

# King Island Conservation Park

**Management Plan**

1999

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The King Island Conservation Park Management Plan 1999 has been extended in 2023, in line with the Queensland *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (s120G). Minor amendments have been made. There has been no change to the plan's original management intent and direction.

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# Contents

<b>1. Management directions and purpose.....</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1 Management directions .....	2
<b>2. Basis for management .....</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1 Bioregional context .....	3
2.2 Values .....	3
2.2.1 Geology and landform .....	3
2.2.2 Plants and animals .....	3
2.2.3 Cultural heritage .....	3
2.2.4 Scenic and aesthetic .....	4
2.2.5 Scientific and educational .....	4
2.2.6 Recreation and tourism .....	4
<b>3. Management strategies.....</b>	<b>4</b>
3.1 Native plants .....	4
3.2 Native animals .....	4
3.3 Introduced plants and animals .....	5
3.4 Cultural heritage .....	5
3.5 Recreational and tourism.....	5
3.6 Education and interpretation .....	6
3.7 Plan implementation and monitoring .....	6
3.8 Complementary management of adjoining areas .....	7
<b>4. Bibliography.....</b>	<b>7</b>

## Summary

This management plan provides the framework and guidelines on how King Island Conservation Park will be managed. It sets out the considerations, outcomes and strategies that are proposed to form the basis on which day-to-day management decisions are made.

The plan was prepared in July 1999 and in accordance with s 125 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (Act). In 2023 the plan was extended, in keeping with s 120G of the Act. For further information on this plan or the planning process, please contact the Department of Environment and Science at [ParkManagementPlans@des.qld.gov.au](mailto:ParkManagementPlans@des.qld.gov.au).

This management plan was prepared by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service staff. Thanks are due to those groups and individuals who made submissions in response to the draft plan.

# 1. Management directions and purpose

## 1.1 Management directions

King Island Conservation Park is located approximately 1 km from Wellington Point in Moreton Bay.

The park will be managed in conjunction with Moreton Bay Marine Park, as a place of significance for migratory birds and to provide for environmentally sensitive recreation opportunities such as birdwatching and beach walking.

The park will also be managed in accordance with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, the Japan Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (JAMBA), the China Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (CAMBA) and the Bonn Convention (Convention on Migratory Species) for the Protection of Migratory Birds and their Environments. The Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation 1994 requires that the special cultural significance of the wildlife listed in the above agreements be recognised and that their populations and habitats be conserved through appropriate management.

King Island will be maintained in its natural condition, with no developed facilities. The island's native vegetation communities will be encouraged to regenerate naturally.

## 1.2 Purpose

The major purposes of management will be to ensure that:

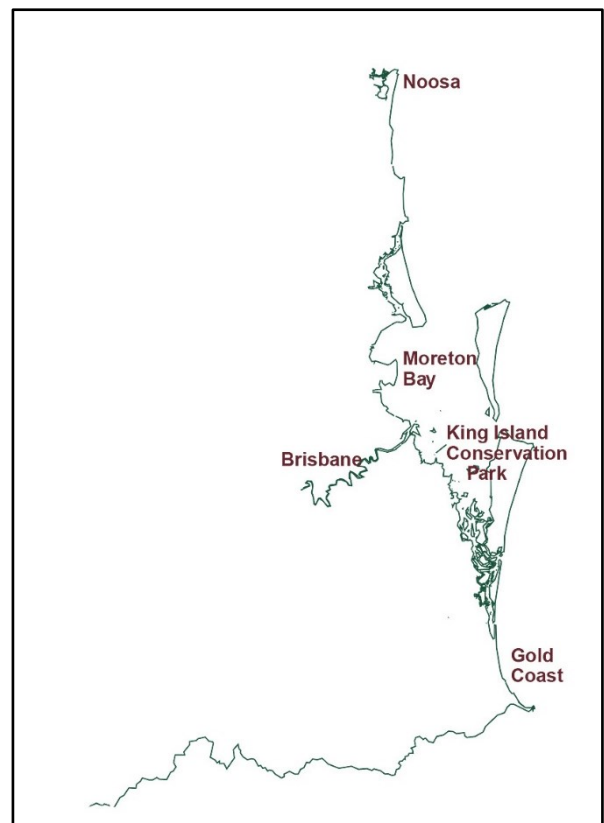
- the mangrove and dune vegetation communities are conserved
- natural regeneration of native vegetation is monitored and encouraged through protection from disturbance
- native animals, particularly migratory wading birds are protected
- low impact, self reliant, nature based recreational and educational day-use opportunities are provided for, and
- the local community, including Aboriginal groups are aware of park management strategies and provided with opportunities to be involved in the park's management.

## 2. Basis for management

The King Island Conservation Park is dedicated under *the Nature Conservation Act 1992* and must be managed under s 20 of the Act to:

- conserve and present the area's cultural and natural resources and their values
- provide for the permanent conservation of the area's natural condition to the greatest possible extent; and
- ensure that any commercial use of the area's natural resources, including fishing and grazing is ecologically sustainable.

The requirement of other legislation will be met when necessary.



Map 1. King Island Conservation Park location map

## 2.1 Bioregional context

King Island Conservation Park was initially declared an environmental park in 1975 and subsequently regazetted as a conservation park in 1994. The park consists of about one hectare of mangroves and littoral dune vegetation and occurs within the southern coastal lowlands environmental province of the South East Queensland biogeographic region. Although small in size, the park acts as a nucleus for extensive sand flats, rubble banks and seagrass beds which are important feeding grounds for migratory wading birds. The conservation park is surrounded by Moreton Bay Marine Park and is included within the Moreton Bay Ramsar site, which is recognised as a wetland of international importance.

## 2.2 Values

### 2.2.1 Geology and landform

King Island is composed of calcareous sand, derived from weathered coral debris and shell grit. It is connected to Wellington Point by a narrow sand bar which is exposed at low tide. King, together with Green, St. Helena and Mud Islands form an island chain which extends into central Moreton Bay.

### 2.2.2 Plants and animals

A well-developed stand of grey mangrove *Avicennia marina subsp. australasica* on the eastern side of the island extends into Moreton Bay Marine Park. The vegetation on the higher, western side of the conservation park consists primarily of ground-cover species typical of coastal dune ecosystems, such as seablite *Suaeda australis*, sea purslane *Sesuvium portulacastrum*, marine couch *Sporobolus virginicus* and beach convolvulus *Ipomoea pes-capre subsp. brasiliensis*. Other low growing species include warrigal spinach *Tetragonia tetragonoides*, river lily *Crinum pedunculatum* and tie bush *Wikstroemia indica*. Also present are a few specimens of cotton tree *Hibiscus tiliaceus*, swamp oak *Casuarina glauca*, *Vitex trifolia var subtrisecta* and Queensland ebony *Diospyros geminata* which is a littoral rainforest species. Littoral rainforest originally covered most of the island, but this and the fringing mangroves were apparently cleared earlier this century (Phillips, 1980). However, the occurrence of another rainforest species, slender grape *Cayratia clematidea*, is evidence of the natural regeneration of the island's former vegetation.

Native animals found on the conservation park include birds such as the striated heron *Butorides striatus* and the mangrove gerygone *Gerygone levigaster*. A species of skink inhabits the island's dune vegetation. Fauna was formerly far more diverse and included possums, bandicoots, water rats, land rails, stone curlews, rainbow lorikeets and snipe (Phillips, 1980).

Numerous species of migratory wading birds feed on the extensive sand flats, rubble banks and seagrass beds surrounding King Island and may roost in the mangroves on the island at high tide. Waders and seabirds observed near King Island include the ruddy turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, pied oystercatcher *Haematopus longirostris*, bar tailed-godwit *Limosa lapponica*, Caspian turn *Sterna caspia*, terek sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*, whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* and the rare eastern curlew *Numenius madagascariensis*.

### 2.2.3 Cultural heritage

From 1904 to 1906, King Island was home to the Philips family who established a temporary dwelling there and gathered much of their food from the surrounding reefs. A letter from a family member is of historical interest, especially in relation to the family's lifestyle and use of the area's abundant natural resources. (Phillips, 1980).

The island and surrounding sand flats and reefs were likely to have been used by Aboriginal people for food gathering.

### 2.2.4 Scenic and aesthetic

King Island and its surroundings represent an area of natural open space that is of local value in the Wellington Point- Waterloo Bay district.

### 2.2.5 Scientific and educational

King Island is readily accessible from Wellington Point at low tide. Because of this ease of access, it is used regularly by local schools for shoreline and island nature study programs. The conservation park has potential for use in scientific research on the regeneration of its native vegetation.

### 2.2.6 Recreation and tourism

The park's popularity as a beach walking destination at low tide indicates its value to local people and visitors alike. Many seek a relaxing walk in this tranquil setting.

## 3. Management strategies

### 3.1 Native plants

#### Current situation

The island's mangroves and dune vegetation are regenerating after having been cleared earlier this century. The mangrove community is currently well established, while the dune community is only in the early stages of regeneration, with limited species diversity and low structure.

#### Desired outcomes

- The biological diversity of the native plant communities continues to develop through natural processes.

#### Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Undertake a vegetation survey and photographic monitoring program to determine the extent and condition of the vegetation communities in the park

### 3.2 Native animals

#### Current situation

With an area of less than 1 ha, the habitat value of King Island for native animals is minimal. The island once supported several species of native mammals and birds which, due to tree clearing, no longer occur there. Despite this, King Island acts as a nucleus for the surrounding sand flats and rubble banks, which are feeding grounds for numerous species of wading birds, including migratory species. At high tide the island may act as a roost site for some of these wading birds.

#### Desired outcomes

- The diversity of animal habitats is maintained, and their integrity enhanced through natural processes.

#### Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Incidental fauna observations from the conservation park will be documented under the Moreton Bay Animal Atlas program.
- Assess the extent to which wading birds use the island as a high tide roost site.

### 3.3 Introduced plants and animals

#### Current situation

An extensive infestation of prickly pear *Opuntia stricta* is present throughout the island's dune vegetation. Prickly pear is a category 3 restricted invasive plant under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. It must not be given away, sold, or released into the environment. The Act requires everyone to take all reasonable and practical measures to prevent or minimise the biosecurity risks associated with invasive plants under their control. This is called a general biosecurity obligation (GBO). The primary biological control agent for prickly pear, the Cactoblastis moth *Cactoblastis cactorum*, is established on the island but is having only a limited effect on the plants. Under a recent program with Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers the prickly pear was manually removed from part of the island. This program requires follow-up work to prevent the establishment of regrowth.

The presence of prickly pear on the island may ironically be of benefit to the regeneration of native plant species. As it discourages visitors to some parts of the island, the trampling of native species is reduced.

#### Desired outcomes

- The numbers and distribution of prickly pear plants on the island are reduced gradually and in conjunction with the regeneration of native plant species.

#### Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Consolidate the program of manual removal of prickly pear from part of the island.
- Encourage biological control by retaining patches of prickly pear infested with Cactoblastis.
- Monitor the effects of prickly pear removal on visitor usage patterns and native plant regeneration.

### 3.4 Cultural heritage

#### Current situation

Aboriginal people probably used the island and its surrounds for food gathering and short-term occupation.

The use of the island as a home site by a family earlier this century is of historical interest and heritage value by way of comparison with the modern lifestyles of people in the area today.

#### Desired outcomes

- The cultural heritage values of the park are recognised and protected.

#### Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Conduct a cultural heritage assessment of the park in conjunction with local historical societies and Aboriginal people with traditional links to the area.

### 3.5 Recreational and tourism

#### Current situation

King Island is one of the most highly visited conservation parks in Moreton Bay. Precise visitation figures are not available, but at low tide large numbers of people regularly walk from Wellington Point to the island. Some people also exercise their dogs on the sand bar between Wellington Point and King Island. This area is part of Moreton Bay Marine Park. Under s 108 of the *Marine Parks (Moreton Bay) Zoning Plan 2019*, dogs must not be taken into the Marine Park unless they are controlled or restrained in a way that prevents them from causing undue disturbance to shorebirds. Dogs are prohibited from the conservation park under s 131 of the *Nature Conservation Regulation 1994*.

#### Desired outcomes

- Nature based recreational opportunities are provided on a day- use basis, with minimal impact on natural and cultural values.

**Proposed policies, guidelines and actions**

- Provide information to the public, on the values of King Island and surrounding Marine Park and on appropriate behaviour, particularly in relation to restraining dogs from disturbing shorebirds.
- Monitor recreational use patterns and impacts on shorebirds, island ecosystems and any identified cultural heritage values.

**3.6 Education and interpretation****Current situation**

The use of King Island for educational purposes helps to encourage greater public appreciation of the values of the conservation park and surrounding area. Educational groups have the potential to cause some impact on the area's natural values by disturbing wading birds and trampling island vegetation and the intertidal zone.

Interpretive signage, detailing the area's values and appropriate visitor behaviour, should be considered. They would be most effective if placed at Wellington Point where people begin their walks.

**Desired outcomes**

- Educational opportunities are provided and encouraged to support conservation strategies.

**Proposed policies, guidelines and actions**

- Provide local schools with information on the values of King Island and surrounding Marine Park, and on the management strategies being used to protect the areas from human impact.
- Develop interpretive signage for placement at Wellington Point, subject to district signage priorities and endorsement by Redland City Council.
- Keep King Island free of signage to maintain its scenic and aesthetic values.

**3.7 Plan implementation and monitoring****Current situation**

King Island Conservation Park is managed by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service staff based at Cleveland. The conservation park is managed in conjunction with Moreton Bay Marine Park and with other island protected areas in southern and central Moreton Bay. The management of King Island represents a small proportion of the management responsibilities of the staff based at Cleveland.

Implementation of this plan will need to be coordinated with the management requirements of many other areas.

**Desired outcomes**

- Resources are made available for the implementation of this management plan on the basis of recognised priorities.

**Proposed policies, guidelines and actions**

- Develop a plan implementation schedule, with reference to:
  - coordinated management with adjacent areas
  - opportunities for community involvement; and
  - opportunities for work experience students and volunteer involvement.
- Conduct a review of the management plan within 10 years of its approval, as prescribed under s 125 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.



## 3.8 Complementary management of adjoining areas

### Current situation

This management plan is legally confined to the conservation park but seeks to encourage cooperative management of adjacent and nearby areas. Moreton Bay Marine Park surrounds King Island and overlaps the conservation park on its eastern side. King Island also has geographic links with Green, St Helena and Mud Islands, which lie to its north. Green Island is controlled by the Department of Resources, while St Helena and Mud Islands are under the management of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. A Regional Coastal Management Plan for south-east Queensland and a Shorebird Habitat Management Plan are also currently being prepared by the Department of Environment and Science.

### Desired outcomes

- King Island is managed in coordination with other areas in central Moreton Bay to ensure complementary outcomes are achieved.

### Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Maintain close management coordination with Moreton Bay Marine Park.
- Implement relevant strategies from the Regional Coastal Management Plan for south-east Queensland and the Shorebird Habitat Management Plan.
- Liaise with the Department of Resources regarding complementary management of Green Island.

## 4. Bibliography

Phillips, C. (1980) A letter to his sister Jo, about their life on King Island. Wynnum Manly & Districts Historical Society.