



NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

Baliiga precinct plan (Never Never picnic area)

Dorrigo National Park





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1 Overview

1.1 Location and context

The Never Never picnic area is located on Dome Road, in the Dorrig National Park, north-east New South Wales. The precinct is approximately 45 km inland from the coast, and sits within dense rainforest escarpment landscape.

The Traditional Custodians of this land are the Gumbaynggirr People. Rich in food, water and materials, the area provided a year-round living environment for thousands of years. The rainforests provided an abundant and diverse supply of food, medicines and materials for hunting, gathering and shelter.

The name Never Never has a long connection to the area despite this location not being near the Never Never River. There are other visitor locations both on- and off-park which are known as the Never Never which causes confusion. Through consultation with the Gumbaynggirr community National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) proposes to rename the precinct using an appropriate Gumbaynggirr name. Baliiga, which means Rosewood, has been suggested.

The precinct is located in the Rosewood Creek catchment, 9.5 km east of the Dorrig Rainforest Centre. It contains the historic picnic shelter, wood fire barbecues, picnic settings, and a small amenities building.

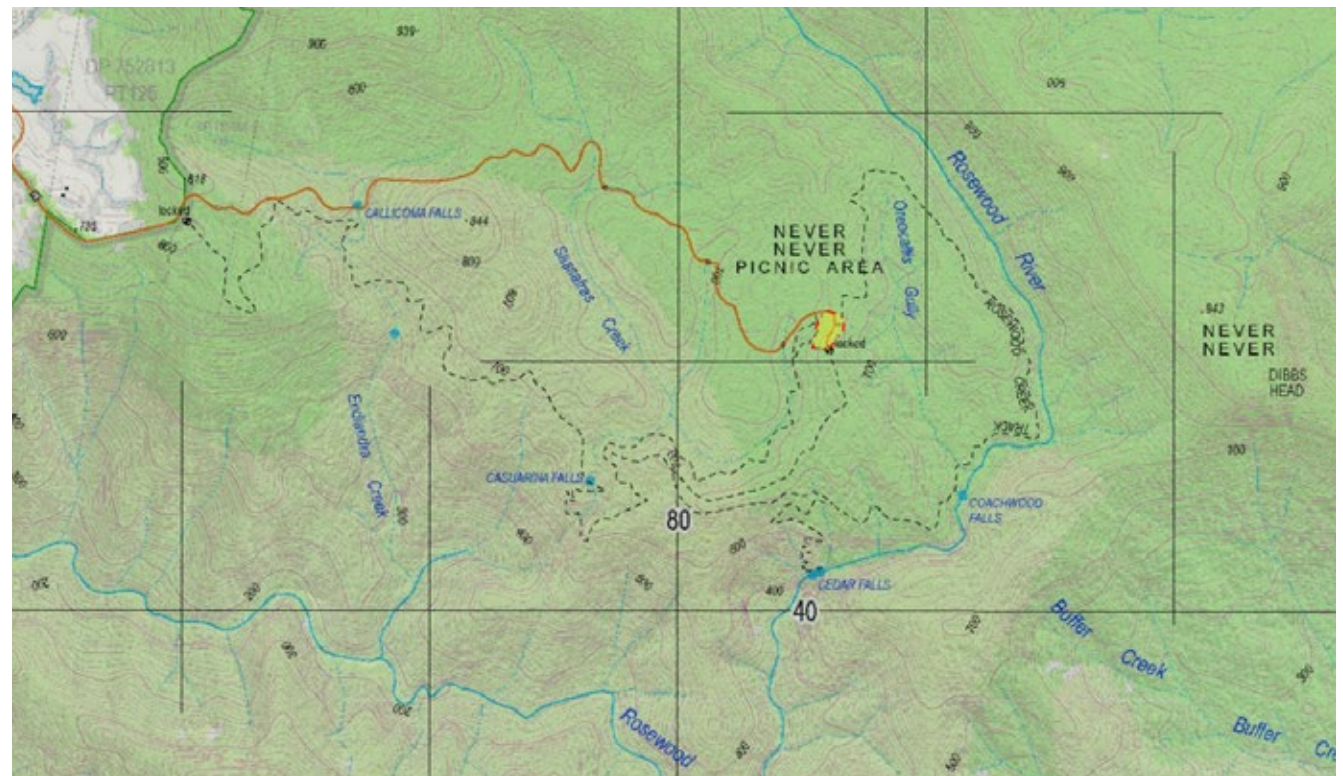
It is a quiet and more remote day use area that is growing in popularity. It is popular for picnics, barbecues and birdwatching, and is a central focal point for a number of walking track loops that link numerous waterfalls.

Walking tracks from the day use area lead to Coachwood Falls, Red Cedar Falls and Casuarina Falls.

Built in 1975, the Never Never picnic shelter is considered an iconic part of the visitor precinct. The structure is currently in need of restoration works. The Never Never picnic area and picnic shelter have historical significance, reflecting important periods and events in the history of Dorrig National Park. The picnic area and shelter also have aesthetic and social significance, being highly valued by NPWS and the local community.



Waterfall on Rosewood Creek, Dorrig National Park
(Ralf Hesse/DPE)



Baliiga precinct indicated by yellow shading above, Dorrig National Park

1.2 Background

The current day use area is increasing in popularity. Frequently visitors stay overnight despite the area being a day use only area. The nearest national park campgrounds are at Platypus Flat and Point Lookout, around 45–60 minutes' drive away.

The precinct plan for this visitor facility aims to upgrade and improve the visitor experience so that it can adapt to increased visitation in a sustainable manner. This approach includes increasing parking capacity, developing camping options, redesigning the track head starting points, and rejuvenating the historic picnic shelter.

The brief has been adapted following the announcement of funding for the Dorrigo Escarpment Great Walk, of which this precinct will form a key component.

The Never Never picnic shelter and picnic area heritage assessment outlines recommendations for management and conservation works for the picnic area and picnic shelter. Various recommendations are reflected in this precinct plan, with conservation works indicated to be undertaken in accordance with the heritage report.

The Baliiga precinct plan incorporates existing infrastructure and heritage requirements, and provides design solutions for current and future usage, including upgrades to the picnic shelter and surrounds, a new toilet block, and a new camping area with walk-in tent sites and vehicle camping sites.



Red Cedar Falls walking track, Dorrigo National Park (Rob Cleary/DPE)



Never Never picnic area (Rob Cleary/DPE)



Never Never picnic area (Rob Cleary/DPE)



Never Never picnic area (Barbara Webster/DPE)



Rainforest on the nearby Blackbutt Track (Rob Cleary/DPE)

1.3 Vision

The Baliiga precinct is revitalised and enhanced as a unique multi-use national park recreational destination, with clearly defined day use and camping areas, improved functionality and infrastructure, and access to the wide array of Dorrigo National Park experiences.

The broad intent is to maintain the low-key, open feel and amenity of the precinct whilst catering for an increasing demand for day and overnight natural experiences.

‘The picnic area and picnic shelter should be retained without significant change to their physical form and character, together with the retention of all of the components that contribute to their overall heritage significance.’

(Source: Never Never picnic shelter and picnic area heritage assessment)



Never Never picnic shelter (Fisher Design + Architecture)

1.4 Response to brief

This precinct plan has been prepared in consultation with NPWS to provide a framework for a sustainable future for the Baliiga precinct over the following decades.

The plan provides broad concepts which demonstrate short- and long-term strategies, design solutions and opportunities, and describes a vision for now and the future.



Red Cedar Falls (Rob Cleary/DPE)

Key objectives

- Upgrade and revitalisation of the precinct landscape and infrastructure for the benefit of visitors, staff and the natural environment, adopting recommendations outlined in the heritage assessment
- Meet pragmatic and landscape-specific needs relating to usage, visitation and sustainability, with a focus on universal usage and visitor safety
- Provide context and deeper understanding of the precinct, and increase visitor awareness of the heritage and natural wonders of the surrounding area through wayfinding information and interpretive signage
- Rehabilitate the natural landscape and engage sensitively with the surrounding environment
- Enhance visitor experiences – improve sense of journey and discovery
- Improve and expand a suite of signage and native planting, utilising materials which are low maintenance, highly durable and robust, and appropriate to the site
- Remove trees that pose a risk to visitors, in particular blackbutts in highly used areas
- In line with the heritage report recommendations, reinstate the more open feel by removal of selected trees or vegetation, and prune where necessary.

1.5 Heritage considerations

The Never Never picnic shelter conservation works

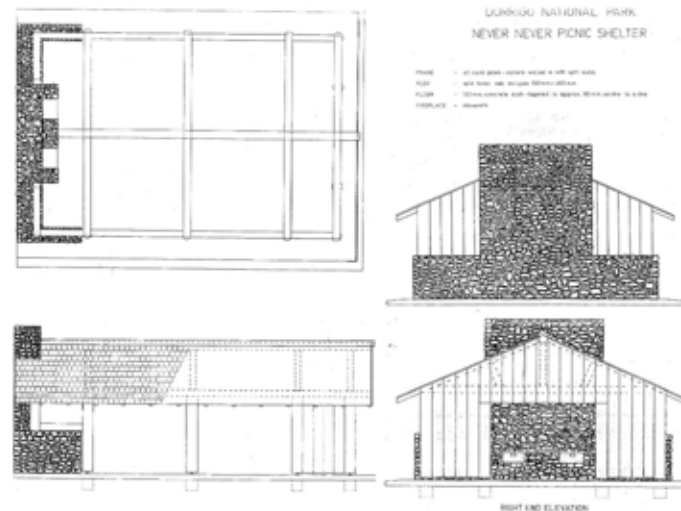
Conservation works for the picnic shelter are to be in accordance with the Never Never picnic shelter and picnic area heritage assessment.

Key heritage considerations for the picnic shelter include maintaining, conserving and replacing the shelter's timber fabric and retaining the overall gable roofed form and the round timber-framed structure and fabric (shingles, slabs and stone) without any additions.

Conservation works for the picnic shelter focus on the need for cyclic maintenance, a structural engineering assessment, and include plans to:

- replace the shingle roof with improved details
- repair the round timber-post roof frame
- repair the timber wall posts and the steel support brackets
- repair existing slab rot – cut back surfaces as required or replace the slab if too rotted
- investigate the extent of any earth build up on the eastern wall and remove earth buildup
- investigate the extent of drainage provided behind the lower section of this east wall of the shelter and the 2 curved stone retaining walls
- investigate the impact of tree roots behind the cracked curved retaining wall and identify any mitigative works required for these 2 defects

- provide a narrow full-length fixed skylight immediately to the south of the ridge line to heritage assessment recommendations
- provide gas barbecue cooking and the reuse of the fireplaces to recover their significance, but with an adaptation to provide for an enclosed fire place for warmth, while minimising risks from fire, to heritage assessment recommendations.



Original plan of the Never Never Picnic Shelter Dorriggo National Park signed NJF and dated 28.6.76 — therefore most likely as an As Constructed drawing. Top left floor plan with north down the page; top right east elevation; bottom left north elevation; bottom right sectional elevation looking east to fireplace.

(Source: from A0 print held NPWS Dorriggo, not to scale)



Bill Darley and Mylie Sawtell (Ruth Holmes)



Testing the barbecue chimney before the opening of the picnic area in 1975 (Ruth Holmes)



Neville Fenton on left at the opening (Neville Fenton)

1.6 Key site issues



Entry and car parking area

- entry road in fair condition requiring minor upgrade, definition of roadside drainage, and filling of potholes
- need improved site orientation and information
- need formalisation of car parking areas for day use and camping, defined parking and turning
- bollards generally degraded and require replacement.



Heritage picnic shelter

- weathered and degraded due to ongoing deterioration of timber fabric from water damage and lack of maintenance.



Day use area

- need definition of day use and camping areas
- loss of views around picnic area from vegetation growth
- abundance of fallen trees and debris
- poor layout and condition of picnic and barbecue settings.



Track heads

- poor definition of tracks and trail heads
- inadequate trail head signage.



Amenities

- existing amenities tired and insufficient for future increased visitation
- accessible circulation requires upgrade.



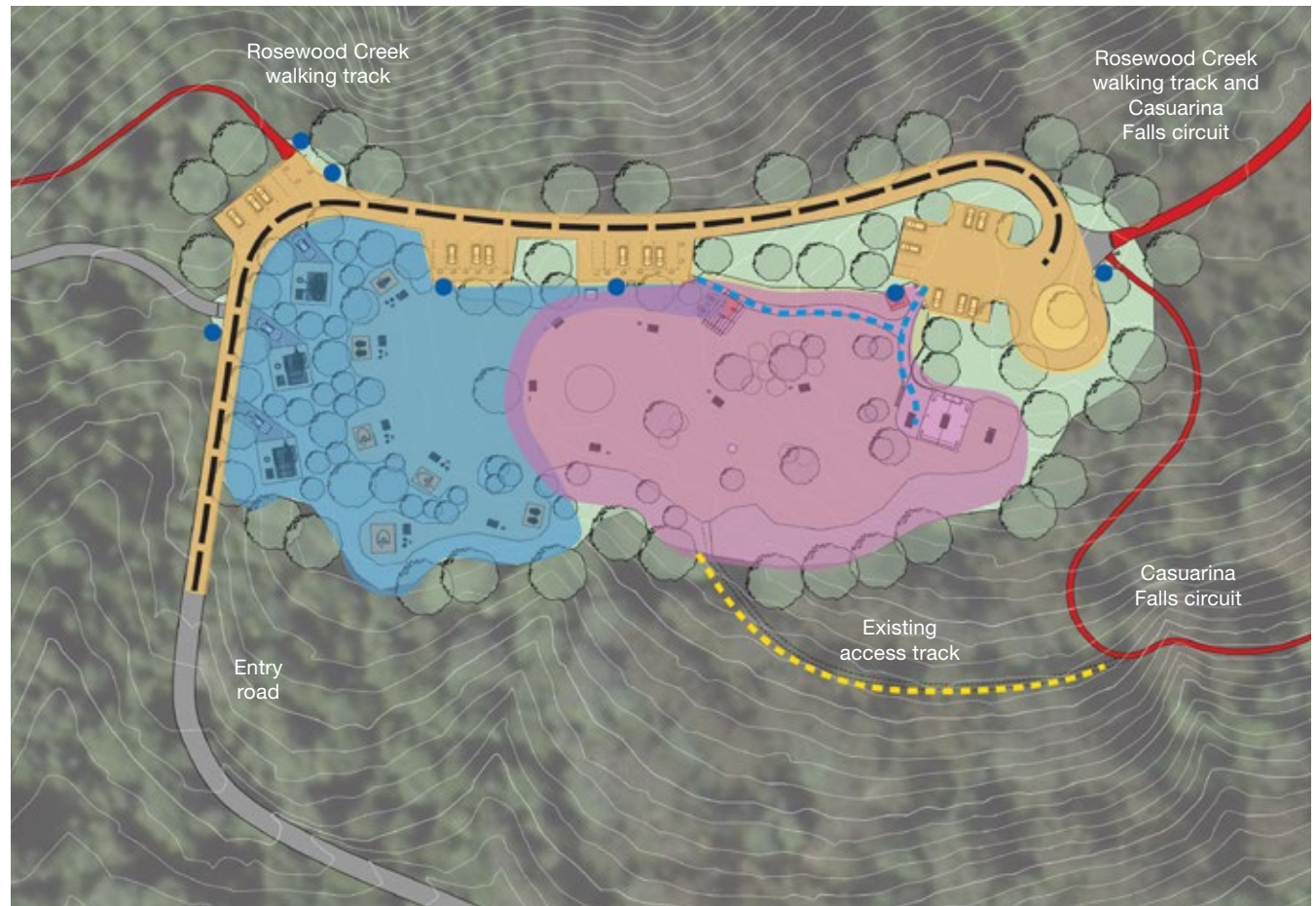
Signage

- interpretive signage poorly located and needs update
- precinct entry sign requires updated information – day use area, camping area, vehicle turning
- poor wayfinding signage
- need for new camp site sign posts to new layout.









2 Strategies and solutions

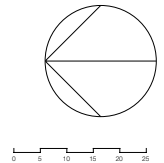
2.1 Design principles

- Improved entry experience
- New signage to direct visitors to day use or camping areas
- Central information and orientation point with clear direction to facilities and attractions
- Clear separation and identification of day use and camping areas, parking and vehicle turning
- Formalised car park areas for the day use and camping areas with new signage
- Improved day use parking and picnic areas
- Improved infrastructure and amenities
- Clear identification of track trail heads
- Consider closing existing access track and diverting to track head to the south
- Improved native landscape
- Improved site drainage
- Enhancement of heritage significance
- Improved accessible circulation



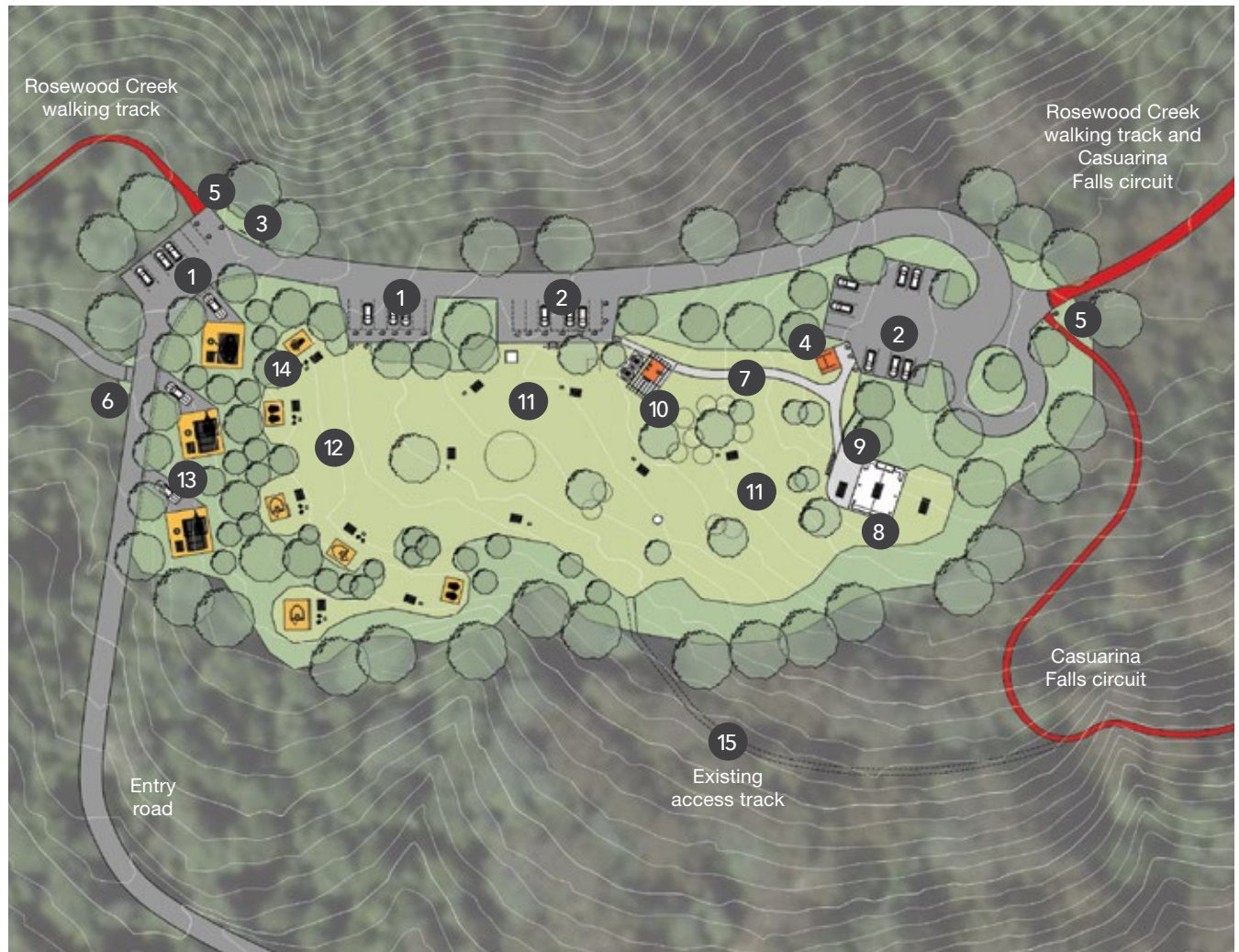
Legend

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------|---|-----------------------|
|  | Vehicle zone |  | Existing access track |
|  | Camping |  | Information point |
|  | Day use area | | |
|  | Road | | |
|  | Walking track | | |
|  | Accessible pathway | | |














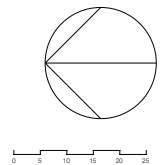
2.2 Site plan – overview

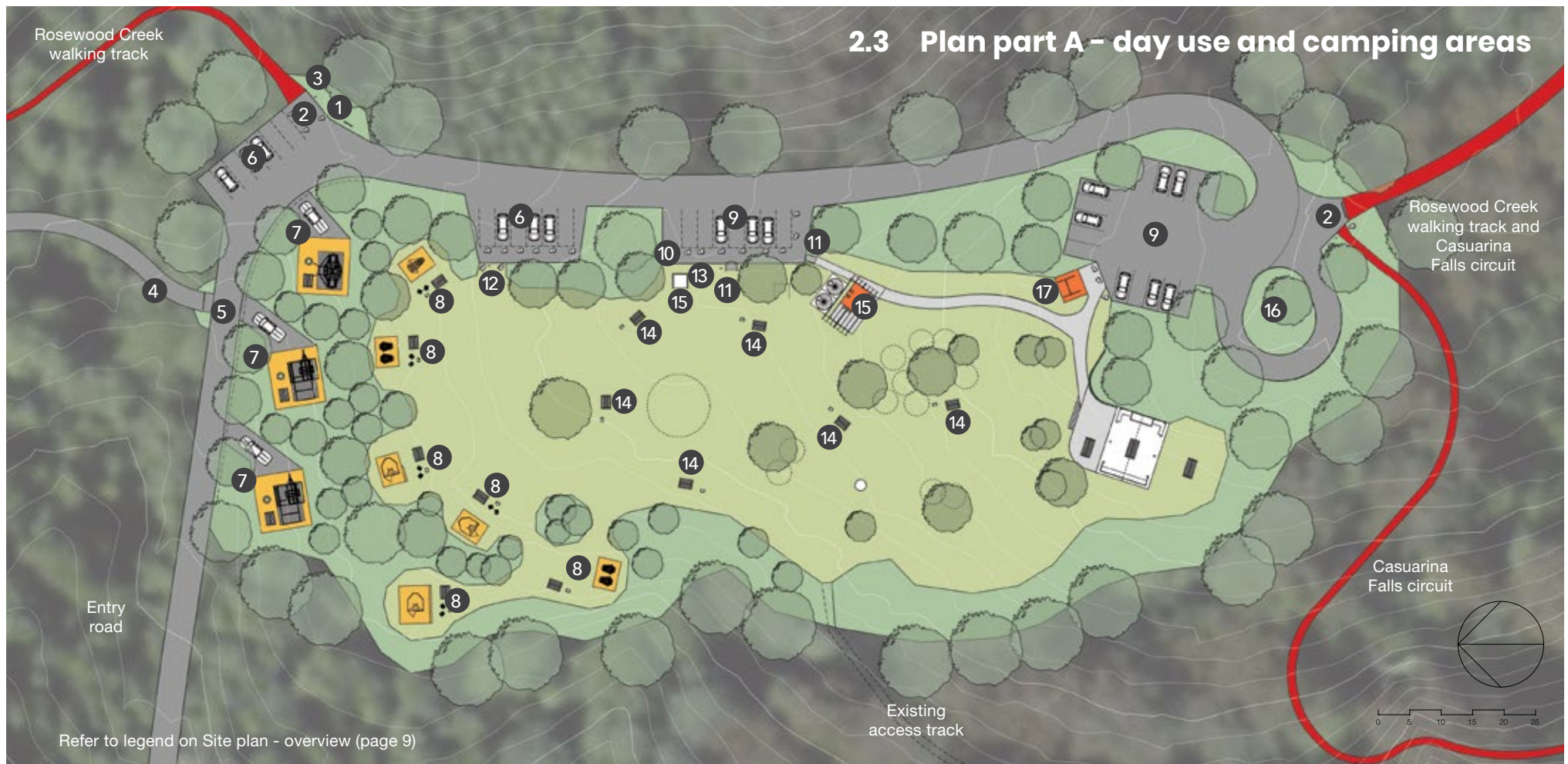
1. Car park – camping
2. Car park – day use
3. Precinct entry sign
4. Information signage shelter
5. Walking track head and sign
6. Locked gate – management access only
7. New accessible pathway
8. Heritage picnic shelter
9. New paved seating area
10. Amenities building
11. Day use area with picnic settings and barbecues
12. Camping area – walk-in camp sites
13. Camping area – vehicle camp sites
14. Camping platforms
15. Consider closing existing access track and diverting to track head to the south



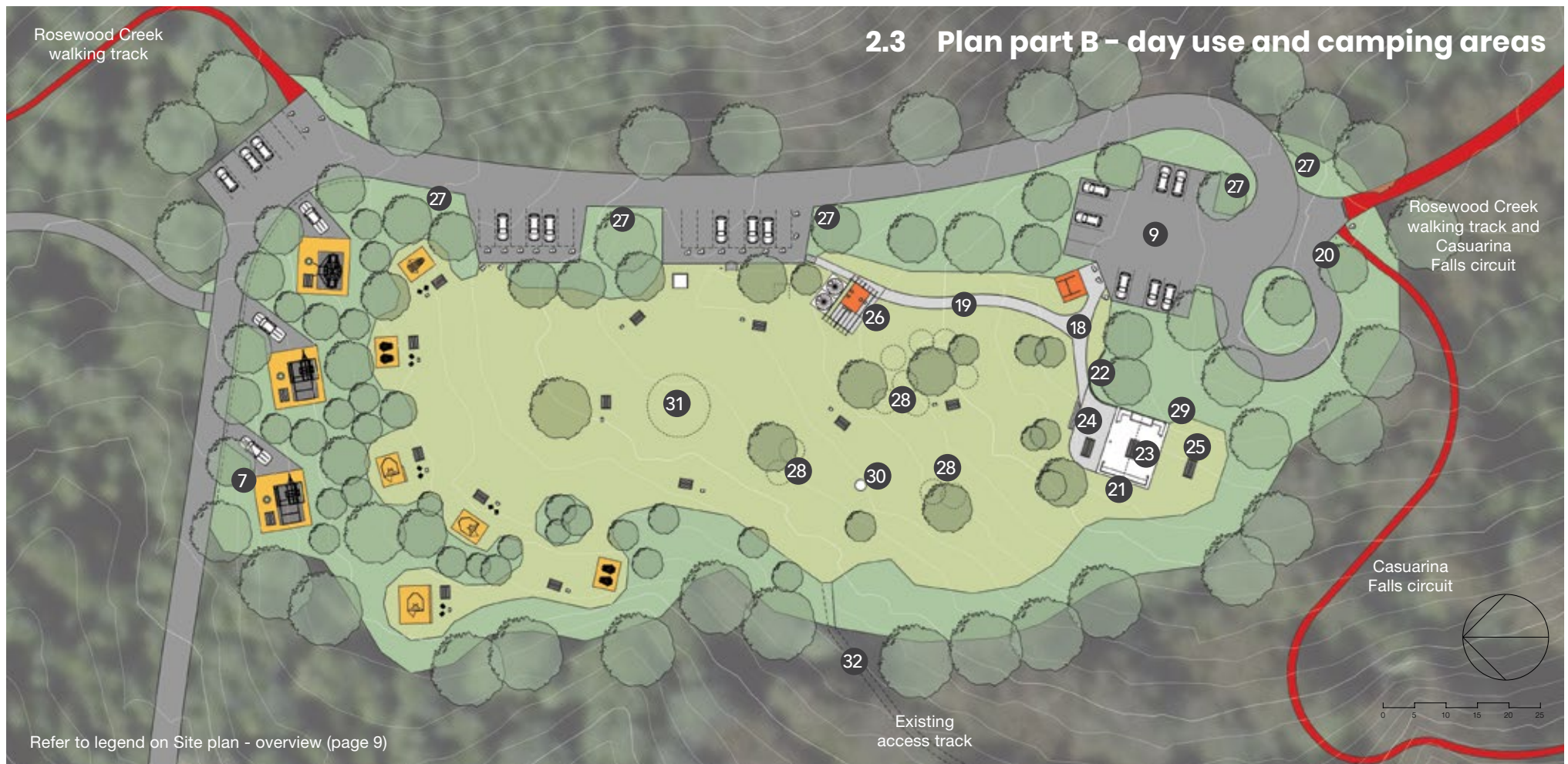
Legend

- | | |
|---|---|
|  Road / parking / service vehicle access |  Camping site |
|  Pathway / elevated walkway |  Grass area |
|  Walking track |  Rehabilitated native planting and privacy screening |
|  Existing building / structure to retain |  Existing trees to retain |
|  New building / structure |  Tree to remove |
| |  Picnic setting |





1. New site entry sign with directional information – day use and camping areas
2. Improve trail head entry with compacted gravel surface, new barrier bollards/rocks, and rehabilitated surround planting
3. New trailhead sign for the Dorrig Escarpment Great Walk and camp
4. Service vehicle access
5. Service vehicle entry with gate and new regulatory sign
6. Camping car parking area with new regulatory sign – improve with graded gravel surface, and define edges with new barrier bollards/rocks and native revegetation
7. New vehicle-based camp site – with levelled pad with geohex surface, battered stone retaining edge, wood fire place, and 'heritage style' picnic setting. Allow for roadside drainage, vehicle crossover, internal site drainage, and native privacy perimeter planting
8. New walk-in campsite – with camping platform, wood fire place, and 'heritage style' picnic setting to NPWS Park Facilities Manual (PFM) details. Allow for site drainage and native privacy perimeter planting
9. Day use car parking areas with new regulatory sign – improve with graded gravel surface, and define edges with new barrier bollards/rocks and native revegetation
10. Retain existing delivery dock and make good for firewood deliveries
11. Retain/reconstruct the steps cut from round logs in the middle car park
12. New sign indicating camping area
13. New sign indicating day use area
14. Retain the remaining log table in picnic area. Provide new barbecues to PFM details and new bespoke log table settings to the 'board tree' stump heritage style reflected in the original works
15. Move the current wood store to the edges of the picnic area
16. New vehicle turning circle – regrade existing road, and define edges with new barrier bollards/ rocks, and rehabilitated surround planting
17. New information shelter to PFM details, with new wayfinding information and updated interpretive panels



- 18. New accessible entry pathway with hard surface. Options – flagstone paving, concrete, bitumen, geohex with compacted gravel
- 19. New accessible pathway to amenities building with hard surface. Options – flagstone paving, concrete, bitumen, geohex with compacted gravel
- 20. New track head signs for walking tracks
- 21. Restore the picnic shelter with conservation works to be in accordance with the Never Never picnic shelter and picnic area heritage assessment
- 22. Repair the existing retaining wall to engineer's requirements
- 23. Restore and reconstruct the hoop pine tables by repurposing materials to create at least 2 functional tables for the interior. Cut back rotted edges and resurface the tables
- 24. New hard surfaced flat area in front of the shelter, connected to the accessible path, that acts to 'open up' the shelter and invite visitors to it. Options – flagstone paving, concrete
- 25. New durable hardwood slab table of similar size and appearance to the 2 original internal tables for the new external area proposed for in front of the shelter
- 26. New 3-cubicle pump out toilet building and wash-up facility providing water and clean-up space for both day use visitors and campers located in-between day use and camping areas. Allow for solar/PV panels
- 27. Replace degraded bollards with new barrier bollards/rocks
- 28. Undertake selective 'thinning out' and pruning of vegetation in and adjacent to the picnic area to restore views of and through the picnic area
- 29. Remove the trees that are located in the immediate vicinity of the shelter which appear to have cracked the curved retaining wall, are overshadowing and reducing light levels inside the shelter and could drop limbs on the roof
- 30. Retain existing tree stump
- 31. Remove selected trees that pose risks to day users, campers and picnickers. This will include large blackbutt trees and a selection of trees that are encroaching on the open area consistent with the intent of the setting
- 32. Consider closing existing access track and diverting to track head to the south

2.4 Perspective views



Artists impression: Day use area entry with increased parking capacity, new interpretation shelter and all-access pathway to picnic shelter



Artists impression: Renovated historic Never Never picnic shelter, new access pathway and paved level area outside



Artists impression: Camping platforms



Artists impression: 3 new proposed vehicle camping sites on the lower section of the precinct

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Front cover photo: Never Never picnic shelter, Dorrigo National Park. (Fisher Design + Architecture)

Back cover photo: Red Cedar Falls, Dorrigo National Park (Rob Cleary/DPE)

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