Gateway Visitor Centre
Draft Master Plan for Consultation
Walkabout Creek
Discussion Paper
December 2013
Introduction

The master planning process for Walkabout Creek is an exciting opportunity for the community to get involved with the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing (NPRSR), to re-imagine the future of this ‘bush in Brisbane’s backyard’ site which is ideally located adjacent to the D’Aguilar National Park and Enoggera Reservoir. A draft master plan has been prepared to provide a conceptual framework for consideration and discussion through community consultation.

There is strong potential to improve the facilities and attractions at Walkabout Creek and the adjoining D’Aguilar National Park to enhance visitor experiences and to provide further opportunities for nature based recreation, including commercial recreation and ecotourism.

Key objectives of the master plan include:

• expand outdoor recreational opportunities for Brisbane residents and visitors
• create diverse experiences incorporating water-based activities
• increase community use of Walkabout Creek and D’Aguilar National Park
• improve the quality of the visitor experience
• improve cost efficiency and return on investment for public and private partners
• generate direct benefits for community, visitors and tourism.

The draft master plan for Walkabout Creek has been developed following a series of consultative workshops with NPRSR and key stakeholders to present a range of options for further discussion through community consultation.

The Walkabout Creek Master Plan project is a priority of the Queensland Government in delivering its commitment to improve access to national parks for sustainable outdoor recreation and ecotourism and support growth of Queensland’s tourism industry.

The purpose of this discussion paper

NPRSR has developed this discussion paper to gain your thoughts and insights with a view to developing a longer term vision for Walkabout Creek. This paper explores the redevelopment opportunity and the main elements of the proposed master plan. Questions have been included in the paper as discussion points. Your response to these and any other comments you have are welcomed.

Consultation

The master plan project is being led by NPRSR in conjunction with our stakeholders. A Project Steering Committee and Reference Group have been established, with representation from NPRSR, Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ), Department of Tourism, Small Business and Major Events (DTESB), Seqwater, Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation (QORF), Department of Education and Training (DETE), Brisbane Marketing and Brisbane City Council (BCC). Two workshops have been held to canvas the views of members of the Committee and Reference Group. Discussions on key opportunities at Walkabout Creek have also been held with other relevant government departments, statutory agencies, local government, education representatives and the tourism industry.

Broader community input is now being sought to help guide the development of a final Walkabout Creek master plan by June 2014. Feedback on this discussion paper and any other comments and insights provided will be used to assist in developing the final Walkabout Creek master plan which is anticipated to reflect a staged approach to the site’s redevelopment proportionate to available funding. Your feedback is invited.

Creating a shared vision amongst key stakeholders and community will be crucial to the success of the Walkabout Creek Master Plan.
Current situation
Walkabout Creek site

Walkabout Creek is located approximately 12 km from the centre of Brisbane, adjacent to Enoggera Reservoir and D’Aguilar National Park. The site is a reserve managed as a joint trusteeship by NPRSR and BCC.

The Walkabout Creek visitor centre receives approximately 54,000 visitors annually, (90% local/domestic residents and 10% international). Visitors come to the centre for education programs, recreation, functions (small meetings and weddings) and to celebrate special occasions.

Walkabout Creek has a long history of both ranger-led school environmental education programs as well as seasonal activity programs, ‘Connect with Nature’, for children and families. Visitors to the small wildlife centre within the visitor centre can participate in ranger talks and spend time in the walk-through aviary; see wallaby, wombat, quoll, amphibian and reptile displays and a freshwater aquarium featuring an underwater platypus viewing pond.

Other features include:
- a café, conference and function rooms, operated under a commercial lease arrangement
- small outdoor amphitheatre
- a heritage site with two heritage listed houses, presently managed for community use by BCC
- the trail head for several short and medium distance walking tracks, mountain biking and horse riding trails within D’Aguilar National Park.

During the World Expo 88 and into the 1990s, the visitor centre was at its peak with a freshwater aquarium and commercial leased ‘Teahouse’. The centre was also a hub for commercial 4WD tours, guided bushwalks and other environmental education and nature base adventure activities, including a ropes adventure course set within the parks bushland near the Bellbird Grove day use area.

Walkabout Creek site and surrounds
The master plan proposes to address some of the challenges facing Walkabout Creek. For its unique location only 12 km from Brisbane's CBD it has low public profile comparative to the potential for such a premium site. Originally built in 1979, the site has had additional buildings added and the current visitor and wildlife centre opened in 1990, the ageing infrastructure is now nearly 35 years old.

Now 25 years after Expo, the visitor centre infrastructure and facilities are in need of upgrading to improve visitor appeal and accessibility. Buildings have been added over time, creating a lack of visual coherence to the centre and a confused sense of identity for visitors. NPRSR commissioned a structural/building condition survey and a Building Code of Australia (BCA) Building Audit Report of the building which was completed in November 2013. These reflect that major works are required to continue to sustain the existing buildings.

The regional office of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) South East Region is based at Walkabout Creek. Over 30 staff, mainly Rangers, work out in the surrounding national parks with Walkabout Creek as their base. This office oversees both marine and national parks and forests from Moreton Bay, Greater Brisbane and the Gold Coast to the Scenic Rim.

There are a number of important considerations with respect to aspects of the visitor centre, these include:

- Ageing infrastructure;
- Non-compliance with the BCA;
- Significant cost to upgrade to current standards and rectify structural issues; and
- Capacity requirements for a growing population and expected increased use of the facilities.
Adjoining resources

The dam on the western side is Enoggera Reservoir and is managed by Seqwater. There are currently no recreational activities permitted on the reservoir, although opportunities are being explored in Seqwater’s Recreation Review of its lakes. Views to the water from the site are glimpsed through dense stands of trees.

The adjacent D’Aguilar National Park comprises 36,400 ha of eucalypt forest and rainforest stretching from The Gap to Lake Wivenhoe in the west, and Mount Mee in the north. The park is important for its diversity of environments and plant communities. More than 800 plant species are found in these forests, some of which are rare and threatened. The park also provides a rich and varied habitat for wildlife. No other capital city in Australia enjoys a park this large and this diverse just 12 km from the city centre.

Current site arrangement

High level Site Appraisal

Current Arrangement

- QPWS Regional Opps Centre
- Interpretive Centre
- Wildlife Centre
- Function/Wedding Centre
- Water Body (secondary supply)
- Limited walking trails

Activities currently permitted in the park include:

- rogaining/orienteering
- 4WD and trail bikes
- bushwalking and trail running
- camping
- mountain bike riding (MTB)
- horse riding
- geocaching
- picnicking/BBQ
- start point for large events.
The opportunity

Walkabout Creek presents a unique opportunity to provide residents and visitors with outdoor recreation, ecotourism and environmental interpretation only 20 minutes from the Brisbane CBD.

While already a destination for outdoor recreation and education groups, Walkabout Creek’s potential has yet to be realised. The site has a number of strengths and opportunities that reinforce its potential for environmentally sustainable redevelopment. They include an existing visitor centre, wildlife centre, the QPWS headquarters for the south east region, located adjacent to the D’Aguilar National Park, Enoggera Reservoir and within walking distance of public transport.

The D’Aguilar National Park also has untapped capacity for increased visitation without impacting the quality of visitors’ experience or the parks natural values. With thoughtful redevelopment Walkabout Creek has the potential to become an iconic gateway national parks visitor centre, attracting visitors to the site and national park.

Visitor market potential

The Brisbane Regional Snapshot compiled by TEQ identifies that domestic overnight visitors on holiday, visiting friends and family or on business are the main visitor markets to the site and adjacent national park, followed by international visitors.

Visitors’ level of interest in engagement in outdoor recreation is strong. According to Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation statistics:

- south east Queensland residents alone generate around 170 million outdoor recreation activity/events per year.
- participation in outdoor recreation in south east Queensland is estimated to be worth more than $1 billion per year (much is direct expenditure on equipment, accommodation and services)
- regular participation in outdoor recreation each year is typically in the areas of:
  - Picnicking – 58%
  - Water activities (including swimming, surfing, diving etc) – 54%
  - Walking/Nature study – 35%
  - Camping – 30%
  - Cycling – 29%.
Proposed Vision for Walkabout Creek

The proposed master plan for Walkabout Creek will be drawn from a culmination of community and stakeholder input and detailed analysis of the site, market opportunities, and business models. The overall vision behind this plan is to create Walkabout Creek Centre as the gateway to adventure in D’Aguilar National Park.

Specifically, the vision for Walkabout Creek is:

- to be recognised as the Adventure Hub for outdoor, nature based, recreation and adventure experiences for the “Bush in Brisbane’s Backyard”
- a destination where site interpretation and environmental education is integrated into all activities and offerings at the site, and also catering for training, events and functions
- an iconic ‘Gateway National Parks visitor centre’ providing information and interaction with activities and experiences on the Walkabout Creek site, the D’Aguilar National Park and south east Queensland parks.

Have your say on the name in the Feedback survey

It is envisioned that the Walkabout Creek visitor centre could be re-named to reflect the new vision for the site. For example the Walkabout Creek Adventure Hub and the brand positioned as; ‘The Walkabout Creek Adventure Hub will be famous as Brisbane’s home of adventure’. New QPWS branding could reflect the intent of the site to deliver a more adventurous experience.

Adventure activities in this context are far broader than just adrenaline and extreme sports. Adventurous for some will be their first time camping, for others abseiling. An ‘active’ offering allows the centre to effectively respond to the opportunity identified across all target markets in tourism, recreation and functions for more avenues for engagement with nature.

The Hub vision
The local community, overnight domestic visitors, corporate team building events and international visitors are considered the priority markets in order of attractiveness for Walkabout Creek. 

Walkabout Creek Adventure Hub can be promoted to these markets as the gateway to D’Aguilar National Park’s world of adventure, with the promise of the experience ‘leaving you feeling alive, energised and rejuvenated and connected with nature’.

**Proposed Final Master Plan**

Two areas of focus or core opportunities within the site are proposed from which all experiences and activities generate:

1. **An activity Centre**, the ‘signature’ for increased and return visitation, including a zip line and ropes course, water based activities, kayaking and canoeing, mountain bike learning facility and outdoor playscapes presents as a possible first stage option for development.

2. **The Gateway Hub building**, including interpretive display space, al fresco dining, function rooms and centre operations are anticipated as possible future redevelopment opportunities beyond the existing buildings in a later stage.

**The Proposed Hub and Activity Centre**
Walkabout Creek Adventure Hub has the potential to encourage visitors to have fun and be active on site, showcasing a range of adventurous activities for all ages and abilities, and be the jumping off point for further exploration of the D’Aguilar National Park and surrounds. Visitors can visit the Gateway Hub building for information and a taste of what is possible on the site and the national park and reservoir. There is potential for commercial opportunities to be located within the ‘Hub’ such as a café, restaurant and function room, merchandise and other retail outlets.

The Activity Centre could provide a ‘signature’ experience, such as a zip line and ropes course, to create a drawcard for residents and visitors. There is potential to offer a range of outdoor activities from the Activity Centre which could also offer commercial opportunities.

Questions:
Do you support the draft concepts for the redevelopment of the Walkabout Creek site?
Do you support the centre being re-named to the Walkabout Creek Adventure Hub?

The proposed master plan includes opportunities for the following activities:
- ecotourism
- outdoor recreation
- environmental education and community use
- wildlife experiences
- events and functions

Photos: Adam Creed, Queensland Government
Proposed Walkabout Creek concept plan
Ecotourism

Ecotourism makes a significant contribution to Queensland’s economy and offers wellbeing and social benefits. To achieve a new forward vision and increase the attractiveness of Walkabout Creek to locals and visitors, ecotourism opportunities that include an on-site ‘signature’ experience will be vital to attracting return visits. While the site currently lacks a ‘signature’ natural experience, it is well placed to offer a zip line and ropes course product—one of the world’s fastest growing adventure experiences. Currently there are no established zip line operations in the Brisbane area.

A zip line consists of a pulley suspended on a cable across an incline, where the user is propelled by gravity to travel from the top to the bottom of the cable. A ropes course is a challenging outdoor personal development and team building activity.

The opportunity exists for commercial entities to partner at the site to provide these new experiences, with other opportunities such as abseiling and rock climbing on artificial surfaces, a possible part of the Activity Centre experiences offered.

A range of nature-based tours could be commercially run from the site, including walking, mountain biking, canoeing/kayaking on Enoggera Reservoir, bird and animal spotting, horse riding and four-wheel driving.

Questions:
Do you support the inclusion of a variety of ecotourism activities in this area?
Do you support the concept of a zip-line on site?
What other ecotourism activities would you like to see included for the site?

Zip line and rope course
Outdoor recreation

There is an untapped potential and visitor market demand for a range of recreation opportunities in nature in the area. The draft master plan contemplates an Interpretive Art Playscape as a drawcard for families. It could include playground elements such as climbing nets, sky walks, slides and wildlife inspired interactive sculptures, all reinforcing the natural assets of the D’Aguilar National Park.

Family activity trails and paths across the site are envisaged to offer additional activity options as well as connections to the proposed facilities within Walkabout Creek. Picnic facilities and shady areas will encourage visitors and families to relax and spend quality time at the site.

A mountain bike riding (MTB) learning track/facilities for residents and visitors has been identified as another potential opportunity and possibly a commercial operation. Young riders could visit Walkabout Creek to gain training and experience in MTB riding within a controlled environment. A dedicated training track would provide riders with the skills and enthusiasm to explore the tracks throughout the national park.

There is also the potential to enhance water based recreation opportunities in conjunction with Seqwater on and around Enoggera Reservoir. The draft master plan proposes a canoe launch facility to provide access to the reservoir. These opportunities are subject to consultation being undertaken by Seqwater.

Proposed Playscape

Questions:

Do you support the introduction of MTB riding facilities for children and youth at Walkabout Creek?
Would MTB trails linked to neighbouring BCC reserves and Seqwater land be useful?
What other outdoor recreation opportunities would you like to see provided on site or in the adjacent national park?
Would walking trails linking the BCC bus stop to the site be useful?
Events and functions

Events have the potential to increase the site’s attractiveness to locals and visitors, and enhance community pride while generating economic benefits. The draft master plan envisions an increase in its attractiveness as a start point for holding appropriate events on-site by improving the functionality of the site. A large level ‘Event Lawn’ is contemplated on the southern section of the site as an ideal setting for large gatherings including; marshalling for charity walks and runs, concerts and space for larger group events.

The future vision proposes a modern new Gateway Hub building in a later stage to provide for food and beverage sales and waterfront al fresco dining, merchandise and other retail outlets, plus function space. The dining space and the function rooms could enjoy expansive views of the reservoir and the surrounding bushland vegetation. These areas could be serviced by a commercial kitchen and cafe servery. The idea considered is that the café would be adventure friendly, and easily accessible for all trail users, particularly mountain bikers, allowing them to park right outside the café from the cycle pathways and use the facilities.

With the function rooms located overlooking the water, in a visually appealing setting, Walkabout Creek site could become an increasingly popular venue for weddings and other functions.

Questions:
Do you support the continuation and expansion of events and functions at Walkabout Creek?
If so, what types of events and functions would you like to see held on site or in the adjacent national park?
Environmental education and community use

NPRSR is committed to providing school students, the community and visitors the opportunity to experience Queensland’s natural environment and cultural heritage through engaging interpretation and ranger-guided activities.

The site will build on its history of ranger led school environmental education and interpretation programs and continue to deliver the Connect with Nature schools program. NPRSR will also work with Department of Education and Training and local schools in developing tailored curriculum packages.

An interpretive display space is an element considered within the Gateway Hub building, providing both permanent and transitional displays showcasing the assets of the D’Aguilar National Park. This material could be refreshed and complemented by relevant interpretive, informative and artistic contributions from the local community, groups and sponsors.

Volunteer programs at the site will be encouraged to provide opportunities for passionate local residents, students and wider community to volunteer and become important champions for Walkabout Creek and the national park.

The master plan recognises the importance of the two heritage listed cottages associated with the Reservoir. In consultation with BCC, both houses are proposed to continue to be made available for community use with possible future use by the local historical societies. Access to the proposed new Activity Centre will be through the heritage site, increasing the exposure of the displays and activities of community groups.

Wildlife experiences

The intention is to continue to provide wildlife encounters as part of tourism, environmental education and interpretation activities at Walkabout Creek. The ability to see and learn about native wildlife on site within close proximity to the Brisbane CBD is an important drawcard for Walkabout Creek to continue to leverage. It is proposed that the wildlife encounters are delivered as part of the popular Connect with Nature schools program. There is an opportunity for commercial tourism operators to also incorporate wildlife encounters into the experiences they offer.

Due to the aged infrastructure currently housing the wildlife exhibit, the future role of wildlife at the site will require careful consideration as part of the Master Plan consultation process. Both community expectations and national standards for wildlife exhibits are very high. Providing new world class wildlife exhibits at Walkabout Creek to rival others in Brisbane and south east Queensland would require significant capital investment and high on-going costs.

Questions:
Do you want to see opportunities for encounters with native wildlife continued at the site?

Questions:
Do you agree with Walkabout Creek encouraging curriculum based excursions for school groups?
Do you believe the site redevelopment will improve the quality of experience for school groups and the local community?
How would you like to see the local community involved in the delivery of the vision for the site?
Other site elements considered

The draft master plan also includes a number of other elements to create an attractive and well thought out destination for the local community and visitors. Please refer section 12 of the draft master plan.

Final Master plan delivery

The proposed Master Plan would need to be delivered through a staged approach that is dependent on currently available, and potential future State Government funding and private investment. The long term vision for the site is to create a new and re-imagined visitor centre that integrates with the Activity Centre and other recreational opportunities on site to deliver a world class visitor experience.

A staged approach is planned for delivery of the vision. Immediate proposed actions able to be delivered within existing budget allocation have a key objective to increase visitation, improve the quality of visitor experience, improve cost efficiencies and returns on investment and generate direct benefits for the community, visitors and tourism.

Increasing the attractiveness to visitors is important in attracting commercial proponents to take up the café and outdoor recreation opportunities. These services will add substantial value to the local area. The master plan also acknowledges the importance of ensuring that Walkabout Creek continues to be a community asset.

Initial Stages
– First Step Deliverables

For the initial Master Plan it is envisioned that the creation of new recreation activities on site and commercial investment in the zip line and/or ropes course represent potential deliverables for the short term. It is feasible that existing available NPRSR funding is able to be focussed on delivering opportunities such as:

- Canoe launch pontoon and gangway – (subject to Seqwater Recreation Review);
- Family Activity Trail – walking, running, bicycle trail linking new busway to existing links to D’Aguilar National Park;
- Junior MTB skills park – high demand in Brisbane and option for families to get kids active, also utilise area under a proposed zip-line/highropes (keen interest from local high schools);
- Interpretive playscape – top end themed playscape with views to water, linked to existing cafe and new Family Activity trail;
- Picnic facilities and shady areas for visitors and families to relax and spend time at site;
- Develop tailored curriculum packages with Department of Education and Training and local schools; and
- An early opportunity also includes private investment by an operator in a zip line and ropes course at the Adventure Hub.

Longer Term Deliverables

The future vision for Walkabout Creek Adventure Hub includes the potential for a larger modern visitor centre incorporating the following:

- An interpretive display and information space;
- Improved eating experience for all visitors from café to restaurant;
- Gallery and event venue offering opportunities for community and commercial use e.g showcase work of local artists;
- New opportunities for commercial partners such as alfresco dining on the waterfront;
- Redeveloped car park; and
- An adventure friendly space and trailhead at the Hub

The longer term proposals are subject to consultation and available forward funding.

Question:

Do you have any other comments on the draft master plan for Walkabout Creek?
Partnerships

Achievement of a new vision is dependent upon effective relationships with the community, key stakeholders such as Seqwater, BCC, QORF, education institutions, local and state government and tourism, event and recreation operators.

As the largest visitor market for Walkabout Creek, NPRSR recognises the importance of local residents, our current visitors, together with local heritage and traditional owner groups, recreation and conservation groups having the opportunity to provide input to the master planning process through this discussion paper.

Seqwater is an important stakeholder as land manager for the adjacent Enoggera Reservoir. BCC is also an important stakeholder as joint trustee over the site and the heritage listed houses. NPRSR is committed to an open and effective partnership approach with Seqwater and BCC with the aim of ensuring planning and management of the Reservoir and heritage site supports the community’s vision for Walkabout Creek.

To achieve innovative partnerships with commercial operators, NPRSR is committed to ensuring red-tape is minimised and the business model is responsive to market conditions. In establishing arrangements with potential operators NPRSR will ensure the importance of conserving the natural assets. Commercial operators will need to be selected and accredited based on demonstrated commitment to best practice eco-tourism.

Rationale for the Proposed Master Plan

Delivery of the proposed master plan offers the following benefits:

- leverages Walkabout Creek’s position as the gateway to a vast and valuable natural environment the D’Aguilar National Park
- enables residents and visitors to immerse themselves in the bush and engage in rewarding activities while only 20 minutes from Brisbane CBD
- capitalises on the growing demand for adventure tourism and product for corporate and education team building experiences.
- creates a new public presentation for Walkabout Creek as a contemporary visitor centre - a ‘must do’ attraction in Brisbane
- increases visitation to the Adventure Hub and D’Aguilar National Park over time
- meets community expectations for improved access to national parks
- helps the community ‘get healthy’ with active, adventurous opportunities for all ages
- creates an improved quality of experience at Walkabout Creek and Enoggera Reservoir
- establishes a new interpretive centre, where training and delivery of contemporary interpretation helps educators to deliver opportunities for outdoor and environmental education
- offers the tourism market and commercial partners new opportunities for nature based tourism (adventure, corporate and education)
- provides people with disability access to many activities on site
- leverages proximity to public transport to the site
- enables the development of formal partnerships with major events and festivals at the site such as Oxfam 48 hour challenge, Orchestra in the Park and the Kokoda Challenge.

The plan also addresses the current challenges with the site, including:

- tired buildings and facilities in need of refurbishment
- lack of visual coherence between buildings, facilities and associated landscaping
- lack of core message of what Walkabout Creek offers, with a current ‘all things to all people’ approach (wedding function centre, environmental education centre, wildlife centre, walking, bicycling, horse trails)
- limited access to the site and on-site car parking
- poor access to buildings and facilities for people with a disability
- lack of awareness amongst residents and visitors of the opportunity to be in a national park so easily
- individual visitor enjoyment is self-driven such as walking, riding their bike/horse, potentially limiting their engagement with the site and national park
- need for a clear point of difference to stand out in Brisbane’s crowded meetings, conference and weddings markets.
Have Your Say

Invitation to Comment on the Discussion Paper

We invite you to give your thoughts on the questions we have asked in the Discussion Paper to assist in the finalisation of the master plan. You can submit your feedback by completing an online survey before 21 February 2014.

Visit www.nprs.qld.gov.au for further information and to view the draft Master Plan. Below outlines the next steps in the consultation process.

Thank you for your involvement in this important project.

Public Release - 20 Dec 2013
Public consultation 8 weeks; information at each Gateway Centre, on-line feedback form, community workshop and stakeholder consultation

Consultation Report - late April 2014
Review community and stakeholder feedback incorporating key elements of findings and provide Consultation report back to community.

Final Master Plan - 30 June 2014
Develop final Master Plan considering community benefits, financial considerations, site constraints and recreation opportunities.
# Summary of Survey Questions

## General
- Do you support the draft concepts for the redevelopment of the Walkabout Creek site?
- Do you support the centre being re-named to the Walkabout Creek Adventure Hub?

## Ecotourism
- Do you support the inclusion of a variety of ecotourism activities in this area?
- Do you support the concept of a zip-line on site?
- What other ecotourism activities would you like to see included for the site?

## Outdoor recreation
- Do you support the introduction of MTB learning and riding facilities for children and youth at Walkabout Creek?
- Would MTB trails linked to neighbouring BCC reserves and Seqwater land be useful?
- What other outdoor recreation opportunities would you like to see provided on site or in the adjacent national park?
- Would walking trails linking the BCC bus stop to the site be useful?

## Events and functions
- Do you support the continuation and expansion of events and functions at Walkabout Creek?
- If so, what types of events and functions would you like to see held on site or in the adjacent national park?

## Environmental education and community use
- Do you agree with Walkabout Creek encouraging curriculum based excursions for school groups?
- Do you believe the site redevelopment will improve the quality of experience for school groups and the local community?
- How would you like to see the local community involved in the delivery of the vision for the site?

## Wildlife experiences
- Do you want to see opportunities for encounters with native wildlife continued at the site?

## Wrap up
- Do you have any other comments on the draft master plan for Walkabout Creek?