



Point Cartwright Reserve and La Balsa Park Recreation Values Report

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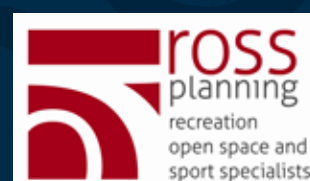
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Background

1.1 Project overview

ROSS Planning has been commissioned by Council to undertake a planning exercise (Recreation Values Report) for Point Cartwright Reserve and La Balsa Park in Buddina.

Through site analysis, review of engagement outcomes and consideration of opportunities and constraints, the project will guide management and suitable uses and inform the master plan process.

1.2 Project objectives

The Recreation Values Report provides an assessment of:

- ☐ existing recreation uses
- ☐ community values with regard to recreation use
- ☐ recreation opportunities and constraints reflecting cultural and environmental values
- ☐ management alternatives and future recreation opportunities.

1.3 What is a Recreation Values Report?

A Recreation Values Report provides the necessary evidence to inform strategic planning aspirations. It establishes a consistent direction by providing a framework for ongoing improvement by considering the interrelationship between:

- ☐ current character, condition and functionality of the site
- ☐ potential impacts and environmental and cultural values
- ☐ emerging issues and trends.

The result is a report that balances needs across a range of often-conflicting interests. The report does not necessarily suggest that all recreation values (and uses) can be progressed further.

It is important to note that the intent of the Recreation Values Report is to avoid ad hoc improvements, and to ensure community use and long-term site viability are maximised. For Point Cartwright Reserve and La Balsa Park, the Recreation Values Report will be used to guide preparation of an updated master plan.

1.4 Project site

The study area (highlighted in the image below) includes Point Cartwright Reserve and La Balsa Park. While these are two distinct areas, they are linked by pathways along one of the banks of the Mooloolah River.

The bulk of the site is zoned Open Space (with a small strip of Environmental Management and Conservation Zone along the Buddina beach foreshore). Council's Planning Scheme identifies (6.2.14.2 Purpose and overall outcomes) the purpose of the Open space zone code is to:

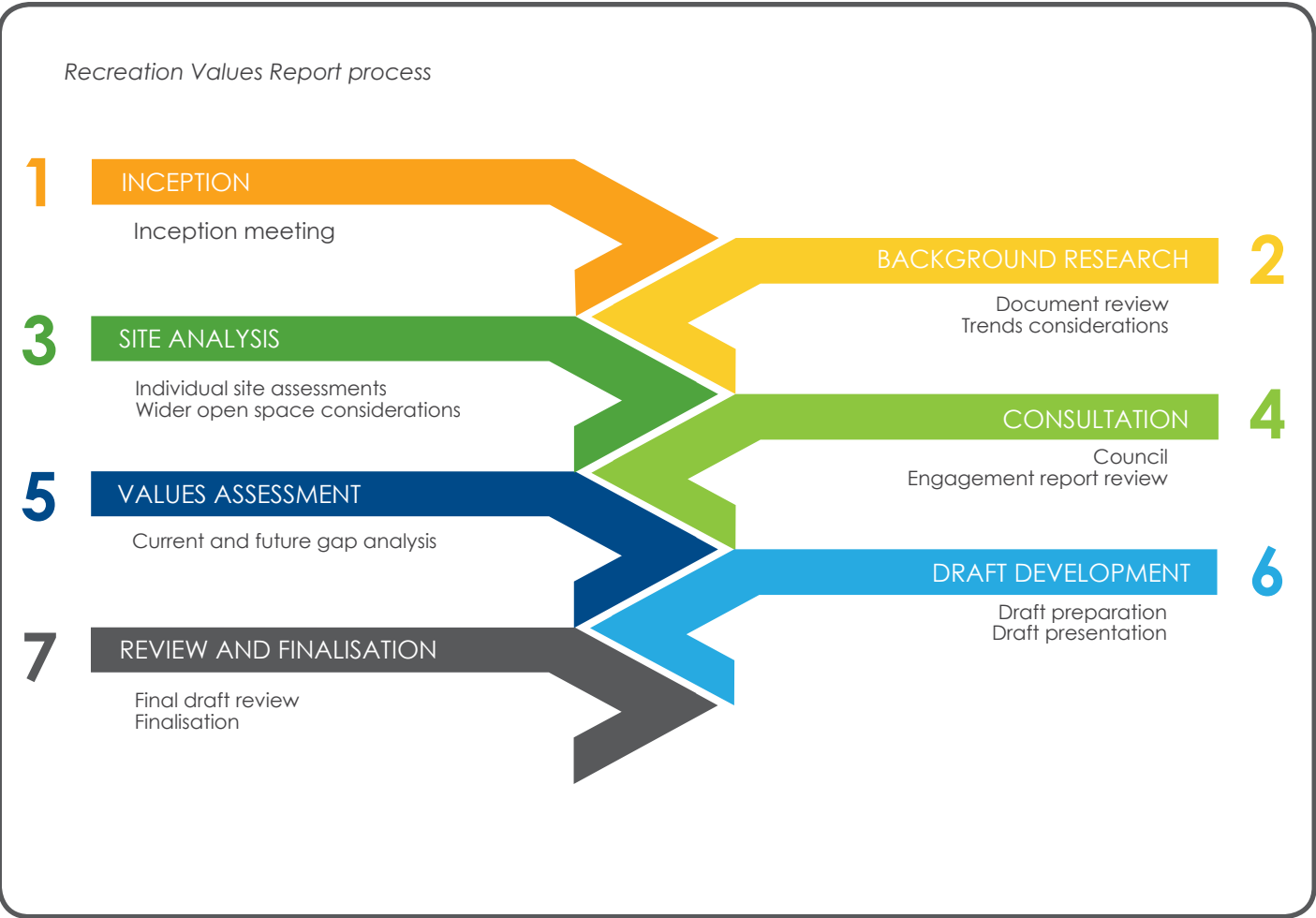
- ☐ provide open space and park functions and those uses which are associated with the safe and comfortable public use of those areas. The zone may also accommodate open space required for drainage or amenity purposes. Where required to meet community needs, development may include shelters, amenity facilities, picnic tables, and playgrounds and infrastructure to support safe access and essential management.

The range of existing uses are generally consistent with this purpose and no new inconsistent uses have been proposed in this report.



1.5 Project process

The project program spans across seven stages as depicted in the figure below.



1.6 Project exclusions

Engagement for the development of the report was limited to discussions with Council officers and review of recent community and stakeholder engagement outcomes. Further, key constraints and opportunities related to environmental and cultural considerations were prepared by others.

It is acknowledged that development of the ultimate master plan will involve resolution of complex issues (balancing conflicting expectations) and that implementation will occur over an extended timeframe.

1.7 Strategic context

In order to present a clear picture of the background issues and opportunities influencing the assessment of recreation values, a basic literature review has been undertaken. A summary of the key documents reviewed is included below, while key impacts for future provision are summarised in the breakout box.

1.7.1 Environment and Liveability Strategy 2017¹

The Strategy sets the vision and actions to ensure a healthy environment and liveable Sunshine Coast into the future. It includes a range of desired standards of service for land types and network blueprints for each catchment. While the Strategy does not provide any specific recommendations with regard to Point Cartwright Reserve nor La Balsa Park, it does identify a range of relevant policy positions and future considerations:

- policy positions
 - coastal landforms, habitats and vegetation communities are protected and enhanced
 - native coastal fauna populations are maintained and enhanced
 - coastal recreational, social and economic activities have minimal impact on coastal values and natural processes
 - coastal cultural heritage values are preserved and appreciated
 - open space is protected for its appropriate function including openness
 - open space is flexible and adaptable to allow for diverse recreational, sporting and cultural experiences
 - environmental values are balanced with recreation opportunities in keeping with the natural setting
 - cultural, heritage and historical values within our public open spaces are enhanced and preserved
- considerations
 - a shortfall in district recreation parks in the catchment - limited opportunity to meet current and projected demand
 - a need to improve access to coastal recreation activities in the surrounding catchment.

Clearly, the Strategy highlights the importance of balancing recreation uses across the sites with the need for protection of environmental and cultural heritage values.

1.7.2 Recreation Parks Plan 2021-2031

The Plan provides the framework to ensure a consistent and sustainable approach to recreation park provision.

With regard to the Recreation Values Report, the Plan outlines the range of infrastructure and embellishments generally desired in district-level recreation parks. While La Balsa Park has been developed in-line with this 'typical' district recreation park embellishment list, the Recreation Parks Plan clearly notes the importance of district parks within the open space network that have lower levels of infrastructure to "allow for connection to nature and other passive recreation opportunities" (p. 32). Point Cartwright Reserve has been developed in this manner and balances well with the highly embellished nature of La Balsa Park to provide opportunities for a range of users.

1.7.3 Regional Facilities Plan for Difficult to Locate Sports²

The Plan presents a range of actions related to facility provision for difficult to locate sports across Noosa Shire Council, Gympie Regional Council and Sunshine Coast Council. It notes that launching and landing sites for hang-gliding require limited infrastructure. Additionally, inland areas tend to have thermals that are consistent and reliable (and more suited to competitive pursuits), while coastal launching sites are more often used for recreational activities.

The Plan identified no demand for a regional-level facility for hang-gliding activities.

1.7.4 Recreational Boating Facilities Demand Forecasting Study 2017³

This Study sets out the current and future demand for publicly accessible recreational boating facilities. It highlights the need for additional boat ramp lanes especially in the Mooloolaba, Maroochydore and Caloundra areas.

Given deep-water access opportunities, La Balsa Park boat ramp was identified as being particularly popular, with car-trailer units regularly parking on surrounding greenspace and choking nearby local roads. As such, formalisation of the maximum number of car-trailer unit spaces is recommended.

Council is currently finalising designs to extend the car-trailer unit parking area servicing the La Balsa Park boat ramp, with construction due to commence in late 2022.

¹ Council, 2020 edition

² Otium Planning Group, 2019
³ GHD, 2017

1.7.5 Point Cartwright Reserve and La Balsa Park Master Plan - Community and Stakeholder Engagement Summary Report - Phase 1⁴

A range of engagement activities were undertaken to ascertain community perception with regard to existing uses and management, values and visions for the site. Ultimately, the Engagement Summary Report will guide development of preliminary reports (such as this Recreation Values Report) and the draft Master Plan.

Key findings include:

- ☐ many respondents are happy with the sites in their current arrangement and see no need for change moving forward
- ☐ dogs and dog management across the sites (particularly Point Cartwright Reserve) is clearly polarising. There are many who love the opportunities for dogs (and pets) at Point Cartwright Reserve, yet many others who see this as the number one issue and are seeking far greater restrictions on dog access
- ☐ the community love the natural feel of the sites, the tranquillity and peaceful character and opportunities for activity and exercise
- ☐ outside of dog-related issues, additional elements for future consideration raised include enhanced parking arrangements, improved management and maintenance and further infrastructure.

1.7.6 Point Cartwright and La Balsa Park Master Plan Cultural Heritage Survey⁵

This project included both a desktop assessment of heritage registers and databases, publications, reports and aerial imagery; in addition to a site survey (with Kabi Kabi representatives). The report highlights:

- ☐ Point Cartwright "is deeply significant and a place of major importance in the Kabi Kabi cultural landscape" (p. 26)
- ☐ La Balsa Park has been highly embellished with significant ground surface disturbance compromising any archaeological potential. As a result, there is "no prospect of recovery or remediation for sites that once existed" (p. 26)
- ☐ three shell middens (one containing associated stone artefacts) located at Point Cartwright
- ☐ the presence of dogs being detrimental to the natural environment and wildlife - such that Kabi Kabi representatives perceive that dogs should not be permitted in Point Cartwright Reserve
- ☐ need for additional interpretative infrastructure and revitalisation initiatives.

1.7.7 Point Cartwright Reserve Master Planning Discussion Paper⁶ & Point Cartwright Reserve Rezoning Proposal⁷

Together, these two documents highlight the key environmental and cultural constraints that the Point Cartwright Care Group consider to be drivers for reducing the impacts of recreation at Point Cartwright. Further, they identify a need for Council to present a more clear vision for the site with a reflective comprehensive management approach.

Key concerns addressed in the documents include:

- ☐ degradation in the environmental and cultural values under existing management practices
- ☐ need for significantly reduced dog activity (given impacts on 'human health and safety, habitat health and wildlife')
- ☐ impacts resulting from 'non-passive' recreation uses and large group activities (organised sports training, boot camps, weddings, parties etc)
- ☐ need to protect the environmental values of the site (potentially through re-zoning)
- ☐ need for management practices that limit tourist-related impacts at the site
- ☐ potential to enhance directional and interpretative signage.

⁶ Point Cartwright Care Group, 2021
⁷ Point Cartwright Care Group Inc, 2022

STRATEGIES AND PLANS - KEY IMPLICATIONS

When considered together, the literature review highlights a number of key considerations:

- ☐ Council and the community acknowledge the importance of balanced uses at Point Cartwright Reserve and La Balsa Park
- ☐ the two sites are popular for a range of recreation uses
- ☐ Point Cartwright Reserve is a site of key environmental and cultural heritage value
- ☐ the community is clearly divided on whether the current dog management practices (particularly the off-leash opportunities throughout Point Cartwright Reserve) are appropriate.

⁴ Leisa Prowse Consulting, 2022

⁵ Converge Heritage and Community, 2022



2

Site analyses

2.1 Open space context

As noted previously, both La Balsa Park and Point Cartwright Reserve are zoned *open space*¹ and are primarily classified as *district recreation parks*. In essence, this indicates that these two open spaces will attract users from the local community and surrounding suburbs. They will also offer different levels of embellishment and experience across multiple activity nodes that are attractive to a wide range of users. Importantly, they will provide quiet areas for reflection and opportunities to connect with nature but also support community gatherings and longer visits.

Council's *Environment and Liveability Strategy (2017)* highlights the lack of district recreation parks within the wider catchment. Indeed, one of the recommendations is for Council to continue to investigate opportunities for new (or expanded) parks in Buddina. (However, the Strategy identifies that suitable land is limited in the area).

The nearest district recreation parks to the master plan sites include:

- ☐ Kevin Asmus Park (approximately 1.5km south)
- ☐ Jessica Park (approximately 2km south-west)
- ☐ Cooper Lookout Park (approximately 2km south).

With district recreation parks having a catchment of approximately 3km, this sub-section of the wider catchment appears catered for by this form of open space. Additionally, each of the parks offers a slightly different experience ensuring opportunities for a range of residents and visitors.

¹ The strip of land on the eastern side of Pacific Boulevard is zoned *Environmental Management and Conservation*

2.2 Recreation uses, experiences and assets

While Point Cartwright Reserve and La Balsa Park are two separate 'venues' and clearly offer differing experiences, they are viewed by many users as one site. A site that 'starts' at the La Balsa Park boat ramp, includes the highly embellished parkland running along the Mooloolah River, loops up through the more natural setting of Point Cartwright Reserve with expansive ocean and river views and then continues down along the coast line through a path system. As such, for the purposes of this site analyses, the two sites will be considered together. For ease of analysis, the recreation uses and experiences have been categorised as land-based, water-based and air-based.

2.2.1 Land-based recreation elements, uses and experiences

Paths, tracks and trails

La Balsa Park and Point Cartwright Reserve are highly valued as locations for walking, walking with dogs, running and riding. As such, activity data captures have identified that there are regularly more than 150 people per hour (weekdays) and almost 300 people per hour (weekends) accessing the sites.

Being such highly used sites, it is encouraging that a range of walk/cycle opportunities exist. From single-person informal tracks leading from the raised headland down to the foreshore, to an unsealed trail passing through remnant rainforest, to wide bitumen-sealed shared use paths (incorporating the Coastal Pathway); there are options for all potential users. The formal paths and unsealed trail are all in appropriate condition - although there are clear areas of desire line shortcuts where the path system 'meanders' up toward the lighthouse. In contrast the informal 'goat tracks' (that have been established by regular trampling) that lead down from the headland are generally unsafe to access, cause damage to flora and fauna and lead to erosion. Additionally, a number of inappropriate mountain bike tracks have been established through the remnant rainforest.

While there is no formal path or designated track available, walking along the base of the headland at shore level is (accepted by Council and) popular.

Lookouts

Point Cartwright Reserve provides a number of locations that are popular for sightseeing as they provide open views of the beach and surf, ocean and/or Mooloolah River. Particularly impressive views are available near the lighthouse and from the boardwalk adjoining the Point Cartwright Reserve car park. The more natural feel of the Reserve is retained as these viewing opportunities are available without formal lookouts needing to be constructed. Users can move about the headland and find their own areas to enjoy the views that interest them most whilst enjoying the natural shade and grassed areas.

While La Balsa Park does not provide the raised vistas available at Point Cartwright Reserve, it does provide uninterrupted views across the Mooloolah River to the wharves and markets area.



Play and picnic

Given their physical connections, La Balsa Park and Point Cartwright Reserve are often viewed by users as one 'site'. However, Council has planned and developed the two parks as separate areas providing largely different experiences. Point Cartwright Reserve has been left as a largely natural open space with limited embellishments. Other than two toilet facilities, the Reserve includes limited seating, no picnic shelters and no barbecues. This is not to say that play and picnicking are not 'permissible' within the Reserve, rather that users need to bring their own picnic rugs and and/or camp chairs and find other self-driven methods of play and amusement.

In contrast, La Balsa Park has been heavily embellished with barbecues, picnic shelters of varying sizes, uncovered picnic tables, two toilet facilities and three play nodes (two with natural shade and one with a shade sail cover) spread across the length of the Park. As a result, the Park is very popular as a site for family outings and all forms of celebrations.



Activities with dogs

Point Cartwright Reserve and La Balsa Park are popular places for people to exercise their dogs. Indeed, field survey results suggest almost 1 in 5 uses each week involve dogs. The adjoining image (from Council's website) shows that dogs are allowed off-leash at all times across much of the headland and south across Buddina beach. Additionally, between 4pm and 8am dogs can be off-leash across the outer perimeter of the headland and south through Half Moon Bay.

It is also important to recognise that while the sites are popular for exercising dogs, there are also large parts of the community that would like to see the presence of dogs managed more tightly by Council. This is particularly the case for Point Cartwright Reserve where much of the headland is designated off-leash at all times and Half Moon Bay where off-leash activities are allowed at restricted times. Key reasons, cited by those seeking reduced dog activity, include:

- ☐ potential harm to cultural heritage sites
- ☐ potential harm to important flora and fauna
- ☐ public health concerns (resulting from dog faeces)
- ☐ noise-related impacts from barking
- ☐ potential for inappropriate interactions (attacks) between dogs and park users.

Further discussion relating to dog access is included in Section 4.



Additional uses and experiences

As two heavily used parks, there are clearly a wide range of uses and experiences available to residents and visitors, including:

- ❑ celebrations
 - Point Cartwright Reserve is becoming a popular venue for outdoor wedding ceremonies
 - as previously noted, La Balsa Park is heavily used for family gatherings and celebrations most weekends
- ❑ physical activity
 - in addition to individual physical activity pursuits such as walking, jogging and riding, the grassed hill at Point Cartwright Reserve also attracts regular pre-season fitness training for local football codes and commercial exercise group sessions
- ❑ 'rock hopping'
 - the rocky shoreline around the Point Cartwright Reserve headland is popular for families to explore in amongst the rocks and rock pools.



2.2.2 Water-based recreation elements, uses and experiences

Fishing

Whilst fishing can be both a land- and water-based activity, it has been included within water-based for ease of reference.

There are a range of fishing options across the master plan area. While fishing is regularly undertaken in the surf beach and from the Point Cartwright Reserve headland rocks, the most popular area for fishing is along the rock wall forming the eastern bank of the Mooloolah River. With many safe and easily accessible fishing spaces available along the length of La Balsa Park, across Half Moon Bay (especially at low tide) and out to the breakwater wall, this is a particularly attractive option for families (and also for night fishing). Additionally, the fishing (and boat launch/retrieval) pontoon adjacent to the boat ramp at the southern end of La Balsa Park provides a further popular fishing option.

Council has provided fish cleaning tables near the boat ramp at the southern end of La Balsa Park.



Boating and paddling

La Balsa Park boat ramp is one of the busier ramps on the Sunshine Coast providing both river and deep water ocean access. The boat ramp includes two lanes, has a boat launch/retrieval pontoon and is serviced by a small car-trailer parking area. As noted previously, the parking area is far too small for peak use times and Council is currently planning for a significant expansion and upgrade. The boat ramp and pontoon also lend themselves to launching of paddlecraft such as kayaks and stand-up paddleboards.



Swimming, snorkelling and diving

The surf beach at the northern end of Buddina beach (toward Point Cartwright Reserve) is not patrolled. However, the beach is an attractive place to recreate (and for surfing). The large sand flat at Half Moon Bay is a popular place for families where children can splash and play in the shallow water (during certain tide times).

The La Balsa Park stretch of the Mooloolah River is a well-known snorkelling and diving area. While the area does not always have good visibility due to tidal movement, it is home to a number of nudibranch species (including a number of more rare varieties).



Surfing

The headland at Point Cartwright Reserve is one of the more popular surfing locations on the Sunshine Coast. Given the size of the headland (and the fact that it can be accessed on all sides), quality waves can be found during most swells and wind directions. The area is renowned for providing quality tubes when conditions are favorable.



2.2.2 Air-based recreation elements, uses and experiences

Hang gliding and paragliding

Hang gliding and paragliding are usually not permitted within controlled airspace (Point Cartwright Reserve falls within the controlled airspace for Sunshine Coast Airport). However, the Sunshine Coast Sports Aviators club has been given approval by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (and Council) to launch from the small grassed area on the eastern side of the Reserve up toward the lighthouse. Strict conditions ensure that this is a closely managed flying arrangement - with flyers needing to stay within 300ft of the shoreline and only flying south from the launch site for a total distance of up to 1.7km. Additionally, a maximum of only three pilots are allowed in the air at one time. A duty person is required to gain clearance from the Sunshine Coast Airport Tower before flying begins (and advise when flying finishes) and remain on the ground at the launch site throughout the session.

This is considered one of the more picturesque (and popular) flying sites for the Region. Throughout the warmer months (when the prevailing winds are east to south-east) flying is undertaken on most days of the week with up to 5 pilots at each session. Smaller numbers fly during cooler months where flying is only undertaken twice each week (on average). The Sunshine Coast Sports Aviators appreciate the access they have to the launch site at Point Cartwright. In order to retain access to the public car park for other users, the club encourages members to park on-street further south from the formal car park area. Additionally, with toilets available at the car park area, there is no additional infrastructure required to meet the needs of flyers.



2.3 Recreation experiences - summary

It is clear that, together, La Balsa Park and Point Cartwright Reserve offer a set of unique recreation experiences. The ability to enjoy scenic walks in a natural setting, formal and informal water-side picnics, hang gliding and paragliding, formal play, quiet reflection, beach activities and watercraft launching - all from an area where on-leash and off-leash dog activities are permitted (and all within a heavily developed residential catchment) is quite unusual. It is this large scope of activities and population pressures that has led to conflicts between users (and uses).

It is becoming common for councils to establish fenced dog off-leash areas within recreation parks. Further, dog off-leash areas are often designated within very large recreation parks and on specific areas of beaches. What is not common is for dog off-leash activities to be permitted in more natural settings (particularly those with cultural heritage values) or along key walk/cycle routes such as the Coastal Pathway. The management of dog off-leash activities within Point Cartwright Reserve requires a re-think.

2.4 Environmental considerations

The environmental values research¹ undertaken as part of the wider master planning project has identified a number of directions with potential to impact recreation activities:

- opportunity exists to expand the current extent of the Point Cartwright Reserve Endangered RE12.2.2 community into the cleared area in the central section of Point Cartwright Reserve. While loss of open space (for recreation purposes) is rarely supported, this area has been heavily impacted previously (by mining activities) and areas of open space would remain immediately east. Additionally, opportunities to extend endangered vegetation within this unique location should not be ignored
- opportunities exist to more closely manage impacts of walking and cycling across Point Cartwright Reserve. Where inappropriate access is resulting in degradation of ecologically significant vegetation areas, intervention is required. Suitable fencing (and gates) is required to exclude bikes from accessing unsealed trails and vegetated areas. Additionally, where goat tracks have been established between the headland and foreshore, a formal track is required, while remaining tracks should be closed and rehabilitated.

2.5 Cultural heritage considerations

A recent cultural heritage survey² across Point Cartwright Reserve and La Balsa Park identified a range of key considerations with regard to recreation opportunities and constraints:

- Point Cartwright is a deeply significant location of major importance in the Kabi Kabi cultural landscape - despite being impacted by inconsistent uses
 - the survey identified three shell midden sites (one containing associated stone artefacts)
 - the bedded layers of sandstone at the base of the cliff faces is also considered significant (as a source of grinding materials and flaked tools)
- La Balsa Park has been significantly disturbed and embellished resulting in no prospect of remediation (from a cultural heritage perspective).

Given the cultural heritage values within Point Cartwright Reserve, the report highlights the need for greater management of user movement and a direction that dogs should not be permitted within the Reserve. These considerations are further discussed within Section 4 of the report.

¹ Future-Plus Environmental, 2022

² Converge Heritage and Community, 2022





Demands and trends

3.1 Demand drivers

3.1.1 Population considerations

The population of the Wurtulla - Buddina and District locality reached more than 28,000¹ in 2021. Council reports an expected increase of more than 8,000 additional residents by 2041². While the largest population increases are expected in the older age cohorts, there are expectations of growth across all ages.

A growing population will mean that the number of people seeking outdoor recreation and play opportunities will increase within the catchment. If not managed appropriately, this could lead to further degradation of the existing assets, inappropriate use of areas of significance and continued user conflicts.

3.1.2 Participation trends

Ongoing research conducted by SportAUS highlights a clear move away from formal sport participation while physical activity and recreation have increased significantly (by more than 20% since 2001). Participation in walking and fitness/gym have increased the most. As previously noted, there are few formal sports/activities undertaken across the study area. For those activities reported by SportAUS³, significant participation increases have been highlighted at a National-level for adults in air sports, cycling, fishing, paddle sports and surfing since 2017. Increases in participation in air sports and fishing have also been observed for children. These findings support reports for increasing demand for space for car and trailer parking across the study area.

Ongoing growth in walking and cycling participation are projected. Across the country, councils are planning for greater demand on the pathway networks. Sunshine Coast Council recognises that the existing shared pathway network struggles to meet existing demand - let alone service expected future needs. The Master Plan will need to address the popularity in walking and cycling (and the need to balance potential conflicting uses of the shared pathway network).

Convenience

Our society is becoming increasingly convenience-orientated. People desire the flexibility to do activities when it suits. This desire has contributed to an increasing trend in 'no strings attached' participation. Results from the 2021 AusPlay Focus Report indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on organised sport due to restrictions on community gatherings. By contrast, there has been a national increase in adult participation in physical activity, and with higher frequency per week being driven by women. Walking for recreation remained the most participated in activity, and jogging was almost as popular, following by cycling, bushwalking and swimming. Interestingly, most of these more popular activities are available across the Point Cartwright Reserve and La Balsa Park areas.

¹ ABS Census QuickStats, 2021
² Profile.id, 2018
³ AusPlay, National data

Increasing health and environmental awareness

People are becoming increasingly concerned about their health, with conditions such as obesity and heart disease on the rise. With the trend of small residential blocks and higher density living, people have less contact with the outdoors (including backyards). A significant body of knowledge now exists as evidence that residents with good access to the natural environment report a higher quality of life. Additionally, at societal level, there is growing awareness of the environment and the challenges it is facing, such as climate change and urban growth. This has facilitated a growth in visitation to various natural areas. A term referred to as 'returning to nature', has emerged where people feel the desire to become reconnected to their natural environments in an effort to escape their modern lifestyles.

COVID and dog ownership

The COVID pandemic resulted in a substantial boom in pet ownership in Australia⁴. Nationally, 69 % of households now own a pet, up from 61% at the start of the pandemic. This increase has largely been led by a surge in dog ownership—with over a million additional dogs being brought into Australian households since 2019. Companionship is by far the most common reason for wanting a dog,

These significant increases in dog ownership are resulting in higher demand for dog parks and dog on- and off-leash areas. Point Cartwright Reserve and the surrounding foreshore areas (including Half Moon Bay) are some of the more popular areas for recreation with dogs across the Sunshine Coast. In fact, dog clubs from outside the region are also known to undertake group activities within the study area. This Report has already highlighted the potential conflicts that can result from inappropriate actions from off-leash dogs and the nuisance noise-related concerns raised by nearby residents.

⁴ Animal Medicines Australia, 2021



3.2 Community values

As previously highlighted, a range of engagement activities were undertaken to ascertain community perception with regard to existing uses and management, values and visions for the site. There is recognition from respondents that La Balsa Park and Point Cartwright Reserve are distinct land parcels with differing values and uses. However, as summarised below, the community is clearly divided on preferred uses and assets across the study area.

□ Point Cartwright Reserve

- four stand-out responses for what respondents love about Point Cartwright Reserve (in order): dogs and pets; natural beauty and landscapes; exercise and active transport; environment
- yet - the highest response for issues and challenges for Point Cartwright Reserve was 'dogs' (specifically too much access to off-leash areas, poor behaviour of dogs and owners, presence of faeces)
- it is also important to note that almost 1 in 4 respondents noted 'no issues' with the current use and management of Point Cartwright Reserve.

□ La Balsa Park

- five stand-out responses for what respondents love about La Balsa Park (in order): natural beauty and landscape; park facilities; exercise and active transport; dogs and pets; amenity
- highlighting that Council has done a quality job in developing and managing the Park, the highest response for issues and challenges for La Balsa Park Point was 'no issue' (a response provided by more than 1 in 3 respondents)
- the top 3 issues identified include dogs (specifically too much access to off-leash areas, presence of faeces, and poor behaviour of dogs and owners), parking, and lack of park infrastructure (specifically shade; barbecues, tables and benches).

Respondents were also asked to look forward and identify elements they would like changed in the future. For both sites, the overwhelming response was for 'no change'. For those that did identify areas for change, there was an almost equal split of those wanting access to more dog off-leash areas and those seeking a reduction in off-leash areas. The only other changes identified consistently was the need for greater environmental conservation for Point Cartwright Reserve and more parking and shade for La Balsa Park. Council reports that lack of parking is a significant concern near to La Balsa Park (particularly with cars and boat trailers spilling out into the on-road parking network). On weekends (with good weather for boating) it is not uncommon for Council to receive complaints from nearby residents regarding difficulty accessing their properties given the volume of cars (and trailers) parking in the surrounding streets.

Determining what the community 'values' at La Balsa Park is relatively straightforward. The Park has been developed as a heavily embellished water-side recreation park - a place where families can go to play, picnic and fish; a place for gatherings and celebrations; a place for walking and cycling; a place to access the river and ocean for boaties. Each of these elements should be built upon and reflected in the master planning exercise. In contrast, the community is divided on the 'values' of Point Cartwright Reserve. It is highly unusual for a site to be recognised for its environmental and cultural heritage values, yet also seen as an important dog off-leash area (presumably by a separate section of the community). Trying to placate these seemingly polar community values will result in further management issues and ever-increasing community conflict.





Future directions

4.1 Vision

4.1.1 Vision statement

The vision statement sets the framework for future decision-making for the study area. It also provides the direction for the guiding principles presented below.

The recreation vision for the study area is:

Together, Point Cartwright Reserve and La Balsa Park provide a wide range of recreation opportunities for local residents and visitors. The sites will be embellished and managed to reflect the environmental and cultural heritage values of the sites and to ensure sustainable outcomes.

4.2 Guiding principles

The guiding principles describe the over-arching intentions for the ongoing development and management of Point Cartwright Reserve and La Balsa Park. They will be used to ensure that the master plan embeds best practice principles to achieve quality recreation outcomes. Importantly, these principles reflect Council's 10 Design Principles and the key planning principles included in the recently adopted Recreation Parks Plan.

Quality planning	Council will ensure an evidence-based strategic approach to the provision of recreation opportunities. Facilities will respond to the needs of the community and be fit-for-purpose (yet recognise resource realities and affordability)
Partnerships	Council will ensure that the community continue to be provided with a range of opportunities to become involved in decision-making processes regarding future recreation-, environment- and cultural heritage-related development
Equitable, accessible, safe and connected	Council will strive to develop equitable, diverse, well-linked recreation options that enhance opportunities for health and wellbeing. Facilities will be safely and conveniently accessed by users (including suitable provision of parking)
Attractive and inviting	Council will ensure that Point Cartwright Reserve and La Balsa Park are designed and effectively maintained to a high quality to encourage the community to value them and to foster high levels of use
Adaptable	Council will ensure that facilities offer a diversity of choices that reflect the varied (and changing) needs of the community. Multi-use facilities will be developed that respond to changing demographics and climate change resilience
Protect, preserve, enhance and educate	Council recognises the important role that healthy and resilient ecosystems and cultural heritage play in the lives of present and future generations. Opportunities to learn about cultural heritage and the natural environment will be integrated into development of the sites

4.3 Proposed uses

The vast majority of existing recreation uses are highly valued, do not degrade the natural beauty of the area, nor the environmental and cultural heritage values of the sites. However, there are a small range of activities that require greater management to ensure ongoing sustainability and quality experiences.

4.3.1 Land-based recreation elements, uses and experiences

Shared pathways, tracks and trails

- ☐ Formalise the desire line short cuts toward the lighthouse end of Point Cartwright Reserve
- ☐ Undertake a 'whole of network' review of the shared pathway to improve alignments and preferred routes, safety, amenity and to reflect future demand. Include upgrades to the signage suite (that aligns with the existing preferred designs used across the shared pathway network)
- ☐ Construct an additional formal track link from the sealed path down to the rocky headland up toward the lighthouse end of Point Cartwright Reserve
- ☐ Construct a formal track leading from the lighthouse to the fenced grass area at the headland end of Point Cartwright Reserve (and close and rehabilitate the other existing goat tracks in this area)
- ☐ Restrict inappropriate access to the unsealed tracks and trails (and the heavily vegetated areas)

Lookouts

- ☐ Construct a formal track leading from the lighthouse to the fenced grass area at the headland end of Point Cartwright Reserve. Formalise this area as an additional lookout

Play and picnic

- ☐ Retain the existing range of play and picnic facilities (with La Balsa Park heavily embellished and Point Cartwright Reserve sparingly embellished)

Activities with dogs

- ☐ Reduce the amount of area available for off-leash dog activities at Point Cartwright Reserve to the existing beach section only (Beach access 198 to 201). The rocky headland and remainder of Point Cartwright Reserve (including Half Moon Bay) are all to be converted to on-leash only areas)
 - clearly Point Cartwright Reserve is a popular dog off-leash area. However, the area has high environmental and cultural heritage values that are incongruent with dog activities off-leash. Further, the area is very popular for passive and active recreation and the Coastal Pathway passes through this site. (This section of Coastal Pathway is the only portion of the Pathway network to include off-leash dog access). While these changes will upset many dog owners, off-leash opportunities will be retained on the nearby beaches and at Jessica Park in Minyama (approximately 2km south-west). Additional parking may be required at these sites if they become more popular for dog off-leash activities.

Additional considerations

- ☐ Continue to monitor formal bookings for celebrations such as weddings. Current levels of bookings are appropriate. However, if these uses increase significantly a capped system may be required
- ☐ Continue to plan for parking upgrades across the site (including to service the La Balsa Park boat ramp).

4.3.2 Water-based recreation elements, uses and experiences

Fishing

- ☐ Retain the existing embellishments supporting fishing opportunities
- ☐ Install a fish-cleaning table near the rock wall mid-way along the length of La Balsa Park

Boating and paddling

- ☐ Investigate opportunities to expand and upgrade the parking area for the La Balsa Park boat ramp

Swimming, snorkelling and diving

- ☐ Ensure opportunities for swimming, snorkelling and diving are not diminished through future development

Surfing

- ☐ Construct an additional formal track link from the sealed path down to the rocky headland up toward the lighthouse end of Point Cartwright Reserve

4.3.3 Air-based recreation elements, uses and experiences

Hang gliding and paragliding

- ☐ Continue to approve hang gliding and paragliding from Point Cartwright Reserve (assuming CAA approvals remain in-place). (While grass launching is appropriate) investigate the potential of developing a matted launch area at the existing launch site to reduce the need for ongoing maintenance of the current grass surface and surrounding shrubs.

4.4 Managing recreation uses

4.3.1 Limits of acceptable change

Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) proposes a framework to define acceptable limits for impacts. Core elements identify:

- ☐ lowest (minimum) acceptable conditions
- ☐ a monitoring process to determine if standards are met
- ☐ management prescriptions reflecting if standards have been met.

Compromise is central to LAC. For a number of years, Council has fielded queries and complaints with regard to the ongoing development and use of the study area (particularly Point Cartwright Reserve). Council has attempted to provide solutions and opportunities for all interested users (those wanting dog off-leash opportunities, those seeking areas to exercise, those enjoying the views, those appreciating the natural beauty and sensitive environment). However, this approach has proven largely unsuccessful and, to some extent, has divided the community. Rather than 'accepting change' it appears time for an alternate approach to management.

4.3.1 Carrying capacity

In contrast to the limits of acceptable change approach, the carrying capacity approach outlines that the capacity of a site (from a recreation perspective) is dependent on several factors. The most relevant factors for Point Cartwright Reserve and La Balsa Park include:

- ☐ the environmental characteristics of the site and its sensitivity to impact
- ☐ the cultural heritage values of the site and its sensitivity to impact
- ☐ the likely level of impact from any existing and proposed activities and facilities
- ☐ any alternate locations/options available for activities considered inappropriate.

Generally, the higher the environmental and cultural heritage sensitivity, the lower the activity impact should be, as a higher level of design, funding and management resources are required to attain sustainable outcomes. In contrast, a lower sensitivity of a site would allow a higher activity impact.

Recommended approach for assessing site carrying capacity:

- ☐ utilise expert advice in the environmental and cultural heritage assessment of the site
- ☐ choose sites of low sensitivity for intensification of use
- ☐ restrict usage rates to appropriate levels by dispersing demand for some activities to other areas
- ☐ utilise expert advice in the siting and design of facilities
- ☐ ensure adequate resources exist to construct facilities to a high standard
- ☐ ensure adequate resources exist to maintain and manage facilities after completion.

Point Cartwright Reserve is an area of both environmental and cultural heritage value. It is sensitive to impacts from over-use and inappropriate uses. As a result, the site is considered appropriate for moderate levels of passive recreation, exercise, infrequent gatherings and events, and dog on-leash activities. The Reserve is not considered an appropriate location for dog off-leash activities. Council is encouraged to investigate opportunities to develop more local-level opportunities for dog off-leash activities. Additionally, opportunities for larger regional-level dog exercise areas should also be considered. While Jessica Park is the nearest park with an off-leash area to Point Cartwright Reserve, it is acknowledged that is a smaller land parcel, is more formalised and does not have the setting or views of Point Cartwright Reserve (but this should not preclude the off-leash changes proposed at Point Cartwright Reserve).

It is important that Council's park planners and maintenance staff have access to the formal bookings for La Balsa Park and Point Cartwright Reserve. As previously noted, existing levels of use are appropriate. However, significant increases in bookings may impact the carrying capacity (and sustainability) of the sites.