Waste Event' for Noosa 2019.
Ultraman	Start and finish Noosa Heads	Four stages over 3 days, Ultra endurance event 10km swim, 140km ride, 281km ride, 84.3km run. Event is independent but there are other Ultraman events internationally.
Equestrian		
Annual Kin Kin Horse Ride	Kin Kin	A 28km ride from Kin Kin to Cooran lookout / Tablelands Escape. 120 riders from Gympie, Noosa Shire, Beaudesert, Maryborough, Yarrabilba, Kallangur, Eerwah Vale, Kandanga, Caboolture, Mt Perry, Samford, Deception Bay, Gatton, Dayboro, Langshaw and Woodridge. The event showcases the region to visitors and supports the community economically, aiming to bring non riders and riders together. Camping, a bonfire and agistment for participants at Kin Kin Oval following ride.

5 Trail Planning and Development

Successful and sustainable trails require strategic location planning, which involves understanding of trail hierarchies, types, users and classifications.

Trail Hierarchy

A number of strategies are employed to ensure the appropriate trail models and trail types are developed in the appropriate locations. Factors for consideration include location significance, spatial distribution, event requirements and trail model detail. Table 3 below provides an overview of the significance hierarchy.

Table 6. Significance Hierarchy

National	Regional	Local
A trail facility for a large population centre and/or a tourism resource that caters for at least a week of unique trail-based opportunities.	A trail facility for a small population centre or large community and/or a tourism resource that caters for short breaks or weekend trips.	A trail facility for a small community and/or a tourism resource that caters for day trips.

Location significance

Location significance defines the scale, reach and connectedness for trail development in a given location. It also identifies the supporting services and infrastructure that is required to meet the significance rating. The location significance indicates a population centre or area's opportunity, including the desired recreation and tourism outcomes. Priority locations for trail development in the project area have been categorised as being nationally, regionally or locally significant. All locations, when being developed, should be consistent with the relevant development procedures and standards.

Locally significant locations cater for community-based trail use with tourism demand limited to day visits. Facilities are developed within a 10-15km zone from population centres unless servicing existing recreation and camp sites, or significant population centres where alternate opportunities do not exist. Locally significant locations can develop around the trail town and trail centre models but can also be stand-alone individual and networked trail systems. They contain limited services and infrastructure but can still host events. Locations of local significance may develop limited trail types and classifications and can expect demand from surrounding regional and national locations.

Regionally significant locations cater for small population centres or large communities and/or tourism resources that cater for short breaks or weekend trips. Facilities should be developed within a 15-20km zone and be focused around a primary trail centre or trail town model. They provide a minimum level of services and infrastructure and can host national and regional events. Locations of regional significance should encompass broad trail types and classifications. Regional locations will see demand for trails from surrounding national locations.

Nationally significant locations capture the tourism market for at least a week of unique riding and can provide a large recreation resource for a major population centre. They are developed to cater for international, interstate and intrastate tourism as a priority and facilities fall within a 20-25km zone, or 30 minutes driving. Trail development is focused around a primary trail town model and can include trail centres, networks or individual trails as part of the hub. Locations of national significance should develop all trail types and classifications where appropriate. These locations will experience very high demand and should provide a high level of services and infrastructure to riders and also have the ability to cater for major international and national events.

Key requirements for National, Regional and Local significance have been outlined for each trail type in the following pages.

6 Governance and Management

Existing Governance

The stakeholders involved in trail development can be very diverse. Local Governments, Regional Councils, Community Advisory Committees, Development Commissions, Tourism Bodies, Government Departments and user group bodies all play a vital role in the governance of trails.

Table 7. Key governance bodies

Governance Body	Role
Noosa Council	Land management
Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service	Land management
Queensland Government Department of Environment & Science	Land management
Kabi Kabi First Nations People	Traditional owners
Noosa Parks Association	Environment and advocacy
Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation	Advocacy
Tourism Noosa	Advocacy / promotion
Noosa Biosphere Reserve Foundation	Environment and advocacy
Bushwalking / Trail Running	
Bushwalking Australia	Advocacy
Bushwalking Queensland	Advocacy – affiliated clubs
Cooloola Bushwalkers Group	Community club
Noosa Trampers	Community club
Sunshine Coast Bushwalking Club	Community club
Trail Running Assoc. of Queensland	Advocacy and events
International Trail Runners Assoc. AU	Advocacy / promotion
Noosa Ultra & Trail Runners (NUTRs)	Community club
Mountain Biking	
International Mountain Biking Assoc.	Advocacy and trail standards
Mountain Bike Australia	Peak body for mountain biking in Australia
Queensland MTB	Online resource race and club orientated
Noosa Trailblazers MTB Club	Community club
Bushrangers MTB Club	Community club
Equestrian	
Australian Trail Horse Riders Assoc. (ATHRA)	Advocacy
Sunny Coast Trail Horseriders Inc	Community club
Paddle	
Paddle Australia	Advocacy
Paddle QLD	Advocacy / club affiliations
Sunshine Coast Paddlesports Club	Community Club
Suncoast Seniors Rec Kayak Club	Community Club

Each of these bodies typically has an interest in both trail advocacy and events. They have or aspire to have formal structures and are capable of assisting the trail development process. Trails in a number of locations rely heavily on volunteer trail bodies for sustainable development and management of the activity. There is opportunity to improve governance structures supporting trails within the Noosa region by combining representatives from relevant organisations based on geographic distribution of trail development.

Existing Management

Many trails in Noosa have a simple management structure where the landowner is also the operator. In these cases, insurances are held by the owner, maintenance is carried out as required, and resourcing comes from ongoing maintenance budgets.

Within the region there are a few situations where the owner and operator may be different entities. For example, the majority of mountain bike singletrack trail networks on QPWS estate remain under QPWS ownership but rely on maintenance from mountain bike bodies who are the trail operators. QPWS have invested in building capacity of volunteers and contractors through formal agreements and guidance to create structured maintenance schedules. Mountain bike bodies who are trail operators have or are working toward having formal Trail Adoption agreements in place with QPWS. Some case studies of volunteer management programs are detailed below.

Volunteer Trail Management

Trail users are passionate about building and maintaining trails, and typically 'custodian' communities naturally form around popular trail networks and parks.

Good facility management is key to ensuring a sustainable and consistent product which can be promoted confidently. Whilst the responsibility for management generally lies with the trail owner, it is possible to create partnerships to involve volunteers in some of these activities, such as:

- Trail auditing inspections and condition reporting
- Trail building initiatives
- Event support
- Incorporating clear roles and responsibilities for volunteer bodies in the ongoing management of trails can yield a number of positive outcomes, including:
- Reduced management costs through using volunteer resources
- Creation of stewards for the environment
- Creating a fun and vibrant community
- Strengthened relationships and networks

7 Overview: Participation and Demand

Research has shown that participation in physical recreation in Australia has undergone a shift in focus with organised team sports static or declining while participation in nature-based pursuits and activities – both recreational and competitive – has risen.

'*The Future of Australian Sport: Megatrends*'[8] states that the popularity of individual fitness and recreation activities is increasing, lending support to the development of facilities which enable increasingly popular alternative active pursuits, such as trail-based sports, in order to encourage healthy and active lifestyles.

Trail-based pursuits such as mountain biking and trail running have witnessed phenomenal growth in the past decade, driven by a broad move towards activities that better suit busy lifestyles – pursuits that can be undertaken at any time, with companions or solo, competitively or non-competitively.

While community participation in trail-based activities is well established in the project area – and indicative measures such as an increase in event participation confirm growth in trail-based activities – formal data on specific use is limited to information collected by the user survey as part of the Masterplan consultation process.

The same can be said for trail-based tourism in the region – anecdotally, visitors are known to use existing trail facilities but there is little specific data available. While participation statistics are limited for the project area, information on general visitor numbers, demographics and expenditure has been drawn from a number of sources to ascertain current participation levels and predict expected demand in the future.

8 www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/564072/The_Future_of_Australian_Sport_-Summary_Report.pdf

Mountain biking

Mountain biking continues to grow as one of the fastest and most popular family-friendly lifestyle activities in Australia. Nationally it is estimated that 2.3M adults participate in cycling. Data on the actual participation in mountain biking in Australia is largely collated from two sources – MTBA's database and statistics and the Ausplay National Sports Participation Survey 2018. Mountain Bike Australia's (MTBA) database exceeds 70,000 individual members and over the last four years, MTBA's financial membership has grown by 59%, with nine new clubs established in 2018, taking total club representation across Australia to 168. Data for a potentially larger market of users – the recreational, non-competitive rider – is again difficult to capture, however indicative measures such as off-road bicycle sales and unofficial monitoring of trailheads paint a picture of a much larger user base than shown by gateway data such as events and memberships.

E-bikes

Electric/power-assisted bikes also represent one of the fastest growing segments of the bike industry as they allow riders to extend their cycling distance and, perhaps more importantly, encourage more users into the recreational cycling fold, including a significant proportion who would otherwise not have considered cycling as a preferred recreation due to concerns about age or fitness. Further, it is significantly extending the upper age limit of riders while also increasing their overall average usage, leading to health and wellbeing gains. It is also beginning to impact tourism with this new type of rider actively seeking cycling experiences suitable to e-bikes.

With relevance to off-road and back country riding where ascents are common – and quite often a deterrent for riders – e-bikes are allowing a broader user capture than the traditional market, which in the past has been defined as younger and more physically capable, and has allowed access into non-typical (for them) terrain. E-bikes make pedalling up hills easier and are therefore opening up off-road cycling opportunities to a much bigger market than would be attracted if limited to traditional non-power-assisted bicycles.

One in three bikes sold in Europe is an 'e-bike'.[9] It is estimated that more than 40 million e-bikes are expected to be sold each year by 2023. Australian e-bike sales are likewise anticipated to increase. This is across all e-bike categories, on and off-road.

Currently, riders in general are seeking a broad range of experiences from local urban and peri-urban trails through to remote wilderness style longer distance riding experiences.

Many Australian owners of e-bikes have enthusiastically described how their lives have been transformed. E-bikes deal with the hills, headwinds and sweating that discourage bike riding.[10]

Given this Masterplan's recommendation for the Noosa region to develop its mountain biking trail capacity and the potential for hinterland 'gravel grind / back country' riding – both of which involve significant hill climbing – the growth of e-bikes presents a significant opportunity to target a fast-growing market. This is a market that shares similar characteristics to the visitor profile that views Noosa as an ideal tourism destination. Further, e-bike users will seek out Noosa cycling experiences as a matter of course, regardless of proactive development, and it is strongly suggested that the coming wave be engaged with proactively, rather than reactively to best capture economic benefit.

It is important to note that e-bikes are not 'motorised bikes', rather they are pedal assisted, with limiters that cut out any assistance at regulated speeds, meaning they do not move any faster or with any more ferocity downhill or on flat ground than a regular non-assisted bike. Further it is considered that there is no greater environmental impost compared to regular bikes.

9 www.abc.net.au/news/2019-07-06/electric-motors-might-change-congestion-cycle/11282384
10 www.rac.com.au/about-rac/media/media-releases/june-2017/electric-bike-trials-a-big-success

Trail running

Trail running is a to date unheralded and largely an under-researched trail user group that is experiencing phenomenal growth. Indicative measures such as events, social media groupings and media channel coverage shows the likelihood that trail runners as a community use more trails, more often than any other user group. A report into trail running in NSW in 2013 (*'Trail Running Market Snapshot'*, Adventure Types, 2013) showed a 521% increase in event-based participation over three years 2010-2013. It is broadly recognised and reported by the trail running sector that growth has further increased since that time. The largest trail running event in Australia (Ultra Trail Australia, 7,000 participants) is seven times as big as the largest mountain biking event (Otway Odyssey, 1000 participants); there are four times as many trail running events (450-500) as mountain biking events in Australia and the average trail running event attracts 2-4 times participation (600-800) as the average sized mountain biking event (200-300). As with mountain biking, data capture outside of events is difficult to gauge, however it is thought that as a percentage of participation, more trail runners engage in events than mountain bikers do, meaning there is a larger unrecorded market in mountain biking, whereas most trail runners are captured by event data.

Bushwalking / hiking

Walking for exercise is the most popular sport or activity which Australians regularly participate in. Nearly half of adult Australians, or 47.9%, regularly go for a vigorous stroll as reported by a Roy Morgan Research Report (2016). The findings confirmed that people who hike/bushwalk tend to take holidays where they can enjoy the great outdoors in its myriad forms. Between October 2010 and September 2015, the proportion of Australians 14+ who reported going hiking/bushwalking on a regular basis grew from 2.9% to 5.2%, while those who participated either regularly or occasionally increased from 15.6% to 27.3% (or more than 5.3 million Australians). When asked what activities they did on their last trip, regular/occasional hikers/bushwalkers were consistently more likely than the average Australian to nominate active, outdoor pursuits. For example, they are 84% more likely than the average Australian to have visited wilderness of some kind on their last trip, 81% more likely to have gone to a National Park or forest and – of course – 135% more likely to have gone bushwalking.[11]

Hiking and rainforest walks undertaken by international visitors to Australia increased by 7% to 1.9 million in the year ending September 2018.[12]

11 www.roymorgan.com/findings/6638-when-hikers-bushwalkers-go-on-holiday-201601250049
12 TRA International Visitors

Between them, mountain biking (including E-bikes) and trail running represent the biggest opportunities for trail user growth and economic/tourism development with unabated demand for trail supply.

8 State Of Activity: Demand

Various forms of walking and cycling activities represented four of the top five most popular physical activities for residents according to the *Noosa Physical Activity Participation Survey,* July/August 2019.

Outdoor activities – the majority trail-based – are currently recognised as major contributors to a continuously growing 'active tourism market' and provide great opportunity for nature-based tourism that can be of great economic benefit to hinterland villages. This is especially pertinent in considering the over-capacity of some trails and landscape-based tourism offerings located in close proximity to Noosa Heads and other high-use coastal areas.

Broadly speaking there are three types of trail users:

- Local community trail users – residents who use trails regularly for recreation, sport and fitness
- Destination trail users – visitors and enthusiasts who travel to a destination specifically to engage in the trail offering
- On holiday trail users – visitors to the region who engage in the trail offering as one component of many activities undertaken / attractions engaged with while on a vacation

The *Noosa Trail Masterplan* recognises that each of these markets place varying degrees of importance on trail network characteristics including some common to all users (access, quality, connectivity, infrastructure) and some specific to a user group (access and variety for locals; supporting services for on holiday; degrees of difficulty and events for destination users). A Masterplan must focus on achieving first and foremost the common necessary elements, and thereafter ascribe prioritisation according to return on investment against other goals.

Broadly there are five factors in considering a trail user market's motivators and needs:

- Diversity
- Uniqueness
- Quality
- Accessibility
- Community

The active tourism market also chooses destinations that offer add-on benefits for either themselves post-trail activity or for family members who would prefer to engage in other non-trail attractions and activities.

These factors will heavily influence a user's decision-making process determining which trails, networks, regions and destinations they visit and use to satisfy their recreational interests.

Importantly, when the demand for diverse and high-quality trail infrastructure is met by a region, the outcomes are notable in terms of economic stimulus, be that via direct visitation spend (accommodation, food etc.), facilitation (hire equipment, activity specific purchases, tours, events) or flow-on employment (build, maintenance, services, hospitality, supplies) and associated secondary spend.

Also of note is the opportunity presented by the increased demand for nature-based experiences. In meeting this demand with creative and sustainable trail development, land managers can integrate specific tools, infrastructure, technology and communication strategies that educate the visitor, be they local or visitor, on Noosa's indigenous culture, native flora and fauna, and local environmental projects. Trail networks therefore become a way of sensitively delivering people into an environment, helping them understand that environment and in doing so creates a connection and value proposition – visitors appreciate the landscapes and its biodiversity, and so are more engaged and attuned to helping protect and champion that environment.

Barriers

Barriers for each trail user type vary, some of the barriers identified in this planning process are outlined below.

Trail Type	Barriers
Bushwalking / urban walk / trail running	• Availability of trail-related information • Safe place to park car • Accessibility of trailheads, public amenities and potable water
Mountain bike	• Perceptions of mountain biking • Limited understanding of the benefits • Undersupply and inaccessibility of appropriate trails • Restricted opportunity for skill building and progression • Availability of trail-related information
Equestrian	• Expense of owning a horse • Availability of trail information • Undersupply of trails close to agistment and that are horse specific • Suitable vehicle and horse float parking area
Paddle	• Expense and transport of equipment • Unclear progression pathways • Paddle trail map

Trail user survey

In an effort to understand the existing trends in trail use across the Noosa Shire a trail user survey was conducted. The online survey consisted of a survey and an interactive map where users could drop pins locating existing trails or potential new trail opportunities. The survey was distributed widely to networks of trail user groups, Tourism Noosa and Noosa Shire Council as well as on social media. It garnered 294 responses.

The survey proved a useful tool in providing an insight into trail-use patterns and preferences for trails and development locations. It also identified where respondents used trails, how often and in some cases barriers to participation.

Common responses from the survey indicated:

- Trail users are multi-disciplinary, participating in a range of trail-based recreation activities.
- By developing trails and facilities, many locations throughout the project area (including in urban settings) have the potential to encourage and attract new people to trail-based activities.
- There is a lack of advanced trails to challenge the aspiring and world-class athletes.
- There is a preference for trails in scenic locations and unique environments.
- Visits to trails in the Noosa Shire are regular with most respondents indicating they visit weekly, monthly or several times a year.
- Camping is the preferred accommodation type if staying overnight.
- Signage, amenities and trail information need improving.

Figure 4. Trail user survey results

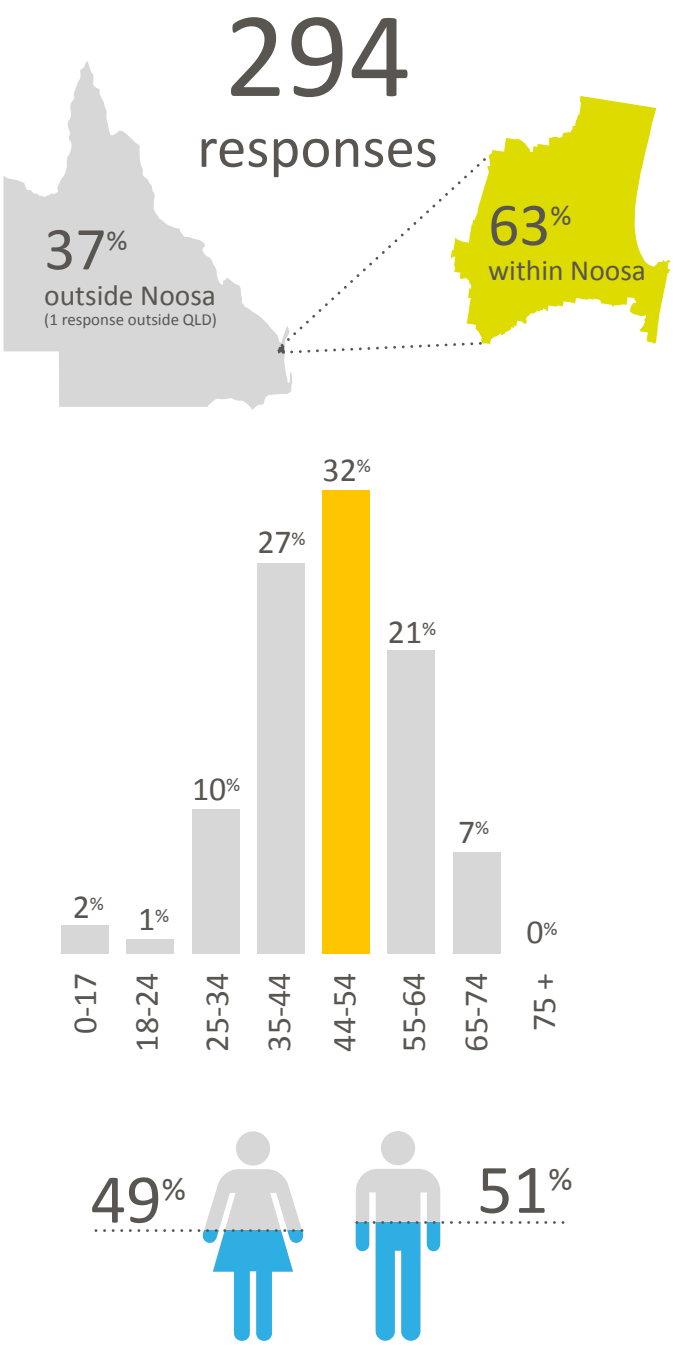
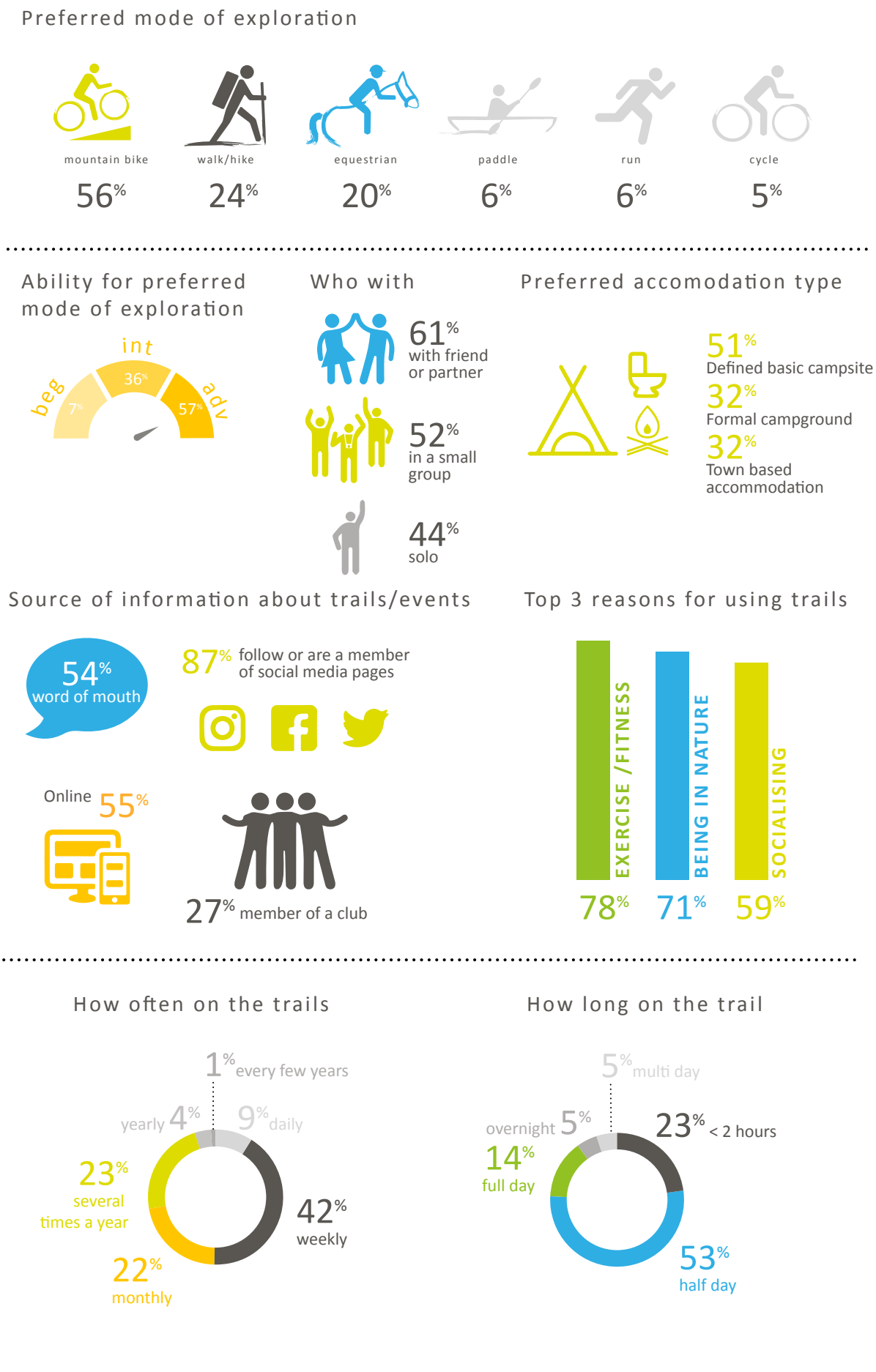


Figure 5. **Trail user survey results**



9 Case Studies

Case Study:

QUEENSTOWN TRAILS TRUST

Queenstown Trails Trust is an organisation with a purpose to raise funds for the development and growth of the trails network in Queenstown NZ (www.queenstowntrail.co.nz). It has a Board of Trustees that includes independent business people and land managers. They have been very successful in helping to deliver and grow over 120km of trails on mixed land tenures around Queenstown and the Wakatipu.

This is an example of the potential sustainability and on-going oversight mechanism that could be implemented to guide trails development in the Noosa region with a purpose of facilitating better communication and coordination between stakeholders and delivering better, more holistic outcomes across the network.

Case Study:

BLUE DERBY, DERBY, TASMANIA

The Blue Derby MTB experience in Tasmania was an initiative devised to support the rural township of Derby, suffering an economic decline at the conclusion of mining and forestry works.

Blue Derby is a network of mountain bike trails shared across the two local Government areas. The trails are centred on the two rural settlements of Derby and Weldborough. Stage one, comprising 23km of trails at Derby was launched in February 2015, followed by Blue Tier in 2016. When completed the area offered a full 85km of trails. Building on this success, there are over 200km of further trails planned (stage 2) to connect mountain bikers to the seaside town of St Helens. The project was made possible by the Australian Government's Community Development Grant Programme, which allocated $2.45 million. This was matched with $700,000 in funding by a partnership of local stakeholders, making it the largest mountain bike trails project in Australia.

Derby has a mix of trails catering for all skill levels and riding styles, the pristine natural environment enhances the trail experience and sets a benchmark for other destinations to aspire to, attracting approximately 30,000 visitors per year. The town of Derby has seen new businesses open, accommodation beds increase (from 12 rooms to more than 70 rooms) and a wave of residential and commercial real estate acquisitions. Dorset Council General Manager, Tim Watson, estimates the economic impact of mountain biking on the region is between $15 million and $18 million. He also states there have been 49 property sales in 18 months, or about $5 million worth of turnover.

Data gathered from online trail usage tracker, Strava, shows that for the first quarter of 2016 the Blue Derby trails and the North South track were the most popular riding trails (amongst Strava users) in Tasmania. Derby is one of the tourism icons of Tasmania. Stage 2 is expected to attract over 138,000 visitors, create 51 full time jobs and add a further $6.88 million to the economy.[13]

The Blue Derby MTB experience is attracting 30,000 visitors annually who spend 4-5 nights in the township of Derby, followed by 5 additional nights elsewhere in Tasmania. The return on investment to date has been estimated at approximately $30million per year. In 2017, the Blue Derby trails were voted by professional mountain bikers as the best in the Enduro Series Competition. This was the first time a stage of this competition was hosted in Australia.

13 www.ridebluederby.com.au, www.abc.net.au/news, www.rdatasmania.org.au

Case Study:

TRAIL RUN: VICTORIAN TRAIL EVENTS

Events such as the Surf Coast Century/Trail Run Series trail weekend in Anglesea, Victoria (September), deliver significant economic stimulus to the region. In 2019 organisers reported 2400 participants and an approximate $3.8 million direct injection into the local economy from event-prompted visitation. As an ultra-distance outing, the event tends to attract pre and post event visitation and overnight stays as runners visit to train on course and partake in organiser-hosted training camps/ weekends to give participants previews of the race day course. This results in multiple overnight visits and associated local spend (food, attractions etc.) even prior to the event weekend.

In Derby, Tasmania, the Tassie Trail Fest leveraged the Council's investment in MTB trails. The event reports a $330,000 direct economic stimulus in the region per year for three years, as a result of hosting the three-day event on Derby/Weldborough trails (2015-17).

In Warburton, Victoria, seed funding support from the Yarra Ranges Tourism and local Community Economic Development Association for the three-day Warburton Trail Fest resulted in a direct economic input of $225,000 (2019 event). Nearly 60% of participants stayed overnight for the event and of that, 80% stayed 2-3 nights (901 equivalent bed nights). 88% of attendees indicated that they were highly likely or will definitely return to visit the Warburton Valley specifically for active recreation (hike, run, ride, paddle). As a marketing exercise the event had excellent new market reach with 59% not aware of Warburton Valley as a trail running destination previously.[14]

14 *Warburton Trail Fest Event Stakeholder Report*, 2019.

Case Study:

WARBURTON, YARRA RANGES COUNCIL

Yarra Ranges Council (Victoria) is currently in the planning stages of developing Warburton as a world-class trails destination. The destination will be based on a series of mountain bike trails and hubs all descending into Warburton. In addition, the area has great walking/running trails and road cycling opportunities. Trail-based businesses will be able to develop and grow based on the concentration of visitors in the valley and town. The region is a comparable learning base for Noosa as it has similar characteristics in terms of being located near larger population centres, is a well-known tourism hub that is yet to fully leverage its trails source and recently large investments have been committed to specifically develop (and redevelop) its trails network for multi-user groups. Predictive outcomes for local economic stimulus are in excess of $26 million for the mountain biking trail development alone, with walking, running and some paddling additional stimulus opportunities, as per the Noosa region.

10 Future Directions

What needs to be fixed?

This *Noosa Trail Masterplan* – and its inherent foundation of consultation and research – has clearly identified that the current Noosa Trail Network, particularly pertaining to the hinterland zone, does not meet the standard expected by today's trail user markets, local and inbound visitors alike. The current network is inconsistent in quality, disconnected in alignments, has poor interpretation, information and promotional support, and as a holistic nature-based tourism offering, fails to deliver on its potential, given the high quality and unique environs in which it is hosted.

The opportunity

There is currently huge growth in 'outdoor active' tourism, bringing with it growth in economic, business and employment opportunities for regions such as Noosa that enjoy attractive and accessible landscapes suitable for a variety of outdoor pursuits. Further, facilitation of growth in outdoor active tourism via the development of resources such as trails and related infrastructure, inherently creates a more inviting environment for local communities to become more engaged in their local environment, more active and therefore healthier – with community health outcomes a core driver of local government responsibilities and objectives.

The opportunity within the Noosa region, therefore, is significant and clear: a better designed, more user appropriate, connected and cohesive trail network that is well maintained and well promoted, will result in a myriad of positive outcomes that will drive significant returns on investment across economic and community, returns that will far outstrip initial investment costs.

Where would Noosa Trail Network like to be positioned in 10-15 years?

In following a *Noosa Trail Masterplan* to fruition (recognising that trails development is an ongoing growth and sustainability process that continues its timeline beyond any single Masterplan), it is envisaged that the Noosa region becomes a high visibility compelling destination for outdoor active visitors across intrastate, interstate and international markets. The trail network will become renowned for offering a variety of high-quality experiences for both recreational and enthusiast users across cycling (on and off road), walking/hiking, trail running, horse-riding and paddle pursuits.

In a tourism sense, trail development should be considered with a specific targeting of and design for beginner-intermediate level trail users, given the preferred dynamic of this market in terms of its size and visitor expenditure, matched to the types of landscapes available which can dictate best style of trail experience. Intermediate-difficult / technically advanced trail experiences should still remain in the mix in degrees, servicing enthusiast visitors and local community users.

The Noosa region has the opportunity to develop a reputation as a welcoming community that embraces an active, outdoors lifestyle and welcome like-minded visitors to their backyard.

Tourism Noosa's innovative and engaging marketing reflects the diverse visitor experiences on offer in the region and positions Noosa's distinctiveness to resonate over competitor destinations. The Masterplan should align with Tourism Noosa's guiding vision:

> To lead a proud and ethical tourism industry that delivers exceptional experiences and nurtures our magnificent environment.
>
> – TOURISM NOOSA TEAM VISION

Tourism Noosa's segment marketing also targets niche interest areas such as health and wellness, walking trails and outdoor adventure, and active travel, which dovetails with and indeed relies on the delivery of high quality 'journey through nature' experiences founded on well-designed, networked and maintained trails.

The Noosa Trail Network will appeal due to its accessibility and location near popular Noosa Heads, with hinterland villages becoming popular day and multi-day stay destinations with visitors able to spend significant time and money on enjoying the landscapes made accessible by the trail network.

Tourism Noosa anticipates that with the enhancement of a better trail network that the length of stay for visitors to the Noosa Shire would increase – allowing the value over volume equation to prosper. Maximising each visitor while they are in region and dispersing them throughout the entire shire.

How can it get there?

In order to realise the vision, the objectives and the outcomes described in this Masterplan, the Noosa region, its community, government agencies, land managers, user groups and other stakeholder organisations need to align with and 'buy in' to the vision of Noosa as a significant trails destination that will attract a range of trail users.

Support needs to be gained across the board for significant trail redevelopment, realignment, design and promotion, with significant hurdles to be overcome in considering current perspectives of land management and best practice use, issues of sustainability, maintenance and funding (for both development and ongoing maintenance).

A more detailed trail corridor and specific alignment plan will need to be created – this Masterplan is a springboard for more detailed design and associated environmental and cultural assessments to gauge feasibility.

Funding models will need to be described and financial models determined, and an overarching steering committee (or similar) will need to be created to guide and monitor the process and progress and act as a central point of stewardship.

Further, local businesses and community groups will need to be engaged and excited by the prospect of leveraging the significant opportunities both economically and socially that a high-quality, sustainable trail network can bring to regions and towns. They, along with local user groups, will need to be empowered by land managers and local government agencies, to take on their part in the stewardship of the Noosa Trail Network, as a critical path to success.

Summary of recommendations of the *Noosa Trail Masterplan*:

These recommendations relate to the primary objectives described on page 7:

1. Trail network
2. Trail user experience
3. Trail infrastructure and services
4. Governance and management

1.

Rationalise, redevelop and realign the Noosa Trail Network in order to better deliver the type and quality of experience* now sought by the growing and diverse recreational trail user market. Much of the current network does not meet experience quality or user suitability benchmarks. Focus should be on quality redevelopment over sheer quantity of trails.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE/S 1 2

2.

Connect current fragmented trail areas and hubs within the region, in order to build a more cohesive and consistent overall trail experience.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE/S 1 2

3.

New land parcels Yurol and Ringtail State Forest – once unusable due to harvesting activities – are soon to come on-stream, offering a timely opportunity to develop new trails that better connect already in-use areas. This presents 'clean slate' design opportunities that can better reflect market demand for specific trail experiences.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE/S 1 2

4.

A trails stakeholder committee of management formed to oversee direction and implementation. Function to also improve relations and regular communication and understanding between representative user groups and land managers.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE 4

5.

Trail routing should concentrate in equal measure on highlighting Noosa hinterland's unique and biodiverse ecosystems and landscapes, while matching the market demand for high-quality, well-maintained, well linked trails that suit specific activity requirements across walking, running, mountain biking, cycling, paddling and equestrian pursuits.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE/S 1 2

6.

Fully mapped final Trail Masterplan to be developed and costed, inclusive of prioritisation timelines, funding source targets and detailed management plans for trails.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE/S 3 4

7.

Designations confirmed across revitalised network as to shared use versus single use trails.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE 2

8.

Mountain biking trails and supporting infrastructure require upgrade and new trails built to service current gaps in product suite and in quality of experiences.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE/S 1 2

9.

Walk/run trails require specific identification of product, some redevelopment and packaging in terms of information available and promotion to growing segments of the outdoor active market.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE/S 1 2

Summary of recommendations of the *Noosa Trail Masterplan* cont.

10.

Equestrian trails require specific audit and re-packaging of available experiences in consultation with local equestrian user groups.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE 2

11.

Trail signage and interpretation requires wholesale upgrades. New improved technology introduced to enhance accessibility, ease and safety.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE 3

12.

Educational and inspirational information would be beneficial at Trail Hubs, Trail Towns or on selected trails (Natural and cultural heritage information).

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE 3

13.

Promotional and marketing material across many information sources and channels (digital, print, onsite, ambassadors) requires wholesale rebranding and refresh.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE 3

14.

Trail events strategy and coordinated calendar needs to be created in order to encourage new events and/or grow established events. Will act as annual promotion opportunity for outdoor active opportunities available across Noosa region trails and attract visitation between events. Support program for event operators to assist in becoming self-sustainable enterprises and active tourism attractions.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE 3

15.

Support mechanisms created to ensure economic opportunities are identified, are accessible and can be fully realised by local business, both core and peripheral to the projected growth in visitation based on trail-related outdoor active user markets.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE 3

*Quality markers include: standard of trail surfacing; features of the route i.e. viewpoints and vistas, waterfalls, ride features (berms etc.); significant flora; supporting infrastructure (toilets, car parks); trailhead information.

11 Detailed Recommendations

Strategy	Action	Timeframe Short: 1-2 yrs Medium: 3-5 yrs Long: 5-10 yrs	Partners / Stakeholders
Management			
Trail management model Development of a Noosa Trail management steering committee involving all user group, advocacy group and land management representation. Empowerment of volunteer maintenance models via dedicated volunteer working group processes based on realistic timeframes and facilitation of volunteers.	• Establish a steering committee (or similar structure) to oversee implementation of Trail Masterplan and associated projects, working with all agreed stakeholders. • Identify likely volunteer communities from active recreational and sport groups willing to actively engage in trail stewardship. • Develop systemised and recorded processes for trail maintenance works undertaken by volunteers, along with support structures (training, accreditation, equipment, funding) to support volunteer efforts. • Source grants for infrastructure works, further planning developments, marketing requirements etc.	Short	• Noosa Council • QLD Parks and Wildlife Service • Tourism Noosa • Noosa & District Landcare • Event and tour operators • Sporting / recreation clubs (MTB, horse, trail run) • Hinterland village trader groups and representatives • High user group representatives
Sustainability – funding Identification of funding models and streams, with prioritisation of funding pool targets against prioritised trail developments across Noosa Trail Network.	• Research, identify and prioritise potential funding models and pathways for achieving income inclusive one-off (grant) and sustainable / ongoing streams. • Develop predictive budgets for ongoing maintenance of finalised trail network (according to phased implementation) inclusive management and execution of maintenance tasks.	Short-Medium	• Noosa Council • Hinterland village trader groups • SEQ Water • Noosa & District Landcare • Tourism Noosa • Trailblazers Mountain Bike Club
QPWS – relationship building focus Further development of communication channels between trail user, advocacy groups and QPWS, especially around new trail development, sustainability and importance of trail-based events and their pathways to sustainability (vis a vis current limiting of event participant numbers).	• Establish a working group (potential trails oversight or steering committee) inclusive of stakeholders with QPWS an important member. • Develop case study collateral and clear pathways that assist understanding of how all conservation and environmental benchmarks can be met in parallel with trail development and recreation within State and National Parks.	Ongoing	• Tourism Noosa • Noosa Council • QLD Parks and Wildlife Service • Event operators • Sporting / recreation clubs (MTB, horse, trail run)

Strategy	Action	Timeframe Short: 1-2 yrs Medium: 3-5 yrs Long: 5-10 yrs	Partners / Stakeholders
Marketing			
New market activation – trail running	• Work with local trail running community (through NUTRs – Noosa Ultra & Trail Runners – and other gatekeepers) to identify preferred and new trail running routes. • Curate / designate a suite of trail run routes according to varying difficulty, promoted to locals and visitors alike. • Support King of Mountain trail event to help grow attendance and publicity outcomes. • Investigate viability of establishing more trail running events (short and ultra, some targeted at local community and others big enough to be attractive to visitors).	Short	• Tourism Noosa • NUTRs • Event operators • Individual 'champions'
Local business activation	• Identify opportunities for local businesses to leverage trail recreation influx. • Assist local businesses to understand the trail user markets and opportunities. • Support local businesses willing to invest in attracting and servicing trail user markets.	Short	• Tourism Noosa • Noosa Council • Hinterland village trader groups and representatives • Event operators • Tour operators • Support service providers/retailers • Sporting / recreation clubs (MTB, horse, trail run)
Promotion	• Audit all trail-related information resources – print and online. • Gap analysis of collateral. • Rebranding of Noosa Trail Network. • Creation of promotional and informational collateral according to rebrand. • Create a Trail Network Marketing Plan encompassing trail recreation across all user groups, that identifies markets, channels and best strategies to inspire use / visitation.	Short-Medium	• Tourism Noosa • Noosa Council • Noosa & District Landcare • Event operators • Tour operators • Support service providers/retailers • Sporting / recreation clubs (MTB, horse, trail run)
New market activation – E-bike	• Consider and research growth in E-bike tourism and how to facilitate / support positioning Noosa hinterland as an ideal E-bike trail centre (given undulating landscapes, vistas and network of villages within proximity). • Create back country / E-bike guides to Noosa hinterland.	Medium	• Tourism Noosa • Noosa Council • Event operators • Tour operators • Support service providers/retailers • Sporting / recreation clubs (MTB, horse, trail run)

Strategy	Action	Timeframe Short: 1-2 yrs Medium: 3-5 yrs Long: 5-10 yrs	Partners / Stakeholders
Infrastructure and planning			
Trail Town designation – Pomona Suggest designating Pomona as a 'Trail Town' hub. Pomona is well facilitated by supporting services (accommodation, cafes etc.), and as a community in better readiness to take on the designation of being a Trail Town, with likely higher ratio of community support. Potential for redeveloping and improving trail network in this region is excellent with high trail quality and features and good links both to the east and west, making it well positioned geographically for access.	• Confirm trail connectivity via Golden Triangle Masterplan (where trails will enter / exit town / where trail hub will be). • Confirm likely trail user support services gaps and opportunities. • Work with local businesses to engage and activate for trail-based visitation. • Collaborate with the Pomona Railway Station Gallery, where visitor information is currently being provided, to become a dedicated Trail Information Centre. • Assess transport to/from options for users linking to Noosa and other regional tourism hubs; activate transport stakeholders (train operators etc.). • Identify key Pomona community champions for the Pomona Trail Town designation, both individual and organisational (schools etc.).	Short	• Noosa Council • QLD Parks and Wildlife Service • Heart of Pomona • Pomona Railway Station Gallery • Pomona Mens Shed • Noosa & District Landcare • Pomona community and businesses • Tourism Noosa
Wooroi MTB Hub Improve facility infrastructure to meet demand.	• Toilet, water and car parking facilities upgrade, required urgently.	Short	• Noosa Council • QLD Parks and Wildlife Service • Noosa Trailblazers
Ringtail State Forest The handover of Ringtail State Forest to transition to National Park status creates an ideal opportunity to develop a trail plan that incorporates realigning existing trails (for better experience and linkages) and the creation of new trails based on maximising the landscapes and elevation on offer for high quality mountain biking and on-foot (walk/run) trails. Ringtail's proximity to Boreen Point in the north also makes it a primary focus for education group use, with Boreen Point and Elanda Point major hubs for school groups, and major users of trails in the region. From safety and experience perspectives there is requirement for a transit linking trail from Boreen Point to the northern Ringtail State Forest entrance trailhead. Connecting trails are required to the south-east into Tewantin NP and to the south-west into Yurol State Forest, as well as into Lake Macdonald (potential major trailhead).	• Evaluate current land manager plans and timelines for land parcel, noting change in usage from harvesting to recreational. • Identify preferred trail design and alignments inclusive realignments, upgrades and new trail build, that will service identified markets for that zone. • Look to identify appropriate site for and include dedicated Trail Hub trailhead, inclusive parking, shelter, water supply, racks and fix-it station. • Work with land managers to incorporate trail plan into ongoing land management and development plans. • Develop 'brand story' for Ringtail Trail Network as a cohesive chapter of a broader Noosa Trail Network rebranding.	Short	• Noosa Council • QLD Parks and Wildlife Service • Noosa Parks Association • Kabi Kabi • HQ Plantations • Noosa & District Landcare • Tourism Noosa

Strategy	Action	Timeframe Short: 1-2 yrs Medium: 3-5 yrs Long: 5-10 yrs	Partners / Stakeholders
Yurol State Forest Mirroring Ringtail State Forest, Yurol State Forest and the handover of harvested forest to transition to National Park status presents an ideal opportunity to realign existing trails (for better experience and linkages) and for the creation of new trails based on maximising the landscapes on offer for high quality shared and single-use trails. Importantly this area links Lake Macdonald (proposed trail hub) to the proposed Trail Town, Pomona, in the south, along with Ringtail State Forest in the north, with access trails suggested into Cudgerie and Cooroy in the south.	• Evaluate current land manager plans and timelines for land parcel, noting change in usage from harvesting to recreational. • Identify preferred trail design and alignments inclusive realignments, upgrades and new trail build, that will service identified markets for that zone. • Work with land managers to incorporate trail plan into ongoing land management and development plans. • Work with local trail user groups to develop volunteer maintenance ownership / modelling for maintenance. • Develop 'brand story' for Yurol Trail Network as a cohesive chapter of a broader Noosa Trail Network rebranding including Kabi Kabi cultural history and storytelling. • Tourism Noosa has a Trees for Tourism project that helps with the revegetation of the area and could be a potential experience for walkers and riders to be involved in a tree planting experience or donating to the program.	Short	• Noosa Council • QLD Parks and Wildlife • HQ Plantations • Noosa Parks Association • Kabi Kabi • Noosa & District Landcare • Tourism Noosa
Kin Kin Focus on equestrian trail user experience and community. Limited focus on cycling/mountain biking/walk product. Shared use maintained. Future link to Woondum Forest Reserve proposed trails.	• Re-assess trails in this zone focused on equestrian use purposes (what can be upgraded, developed) working with local horse riders to deliver appropriate upgrades. NOTE: keeping trails shared use (walking a predominant alternative use, riding secondary). • Leveraging and supporting current equestrian 'experiential' (non-competitive) trail ride and identifying further event opportunities. • Promote equestrian trail experience to horse riders. • Identify opportunities for agistments in the local area. • Assess option and feasibility for future MTB link to proposed Woondum Forest Reserve Trails. • Assess potential best backcountry / gravel grind routes linking Kin Kin to south and activate local businesses to service/support that market.	Short	• Kin Kin Business / Traders Association • Noosa & District Landcare • Equestrian Association • Noosa Council • Tourism Noosa

Strategy	Action	Timeframe Short: 1-2 yrs Medium: 3-5 yrs Long: 5-10 yrs	Partners / Stakeholders
Golden Triangle focus > Wooroi/ Tewantin > Pomona > Ringtail/ Boreen Point Primary focus for redevelopment opportunities presents within the so-called 'Golden Triangle' area bounded by Wooroi in the east, Pomona and Cooran in the west and the northern tip of Ringtail State Forest in the north (with linkage through to Boreen Point). Whilst there are network trails to the north towards Kin Kin, it is suggested that focusing on the Golden Triangle area is best strategy due to proximity to Noosa Heads, concentration of trail alignments both current and potential within the zone, and best opportunities for consistency of experience and linkages. Trails around Kin Kin should be rationalised with a priority on identifying select (and best) equestrian loops and 'gravel grind' / road cycling tour route designations.	• Investigate and identify detailed corridors and mapping for best trail alignments and supporting infrastructure design. • Confirm trail rationalisations and design/ build prioritisations, with planning for regeneration and realignment timeframes. • Work with land managers / stakeholders to ensure alignments meet environmental, cultural, sustainability and user-demand guidelines. • Create a Golden Triangle Zone Trail Masterplan – concurrent with an overarching trail alignment Masterplan for region – to inform permissions and implementation process and dictate trail build process.	Short-Medium	• Noosa Council • QLD Parks and Wildlife Service • SEQ Water • Noosa Parks Association • Tourism Noosa • Noosa & District Landcare
Tewantin National Park / Tinbeerwah With best proximity to Noosa Heads, Tewantin and Wooroi, along with excellent under-utilised geographical features, Tewantin National Park requires a trail plan focusing on mountain bike specific trails with some additional walk and run product development. Requires link solution to join with existing Wooroi trail network in the south. Leverages off the Tinbeerwah Lookout, a feature target for ride, run and walk. Single-use mountain bike trails to come off the north-south ridge leading away to the north of the lookout, with pedestrian walk/ run singletrack creating loop links to the west into Lake Macdonald (proposed) trailhead / recreation area.	• Evaluate current land manager plans for land parcel, establishing and continuing dialogue with QPWS. • Identify preferred trail design and alignments inclusive realignments, upgrades and new trail build, that will service identified markets for that zone. Inclusive of critical link to Wooroi MTB trails. • Work with land managers to incorporate trail plan into ongoing land management and development plans. • Work with local trail user groups to develop volunteer maintenance ownership / modelling for maintenance. • Develop 'brand story' for Tewantin Network as a cohesive chapter of a broader Noosa Trail Network rebranding.	Short-Medium	• Noosa Council • QLD Parks and Wildlife Service • Trailblazers Mountainbike Club • Tourism Noosa

Strategy	Action	Timeframe Short: 1-2 yrs Medium: 3-5 yrs Long: 5-10 yrs	Partners / Stakeholders
Lake Macdonald – trailhead hub The near-future upgrade/ redevelopment of Lake Macdonald and environs offers opportunity to integrate trail-specific development, including establishing a major trailhead at recreation area at north-west corner of lake. Trails to link in from Ringtail State Forest in north, Tewantin in the east, Yurol and Pomona in the west. Leverages siting of Noosa Botanic Gardens on eastern shore of lake. www.seqwater.com.au/project/lake-macdonald-dam-upgrade	• Evaluate current Land Manager plans and timelines for land parcel specifically noting active upgrade works by South East Queensland Water (planning phase 2019-20 / construction 2020-22). • Identify appetite for trail development including potential 'Trail Hub' to activate Lake Macdonald shore-based recreational opportunities. • Establish preferred trail alignments inclusive realignments, upgrades and new trail build, that will service identified markets for that zone. • Work with land managers to incorporate trail plan into ongoing land management and development plans. • Work with local trail user groups to develop volunteer maintenance ownership / modelling for maintenance. • Develop 'brand story' for Lake Macdonald and environs network (linked to Ringtail and Yurol networks) as a cohesive chapter of a broader Noosa Trail Network rebranding.	Short-Medium	• Noosa Council • SEQ Water • QLD Parks and Wildlife Service • Noosa & District Landcare • Tourism Noosa
Cooran – Pomona Trail (railway reserve) Accessing funding for 'rail trails' with a view to establishing a trail from Pomona to Cooran aligned alongside railway corridor. This would bridge the gap in a potential loop trail experience between Pomona and Cooran whilst simultaneously providing a much-needed bike transit route for the school-age community to commute between Cooran and Pomona to attend Junior School.	• Research and confirm a potential trail alignment corridor from Cooran to Pomona inclusive of researching of feasibility of trail route paralleling railways line / railway land. • Identify grant opportunities specific to this project. • Align local (Cooran / Pomona) champion organisations and develop sustainability models that are inclusive of community organisations to take volunteer guardianship of the trail (i.e. schools etc.).	Medium	• Noosa Council • Noosa & District Landcare • Heart of Pomona • Cooran business group • Pomona and Cooran schools

Strategy	Action	Timeframe Short: 1-2 yrs Medium: 3-5 yrs Long: 5-10 yrs	Partners / Stakeholders
Woondum Forest Reserve Long-term aim to advocate for and establish high quality stand-alone trail network within Woondum Forest Reserve, utilising ridgeline and elevation for first class MTB trails with trailhead at Johnstons Lookout. Consideration given to a walk/run route addition. Loop back trails and/or consideration given to gravity drop trail to Cooran terminus to link with public transport (train and/or trails to Pomona). Note Gympie to the north-west has existing trail product in Victory Heights, Woondum creating a stepping-stone trail destination to/from Gympie, back into Noosa.	• Initiate feasibility into creation of a stand-alone mountain bike network within Woondum Forest Reserve with careful consideration of trailhead / parking location, residential impacts, trail design / plan.	Long	• QLD Parks and Wildlife Service • Noosa Council • Gympie Regional Council • Tourism Noosa
Alternative low-input, high-yield cycling – gravel grind/back country (including Kin Kin to Gympie)	• Curation and promotion of a select network of 'gravel grind' and back country touring routes that leverage the high concentration of high quality, significant elevation gravel road routes available in the Noosa hinterland, matched to key focal points (lookouts, townships). • Develop guide / collateral to promote.	Long	• Noosa Council • Gympie Regional Council • Tourism Noosa • Event operators • Tour operators • Support service providers/retailers • Sporting / recreation clubs (MTB, horse, trail run)
Trail signage / interpretation Complete revision of Noosa Trail Network branding and on-trail signage, with high priority allocated to in-use trails (i.e. Wooroi) and those trails identified for priority development.	• Audit trail signage for location, condition and suitability. • Devise trail signage (directional and interpretive) masterplan reflecting new / redeveloped / realigned trail network. • Commission brand redevelopment for Noosa Trail Network to reflect across all assets (signage, interpretation, marketing, information on and offline).	Ongoing	• Noosa Council • QLD Parks and Wildlife Service • Kabi Kabi • Tourism Noosa

Stage One Works Cost Estimate document by TRC Tourism provided on request to Tourism Noosa

> The development of this plan could not have been done without the enormous support of the over 40 plus stakeholders who have been consulted in this process.
>
> There has never been a better time for the ideas in this plan to be developed. It will support Noosa as a truly sustainable green destination and harnesses the natural beauty of the hinterland, encouraging health and wellbeing for our community and for our visitors.

Appendix A – Consultation

The following stakeholders and user groups were consulted as part of development of the *Noosa Trail Masterplan*:

- Bike On
- Broadcroft Design
- Cognition Bikes
- Cooloola Berries
- Cooroy Chamber of Commerce
- Cooroy Future Group
- Country Noosa
- The Dales Boutique B&B
- Ecotekk Electric Bikes
- Equathon Horse Riding
- Great Noosa Trail Walk
- Heart of Pomona
- Kabi Kabi Applicant
- Kin Kin Community Group
- Kin Kin General Store
- Kin Kin Horse Ride
- Living Valley Health Retreat
- Looking Glass
- Majestic Theatre
- Noosa Biosphere Reserve Foundation
- Noosa Black Coffee
- Noosa Council
- Noosa and District Landcare
- Noosa Library
- Noosa Museum
- Noosa Trailblazers
- Noosa Tri Club
- Pomona Railway Station Art Gallery
- QLD Parks and Wildlife Service
- Rosecliffe Cottages
- Sandy Bolton MP
- Slow Food Noosa
- Spoke n Trail
- Steve Weis Gallery
- Sunny Coast Trail Horse Riders Association
- Sunshine Coast Horse Agistment
- Susan Ewington
- That Place Pomona
- Tourism Noosa
- Tri Adventure
- Tropical Treks Guided Bushwalks & Birdwatching
- Venturecycles
- Waterford Park

Appendix B – References

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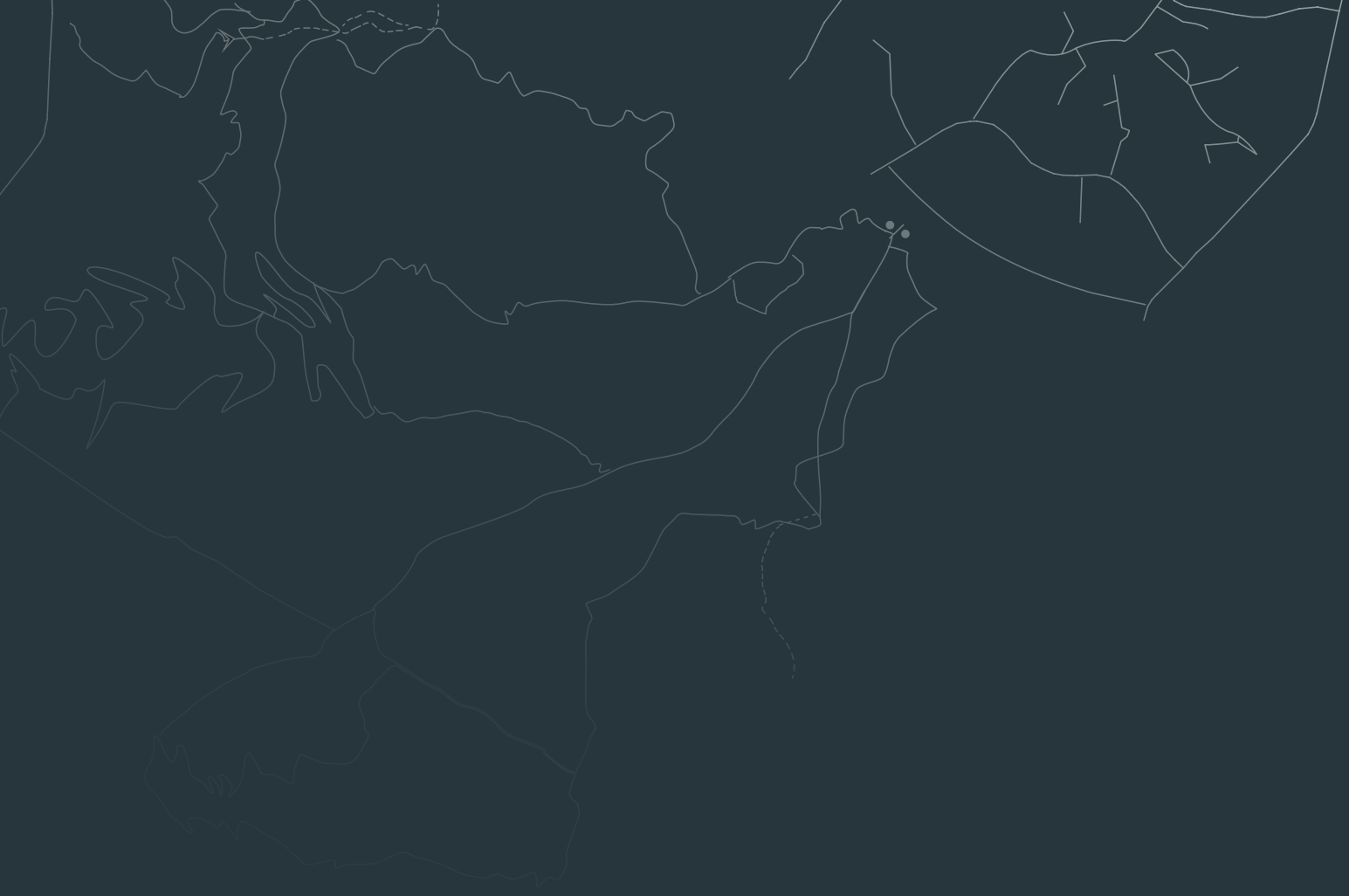

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