WESTERN AUSTRALIAN STRATEGIC TRAILS BLUEPRINT 2017-2021

Photo: Stirling Range National Park © Tourism Western Australia

Developed for the Trails Reference Group by TRC Tourism

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PUBLICATION INFORMATION

DISCLAIMER

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The trails community recognises and values the heritage, culture and spiritual connection of Aboriginal people with the lands and waterways through which trails pass.

GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
Department of **Sport and Recreation**
Department of **Parks and Wildlife**

Tourism WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Trails WA

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Photo: Joffre Gorge Trail in Karijini National Park. ©Tourism Western Australia

FOREWORD

Western Australia is blessed with landscapes which naturally invite us into the outdoors. The scenery ranges from the lush, age-old trees of the South West to the red dirt of the north. The flora and fauna is unique and the vistas postcard worthy. Our State's geography allows us to challenge ourselves on a winding mountain bike ride, take a leisurely stroll or enjoy many other trails experiences on offer.

Our trails connect people with these wonderful natural landscapes, primarily using physical activity for the mode of travel. There's no doubt that being active in the outdoors provides significant health, social and economic benefits and Western Australia's trails achievements continue to fuel a growing reputation internationally.

We should be proud of our work to date on trails, and I am pleased the Western Australian Strategic Trails Blueprint has identified strategic directions for the future that respond to emerging challenges and opportunities.

The document serves as a resource for Western Australia to guide future investment, planning consistency and the sustainable trails development across our State – with the Trails Reference Group to oversee the implementation program through to 2021. The Blueprint acknowledges the growing importance of trails to the visitor and tourism economy as well as its powerful influence on community development and personal wellbeing.

More than two decades ago government, industry and the community came together to form an enduring collaborative partnership that is still evident in this document. The Blueprint builds on the previous strategic outcomes to provide a very strong platform to launch into the next five years. It's my belief that trails present significant opportunities to the community of Western Australia on so many levels.

I commend to you the Western Australian Strategic Trails Blueprint 2017–2021.

Mick Murray MLA
Minister for Sport and Recreation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Western Australian Strategic Trails Blueprint 2017–2021 (the Blueprint) is an overarching guide for consistent and coordinated planning, development and management of quality trails and trail experiences across Western Australia. It provides a vision, guiding principles, strategic directions and actions for consideration across the State for government, trail managers, landholders, trail support groups, tourism operators and the community.

Western Australia is blessed with stunning natural landscapes and the Blueprint expresses the aspirations of the trails community to achieve improved and sustainable outcomes for trail supply, experiences, community development and the local, regional and state visitor economies.

Physical and mental health continues to be vitally important to the general well-being of Western Australian communities and trails in all their forms provide a valuable outlet for exercise, play, challenge, recreation and adventure. Trails also improve the awareness and appreciation of the natural environment and build support for its conservation and protection.

Tourism is now playing a bigger and more significant part in trails development, as visitors – both international and domestic – look for interesting, challenging and unique experiences as part of their holidays and travels. This document recognises that quality trails have the ability to create "Trail Towns", "Trail Centres" and "Trail Networks" which embrace and benefit communities on an economic, tourism and social level.

BLUEPRINT VISION

By 2021 more people will be using Western Australia's trail network resulting in greater community, social, cultural, economic, environmental, health and wellbeing outcomes for Western Australia.

Photo: View of Mylies Beach from the walk trail to East Mount Barren.
©Tourism Western Australia/Authority

GUIDING PRINCIPLES IDENTIFIED TO ACHIEVE THE BLUEPRINT VISION

ACCESS
Consideration is given to ease of access for all members of the community, including local residents and visitors

CONSUMER FOCUS
Trails are planned and developed to match current community and market needs and respond to future change

CONSISTENCY
Lead agencies and relevant stakeholders enact change consistent with the Blueprint

SUSTAINABILITY
Trail planning and development takes into account short and long term community, health, social, economic and environmental considerations

EVIDENCE BASE
Effective monitoring and evaluation are undertaken to contribute to planning

INNOVATION
Global advances in trail development and emerging relevant technologies (such as media, measurement, research) are reflected in trail improvements

COMMUNITY BENEFIT
Trails offer economic, health, wellbeing and community connection outcomes for WA residents

VISITOR ECONOMY CONTRIBUTION
Opportunities are realised for trails to support growth in tourism resulting in increased visitors, spend, new business enterprises and job creation

ENGAGEMENT
The community and user groups have the opportunity to become ambassadors for the trail sector through consultation, feedback and active participation in trail use and events

QUALITY TRAILS
Good planning, maintenance and support networks result in a diverse network of fit-for-purpose, sustainable and high quality trails

ABORIGINAL PARTICIPATION
Opportunities are realised that contribute to awareness of Aboriginal culture and values through trail initiatives

ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE
Trails help protect, interpret and conserve environmental, cultural and heritage values

CURRENT STATE OF TRAILS IN WA

Over the past two decades, there has been a great deal of trail development across WA. The quality of these trails has improved with the maturation of the trails industry and guidance from strategies and frameworks such as the WA Trails Strategy 2009–2015. However, there are still gaps in trails supply across multiple trail types and geographic regions.

Western Australia is seeing increasing growth in trail-related activities and an overall increase in trail use reported by the Department of Parks and Wildlife and other land management agencies. Uptake has been encouraged by better access, new developments, promotion, and an increased community focus on nature-based activity as a pathway to improved fitness, health and wellbeing. Due to unmet demand (particularly for mountain biking and trail bike riding) unsanctioned trails are being developed in places sometimes resulting in unacceptable environmental and cultural impacts.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

To achieve the vision for trails in Western Australia, the Blueprint identifies eight strategy headings broken down into the following strategic directions:

A. EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE
A1. Strengthen State-wide governance arrangements for trails coordination.

B. CONSISTENT AND COLLABORATIVE PLANNING
B1. Develop an integrated and consistent approach to trail planning at the state regional and local levels.
B2. Create a regional trails masterplan framework.

C. SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND MAINTENANCE
C1. Ensure that information and training on best practice sustainable trail design, construction and maintenance is available to current and potential trail developers, managers and organisations.

D. SOUND KNOWLEDGE BASE
D1. Investigate and evaluate trail use trends to inform decision-making on new trail developments and trail uses.
D2. Improve the availability of trail-related data and research for use in trail funding, planning, development and management.

E. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
E1. Encourage community stewardship for trails by supporting and facilitating improvements in volunteer trail development, maintenance and management.
E2. Encourage environmental stewardship through trail participation and programs.
E3. Enhance opportunities for community development through participation in trails activities and programs.

F. INVESTMENT AND FINANCING
F1. Provide guidance and support to organisations, localities and regions to evaluate and seek investment in existing and future trails.
F2. Investigate and encourage the adoption and expansion of a range of sustainable funding options for the development, maintenance and management of trails.

G. GREATER TRAIL USE AND AWARENESS
G1. Improve trail facilities, interpretation and safety to increase the appeal of trail experiences.
G2. Build the capacity of trail-focused events to increase usage and trail-led economic stimulus.
G3. Establish an effective coordinated system for trail communication, promotion and marketing.
G4. Increase coverage of WA trails in the media.

H. GROWING THE VISITOR ECONOMY
H1. Identify iconic trails to be developed and promoted as the best in Western Australia.
H2. Implement a staged program of trail development and promotion for iconic trails.
H3. Encourage and support private sector involvement in improving trail experiences.
H4. Encourage and support Aboriginal involvement in improving trail experiences.

Note: Aboriginal engagement and contribution is assumed across all strategic directions.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

This Blueprint has been developed for the consideration of the Trails Reference Group (TRG) which is convened by the Department of Sport and Recreation. The group is composed of government agencies, industry bodies and community members. The TRG will review the Blueprint, develop a detailed implementation plan and oversee specific aspects of its delivery.
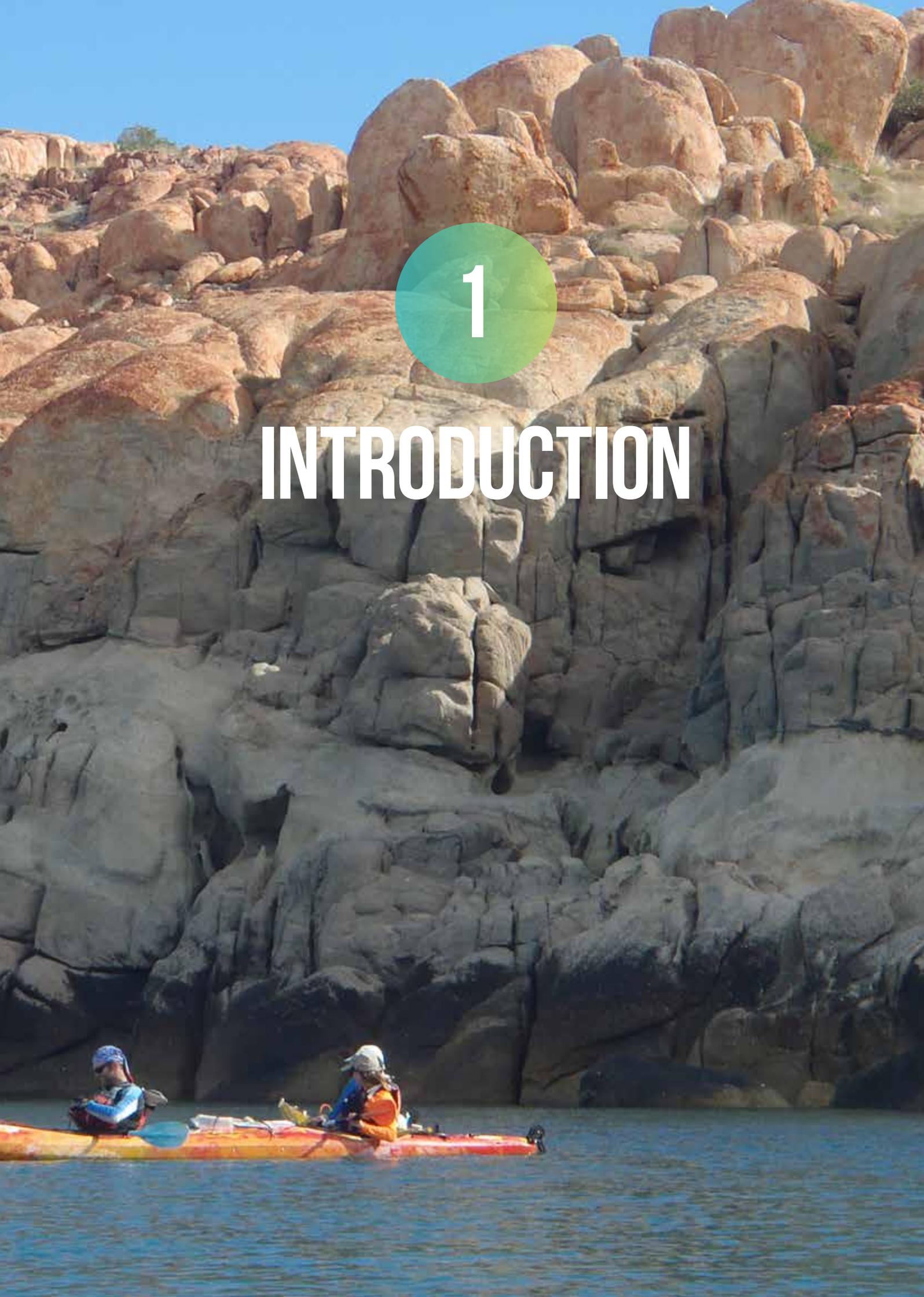
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INTRODUCTION

1.1   INTRODUCTION

Trails have been an important and valued feature of the Western Australian landscape for more than 60,000 years. Some of Western Australia's most-loved walking and cycling trails follow traditional pathways through country that has been used by Aboriginal people for generations. More recently, planning and development of recreational trails has been a significant pillar of strategic government and community thinking. Over the past 21 years numerous trail development initiatives, both large and small, have been implemented across the State to provide opportunities for land and aquatic trail-based activities. It is well recognised that access to trails plays a significant role in encouraging participation in outdoor recreation and driving economic growth through nature-based and adventure tourism. In addition, using trails can assist communities to realise important health and wellbeing benefits, to make social and cultural connections and to enhance environmental outcomes.

1.2   PURPOSE OF THE BLUEPRINT

This Western Australian Strategic Trails Blueprint 2017–2021 (the Blueprint) is an overarching guide for consistent and coordinated planning, development and management of quality trails and trail experiences across Western Australia. It provides a vision, guiding principles, strategic directions and actions for consideration across the State by government, trail managers and landholders, trail support groups and the community. The Blueprint expresses the aspirations of the Western Australian trails community to achieve improved and sustainable outcomes for trail supply, experiences, community development, health and wellbeing and the local, regional and state visitor economies.

The Blueprint supersedes the earlier Western Australian Trails Strategy 2009–2015 and seeks to further develop the significant strengths of the State's trails sector.

Vision

By 2021 more people will be using Western Australia's trail network resulting in greater community, social, cultural, economic, environmental, health and wellbeing outcomes for Western Australia.

The following **Guiding Principles** will be applied in achieving the Vision and implementing the strategies and actions in this Blueprint.

ACCESS
Consideration is given to ease of access for all members of the community, including local residents and visitors

CONSUMER FOCUS
Trails are planned and developed to match current community and market needs and respond to future change

CONSISTENCY
Lead agencies and relevant stakeholders enact change consistent with the Blueprint

SUSTAINABILITY
Trail planning and development takes into account short and long term community, health, social, economic and environmental considerations

EVIDENCE BASE
Effective monitoring and evaluation are undertaken to contribute to planning

INNOVATION
Global advances in trail development and emerging relevant technologies (such as media, measurement, research) are reflected in trail improvements

COMMUNITY BENEFIT
Trails offer economic, health, wellbeing and community connection outcomes for WA residents

VISITOR ECONOMY CONTRIBUTION
Opportunities are realised for trails to support growth in tourism resulting in increased visitors, spend, new business enterprises and job creation

ENGAGEMENT
The community and user groups have the opportunity to become ambassadors for the trail sector through consultation, feedback and active participation in trail use and events

QUALITY TRAILS
Good planning, maintenance and support networks result in a diverse network of fit-for-purpose, sustainable and high quality trails

ABORIGINAL PARTICIPATION
Opportunities are realised that contribute to awareness of Aboriginal culture and values through trail initiatives

ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE
Trails help protect, interpret and conserve environmental, cultural and heritage values

1.4 PARTNERS IN DEVELOPING THE BLUEPRINT

The Blueprint has been collaboratively developed with input from a range of government agencies and trail sector stakeholders at state, regional and local levels. Input was also received from regional development commissions, regional tourism organisations, local governments and eminent persons. The Trails Reference Group led the process with a Project Advisory Group made up of the Department of Sport and Recreation, Department of Parks and Wildlife, Tourism Western Australia and Trails WA.

The strategic development of trails in Western Australia is guided by the Trails Reference Group which is convened by the Department of Sport and Recreation.

Some of the Key Trails Organisations for Western Australia are:

The Trails Reference Group is composed of nominees from government agencies, local governments and community members. The Trails Reference Group advises on the implementation of State trail strategies which will include this Blueprint once it is adopted. It also monitors the progress of proposed actions and outcomes and reports to government and industry. The Trails Reference Group can co-opt members for specialised purposes as required and undertakes consultation with trails stakeholders as part of its process.

The Department of Sport and Recreation's mission is to enhance the quality of life of Western Australians through their participation and achievement in sport and recreation. This includes goals related to industry development, enabling access and encouraging participation. With active outdoor recreation a growing trend, the Department plays a significant role in trails. It coordinates the Trails Reference Group and is the lead agency responsible for coordination and oversight of the WA Strategic Trails Blueprint.

The Department of Parks and Wildlife is responsible for managing the State's national parks, marine parks, state forests and other reserves and many aspects of protection and use of the state's wildlife and natural areas. It manages and maintains the State's largest single portfolio of public trails and plays a major role in trails planning, development, funding and resourcing. The Department of Parks and Wildlife works closely with government and industry partners and volunteer trail support groups.

Whilst many government agencies have a degree of involvement with trails, there is an increasing relevance and contribution from the Department of Regional Development that closely links to major regional projects. The Department of Water also has assisted in relevant trails planning across the State.

Trails WA was established in 2012 to carry out projects to further the development and promotion of trails in Western Australia. It carries out many communications and promotional tasks for trails throughout the State including management of the Trails WA website and associated apps.

Outdoors WA is the peak body for the outdoor sector in Western Australia, including camping, outdoor recreation and outdoor education. It is responsible for facilitating outdoor activity standards and encouraging outdoor recreational activity participation, including education and professional development of outdoor recreation leaders.

Tourism WA is responsible for the interstate and international marketing of Western Australia as a travel destination. It features trails on its website as potential experiences for visitors to the State and promotes trail experiences in conjunction with the regional tourism organisations and through social media.

Lotterywest manages the Trails Grants Program which provides funding support for community trails planning, construction and promotion projects. This program has been significant for trails development across all regions of the State. Guidance to applicants during the application process is provided by the Department of Sport and Recreation and Lotterywest.

Local governments across WA manage and maintain many trails on behalf of ratepayers and the community by providing the infrastructure necessary for quality recreation and visitor experiences.

Community organisations may represent a particular trail type such as bushwalking, cycling, trail bike riding and equestrian or have a special interest focus such as Aboriginal heritage, inclusion, management, volunteering, promotion and/or maintenance of specific trails.
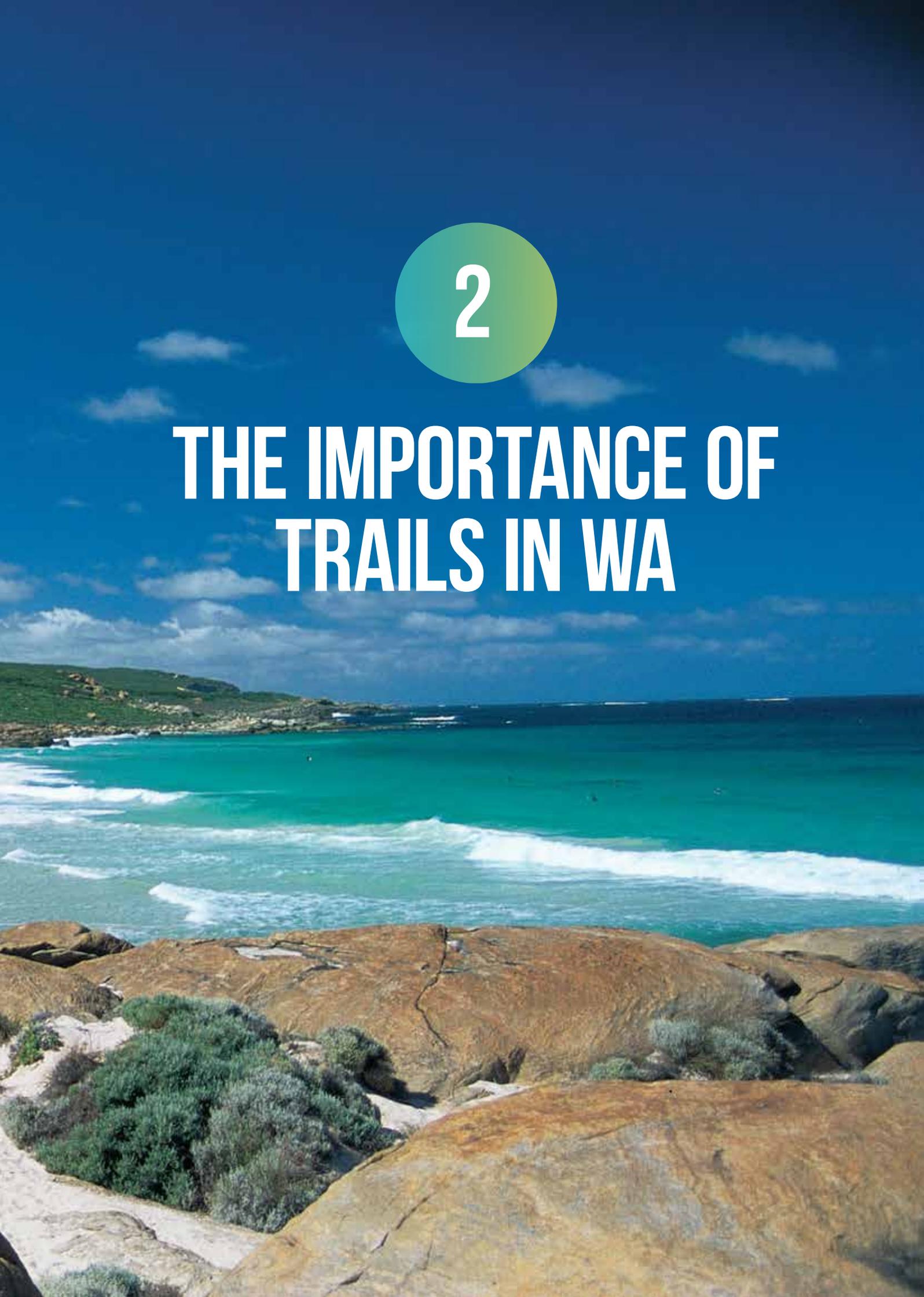
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THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAILS IN WA

2.1   WHAT TRAILS ARE COVERED BY THIS BLUEPRINT?

Trails are pathways or routes that are used for recreation, tourism and appreciation of natural and cultural values. Trails may be short or long; be part of a trail network or a single journey; be used for one activity or be shared by several different trail activities; be primarily used by local residents or form a visitor attraction; be purpose-built paths or routes designated by signage and information.

Many trails are developed as local community infrastructure and as a visitor experience with associated products, services, accommodation and interpretation. Trails covered by the Blueprint include non-motorised and motorised trails based on land and water. The current trail types included on the Trails WA website are shown below. Trail running is not currently listed and is identified within this Blueprint as an emerging activity.

FIGURE 1 TRAIL TYPES

Bushwalking / Urban Walk		Mountain Bike		Cycle	
Equestrian		Paddle		Snorkel	
Trail Bike		Drive (2WD)		Drive (4WD)	

In Western Australia trail opportunities for local people and visitors are enhanced by the development of clusters of linked trails in localities. The different categories of trail clusters are:

Trail Town:

A population centre which has been assessed and accredited as a destination for its trails offering through the provision of high quality:

- Trails (single or mixed use);
- Outdoor experiences that encourage extended visitation;
- Trail-user related facilities and services (including accommodation);
- Trail-related businesses; and
- Trail branding and signage.

Trail Centre:

A managed multiple trail facility with dedicated visitor services supported by high quality:

- Trails (single or mixed use);
- Outdoor experiences that encourage single day visitation;
- Trail-user related services; and
- Trail branding and signage.

A Trail Centre can stand alone in an individual location or may be positioned within a Trail Town.

Trail Network:

A multiple trail facility with limited or no visitor services, supported by high quality:

- Trails (single or mixed use);
- Outdoor experiences that encourage single or part day visitation; and
- Trail branding and signage.

A Trail Network may be a stand-alone facility or form part of a Trail Town or Trail Centre.

FIGURE 2 TRAIL MODEL

TRAIL PRECINCT

TRAIL TOWN
Population Centre

Visitor Information

Amenities & Facilities

Attractions & Activities

Equipment Hire

Trail Centre

Individual Trails

General Services & Supplies

Accomodation

Trail Networks

Individual Trail

TRAIL NETWORKS

Individual Trails

Amenities

TRAIL CENTRE
Individual Site

Visitor Information

Amenities & Facilities

Equipment Hire

Individual Trails

Trail Networks

2.2   TRENDS IN TRAIL USE AND DEVELOPMENT

It is widely recognised that there has been a global increase in the development, use and demand for trails to service growth and change in participation in outdoor activities in communities and by visitors.

The popularity of individual fitness and recreation activities is increasing while that of organised team sports is static or declining [1]. This is accompanied by a growing diversity in recreation activities aided by developments in technology and the affordabilty of equipment. Many of these new activities have a strong lifestyle and/or adventure focus and motivated supporters who are closely involved in the development and maintenance of trails.

Walking, bushwalking and horse-riding as ways of experiencing natural environments have been joined by mountain biking and trail running and the emerging trend of riding electric assist bikes. The growth of paddling and underwater sports has led to demand for water-based trail facilities, while the popularity of four-wheel driving and off-road trail biking has resulted in requests for development of additional trails and routes for these activities.

The provision of well-constructed trails is vital to ensure that these activities are undertaken in a way that protects natural and cultural values and is environmentally and socially sustainable as well as offering excellent experiences for participants. Consumers are increasingly seeking trails that facilitate their enjoyment and appreciation of an area or trail activities through supporting services, visitor products, interpretation and accessible information.

The growth in the range of people seeking support to explore natural areas (including growth in the retiree generation) has resulted in trail development of soft adventure trails and guided or self-guided experience packages that provide information, accommodation, transport and equipment. People are also using digital technologies (such as smartphones and apps) and social media to access information about trails and record their trail activities. There are increasing expectations for delivery of trail interpretation through digital sources.

Photo: 30km early morning summer run, Wungong Regional Park - Darling Regional Park area

[1] Hajkowicz, S.A., Cook, H., Wilhelmseder, L., Boughen, N., 2013. The Future of Australian Sport: Megatrends shaping the sports sector over coming decades. A Consultancy Report for the Australian Sports Commission. CSIRO, Australia.

2.3   BENEFITS OF TRAILS

A global body of evidence shows that the provision of trails leads to multiple health, lifestyle, social, environmental and economic benefits for communities.

BENEFITS THAT ARE GENERALLY RECOGNISED INCLUDE:

Encouraging more frequent outdoor physical activity leading to improved physical and mental wellbeing and a reduction in lifestyle diseases and associated medical costs.

Improved lifestyle due to opportunities for outdoor recreation by individuals, groups, education and community organisations.

Providing low cost facilities for recreation accessible to many different groups in the community.

Improved awareness and appreciation of the natural environment and support for its conservation and protection.

Economic benefits from employment and business opportunities in trail development, management, maintenance, events and supporting products and services.

Tourism growth to trail destinations with resulting economic stimulus of local economies.

Trails adding to the value of nearby properties.

Protection and showcasing of natural, cultural and historic areas by providing for sustainable access routes.

Improved sustainability of local communities by making them more attractive places to live.

Opportunities for social interaction and development of community identity through participation in trail activities, maintenance and conservation.

Photo: Cape Le Grand Coastal Trail. ©Tourism Western Australia

TRENDS IN GROWTH IN OUTDOOR NATURE-BASED ACTIVITIES

An estimated 2.7 million overnight visitors to WA participated in a nature-based activity in 2015-2016 — 27% of all the State's overnight visitors and an increase of 15% a year from 2012–2016.

Source: Tourism WA and the National and International Visitor Surveys.

There are 8 billion visits to the world's national parks.

It is a major economic driver, generating approximately $820 billion annually in direct in-country expenditure.

Source: Balmford A, Green JMH, Anderson M, Beresford J, Huang C, Naidoo R, et al. (2015) Walk on the Wild Side: Estimating the Global Magnitude of Visits to Protected Areas.

Adventure tourism, valued at $263 billion, is one of the fastest growing tourism categories, attracting high-value customers, supporting local economies and encouraging sustainable practices.

Source: Global Report on Adventure Tourism, UNWTO (2014); Adventure Tourism Development Index, (2015) http://adventureindex.travel/docs/atdi_2015.pdf

Australia has 4.2 million international nature-based visitors, an increase of 4% a year from 2010–2014.

2.4 million international visitors considered Australia's diverse coast or natural environment to be their most memorable experience.

Nearly 3 million visitors went cycling.

Source: https://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/725758/GIFT-TRA- Nature-Based- Tourism-Fact- SheetQANTASFINAL-1.pdf

Nature-based tourism contributes $23 billion to the Australian economy each year.

Source: BDA Marketing Planning (2015)

In the year ending June 2016, 68% of international visitors to Australia engaged in some form of nature-based activity.

Source: Tourism Australia, http://www.tourism.australia.com/nature-based- tourism.aspx

3

THE CURRENT SITUATION

3.1   TRAIL SUPPLY

Western Australia has a strong suite of trails for a wide range of users. Many new trail projects are being developed and the trails sector in Western Australia is well positioned for consolidation and growth.

Trails are heavily concentrated in the south and south west of the State where there is a higher population density, milder climate and easier access to trail locations. Trails in the central and northern regions are more disparate or remote, harder to access, less supported by off-trail services and so less used.

More than 470 trails are now listed on the Trails WA website and app, including 62 Top Trails. Many trails in Western Australia are located on land managed by the Department of Parks and Wildlife, which also provides information on trails through Trails WA, digital media and brochures.

3.1.1   BUSHWALKING TRAILS

Bushwalking trails are abundant across the state although quality is variable. Marketing for most walking trails is currently pitched at regional or local markets. Some trails are of such high standard and/or experience and feature enough development potential that there are excellent opportunities for leveraging day and multi-day walks as iconic experiences that attract a wider range of visitor markets. Examples include the Bibbulmun Track, the Cape to Cape Track and the gorge walking trails in Karijini National Park. In some areas, significant trail-related access and infrastructure projects (such as the Granite Skywalk in the Porongurup National Park) have improved visitor opportunities for those regions and driven a rise in visitor numbers.

3.1.2   URBAN WALKING TRAILS

Improved urban pathway networks have been developing in many regional centres including town-based trails linking natural, cultural and heritage highlights in Perth and regional centres.

3.1.3   MOUNTAIN BIKING TRAILS

Mountain biking trail networks have risen in prominence with Margaret River, Pemberton and Collie/Wellington identified as potential nationally significant mountain biking destinations in the South West Mountain Bike Master Plan. Similar potential has been established for several communities in the Perth hills as well as the Peel and Great Southern regions. Many mountain bike trails remain unsanctioned and are currently rated as having only local significance. The Munda Biddi Trail is a high quality, off-road cycling trail between Mundaring (near Perth) and Albany that has strong potential for further development and promotion for iconic biking journey experiences. There are few significant off-road cycle experiences in the State's north.

3.1.4   CYCLE TRAILS

Cycle paths for recreational riders are provided in Perth and larger regional centres. Additional cycle trails are located across the state, generally near towns, particularly along the coast and hinterlands around Perth.

3.1.5   EQUESTRIAN TRAILS

Equestrian trails exist throughout the state, particularly in the south, but have seen limited development for visitor experiences. Some guided horse treks are offered. Planning for the Augusta-Margaret River Bridle Paths and the Bridgetown to Scott River Trail is underway and the implementation of the 320km Warren Blackwood Stock Route will commence in 2017.

3.1.6 PADDLE TRAILS

Several trails have been developed for river, estuary or ocean canoeing and kayaking. They include the Peel Canoe Trails (a Top Trail) offering easy paddling along the Serpentine and Murray Rivers south of Perth. Other paddling trails are located near Fremantle, Rockingham, in the south west and in the north at Shark Bay, Coral Bay and Kununurra.

3.1.7 SNORKEL AND DIVE TRAILS

Trails for snorkelling or scuba diving exist in several areas and include trails at Coogee, Parker Point on Rottnest Island, Jurien Bay, Shoalwater Islands, Ningaloo and Shark Bay.

3.1.8 TRAIL BIKE TRAILS

Trail bike riding incorporates both road registered and off-road registered vehicles. The majority of trail bike riding is done by licenced riders on road registered trail bikes on the many thousands of kilometres of popular legal trails on roads and tracks across the state. There are limited opportunities for sanctioned off-road recreational trail bike riding experiences in the State and no long distance trails exist. Lack of sanctioned off-road trails and facilities has significant impact on other trail users as well as reducing environmental and other values.

Pinjar is an off-road vehicle area in the northern suburbs of Perth which hosts a network of trails. There are commercial trail bike parks south east of the city as well as in the south west. Feasibility assessment of a trail bike riding trail town has commenced in the Shire of Manjimup.

3.1.9 DRIVE TRAILS (2WD)

Driving trails offer a range of half day, day and multiple day journeys exploring the natural environment, heritage and food and wine offerings across Western Australia with many linking to other types of trails.

3.1.10 DRIVE TRAILS (4WD)

Four-wheel drive trails in the State are numerous, with a number of experiences recognised nationally by off-road interest groups including the Gibb River Road, the Canning Stock Route and the Gunbarrel Highway. Routes at Cape Le Grand, Cape Leveque and the Aboriginal culture-inspired Warlu Way offer further themed exploration trails.

3.2　DEMAND FOR TRAILS

Western Australia is seeing increasing growth in trail-related activities. There has been an overall increase in trail use as reported anecdotally by the Department of Parks and Wildlife and other land management agencies. Uptake has been encouraged by better access, new developments, promotion and an increased community focus on nature-based activity as a pathway to improved fitness, health and wellbeing. Due to unmet demand (particularly for mountain biking and trail bike riding) unsanctioned trails are being developed in some places resulting in potentially unacceptable environmental and cultural impacts.

Photo: Siding Railtrail, Munda Biddi. Supplied by Munda Biddi Trail Foundation

Walking (recreational) is the most popular form of exercise

32% ·········· MEN ·········· | WOMEN ········ **52%**

Source: Australian Sports Commission, AusPlay: Participation data for the sport sector, December 2016

Top Reasons for Walking

52%
RECREATION

21%
TRANSPORT

Source: http://www.roymorgan.com/findings/6123-australian-sports-participation-rates-among-children-and-adults-december-2014-201503182151

Based on 8.8 million participants

45.3%

ADULTS REGULARLY WALK FOR EXERCISE

Source: http://www.roymorgan.com/findings/6123-australian-sports-participation-rates-among-children-and-adults-december-2014-201503182151

23% WA residents cycle weekly

43.3% WA residents have ridden a bicycle in the past year

1.13 million approx. WA residents cycle once a year

Source: Australian Cycling Participation Survey 2015
https://www.onlinepublications.austroads.com.au/items/AP-C91-15

Use of cycle or walking paths
increased 7% to 31%
between 1999 to 2006

Source:
http://www.beactive.wa.gov.au/assets/files/Research/2009%20Adult%20Survey%20Main%20Report.pdf)

46.1%

33.2%

Western Australia
43.1%

33%

35.8%

ACT 44.1%

35.9%

34.8%
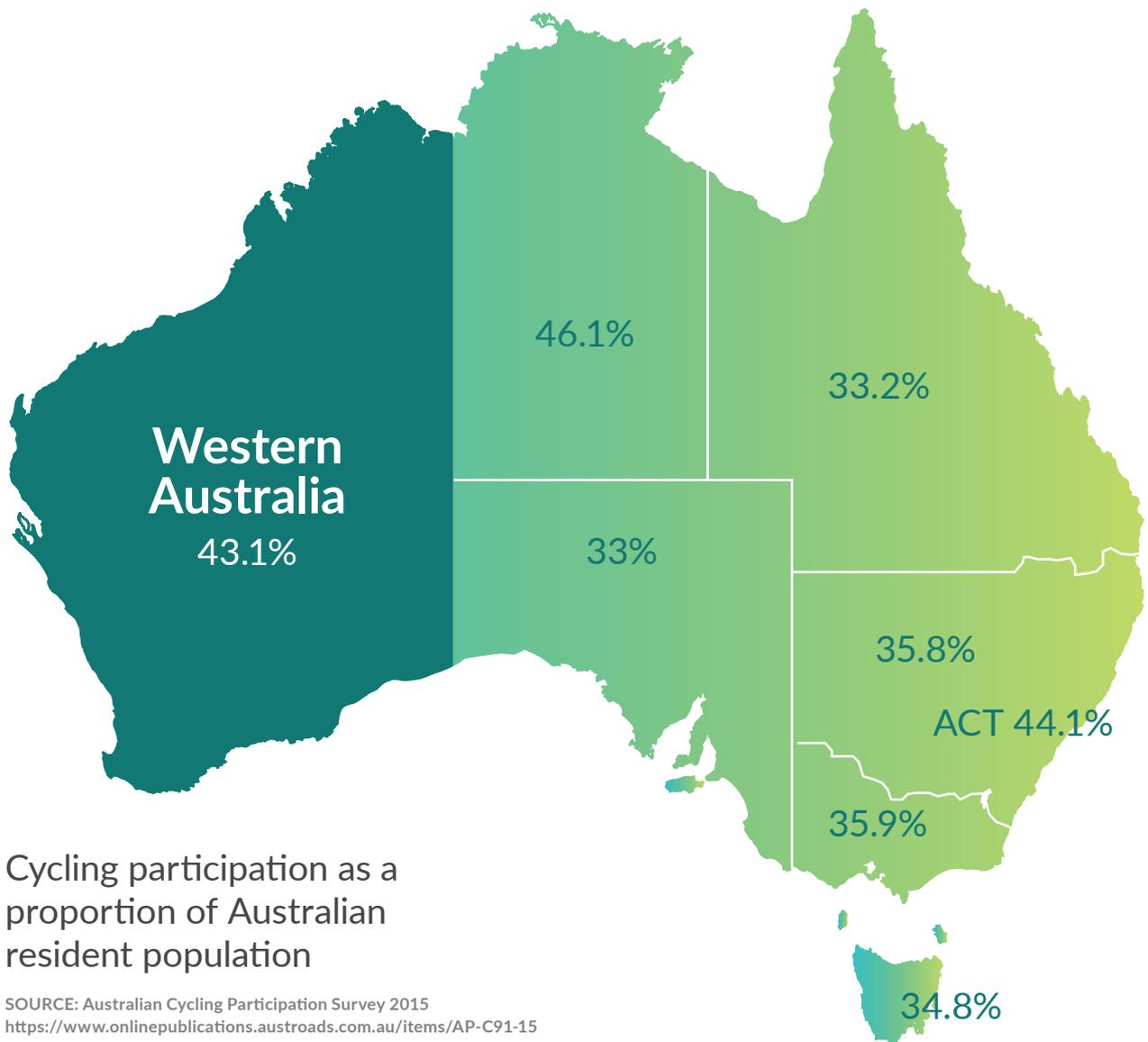
Cycling participation as a proportion of Australian resident population

Estimated **18.6 million visits to WA's national parks** and conservation lands in 2014–2015, a **10% increase** from 2013–2014.

3.3 PLANNING AND COORDINATION

Western Australia has energetic trail stakeholder organisations, partners and community groups that have cooperated on the development and management of many trails. This is seen especially in the collaborative development of the long distance Bibbulmun Track and Munda Biddi Trail and their associated visitor experience and accommodation partnerships. Trails WA was formed in 2012 and is consolidating its outcomes in State-wide trails advocacy, information promotion and marketing.

Numerous State-wide level plans have been developed. These include:

Western Australian Trails Hubs Strategy 2012.

Western Australian Mountain Bike Strategy 2015–2020.

Our Bike Path: A Strategic Framework for Cycling in Western Australian 2014–2020.

Western Australian Horse Trails Strategy 2015.

Western Australian Trail Bike Strategy 2008.

WA Bicycle Network Plan 2014–2031.

WA Outdoor Recreation Strategy (under development).

Local and regional plans and feasibility studies have also been developed at various locations across the State.

Photo: Kimberley Hiking

Trails WA website

The Trails WA website, Trail Talk portal and app is a leading example of a trails-based public domain resource. With the support of the Department of Parks and Wildlife, the Department of Sport and Recreation and Lotterywest, it has evolved and grown into the richest source of information for trails experiences in Western Australia. The website is an opportunity for further growth to continue to improve the marketing and provision of inspiration and information around Western Australia's trail-based assets:

- Number of trail guides: 470+
- Trail types/categorisations logged: walk (bush/urban), mountain bike, cycle, equestrian, paddle, snorkel, trail bike, drive (2WD/4WD).
- Features: reviews, online mapping, trail statistics, trail tips, Top Trails listing, search by region, trail town, trail network, trail experience and trail events.
- 24,000 viewers and 100,000 page views per month and growing.
- Social media support: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Trails WA

Photo: Common Ground

3.4   WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

The progress and enthusiasm demonstrated in trails development to date now needs to be harnessed to achieve the vision for Western Australia's trails. The Blueprint provides the framework and direction to achieve the following aspirational outcomes:

Develop a consistent and coordinated State-wide approach and clear State-wide processes for trail planning, investment, development and management.

Establish better understanding of economic, social, community and health impacts of trails through coordinated research to support continued funding for trails in WA.

Improve the diversity and quality of trails and trail-based experiences across all trail types and trail-based experiences.

Ensure State-wide strategies are in place for all trail-related activities e.g. bushwalking and 4-wheel driving.

Establish a process and template to engage state or quasi-state landholders for accessing corridors such as powerline easements and rail corridor service roads for developing access to trails, use to develop trails and to formalise unsanctioned trails.

Improve the collective suite of information and promotion to support trail experiences.

Attract new domestic and international markets through broader offerings on trails including new commercial opportunities.

Increase the understanding of the vital role that the trail sector plays in the community through the promotion of health and wellbeing, appreciation of culture, protection of the environment, tourism and enhancing the economy.

Improve engagement, coordination, communication and leadership amongst trails sector stakeholders and the extensive community volunteer sector involved in trails.

Develop appropriate financial models for coordinating promotion and marketing of trails towns, trail centres and trail networks.

Develop appropriate financial models for maintenance of trails and trail-based activities.

Establish clear State-wide processes for the designation, branding and accreditation of Top Trails, Trail Towns, Trail Centres and Trail Networks.

3.5 CHALLENGES

There are a range of challenges that need to be addressed to continue to improve Western Australia's trails.

Administration and coordination: There is an opportunity to improve understanding among trails stakeholders of how the trails sector is administered and governed. Coordination between agencies, particularly between local and regional stakeholders and state-level administration could also be improved.

Communication: Effective communication is essential between agencies and management authorities across regional boundaries and between urban / semi-rural borders.

Capacity building: User groups, volunteers, and local government authorities will benefit from capacity building in trail maintenance, development, advocacy and funding acquisition.

Research and data: Trail use data collection, use of technology, tracking, understanding user profiles and market research could be better utilised to assist planning for future trails development and maintenance. Trail use is difficult to quantify due to informal user patterns and many trail users undertaking more than one type of trail activity.

Trails Database: The 470+ trails entered into the Trails WA website have become the information source for trails across the State. Further effort is required to complete the data base to cover all good quality trails.

Funding: Funding sources are not guaranteed and there is a strong reliance on public contributions from government agencies including Lotterywest. Available funds are often tied to specific outcomes that do not always achieve broader trails outcomes.

Maintenance: The ongoing maintenance and monitoring of trails and associated infrastructure to maintain high standards is a significant challenge. Funding for maintenance and upgrades is not consistently available and the capacity of many trails management organisations is limited.

Facilities: Access, signage, interpretation and supporting amenities on trails and at trail towns, trail centres and trail networks need to be improved to raise the standard and market appeal of many trails.

Aboriginal engagement: Increased engagement is needed with Aboriginal communities and groups to increase opportunities for their involvement in trail development, maintenance and interpretation. It will be increasingly important to encourage and support Aboriginal involvement in aspects of trail planning, experiences and/or management.

Legislation and policy: There are some legislative and policy barriers to the development and use of trails. These include limitations on trails and events in public drinking water source areas and issues around native vegetation clearing. Processes required to introduce charges for park / trail use also affect the ability to receive income from use of some parks and trails.

Bushfire: The threat of bushfire events poses a safety hazard for trail users and trails infrastructure. Mechanisms for the communication of trail closures need to be refined. In the event of fire damage, significant costs may be incurred to repair damage. The impact of fire on direct repairs and on diverting trails staff from other work needs to be better communicated to the public and stakeholders.

Branding and marketing: The branding and communication of WA's trails to tourist markets needs further development to achieve greater recognition of the State's trail opportunities.

4

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

The strategies and actions in this section aim to achieve the vision for trails in Western Australia. The strategies cover the following aspects of trail development and management:

A. Effective Governance

B. Consistent And Collaborative Planning

C. Sustainable Design And Maintenance

D. Sound Knowledge Base

E. Community Engagement

F. Investment And Financing

G. Greater Trail Use And Awareness

H. Growing The Visitor Economy

BLUEPRINT STRATEGIES

A. EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE
A1. Strengthen State-wide governance arrangements for trails coordination.

B. CONSISTENT AND COLLABORATIVE PLANNING
B1. Develop an integrated and consistent approach to trail planning at the state, regional and local levels.
B2. Create a regional trails masterplan framework.

C. SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND MAINTENANCE
C1. Ensure that information and training on best practice sustainable trail design, construction and maintenance is available to current and potential trail developers, managers and organisations.

D. SOUND KNOWLEDGE BASE
D1. Investigate and evaluate trail use trends to inform decision-making on new trail developments and trail uses.
D2. Improve the availability of trail-related data and research for use in trail funding, planning, development and management.

E. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
E1. Encourage community stewardship for trails by supporting and facilitating improvements in volunteer trail development, maintenance and management.
E2. Encourage environmental stewardship through trail participation and programs.
E3. Enhance opportunities for community development through participation in trails activities and programs.

F. INVESTMENT AND FINANCING
F1. Provide guidance and support to organisations, localities and regions to evaluate and seek investment in existing and future trails.
F2. Investigate and encourage the adoption and expansion of a range of sustainable funding options for the development, maintenance and management of trails.

G. GREATER TRAIL USE AND AWARENESS
G1. Improve trail facilities, interpretation and safety to increase the appeal of trail experiences.
G2. Build the capacity of trail-focused events to increase usage and trail-led economic stimulus.
G3. Establish an effective coordinated system for trail communication, promotion and marketing.
G4. Increase coverage of WA trails in the media.

H. GROWING THE VISITOR ECONOMY
H1. Identify iconic trails to be developed and promoted as the best in Western Australia.
H2. Implement a staged program of trail development and promotion for iconic trails.
H3. Encourage and support private sector involvement in improving trail experiences.
H4. Encourage and support Aboriginal involvement in improving trail experiences.

Note: Aboriginal engagement and contribution is assumed across all strategic directions.

A. EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Strategy A1: Strengthen State-wide governance arrangements for trail coordination

As a coordinating group of key government agency and trails sector representatives, the Trails Reference Group assists in the coordination and facilitation of trails development, management and promotion across the State's trail sector. The group's effectiveness is hindered by a lack of dedicated resources and understanding of its role among regional and local trails stakeholders. Strengthening the role, representativeness and resourcing of the Trails Reference Group as the primary steward of the State's trails sector will improve its effectiveness in coordinating the trails sector and influencing trails outcomes.

The Trails Reference Group is responsible for overseeing the implementation of this Blueprint.

No.	Action
A1.1	Formalise the structure of the Trails Reference Group with a clear Terms of Reference and include regional representation based on Regional Development Commission areas of responsibility.
A1.2	Create mentorship pairings within the Trails Reference Group that identify and support the next generation of trails ambassadors (succession planning).
A1.3	Establish and implement regular reporting of progress in the implementation of the Blueprint and provide feedback to stakeholder organisations at agreed times.
A1.4	Investigate resources to ensure the continued role of key community organisations that represent trail users and support the trails sector across the State.

B. CONSISTENT AND COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

Strategy B1: Develop an integrated and consistent approach to trail planning at state, regional and local levels.

A State-wide trail planning process to guide trail development at regional and local levels is desirable to ensure that trail planning and development occurs in a way that is compatible with other land uses, development initiatives, legislative and planning requirements, and the protection of environmental, social and cultural values. This approach would help identify priorities for achievable trail opportunities and avoid duplication of trails. In accordance with the vision and principles in this Blueprint, a hierarchy of trails plans would be developed (see Figure 3):

State-wide strategies for specific trail activities should be developed where there is demand from users and government and peak body support. This should address the gaps within the current suite of strategies.

Where practical, regional trails masterplans should be undertaken to provide a scheme for targeted trail development and management for all types of trails in regional areas.

Localised trails plans should be developed as appropriate for areas, trail networks or trails and need to take account of the supply of trails and any relevant linkages in adjacent areas.
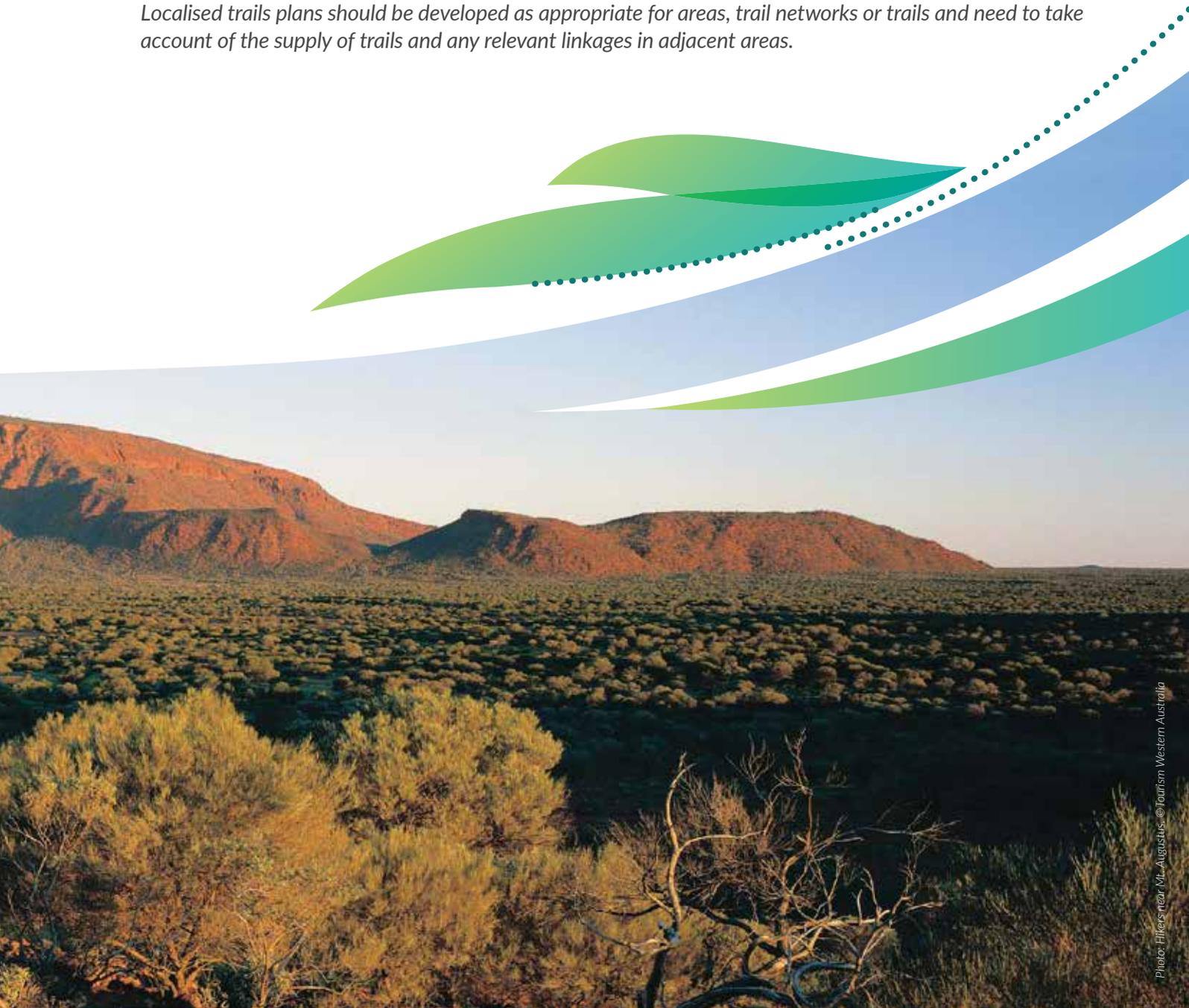
FIGURE 3: STATE-WIDE TRAILS PLANNING STRUCTURE

WA TRAILS STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT

⬇

STATE-WIDE ACTIVITY BASED TRAILS STRATEGIES:
Walking / running
Mountain Bike
Cycling (other than MTB)
Aquatic
4WD
Trail Bike Riding
Equestrian

* Some State activity strategies exist such as trail bike riding, equestrian, mountain biking and cycling. However others are lacking, for example bushwalking, four wheel driving and snorkelling.

⬇

REGIONAL TRAILS MASTERPLANS
Referencing all trail uses / forms

* Some regional trails masterplans exist such as the South West Mountain Bike Master Plan and the Perth and Peel Mountain Bike Master Plan, but few are all-user encompassing.

⬇

LOCALISED TRAILS PLANS
Can be multi-use or specific use.
Project-based relevant to local governments, private operators, community organisations, user groups, trail centres, trail towns and/or networks.

* Most trails plans exist at this level, particularly trail towns and network plans.

No.	Action
B1.1	Audit and create an inventory of current or draft trails plans across the State.
B1.2	Create a centralised and accessible library of all current and planned developments relevant to the trails sector.
B1.3	Identify gaps in the trail planning structure with a view to developing appropriate plans to fill gaps.
B1.4	Develop a tiered trail planning structure for implementation of the Blueprint consisting of State-wide activity-based strategies, regional trails masterplans (where possible or necessary) and localised trails plans.

Strategy B2: Create a regional trails masterplan framework.

Where practical, regional trails masterplans should be developed to provide a guiding framework and priorities for trails development and management within each region. Such a master planning process could be implemented with pilot plans in targeted regions and a staged approach over time.

No.	Action
B2.1	Implement a staged program of regional trails master planning for Regional Development Commission areas where there is a high level of competing demands and opportunity.
B2.2	Ensure that regional trails masterplans recognise and integrate relevant current or planned trails strategies and local and regional tourism plans and strategies. Cater for a diversity of trail users, types and experiences. Cover planning for relevant trail towns, trail networks and visitor services. Establish trail development priorities (see Strategy F1).

Photo: Trail Running in the Ellis Brook Valley Reserve

C. SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND MAINTENANCE

Strategy C1: Ensure that information and training on best practice sustainable trail design, construction and maintenance is available to current and potential trail developers, managers and organisations.

There is scope to assist trail organisations and groups to build their capacity to plan and maintain trails. Such support will create longevity and sustainability in trail organisations, empower community and volunteer groups and encourage better resourcing around trails management.

There is an established set of classifications that are recognised and used internationally and in Australia in sustainable trails design, construction and maintenance. These guidelines include:

Mountain Biking: International Mountain Biking Association Trail Difficulty Rating System
https://www.imba.com/resources/freeriding/trail-difficulty-rating-system

Walking: the Australian Walking Track Grading System (for users)
https://parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/activities/users-guide-walks-classification-standards.pdf

AS 2156.1-2001 Walking tracks: Classification and signage (for design/maintenance)

International and national standards and guidelines may require adaptation to suit Western Australia's specific climate, soil, environmental and cultural conditions such has been done in the DRAFT WA Mountain Bike Guidelines.

No.	Action
C1.1	Collate and locate all relevant trail planning, design and maintenance guidelines as one accessible online resource. Promote use of this resource to relevant organisations and trail groups.
C1.2	Develop and present trail design, construction, visitor risk management and maintenance workshops to trail management organisations and user groups across the different types of trails and uses.

D. SOUND KNOWLEDGE BASE

Strategy D1: Investigate and evaluate trail use trends to inform decision-making on new trail developments and trail uses.

With numerous changes occurring in the way people use trails more information is needed to evaluate how new uses (such as electric bike riding, trail running and demand for paddling trails) and new technologies should be reflected in trail development and management and to underpin business cases to attract investment in trails.

No.	Action
D1.1	Investigate, monitor, assess and report on the rise of the emerging user groups and markets (such as electric bicycle users, trail runners, paddlers), identifying the challenges and opportunities they present and impacts on existing trail users.
D1.2	Provide input into policy frameworks around trails development and participation including for emerging trends such as electric bikes and trail running.
D1.3	Monitor, review and report on emerging technologies (such as virtual reality, smartphone integrations), their potential impacts and ways they may be utilised for trail user information, engagement, safety, planning, management and promotion.

Strategy D2: Improve the availability of trail-related data and research for use in trail funding, planning, development and management.

Data on trail use is important to inform ongoing trail management, understand trail users and to evaluate the need for new trails. Improved trail use data collection and interpretation is required throughout the State through methods such as trail counters and visitor surveys. There is also potential to utilise user-generated input from online digital technologies such as Strava and Trailforks, which provide information on the use and popularity of walking, running and cycling routes.

No.	Action
D2.1	Implement a system for recording, analysing and publicising trail-related data and research relevant to WA.
D2.2	Investigate methods for standardised and consistent trail use monitoring and encourage adoption by trail managers.
D2.3	Encourage trail managers to periodically undertake standardised trail user surveys to obtain information on participation, visitor characteristics and satisfaction. Data should be collected by a central body and disseminated widely for use in improving trail experiences.
D2.4	Offer training programs for trail managers in trail user data collection and survey techniques.
D2.5	Investigate ways to utilise user-generated activity recording technology (such as Strava and websites such as Trailforks) as a source of trail use data.

E. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Strategy E1: Encourage community stewardship for trails by supporting and facilitating improvements in volunteer trail development, maintenance and management.

Volunteers have made major contributions to the Western Australian trails through assistance in trail planning, construction, marketing, promotion, stewardship, maintenance and administration. There is scope to encourage increased participation by volunteers through offering training and incentives such as the scheme offered by the Department of Parks and Wildlife for volunteers.

No.	Action
E1.1	Develop and support programs for community and user group involvement in trail development, maintenance and management.
E1.2	Develop or extend existing training and incentives programs to engage volunteers in community trail stewardship.

Strategy E2: Encourage environmental stewardship through trail-related participation and programs.

As a focus of visitor activity, trails provide opportunities to develop environmental stewardship for both the trail itself and the natural and cultural environments through which it passes. This can be done through the use of information messages, interpretation and community education programs. There may already be existing activities and programs in an area that could be harnessed to include trails. Trails events are also an opportunity to communicate with trail users.

No.	Action
E2.1	Ensure that trail information includes education (suited to user markets) on minimal impact trail use and appreciation and protection of the natural and cultural values of the area.
E2.2	Work with stakeholders such as Leave No Trace, land managers and waste management networks to promote and educate users in minimal impact principles and environmental protection.
E2.3	Include interpretative materials and community education programs in trail management and participation programs.

Strategy E3: Enhance opportunities for community development through participation in trails activities and programs.

Community members can derive significant benefit from access to high quality trails. Using trails can create opportunities for community members to meet others and form stronger neighbourhood connections. Working with neighbours on trails projects and programs can enhance community connectedness and engender stronger community bonds. This can lead to the achievement of better community outcomes through building social capital and strengthening sense of place. For some people, proximity of good trails will influence their choice of where to live.

No.	Action
E3.1	Ensure that community development remains a consideration in trails planning, design, management, funding, research, events and participation programs.

F. INVESTMENT AND FINANCING

Strategy F1: Provide guidance and support to organisations, localities and regions to evaluate and seek investment in existing and future trails.

A consistent approach to the assessment of trail developments will be achieved through the:
Classification of trails and trail networks according to their significance at state, regional and local levels. Application of criteria to assess the feasibility of trail developments (for existing and proposed trails) and prioritise them for investment.

CLASSIFICATION FOR WA'S TRAILS AND TRAIL NETWORKS

State trails
An extended trail or trail network that is of sufficient quality and with appropriate facilities, products and services to be recognised beyond the State and to attract visitors to WA.

Regional trails
A major trail or trail network that services a population centre or large regional community, with facilities and services of a standard and appeal that could attract visitors from outside the region.

Local trails
A trail that services the local community and provides facilities suited to local use. Some local trail may have potential for development to regional status.

No.	Action
F1.1	Implement a State-wide classification system for trails to define their relative significance and broad developmental needs.
F1.2	Implement State-wide adoption of consistent criteria for trail development assessment and prioritisation.
F1.3	Assist trails organisations and managers to identify appropriate partnerships for trail development, experiences, maintenance and management.
F1.4	Provide trails organisations with access to a centralised pool of research and information to assist in the assessment of trails development needs, the preparation of funding applications and seeking investment partners.

Strategy F2: Investigate and encourage the adoption of a range of sustainable funding options for the development, maintenance and management of specific trails.

The availability of long term funding for the maintenance and management of trails is a major consideration in the development of sustainable trails. The majority of current funding for trail development in the State comes from grants awarded on a project-by-project basis. Grants from the Department of Regional Development's Royalties for Regions program, Lotterywest and local governments have enabled development of many trails and it is important that such funding programs continue. However, funding programs are a finite resource with many competing applicants. Additionally, once trails are developed there are often limited ongoing resources for trails maintenance and organisational support. Trails management organisations in other places (such as Trails Trusts in New Zealand) have been able to diversify funding sources and utilise partnerships to obtain resources for development and management of high quality trails. In turn, the success of these trails in attracting local and visiting users and contributing to local economies has assisted many trails organisations in securing public or private investment in the development of new or upgraded trails.

Funding sources utilised by trails organisations include:

Membership fees, which typically produce low income streams.

Fundraising also tends to raise relatively small amounts unless there is a well-run campaign in a highly-motivated community.

Philanthropic donations and bequests, generally at a low level.

Commercial sources such as sponsorship and fees from commercial operators and events. These sources can generate significant funds but are under-utilised in WA compared with other places.

User-pays contributions from sources such as trail use fees, park entry fees, parking fees and camping fees. This funding source is also less used in WA than in overseas trails destinations.

Discounted trail fees, multi-entry or multi-trail passes the proceeds of which are used for trail maintenance.

Volunteers support organisations and trail maintenance. Volunteers can be effective but are not always available to provide consistent, on-going support.

Partnerships to improve trail experiences, such as with commercial operators to provide trail-related products and contribute to trail and environmental management, and with private landowners to provide access to trails.

No.	Action
F2.1	Investigate successful international financial management models (such as the New Zealand Trails Trust) and assess relevance and potential viability within Western Australia.
F2.2	Review and report on current legislative arrangements for user-pays options on trails and on commercial usage fee structuring.
F2.3	Identify potential commercial sponsorship and philanthropic income opportunities related to trails.
F2.4	Recognise the long-term impact of the Lotterywest Trails Grant Program and ensure that the future investment in the program is strategically targeted through a strong alliance between Lotterywest and the Department of Sport and Recreation. This will require both agencies to provide input into potential projects early in the development process and offer assistance to applicants.
F2.5	Research and produce a credible advocacy platform that succinctly and powerfully, informs decision makers of the evidence-based case for public support of trails development and maintenance. It should describe the economic, environmental, community, health and cultural benefits of supporting a varied and quality trails network. This should be done in conjunction with any future development of overarching strategic outdoor frameworks/strategies.
F2.6	Investigate ways to support volunteer groups and friends of groups to work in a financially sustainable way under a social enterprise framework.

G. GREATER TRAIL USE AND AWARENESS

Strategy G1: Improve trail facilities, interpretation and safety to increase the appeal of trails experiences.

Improving access, signage, trailhead facilities and ways of telling the stories of the places and people through which trails pass will provide a more appealing experience for existing users and to attract new users.

In Western Australia's climatic conditions, information about safety measures in non-urban areas and extreme weather events (such as flood, fire and drought) is an important consideration for trail users.

No.	Action
G1.1	Develop and present trails related workshops on best practice design for trails facilities and interpretation development to trail management organisations and user groups including the use of digital technology.
G1.2	Ensure that visitor risk information relevant to the safe use of trails is provided in communications that are accessible to all trail users including non-English speaking visitors. This should include arrangements for emergencies such as fire, drought or flood.
G1.3	Review and improve visitor risk communication to ensure it is appropriate for trails.

Photos: Hikers on Greenbushes Loop Walk Trail. © Tourism Western Australia

Strategy G2: Build the capacity of trail-focused events to increase usage and trail-led economic stimulus.

Trail-based events and community activities have been successful in many places in encouraging greater local and visitor awareness, use and support of trails. Community activities such as walking or cycling clubs can be instrumental in achieving improved health and well-being outcomes.

No.	Action
G2.1	Identify existing trails-based events and activities across regions and trail types and identify opportunities for targeted assistance to grow events and improve economic impacts.
G2.2	Identify significant potential trail-based events across regions and trail activities and identify potential user markets, support organisations and potential economic, participation and other measures.
G2.3	Identify and support the creation of participative club, group or community trail-based events with a targeted health and wellbeing outcome (for example, group walks).
G2.4	Investigate the feasibility of establishing a trails awareness campaign aimed at Western Australian or local users (such as Try A Trail Week) with the aim of raising the general profile of the trails sector and local trails within communities and creating a central campaign around which to organise trail-based activities and volunteerism. This is also an opportunity to rally organisational and corporate support as well as capturing economic and participation data.

Photo: Common Ground

Strategy G3: Establish an effective coordinated system for trail communication, promotion and marketing.

Marketing of trails to Western Australians, rather than to visitors from outside the State, requires targeting different markets, use of content and messages appropriate to markets, multiple communication methods and the cooperation of the different agencies and trail sector players. Effective intrastate trails marketing requires a more consistent and collaborative approach to reach markets.

Trails WA is ideally placed to expand its role to include the coordination of intrastate trail communication, promotion and marketing. The organisation could also act as a focal point for trails information and collateral resources.

A strategic marketing plan is required to guide Trails WA in the coordination of these activities. As part of this enhanced role, Trails WA would also work with partners in the promotion of significant trails products interstate and internationally.

No.	Action
G3.1	Consolidate Trails WA as the lead non-government organisation responsible for the State-wide coordination of intrastate, communication, promotion and marketing of trails.
G3.2	Strengthen the cooperation and coordination between Trails WA and partners in order to provide support for the interstate and international marketing of WA trails including linking regional trails websites with the Trails WA website.
G3.3	Review the current structure of Trails WA and develop a pathway to sustainable governance suitable to meet future aspirations/demands of the trails sector.
G3.4	Investigate, assess and implement improved sources of funding and support for Trails WA and its operations, including appropriate staff position/s.
G3.5	Work with Tourism WA and regional tourism organisations to develop a strategic trails marketing plan to identify priority goals, outcomes and actions to achieve effective State-wide trails marketing and communications.
G3.6	Identify key positions/staff within local governments, regional development commissions, Tourism WA, Department of Sport and Recreation, Department of Parks and Wildlife, regional tourism organisations and trail user groups to provide contact points for two-way information flow with Trails WA on promotion and marketing of trails.

Strategy G4: Increase coverage of WA trails in the media.

Awareness of trails will lead to increased participation. Efforts need to be put into growing media coverage about trail opportunities both within and external to the State.

No.	Action
G4.1	Establish a trails-focused media familiarisation program that includes general travel media and niche user group media from WA and interstate.
G4.2	Work with trails-focused event operators to leverage media collateral (such as images, videography and editorial) from events.
G4.3	Work with regional tourism organisations to identify significant trail experiences and identify appropriate marketing/media channels for them according to significance classifications.

H. GROWING THE VISITOR ECONOMY

Strategy H1: Identify iconic trails to be developed and promoted as the best in Western Australia.

There is potential to develop and promote a range of high quality, iconic trails in Western Australia to showcase the State to interstate and international visitors and spearhead growth in the visitor economy. Such an approach has been taken in other places, including the Great Walks of New Zealand and the New Zealand Cycle Trail, with resulting growth in nature-based and adventure visitation. The quality of the experience offered by such trails is enhanced by supporting information, visitor services (such as transport, tour products and accommodation) and interpretation.

Trails across Western Australia are at different stages of development and market awareness. Ideally, the mix of iconic trails will reflect the unique visitor experience proposition that Western Australia offers whilst encouraging dispersal across the State. This will require improvements to some trails that already have a high profile but are not necessarily meeting the needs of contemporary markets, as well as commencing a program of development of other new trails. Experiences that encourage a multi-day stay are a priority.

Existing trails that already have a strong awareness in the market are the Bibbulmun Track, Munda Biddi Trail, Cape to Cape Track and the walking/canyoning trails in Karijini National Park. These trails have potential for development and promotion as iconic experiences in the shorter term, as do several existing four-wheel drive journeys. Additionally, several business cases are nearing completion for major trail developments in the Peel, South West and Great Southern regions.These include the creation of multiple Trail Towns and significant trail infrastructure.

Not all types of trail experiences will attract visitors from outside the State. Other trail experiences that have a strong community demand will still be available to visitors and will add to the local offering.

No.	Action
H1.1	Develop criteria to identify and prioritise the iconic trail development opportunities with strong potential to attract a range of visitor markets and contribute to the visitor economy. The opportunities should extend through the different types of trails and trail users.
H1.2	For each priority iconic trail opportunity, identify the requirements (including infrastructure, signage, information, interpretation, products, services and accommodation), cost-benefit analysis and timeframe to bring the trail and associated products to market.
H1.3	Seek expressions of interest for private sector investment in activating distinctive three to four day experiences on sections of iconic regional trails such as the Bibbulmun Track and the Munda Biddi Trail. This could include either on-track accommodation or links to off-track accommodation and/or trailhead transport services.
H1.4	Investigate and prioritise potential loop trail add-ons to iconic ride or walk experiences on established trails such as the Munda Biddi Trail and the Bibbulmun Track.

Strategy H2: Implement a staged program of trail development and promotion for iconic trails.

Achieving an excellent suite of iconic trails for Western Australia will require considerable investment in planning and development over time. In some cases it will also require engagement with the private sector to seek investment in accommodation and services suited to relevant markets.

Priority for funding under this strategic goal needs to be directed to those trail experiences that have the greatest potential to contribute to the State-wide economy, particularly where there is a significant gap in the market. This will require strong partnerships across the State Government, regional tourism organisations, regional development commissions and local governments and a commitment to the value of trails to the State.

No.	Action
H2.1	As a high priority, undertake a staged program for feasibility assessment and development of master plans and business cases for the development of iconic experiences for the highest priority trails identified under Action H1.1.
H2.2	Develop and undertake a staged program for investigation and preparation of master plans for other identified iconic trail experiences identified under Action H1.1 where feasibility is demonstrated.
H2.3	For each trail under development, work closely with government, trail managers and organisations, the tourism industry and the community to encourage development of linked products, services and accommodation suited to target markets.
H2.4	As iconic trails are developed, work cooperatively to develop and deliver quality information and promotion to attract domestic and international markets.

Strategy H3: Encourage and support private sector involvement in improving trail experiences.

Whilst experiences need to be available across the range of price points for visitors, seeking commercial investment in accommodation, transport and other services can greatly add to the experiences and the attraction of trails. Not only can it offset government investment, but it encourages entrepreneurial vision in creating experiences suited to market.

No.	Action
H3.1	Conduct a market gap-analysis to identify trails where linked products (such as tours transport, logistics operations, accommodation) could be established in a cost effective manner to add to the attraction of the trail for target markets.
H3.2	Facilitate linkages between private sector providers and trail opportunities/service gaps.

Strategy H4: Encourage and support Aboriginal involvement in improving trail experiences.

There is a growing interest in Aboriginal culture and stories and trails offer opportunities to tell these stories either through interpretation or Aboriginal businesses and community members providing services on trails.

No.	Action
H4.1	Liaise with appropriate Aboriginal communities and groups to identify and progress opportunities to develop products, services and interpretation linked to trails.

5

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of plans and strategies is essential to keep track of progress and identify adaptations that may need to be made to address new issues and changes.

As part of its role in coordinating the implementation of this Blueprint the Trails Reference Group will need to review and report on the achievement of the actions in the Blueprint annually and at the end of the period covered by the Blueprint.

Success in implementing the Blueprint will need to be evaluated by the Trails Reference Group and may include indicators such as:

Progress in implementing specific actions in the Blueprint.

Visitation data of the Trails WA website.

Receipt of trail visitor use and survey data supplied by trail management organisations.

Growth in nature-based visitation for Western Australia and its regions.

Growth in awareness of Western Australia as a trails destination.

It is anticipated that this Blueprint will be responsive to new developments and opportunities as well as the emerging trends in technology and participation patterns. It is recommended the Trails Reference Group institutes a process that allows for regular updating and modification of this Blueprint.

The current boom in hiking and bushwalking is not only a good thing for participants' personal wellbeing – it also represents a wonderful opportunity for savvy tourism operators and destination marketers. Our data indicates that people who hike/ bushwalk either regularly or occasionally tend to behave in a certain way when they go on holidays, engaging in energetic physical activity and seeking out natural surroundings more than the average Australian. Australia boasts a surplus of national parks and wilderness areas, and with the right kind of branding and promotion, many of them stand to benefit from this growing segment of the travel market – especially if they have a detailed understanding of who exactly these hikers and bushwalkers are.

http://roymorgan.com/findings/6638-when-hikers-bushwalkers-go-on-holiday-201601250049

WANSBROUGH WALK

BOLGANUP TRAIL

TRAIL SNAPSHOT: QUEENSTOWN TRAILS (NEW ZEALAND)

Queenstown is a premier cycling destination with a global reputation noted for its extensive network of over 190 kilometres of quality cycling and walking trails and facilities for mountain biking. It includes the 120 km Queenstown Trail, part of the New Zealand Cycle Network.

Development of the trail network at Queenstown commenced in 2004 under the guidance of the Queenstown Trails Trust, with assistance from the Department of Conservation, the Queenstown Lakes District Council, the tourism industry and local cycling and walking groups. The network offers mainly easy to intermediate level riding on shared cycling, walking and hiking trails ranging from short to full day excursions. There is also a local commuter/recreational trail network within and between local communities which is planned for extension over the next 10 years. There are five mountain bike parks that offer riding from beginner to advanced levels and challenging downhill and technical trails at Ben Lomond (accessed by the Skyline Gondola) and Wynyard Terrain Park.

Use of the cycling network varies from a few hundred users on some trails to very large numbers on the most popular sections of the Queenstown Trail between Frankton and Queenstown. In 2015, a total of 214,100 journeys by cyclists, walkers and event competitors was recorded on the Queenstown Trail. About 46% of users of the Queenstown Trail are estimated to be international visitors and there is a relatively high use of the trail network by local residents. The Skyline/Ben Lomond downhill mountain biking trails attract about 50,000 to 70,000 riders per year.

Demand for cycling in Queenstown is increasing due to:
- The quality and promotion of a range of cycling infrastructure and experiences.
- The availability of a wide range of linked, well-promoted and bookable attractions, accommodation, guided and self-guided packages and services such as bike hire and shuttle transport. Some of these are pre-existing businesses offering products for Queenstown visitors generally, while others are businesses that offer trail-specific products.
- Its status as an iconic visitor destination attracting a range of visitors seeking soft adventure and adventure activities.
- Ease of access through the Queenstown airport.
- The growth of the local Queenstown population which is forecast to grow from about 30,700 in 2015 to about 57,000 in 2025.

Effective planning and management of the trail network by the Queenstown Trails Trust has been critical to its success including through:
- Building an extensive trail network collaboratively across different land tenures.
- Fundraising and income generation through grant funding, investments and events.
- Partnerships with the Department of Conservation, local community and recreation groups, landholders and businesses for trail development, experience development and trail maintenance.

Sources: Queenstown Trails for the Future 2015-2025; http://queenstowntrail.co.nz
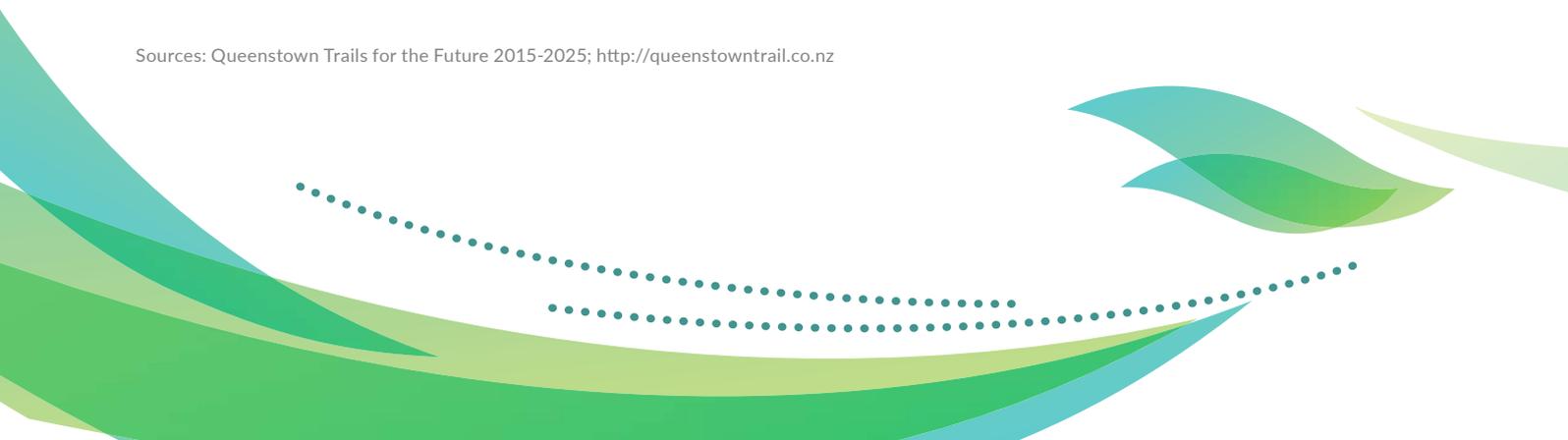
TRAIL SNAPSHOT: OTAGO CENTRAL RAIL TRAIL (NEW ZEALAND)

The highly successful Otago Central Rail Trail has become a model for many of the trail experiences in the New Zealand Cycle Trail. The rail trail (a 150 km three to four day cycle that can also be used for shorter journeys and for walking and horse riding) was opened in 2000 on the disused Central Otago railway line between Clyde and Dunedin as an initiative aimed at rejuvenating the stagnating local economy. The rail trail passes through spectacular mountain and valley scenery, old gold mining towns and agricultural areas. A wide range of accommodation, attractions (such as heritage sites, arts, wineries, farm visits), tours, food and cafes, sporting activities, bike hire, transport and luggage services are offered by local businesses.

An estimated 12,000 to 15,000 multi-day cyclists and up to 50,000 day cyclists use the Central Otago Rail Trail each year. The trail has an international and domestic reputation as an iconic experience. International visitors comprise over one third of trail visitors and have increased as a proportion of trail users since the trail was opened. Most international trail users come from Australia with significant numbers from Europe, South Africa, the UK and North America. The trail attracts visitors from around New Zealand, predominantly from the upper North Island (nearly two-thirds of domestic visitors in a 2014/15 survey) with lesser numbers of visitors from the nearby Canterbury and Otago regions and the lower North Island . A high proportion of domestic and international rail trail visitors arrived via aircraft to the Queenstown or Dunedin airports.

In 2014/15 it was estimated that the rail trail had resulted in an additional $10 million total economic output to the Otago and Central Otago economies and 102.4 full-time employees in the local economy.

The success of the Otago Central Rail Trail in attracting visitors and improving the local economy owes much to the achievements of the Otago Central Rail Trail Charitable Trust in developing, coordinating and promoting trail experiences (with local tourism organisations), the contribution of the Department of Conservation to infrastructure and recreational experiences and the collaboration of more than 70 local businesses and organisations in offering trail-related products and services.

TRAIL SNAPSHOT: BIBBULMUN TRACK (WESTERN AUSTRALIA)

The Bibbulmun Track is one of the State's premier walking experiences. It is a 1,000 kilometre walking track between Kalamunda in the Perth Hills and Albany on the south coast.

Passing through nine rural towns and many popular scenic spots, walkers can enjoy day walks staying in local accommodation or embark on longer walks staying in the 49 purpose-built campsites along the track. It takes an average of six to eight weeks to walk end-to-end.
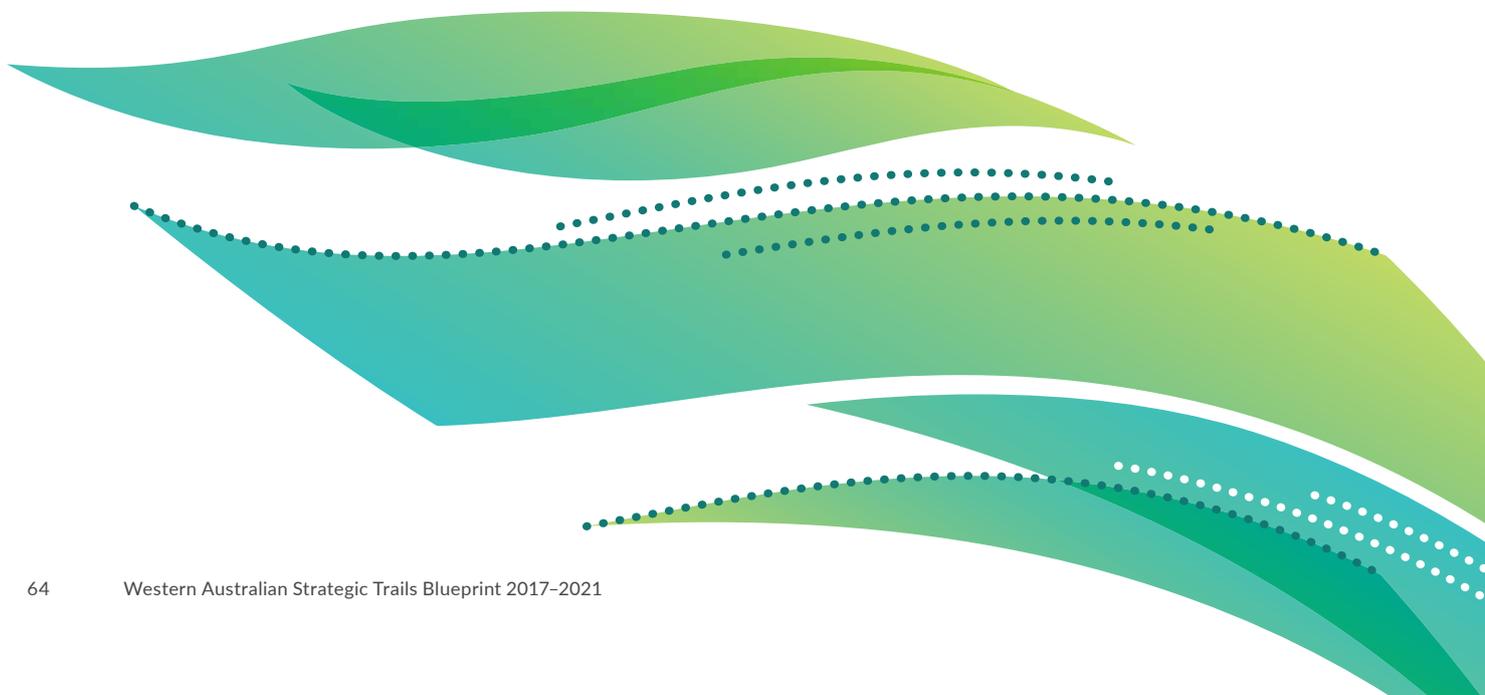
The track is estimated to receive over 302,000 visit days (87,652 walk trips) on the track annually.

The results of a 12-month user survey conducted in 2014/15 showed that the top personal benefits of walking the track include access to scenic natural areas and walking as a physical and mental health activity. Walkers were highly satisfied with their experience, with 98% responding that they would recommend the track to others.

The survey respondents were mostly Western Australians (93%). Of the remaining respondents, 4% were interstate and 3% international. Campsite log book data suggest that there are some areas along the track that receive higher proportions of international and interstate visitors, with those closer to Perth having a higher proportion of Western Australians.

Ninety seven percent of survey respondents intended to walk the track again and for two thirds of walkers the track was the main reason they visited an area. Single day and shorter multi-day walks along segments of the track formed the majority of trips and it is estimated that trail users account for $13.1 million in annual direct expenditure.

Packaged experiences are offered along the length of the track through the Bibbulmun Track Foundation and other tour operators.

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN
STRATEGIC TRAILS BLUEPRINT
2017-2021