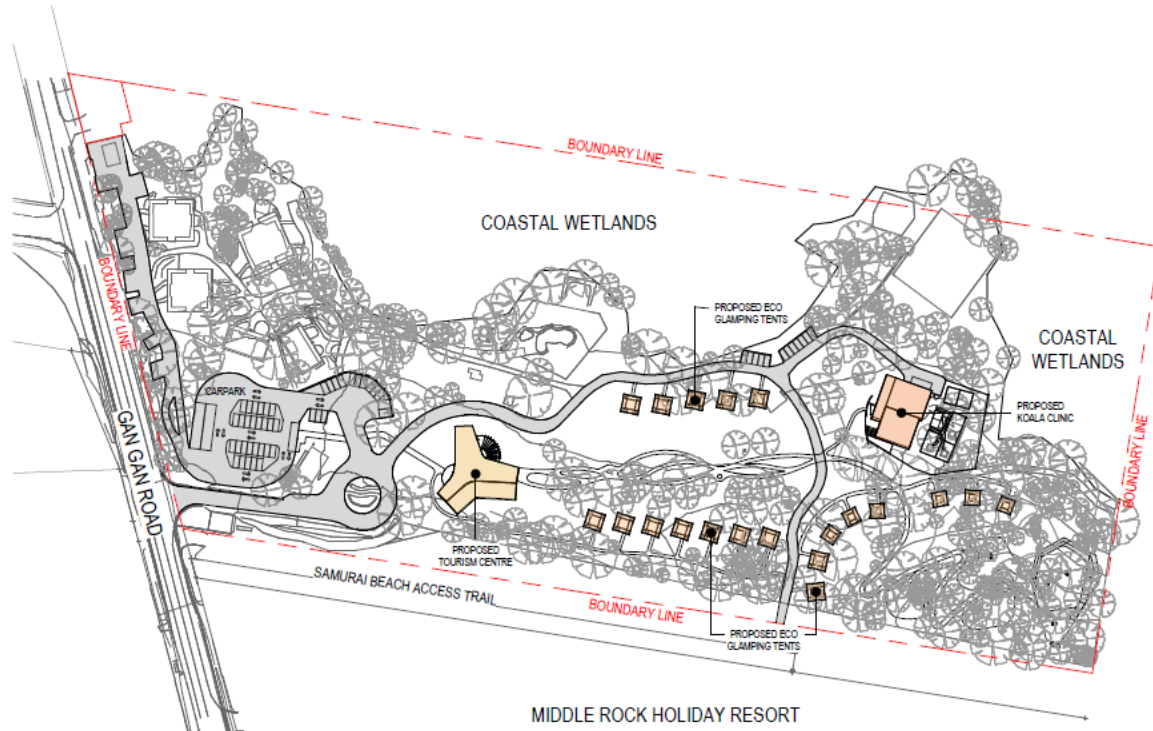


DA 16-2018-534-1 Advertising 23/08/2018 to 06/09/2018

Koala Sanctuary (eco-tourist facility) at Treescape Holiday Park

562 GAN GAN ROAD ONE MILE (LOT 2 DP1109948)

Eco tourist facility – 20 glamping tents with amenities, koala sanctuary and clinic, vegetation removal and car parking.



camping sites. Existing approval requires 41 car parking spaces and an additional 48 spaces provided within 48 of the approved camp sites, as well as four visitor spaces and one accessible space.

The proposal is development that needs consent pursuant to Part 4 of the EP&A Act. The Quantity Surveyor Certificate of Cost found the Capital Investment Value for the project is \$4,495,328 (excluding GST). Council is the consent authority under Section 4.5 of the EP&A Act as the Capital Investment Value for the project is under \$5 million

1.7 Discussions with Council and Permissibility

This SEE was prepared in consultation with staff of Port Stephens Council and Port Stephens Koalas (PSK). Consultation has informed the scope of the project and confirmed information and assessment requirements.

We were advised by Council that consultation has occurred with the following agencies:

- PSK through President and Secretary
- Department of Premier and Cabinet NSW Hunter Office
- Crown Lands
- Destination Port Stephens
- Department of Primary Industries
- Department of Planning and Environment
- NSW Rural Fire Service
- Inbound Tourism Operators
- Destination NSW.

Further consultation has occurred between Crown Lands and Council regarding the ongoing use of the Crown Land for the Treescapes camping and accommodation site and Koala Sanctuary.

The proposed works include:

- vegetation clearing for bushfire protection of the site
- overall use of the site as an eco-tourist facility focusing on protection, treatment, rehabilitation and displaying of koalas.
- tourism centre
- 20 glamping tents (with private amenities)

- Koala clinic for Koalas in treatment, management and learning
- car parking and alteration to internal roads.

2.1.1 Vegetation clearing

An assessment of the existing vegetation and habitat as well as the impact of clearing on flora and fauna has been undertaken and is described in the Biodiversity Assessment Report (Appendix 7). Clearing of approximately 0.22 hectares of vegetation is required in order to accommodate the proposal and for Planning for Bushfire 2006 requirements. Of thirty hollowbearing trees identified within the study area two (2) will be removed by the Project. It is anticipated however, that approximately 28 hollow bearing trees will be retained in the study area, throughout the life of the project. Vegetation to be removed includes 0.27 hectares of low condition and of 0.05 hectares of moderate condition Plant Community Type Smooth-barked Apple Blackbutt healthy open Forest.

An Arborist Report (Appendix 8) was completed of the trees onsite and of those required removal and pruning. The retention of trees has been based upon their suitability for retention or are considered more appropriate to be retained than others. The clearing of vegetation is being done in accordance of requirements for the proposal, however the intention of the site is to remain in a bushland setting to fit in with the Koala Sanctuary theme and provide an opportunity for Koalas to recover in a natural setting.

2.1.2 Building design/construction

The architecturally designed buildings will be single storey and integrate with the environmental attributes of the site. Activities within proposed buildings associated with the eco-tourist facility are described below:

- Koala clinic – Port Stephens Koalas will care for and rehabilitate sick and injured Koalas. The facility will be licenced by the NSW Department of Primary Industries.
- Tourism centre and associated reception and café – the building will be used as the entry to the Koala sanctuary and free range elevated walk and the Koala clinic
- 20 glamping tents will be erected that will involve tent and associated ensuite for hire by visitors to the centre
- existing road and car park will be altered and extended to provide appropriate movement of vehicles across the site, including parking for buses.

Council has advised that the 20 glamping tents will replace 14 existing powered, 5 existing unpowered and 2 drive through sites and as such there is a negligible increase in the overall number of accommodation sites.

4.4 State Environmental Planning Policy 44 – Koala Habitat Protection

The Biodiversity Assessment Report (Appendix 7) found the entirety of the study area falls within the “preferred” habitat category mapped within the Koala Habitat Planning Map for the Port Stephens Council Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management (Port Stephens Council 2002). Although managed areas where the dominant tree species is Eucalyptus pilularis (Blackbutt), as well as areas mapped as Smooth-barked Apple – Blackbutt heathy open forest, should normally represent supplementary Koala Habitat based on habitat attributes, the Port Stephens Council Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management (CKPoM) also includes these areas as “preferred Koala habitat” in its mapping. The Port Stephens Council CKPoM Glossary of Terms identifies “preferred Koala habitat” as “the most important category of Koala habitat in the Port Stephens LGA and hence should be afforded the highest level of protection”. Study area personnel report that Koalas have been occasionally observed using non-preferred feed trees in the managed areas for resting sites. (Appendix 7).

The site is zoned RE1 – Public Recreation and eco-tourist facilities are permitted with consent in the zone.

The Koala Sanctuary is considered to be permitted in the zone.

Eco-tourist facility means a building or place that:

- (a) provides temporary or short-term accommodation to visitors on a commercial basis, and
- (b) is located in or adjacent to an area with special ecological or cultural features, and
- (c) is sensitively designed and located so as to minimise bulk, scale and overall physical footprint and any ecological or visual impact.

4.8 Crown Land Management Act 2016

The proposed Koala Sanctuary will be located on Crown Land and management in accordance with the relevant Act. We have been advised the NSW Department of Primary Industries has been consulted throughout design development.

A wetland identified in SEPP (Coastal Management) 2018 is located within the site (northern boundary). No work is proposed within the wetland or within 40 metres of the wetland. A Biodiversity Assessment Report (Appendix 7) and Concept Stormwater Management Plan (Appendix 11) have considered potential impact on the wetland.

A Traffic Impact Assessment for the site is in Appendix 6. The assessment found overall the proposed Koala Sanctuary and Tourism Facility will have an acceptable impact upon traffic and parking within the locality and should therefore be recommended for approval.

All parking demands can be contained on site. The site will not generate a high demand for traffic with the majority of visitors to the centre arriving by coach. The local roads and intersections providing adequate spare capacity to support the additional demands created by the proposed development.

Sight lines at the existing site access are consistent with the Austroads Guides with the layout of this intersection enabling safe and appropriate access onto Gan Gan Road (Appendix 6)

The assessment found overall traffic demands generated by the site are relatively low and are well within the capacity of the surrounding road network. Most of the traffic accessing the proposed Koala Sanctuary and Visitors Centre is expected to be tourists who reside outside of the Port Stephens area. The origin / destination of vehicles will therefore depend on whether visitors travel to the site as part of a day trip, are overnight visitors staying on site, are tourists staying elsewhere in One Mile or are in accommodation throughout the Tomaree Peninsula. Tourism statistics for Port Stephens confirm that there is a high demand for travel arrivals by means other than private vehicle, confirming that the majority of visitor numbers attending the site are likely to be arriving as part of coach tours.

Current traffic volumes on Gan Gan Road are less than 200 vehicles per direction during the morning, and the proposed development could increase this by 19 vehicles per hour to 219 vehicles per hour per direction. This corresponds with an overall Level of Service B, and the development therefore has an acceptable impact, being well within the capacity of the road.

The proposed development could create demands for an additional 54 vehicles through the site access and the intersection of Gan Gan Road / Frost Road during the morning peak period. This would be on the basis that vehicles and buses would arrive and depart within an hour which is unlikely however has been allowed for as a worst case scenario. Sensitivity modelling demonstrates that both the site access and intersection would provide an acceptable standard of operation with this increase in traffic, with no significant increases in delays or queueing. There may however be some additional delays for vehicles turning right out of Frost Road, due to the increase through traffic volumes on Gan Gan Road, which create less frequent gaps.

Overall parking demand for the proposed development is 57 spaces (plus 2 buses) that is consistent with the proposed supply. Parking shall be designed and constructed in accordance with Australian Standard AS2890.1:2004 (Off-street Car Parking).

The traffic assessment considered that the provision of a channelised turn lane is not required on safety or capacity grounds with the existing access layout being appropriate. To reduce the demands for the right turn into the site promotional material and bus services shall be directed to approach the site from the north using Frost Road. Similarly, signage shall direct drivers to the centre along this route. Furthermore, sight lines at the existing access satisfy the minimum requirements specified within the Austroads Guide.

Overall the proposed Koala Sanctuary and Tourism Facility will have an acceptable impact upon traffic and parking within the locality and should therefore be recommended for approval.

All parking demands can be contained on site. The site will not generate a high demand for traffic with the majority of visitors to the centre arriving by coach. The local roads and intersections providing adequate spare capacity to support the additional demands created by the proposed development.

Sight lines at the existing site access are consistent with the Austroads Guides with the layout of this intersection enabling safe and appropriate access onto Gan Gan Road (Appendix 6).

Traffic Report

Traffic volumes are typical of the area except during the summer holiday period when tourist numbers increase significantly in One Mile.

Proposed Development

The proposal allows for the construction of a Koala Sanctuary and Tourism Facility within the Port Stephens Treescape accommodation and camping grounds. The proposed masterplan being considered by Port Stephens Council allows for the construction of the following facilities:

- Tourism centre;
- Koala clinic;
- Koala enclosure with tree top walk for visitors;
- 14 x four-person glamping tents;
- 6 x two-person glamping tents; and
- Associated carparking and access.

The proposed glamping tents (20 tents) will replace the existing camping on site (21 sites), including 14 unpowered, 5 powered and 2 drive through sites. No changes are proposed to the existing cabin accommodation. The existing carpark will be upgraded and realigned to increase the total parking supply for the site.

Traffic Generation

The RMS Guide to Traffic Generating Developments does not provide standard trip generation rates for a tourist facility such that being proposed. As such, the traffic demands for the site have been calculated from first principles based on the predicted visitor numbers as determined within the business case prepared by Port Stephens Council for the site, together with consideration to current tourism statistics for the Port Stephens area.

Accordingly, trip generation rates have been calculated on the following basis:

- Port Stephens Council have predicted that approximately 45,000 tourist will visit the site on average per year once the facility is fully operational (post Year 4).
- 42% of visitors to Port Stephens stay between January and March. January is the peak month for visitors accounting for around 20% of overnight stays and 15% of day trips.

Applying this, around 9,000 visitors would visit the site during January. Excluding New Year's Day, this equates to an average of 300 visitors to the site on any given day (assuming that demands are reasonably distributed throughout the week given that this period is school holidays).

Whilst details regarding the operation of the proposed Koala Sanctuary and Visitor Centre are not known at this time, it is expected that the site will be open to visitors for self-guided tours, with two scheduled feedings / guided tours occurring during the morning and afternoon. Most visitors are expected to attend the site during these feedings with visitors equally distributed between the morning and afternoon sessions.

These feedings are expected to accommodate tourist groups who will travel to the site by coach. Advice from the study team indicates that 60% of visitors are expected to arrive by bus (90 visitors), with a maximum of 2 buses travelling to the site for each session (45 tourists per bus).

Given the location of the site, the remaining 40% of visitors (60 visitors per feeding session) are expected to travel to the site by car. Applying an average car occupancy rate of 3 persons / vehicle (mostly young families and adult couples), this gives an additional 20 passenger vehicles travelling to the site for each scheduled feeding (20 inbound, 20 outbound per session).

Up to 20 staff (including 10 volunteers) may be required to operate the site, creating up to 40 trips per day (20 inbound and 20 outbound). These trips would occur at various times throughout the day associated with the staffing demands for the various facilities. Assuming that 50% of staff arrive prior to the morning feeding, and depart shortly following the afternoon feeding, this would see 10 trips inbound during the morning peak and 10 outbound during the afternoon associated with staff.

No trip generation rates are provided within the RMS Guide for tourist accommodation. Trips generation rates are provided for overnight accommodation, with 0.4 trips during the evening peak hour and 3 trips per day specified for motels. Adopting these rates, the glamping tents could therefore generate an additional 60 trips per day with 8 trips during the evening peak hour.

To ensure a robust assessment, no allowance has been made for the reduced traffic demands associated with those staying within accommodation on site (glamping tents or cabins within Port Stephens Treescape) also being visitors of the Koala Sanctuary and Tourism Facility.

Overall the proposed development could therefore generate up to 208 trips per day as shown below in Table 1.

Travel Demand	Number	Trips	Traffic Generation
Buses	180 visitors (2 buses per session with 45 visitors per bus).	4 buses per day Maximum of 2 buses per feeding.	8 trips per day across two feeding sessions.
Private Vehicles	120 visitors (3 per vehicle)	40 vehicles per day 20 vehicles per feeding	80 trips per day across two feeding sessions.
Staff and volunteers	10 staff 10 volunteers	50% of staff inbound / outbound during the peak periods.	40 trips per day 10 trips in morning and afternoon peak.
Glamping pods	20 tents	0.4 evening peak hour vehicle trips 3 trips per day	80 trips per day 8 trips evening peak.
Total			208 trips per day (104 inbound/104 outbound)

These trips consist of 200 light vehicles and 8 buses. Of these up to 54 trips (including 4 bus movements) could occur during the morning peak (9.45-10.45) associated with 50% of staff / volunteers arriving at the beginning of the day coinciding with visitors and tour groups arriving for the morning feeding sessions and departing within the hour.

The above allowance is for additional traffic associated with the proposed development. As the traffic surveys were undertaken at a time when the site was not fully utilised it is considered that this would be consistent with the traffic demands for the cabins only.