



Destination Macquarie Marshes Action Plan

December 2016



Prepared by The Tarani Group Pty Ltd for





Prepared by The Tarani Group Pty Ltd, for the not-for-profit organisation RiverSmart Australia Ltd, with funding provided by the Energise Enterprise Fund of the Murray-Darling Basin Regional Economic Diversification Programme.

Disclaimer

In preparing this report and the information contained herein, the consulting team has relied on the sources indicated. Whilst the sources of the information are believed to be correct and reliable, no responsibility is accepted for their accuracy.

Citation

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Cover photographs

Top – North Macquarie Marshes from the air, September 2016. Nicola Brookhouse, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

Bottom - Photographs by Dr Bill Phillips, CEO of RiverSmart Australia Ltd.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

RiverSmart Australia Limited received funding from the Energise Enterprise Fund of the Murray-Darling Basin Regional Economic Diversification Programme to undertake the project entitled “Destination Macquarie Marshes: planning and consultations”.

Increased visitation to the Macquarie Marshes is a key action in the Great Western Plains Destination Management Plan and also in the Action Plan for the development of RiverSmart's Window on the Wetlands (WoW) Centre in Warren. This report, the Destination Macquarie Marshes Action Plan provides a 'blueprint' for moving forward with establishing the Marshes as a premier visitor destination site in western NSW and for Australia.

In 2009, a feasibility study was commissioned by RiverSmart Australia Ltd, with financial assistance from the then Central West Catchment Management Authority (CW-CMA), to identify opportunities to introduce a series of 'eco and related-trails' into the region. The study was done by the same consultants engaged to undertake this current project; namely, The Tarani Group. The aim of this initiative was to bring new visitors to the area, offer existing visitors a reason to stay longer, and to increase the awareness, understanding and prioritisation given to the regions' natural assets, in particular the Macquarie River and Marshes. The study was finalised in early 2010 and a series of eleven integrated trails has since been established by RiverSmart Australia Ltd under the “Macquarie Valley Trails” brand (see www.rivertrails.com.au).

Then, in 2010, the CW-CMA commissioned a study (also done by The Tarani Group) to assess the feasibility of establishing a Wetlands Education and Cultural Centre located in or around the Macquarie Marshes for visitors and the local community.

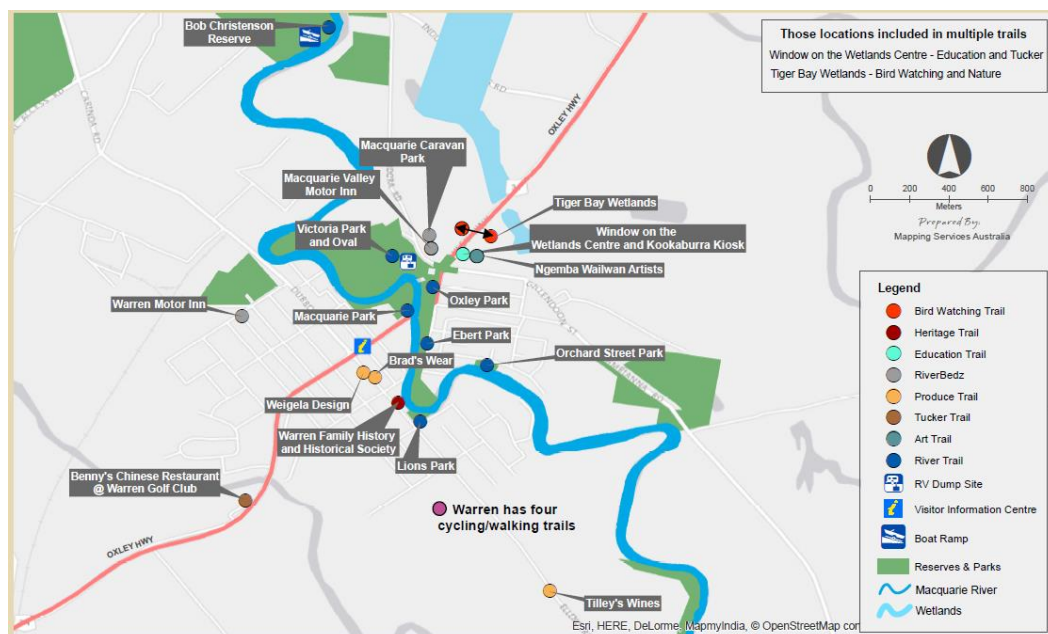
The key findings from these two previous studies included:

- *The region has an abundance of natural and cultural heritage assets that offer opportunity for developing the proposed new tourism product;*
- *The region is home to some iconic tourism sites including Taronga Western Plains Zoo, Warrambungles, Siding Springs Observatory; and Wellington Caves however there is a lack of coordinated marketing campaigns between sites, operators and LGAs;*
- *There is ample opportunity to increase visitor nights by providing visitors with more “solutions” to enhance and extend their stay;*
- *New product would open the door to increased visitation across the region;*
- *The Australian Experience Seeker will inject more funds into the economy than any other tourism market segment;*
- *Visitors to national and state parks spend more and stay longer, thus supporting the need to open up and market the region’s natural assets along the Macquarie River for tourism and recreation following environmental conservation efforts;*
- *The drive market is still the primary target market for the Central West, however airlines must also be targeted with marketing campaigns once the trail is available with fly drive packages developed;*
- *A 15% increase in visitation to the region would see a boost of approximately \$33million of expenditure per annum, flowing through to around 330 new FTE jobs in the first 3 years;*
- *There are 46 wetland centres in Australia;*
- *A medium sized wetlands centre could attract new visitation of 40,000 visitors per year over the first 5 years of operation, resulting in a direct injection of over \$11m annually into the regional economy.*

As part of its overall Macquarie River program, RiverSmart Australia Ltd, with the support of Warren Shire Council began the development of the Window on the Wetlands (WoW) Centre – an education, recreation and cultural centre, in Warren, which was officially opened on World Environment Day 2015. This Centre sits beside the relatively small Tiger Bay Wetlands complete with walking trails, bird hides and interpretive signage. This initiative has received strong community backing and government support, both local and State. The WoW Centre (with its Kookaburra Kiosk) welcomed over 5,000 visitors in the first year of operation.



RiverSmart's Window on the Wetlands Centre, Warren (Bill Phillips)



Map of Warren showing location of the WoW Centre (www.rivertrails.com.au)

The Macquarie River and Marshes have great ecological value and are a potential 'mecca' for bird enthusiasts, providing habitat for **over 260 species of birds**, plus excellent recreational angling, and opportunities for a range of outdoor activities.



The Macquarie Marshes – a bird watchers 'mecca' (Neil Zoglauer)

The iconic Macquarie Marshes are (partly) Ramsar-listed, meaning the two Nature Reserves and two areas of private land ('Wilgara' Wetlands and 'U-Block') are recognised as internationally important. The Marshes are also listed by the National Trust as a Landscape Conservation Area and are on the Australian Heritage Commission's Register of the National Estate. The 220,000 hectare Marshes are owned and managed by private landholders (approximately 90% of the area, majority freehold) and the NSW government (Nature Reserve, approximately 10%).

The values of the Marshes include:

- Significant (internationally recognised) biodiversity role – large areas of inland freshwater wetlands and habitat for migratory birds and Australian waterbirds including 21 threatened species;
- Indigenous cultural values – traditional country of the Wayilwan people;
- Early European cultural values – John Oxley led an expedition to the Marshes in 1817 and 1818 with the first European settlement in the Marshes around 1844;
- Grazing and other agricultural values;
- Educational values; and
- Tourism values.

1.2 Project objectives

The key objectives of this project were to:

- Examine a suite of issues such as accommodation, road suitability, safety factors, marketing, signage and promotion, and identify opportunities for visitors to access, learn about and experience the Macquarie Marshes;
- Identify actions to increase linkages between key Great Western Plains visitor experiences, the Window on the Wetlands Centre in Warren, the 'gateway towns' and ultimately the Macquarie Marshes;
- Ensure consistency with, and achieving objectives within the Great Western Plains Destination Management Plan.

The driving forces behind the project:

- Increased business activity for tourist and service industry operators, suppliers and retailers;
- Improved economic outcomes for 'gateway' towns and regions;
- Improved visitor awareness, safety, and access to tourist activities and facilities; and
- Improved visitor satisfaction.

1.3 Methods

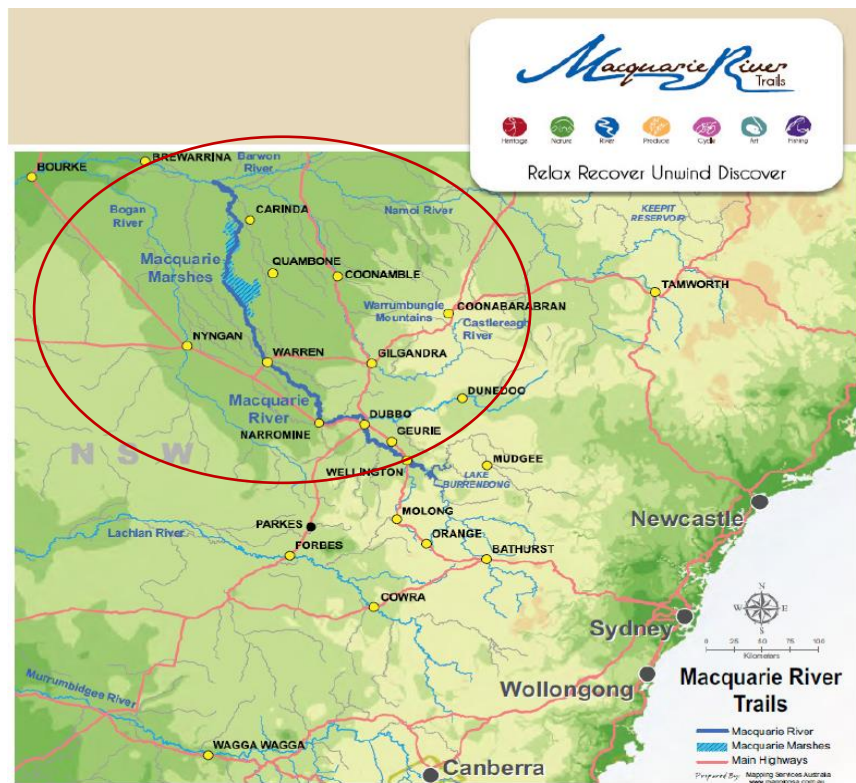
To prepare this report, the following process was followed:

- a. A review was undertaken of previous feasibility studies; regional, State and national policies and plans; existing product offering and marketing;
- b. Discussions were held with the relevant officers in the Coonamble, Walgett, Bourke, Dubbo and Warren Councils, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, NSW Office of Environment and Heritage; existing tourism operators and land owners;
- c. Potential organised tour operators and options were researched and reviewed; and
- d. Recommendations were developed based on extensive community and stakeholder consultations.

1.4 Project area

The Macquarie Marshes lie within the Warren, Walgett and Coonamble Local Government Areas; the Destination Country and Outback region (see next section); the Central West Local Land Services area; and are part of the area covered by the Orana Regional Organisation of Councils.

The Marshes are located approximately 620 km from Sydney; 220 km from Dubbo; 291 km from Bourke; 100 km from Coonamble; 150 km from Walgett; 100 km from Warren; and 90 km from Nyngan. The vast majority of visitors to the region travel by car (88%).



Macquarie Marshes, and region, map

2. Situational analysis

2.1 Visitation to the region

Destination NSW recognises “Central NSW” as comprising the major towns of Bathurst, Coonabarabran, Cowra, Dubbo, Mudgee, Narromine, Orange and Parkes.

Note, on 6 July 2016 the NSW Government announced a restructure of NSW tourism creating 6 new Destination Networks. The Macquarie Marshes and surrounding communities now lie within the region called Destination Country and Outback which takes in about half of the State. There are to be seven skills-based Directors to service this expansive and diverse region. Details of funds to be allocated to support this new structure are yet to be spelled out.

Destination NSW (March 2016) states that over 2.1 million domestic visitors stay 5.3 million nights in the Central NSW Region; and a further 40,700 internationals stay 903,000 nights. The main visitor mindset types visiting the region are True Travellers and Wanderers/Grey Nomads (Inland NSW Community Roadmap 2016).

Cultural and Heritage Tourism

Destination NSW (December 2015) reports that 290,000 domestic visitors spent 742,000 nights, and 24,000 visitors spent 655,000 nights in the Central NSW region for Cultural and Heritage tourism annually. Domestic visitors stayed 2.6 nights on average spending \$276 per night, and internationals stayed 27.1 nights on average spending \$106 per night. A Cultural and Heritage tourism visitor participates in at least one of the following activities:

- Visit history, heritage buildings, sites or monuments;
- Visit museums or art galleries;
- Attend festivals, fairs or cultural events;
- Attend theatre, concerts or other performing arts;
- Experience aboriginal art, craft and cultural displays;
- Visit an aboriginal site or community; and
- Attend aboriginal performance.

Nature Tourism

Destination NSW (December 2015) reports that 428,000 domestic visitors spent 1,303,000 nights and 32,000 international visitors spent 820,000 nights in the Central NSW region participated in Nature Tourism. Domestic visitors stayed 3 nights on average and spent \$199 per night. Internationals stayed 26 nights on average and spent \$103 per night. A nature based visitor participates in at least one of the following activities:

- Bushwalking or rainforest walks;
- Visit national parks or state forests;
- Visit botanical or other public gardens;
- Visit wildlife parks, zoos or aquariums;
- Visit farms.

Destination NSW also reports that Outback NSW had the highest proportion of domestic caravan and camping visitors (20.7%) amongst all regions of NSW, with Central NSW attracting 9.7%.

In 2011 Ernst & Young reported that on average recreational fishers go fishing in the Murray-Darling Basin 12 times per year, individually spending around \$262 each trip. With approximately 430,000

fishers in the Basin, recreational fishers spend around \$1.3 billion each year when fishing. Warren, one of the gateways to the Marshes, is considered the premier fishing location on the Macquarie River.

With 88% of visitors travelling to the region by car, the opportunity to facilitate visitation in and around the Macquarie Marshes could be achieved with sufficient product, accommodation, support infrastructure and marketing. These issues are considered further in Sections 5 and 6.

The Great Western Plains Destination Management Plan (DMP) is the key tourism plan for the region. It identifies that families are the top travel segment and that marketing campaigns for the region should reinforce how it provides opportunities for families to reconnect with one another while on holiday (providing authentic experiences): “the region can provide families with experiences to create memories to last a lifetime”. This positioning would also provide a point of difference from other travel destinations. The DMP states that a “brand toolkit” and marketing templates will be developed to assist operators and industry partners to leverage this positioning in their own communications to extend the reach and impact of the campaign program.

2.1 Access to the Macquarie Marshes

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is custodian and manager of the Macquarie Marshes Nature Reserves. The NPWS conducts Discovery Tours for schools and private groups (by arrangement) throughout the year, and holds open days with guided walks during the October long weekend. Tours can be booked through the Pilliga Forest Discovery Centre. Privately operated Marsh Meanders can also be booked through the Coonamble Visitor Centre.

The NPWS has provided and maintains an observation platform on Gibson's Way with interpretive signage. The platform, known as 'the bird hide', is located on a road reserve and overlooks private property (see photo below).



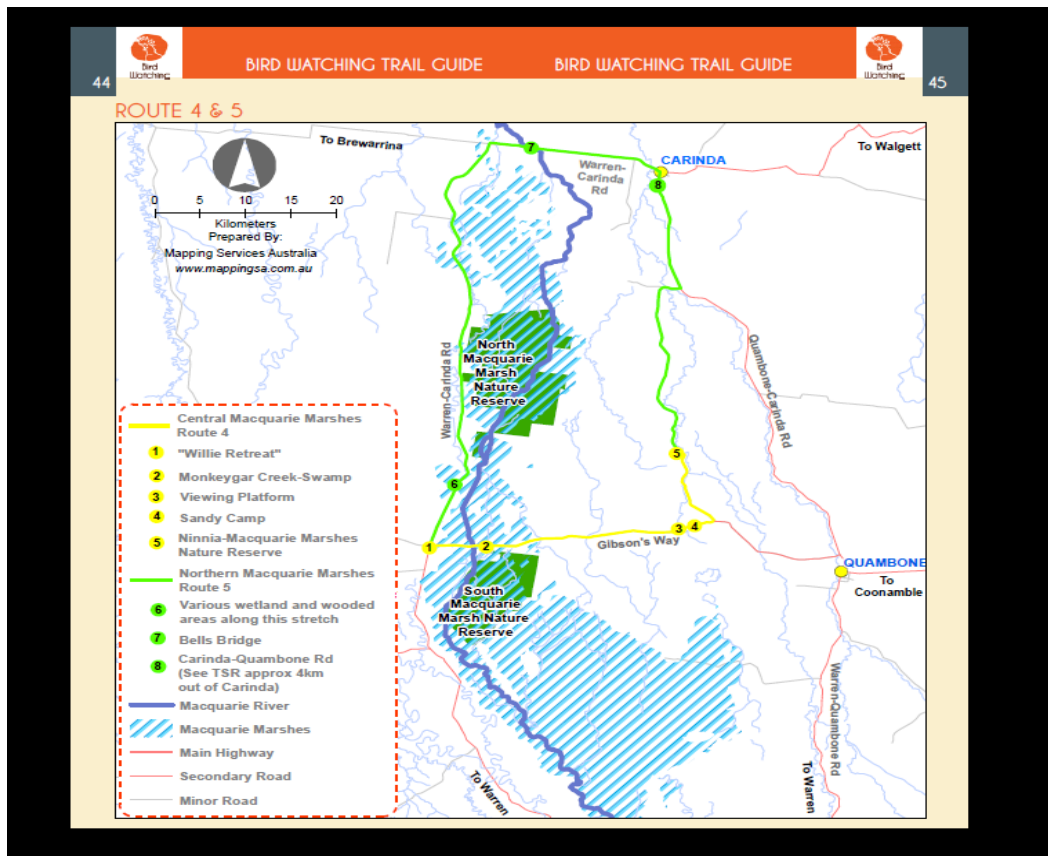
Image: Bird viewing platform, Gibson's Way (Bill Phillips)

Roads in and around the Marshes include (see map below):

- The Warren-Carinda Road and Warren-Quambone Roads. Both are bitumen, all-weather roads, but quite narrow in places;
- The Carinda-Quambone Road. Is unsealed and is dry weather only for 2WD vehicles; and
- The Sandy Camp Road and Gibson's Way. Which are mostly unsealed and some sections are impassable immediately after rainfall. Key restrictions occur near 'Stanley' at the eastern end and the other most problematic place is water crossing Gibson's Way near Monkeygar Creek Crossing. There is often water across the causeway at Monkeygar Swamp but this is

usually passable for 4WD or larger 2WD vehicles. It would not be suitable for smaller 2WD vehicles.

The map below comes from the [Bird Watching Trail Guide](#) of Macquarie Valley Trails.



Map of Macquarie Valley Trails Bird Watching Routes (www.rivertrails.com.au)

The Marshes are a mixed-use area including farming (grazing, dry and irrigated cropping), private land owners, NSW NPWS Nature Reserves, accommodation, camping and light industry. The private property 'Willie Retreat' on Gibson's Way (a short distance from the intersection with the Warren-Carinda Road) offers camping, on-site vans, cabin and bunkhouse-style accommodation. See Section 4.3 for more details of accommodation options.



Image: Camping area at 'Willie Retreat' (Bill Phillips)

Whilst some directional/wayfinding and interpretive signage exists in the area of the Macquarie Marshes, there are several significant gaps which are not suitable to draw people to the area or assist their safe, informed and relaxing travel. These have been identified and discussed in the Signage Strategy in Section 6.

The Bird Watching Trail under the Macquarie Valley Trails (www.rivertrails.com.au) program provides a self-drive map (see above) to assist travellers find their way to several key locations in and around the Marshes. This is currently not signposted.

Directional and information signs are important for ensuring that visitors can not only find what they're looking for, but can understand what they're viewing and experiencing when they arrive. Wayfinding signs are the final directional link in a communication process between the destination and the visitor – a process which should also include marketing material such as a website, brochures and advertising.

Given the remoteness of the area, extreme summer temperatures and changeable road conditions, directional signage is also a key requirement to improve visitor safety.

The specific purpose of tourist and services signs is to:

- Reassure travellers that they are travelling in the right direction;
- Give advance notice of attractions and services, particularly where a change in direction is required;
- Provide notice of an attraction or service and facilitate safe access; and
- Direct travellers to tourist information and infrastructure including visitor information centres, information bays, interpretation centres, viewing platforms, amenities etc.

Section 6 of this report considers signage issues and makes several detailed recommendations.

3. Strategic alignment – regional tourism

The Great Western Plains Destination Management Plan (DMP) is the key tourism plan for the broader region. Dubbo (with Taronga Western Plains Zoo as the 'hero' attraction) offers a strong regional hub for the DMP. It also encompasses Narromine, Coonamble, Gilgandra, Warren and the Warrumbungle Mountains. The DMP aims to position the region as “the wild frontier”.

The DMP is managed by the Western Plains Destination Management Group. To date the Destination Management group has achieved the following:

- Engaged a consultant to conduct a Regional Accommodation White Paper.
- Published the Great Western Plains Guide in 2015 that produced 150,000 copies.
- Coordinated a Great Western Plains Campaign valued at \$240,000 and which included a print and digital campaign for phase one reaching 3.05 million people through print and digital activity resulting in 4,596 competition entries. Phase two was a TV campaign targeting the family market and resulting in 1,067 TV spots.
- Published the Western Plains 2016 Guide that is being distributed to 120,000 visitors.
- Submitted a grant application (awaiting outcome) for an economic study on freedom campers.
- Undertook audits for the following areas: accommodation; product; transport; visitor services and infrastructure; food and beverage, aboriginal product.

The DMP identifies four over-arching strategic areas, with specific goals linked to each:

1. Destination development

Objective: Strengthen the visitor experience across the Central Inland NSW region in line with consumer preferences, enabling the region to deliver on its 2020 Potential.

2. Events

Objective: Provide opportunities to engage with the local community, stimulate re-visitation and tell a unique destination story through authentic event experiences, thereby contributing to the region's 2020 Potential.

3. Industry engagement and education

Objective: Increase the capacity of tourism operators and industry stakeholders to deliver on consumer expectations, enabling the region to deliver on its 2020 Potential.

4. Marketing

Objective: Increase the appeal of the destination, maximise stakeholder resources and positively influence overnight tourism expenditure to deliver on 2020 Potential.

The following key experiences are listed as regional tourism strengths offering potential to grow visitation nights within the region: Nature; Arts and Cultural Heritage; and Agriculture.

The DMP states that the region “has significant natural and wild features including The Warrumbungles, Coolah Tops National Parks, Siding Springs, **the Macquarie Marshes** and the Taronga Western Plains Zoo, and many more natural assets.” The DMP lists a number of opportunities and actions to grow visitation, length of stay and tourism expenditure in the region, including the following which are relevant to the current study:

- Address and maintain relevant regional signage – look for opportunities to motivate “drive through” traffic to stop and explore (even if only for the afternoon);
- Gather relevant information and engage local representatives to be active with TASAC;
- Develop relevant Touring Routes and Trails and ensure accessible interpretation for travellers.

4. Strengths

4.1 Existing and potential product

The 'gateway' towns and Macquarie Marshes area have existing and a range of potential tourism 'products' that will cater for a range of markets including grey nomads, families, outdoor enthusiasts, educational groups and couples.

A large amount of work has already been completed in the development and promotion of the Macquarie Valley Trails (www.rivertrails.com) program which outlines an array of existing tourism product. Of most relevance to the Macquarie Marshes experience are the following trails:

[nature](#); [river](#); [heritage](#); [cycling](#); [produce](#); [fishing](#); [art](#); [bird watching](#); and [education](#)

There are also trails for accommodation ([River Bedz](#)) and eating out options ([Tucker](#)).

See Section 4.3 for more information on accommodation options. Note that at present the Macquarie Valley Trails program does not include attractions in the 'gateway' communities other than Warren. The exception to this is the Riverside Caravan Park in Nyngan.

As noted under Section 2.1, the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service is custodian and manager of the Macquarie Marshes Nature Reserves. The Nature Reserves are currently opened on the October long weekend for Discovery tours, and at other times tours can also be booked for schools and private groups by contacting the NPWS Pilliga Forest Discovery Centre.

Visitor infrastructure in the Marshes is limited, and includes a Bird Viewing Platform and interpretive signage on Gibson's Way, and boardwalks, viewing platforms and signage at the Burrima site managed by the Macquarie River Food and Fibre organisation. The Tiger Bay Wetlands in Warren – sitting beside the Window on the Wetlands Centre - also offers walking trails, interpretive signage and bird hides.

This study has also identified several potential operators not currently offering experiences in the Macquarie Marshes, but who are interested in exploring opportunities to expand into the area, or partner with others to offer packaged opportunities. These include air, vehicle and on water operators. Further details are provided in Section 5.1.1.

4.2 Events

Many popular events are on offer in the target region. Along these are the following: the annual Coonamble Rodeo (largest in Southern Hemisphere held annually on the June long weekend); RiverSmart's annual Macquarie Fishing Classic based in Warren (held in early December); Quambone's Polocrosse Carnival (Annual event held in June at the Quambone Sportsground), camp oven cook off, Carinda & District Race Club (which has been holding race meetings since 1915) stages a 6 race meeting every July; Carinda Camp draft, Quick Shears Competition, "Let's Dance" David Bowie event in Carinda and the Marra fleece and field day.

The Destination Macquarie Marshes initiative offers an opportunity for event organisers to attract bigger audiences for sporting, birding, fishing or cultural events.

4.3 Accommodation

The [Rivertrails website](http://www.rivertrails.com.au) lists a number of accommodation operators in and around the Marshes, such as the 'Willie Retreat' property referred to in Section 2.1.

In addition, the 'gateway' towns offer the following:

Warren – 94 rooms offering up to 227 beds including a mix of motel and cabins but excluding camp sites and RV camping areas (see above also);

Nyngan – (number unknown at this time) a mix of motel and cabins plus camp sites and RV camping areas;

Walgett – 143 motel beds plus a camping group and RV locations;

Coonamble – 263 motel beds plus a Caravan Park, camp sites and RV camping spots;

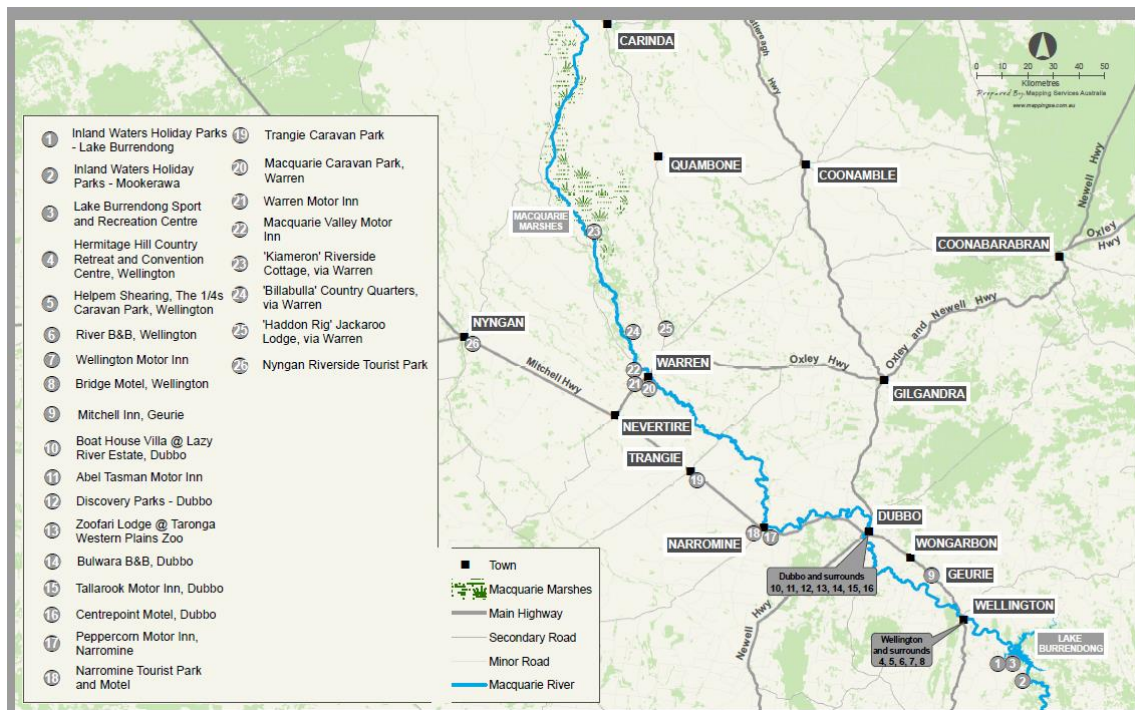
Gilgandra - 113 beds (motel, B&B and cabins) plus 3 caravan parks, camp sites and RV camping areas;

Bourke – 450 beds (motel, B&B and cabin style) plus camping and RV camping areas.

Under the River Bedz Trail there are several properties currently listed that lie within Warren Shire. These are the following:

Macquarie Caravan Park, Macquarie Valley Motor Inn, Warren Motor Inn, all in Warren.

Offering more rural settings are also Haddon Rig's Jackaroo Lodge, Billabulla's Country Quarters and Kiameron's Riverside Cottage. The latter is accessed off the Warren-Carinda Road on the way to the Macquarie Marshes, while access to Haddon Rig and Billabulla is via the Quambone road.



Map of various RiverBedz Accommodation options (www.rivertrails.com.au)

4.4 Marketing

Macquarie Valley Trails has developed a website (www.rivertrails.com.au), a 160 page printed and downloadable [Glovebox Guide](#) and an [interactive app](#) (iOS and android) for visitors to the region outlining its' 11 trails (see above). Formalising this trail as one of [NSW's Drives and Road Trips](#) would amplify existing marketing efforts.

The region also benefits greatly from the presence and marketing efforts of Taronga Western Plains Zoo, which is a 'hero' product/drawcard. Co-promotion with Taronga Western Plains Zoo of a Macquarie marshes experience would seem obvious and beneficial (see Action Plan - next Section).

In addition, each of the Councils across the 'target area' have their own promotional programs directed by one or more paid employees, depending on the size of the Council. Ideally, each of these would see fit to direct some resources to promoting visitation to the Macquarie Marshes as set out in this Action Plan. The Visitor Information Centres in each 'gateway town' (and further a field also), the Pilliga Centre and the WoW Centre also have key promotional roles (see Action Plan - next Section).

The regional Destination Management Plan is implemented by a Steering Group, facilitated by Dubbo Regional Council. This group holds significant opportunity for helping to facilitate coordinated promotion of the Macquarie Marshes as a destination.

5. Action Plan

In the table below, each recommended action for the Destination Macquarie Marshes 'blueprint' is presented in alignment with the relevant Objectives and Actions from Destination Management Plan for the region. The DMP objectives are shown in the first two columns of the plan below.

5.1 Destination development

Objective - Strengthen the visitor experience across the Central Inland NSW region in line with consumer preferences, enabling the region to deliver on its 2020 Potential

5.1.1 Product accessibility, promotion and development

DMP Objective	DMP Action	Destination Macquarie Marshes Opportunity	Destination Macquarie Marshes Recommended Actions	Lead role(s)
To maintain current gap and potential investment and development opportunities	LGAs to identify and draft a priority product development list in preparation for product development funding opportunities	Work with the 'gateway' and surrounding LGAs and State government organisations to document and communicate the accessibility and availability of product on offer in the Macquarie Marshes, including the identified opportunities herein.	1. Re-establish the Destination Macquarie Marshes Task Force (DMMTF) to drive the actions within this Action Plan moving forward. Members should (at least) include representatives from Warren, Coonamble, Walgett, Bogan and Gilgandra Shires, RiverSmart, NPWS, NSW Office of Environment and Heritage and Warren Macquarie Aboriginal Lands Council (assuming they are interested in being involved).	RiverSmart with the support of those organisations named at left.

			2. Identify as the highest priority, access sites to the Macquarie Marshes (present and future) and points of interest to guide implementation of this plan.	DMMTF
		Ensure the Destination Macquarie Marshes Task Force is represented at regional DMP Steering Group meetings to assist with coordinated implementation of their respective plans.	3. Destination Macquarie Marshes Task Force to appoint a “Communications Officer” to represent them when working with the DMP Steering Group to help further establish the region as “The Wild Frontier”.	DMMTF
			4. Work with DMP Steering Group to identify funding opportunities to progress priority actions within this Action Plan.	DMMTF
			5. Work with DMP Steering Group and pursue opportunities to fund the DMM Signage Strategy elements – see Signage Strategy (Section 6) – including the development of a logo/brand for all partners to adopt with signposting etc.	DMMTF
			6. RiverSmart representative to meet with DMM Task Force Communications Officer bi-monthly (prior to DMP meetings) to provide input prior to DMP meetings.	DMMTF
		Facilitate the promotion of existing or development of new 'products'	7. Work with Louise Clifton of NPWS to identify all existing Marsh-related Eco-pass holders in, and (where appropriate) work with relevant organisations to offer tours.	RiverSmart and the WoW Centre, VIC's etc.

			Examples include the following: www.tristate.com.au/tours ; www.dubbotowncountrytours.com.au www.followthatbird.com.au www.philipmaher.com/main.htm Marsh meanders	
			8. RiverSmart to work with Louise Clifton of NPWS to obtain an Eco-pass for Marshes/Rivertrails guided tours and then introduce (and encourage others to do so) a range of guided packaged 4WD Tours, bird watching and canoe Tours accessing the Marshes when seasonal and bird breeding conditions permit.	RiverSmart and the WoW Centre
			9. Support the WoW Centre in Warren to become a primary information source and booking office for guided tours in and around the Macquarie Marshes, including (if they are willing) for other tour operators as well.	WOW Centre – RiverSmart, other tour operators
			10. Update existing Macquarie Valley Trails maps highlighting self-exploration opportunities in and around the Marshes including self-drive, cycle and canoe, with GPS points and increased narrative to inform self-explorers on points of interest.	RiverSmart with help from relevant organisations.

			<p>11. Ensure Macquarie Marshes access and information (road conditions and water levels) is up-to-date (weekly) on a Macquarie Marshes page of the www.rivertrails.com.au website. Real time water information is available www.realtimedata.water.nsw.gov.au/water.stm and this should be shown as a link on the Rivertrails site. Ensure this website is also shown on hard copy trail brochures/booklets, maps and other marketing livery.</p>	RiverSmart with help from relevant government agencies
			<p>12. Seek opportunities to work with Dubbo Regional Council and Western Plains Zoo to co-promote and develop package deals for visting both the Zoo and taking a guided tour of the Macquarie marshes.</p>	RiverSmart with Dubbo Regional Council and Western Plains Zoo
			<p>13. Work with OEH/NPWS to create a fold out map (with online version) of the Macquarie Marshes, identifying access points, points of interest, walks and rides (and difficulty rating), key habitat areas, distances, visitor infrastructure, accommodation, food and beverage and cultural sites. The brochure should direct visitors to the Macquarie Marshes webpage (see above) to ensure they are aware of access restrictions. The brochure should offer a seasonal snapshot of what visitors may see in the Marshes, and highlight guided and self-guided opportunities.</p>	RiverSmart, OEH, NPWS, DMM Task Force

			14. Work with Ken Borchardt (pilot and winemaker) to help him introduce and promote a suite of flights into the Marshes including flyover, and fly-stay. Ken has existing contacts in China, available aircraft and single and multi-day package ideas, costings and facilities (such as tents).	RiverSmart, Ken Borchardt
			15. Further discuss and support, where possible, escalation of helicopter scenic flights over the Marshes with Dione and Jack Carter from Nyngan.	DMMTF and the Carters
			16. Invite Dubbo Bike Users Group to consider Destination Macquarie Marshes in their multi-day (mixed terrain) events calendar http://dubbobug.org.au/events/2016-10/	DMMTF
			17. Assist (where possible) private landholders who have, or are planning to have infrastructure to support increased Marsh visitation (such as boardwalks, signs etc).	DMMTF with Macquarie River Food and Fibre in the first instance
			18. Promote the establishment of further infrastructure (bird hides, boardwalks etc) by government agencies to improve the self-guided tour opportunities for visitors. For example, construction of a bird viewing tower at the Monkeygar Creek crossing.	DMMTF

			19. Work with NPWS/OEH and the relevant Councils to introduce eco-toilet facilities in several key locations for visitors to the Marshes, such as the Gibson's Way Bird Observation Tower.	DMMTF, NPWS, OEH, relevant Councils
Support and grow Aboriginal product development	Review aboriginal products audit and collectively identify gaps and opportunities for development, growth and investment	Offer guided tours showcasing and educating visitors about Marsh-related Aboriginal culture.	20. Work with local Indigenous organisations to develop and run tours in and around the Marshes. If appropriate to local Indigenous custodians liaise with First Lesson Cultural Tours to expand existing tours into appropriate Marsh sites. Work with the Warren Macquarie LALC to investigate opportunities.	DMMTF
	Consult and investigate with local Aboriginal Land Councils and Outback Arts to build relationships around Indigenous products and art.	Work with the relevant Aboriginal Lands Councils, Outback Arts and other stakeholders to develop products and artworks.	21. Work with the Warren Macquarie LALC and Outback Arts to investigate opportunities to develop further outlets for Indigenous artworks.	DMMTF with Outback Arts
Develop food, wine and agri-tourism products, providing an opportunity to link with neighbouring tourism hubs	Develop Agricultural Tourism Guide	In developing an agri-tourism guide ensure this is done in consultation or partnership with RiverSmart and Macquarie Valley Trails to avoid reinventing the wheel (see MVT's Produce, Tucker and Bedz trails).	22. RiverSmart and the Warren Shire Council representative currently leading the agri-tourism guide development to liaise closely on this project.	DMMTF, DMP Steering group
	Earmark Agri-tourism champions and create case	Macquarie Valley Trails to work with the DMP Steering Group to	23. As above.	DMMTF

	studies to support further agritourism development	showcase relevant Agri-tourism champions for case studies where appropriate.		
Ensure greater development and integration of regional arts, cultural and heritage assets and activities into Great Western Plains Website	Maximise relationships such as Outback Arts, OEH, Heritage product operators and art/cultural product operators.	Build upon the authenticity and opportunities to gain a better appreciation of Indigenous and early European cultural heritage of the region.	24. Offer visitors a stronger connection with the Indigenous and early European culture heritage through guided and self-guided experiences, through installing additional signage, and including heritage as a major component of guided and self-guide tours of the Marshes.	DMMTF, NPWS, OEH, VIC's and the Wow Centre.
	Investigate benefits/costs for "heritage near me" app for product development for GWP or individual LGAs	The Macquarie Valley Trails downloadable app already has 'near me' functionality for all attractions on all trails, but it is very expensive to keep current due to technological advances.	25. Work with the DMP Steering Group to see if the RiverTrails app would meet this DMP Action, and if so, what funding may be available to assist with currency of technology	DMMTF representative on the DMP Steering Group
	Audit and compile Heritage and Art events with a view to integration into GWP website.	Ensure Heritage and Art events in and around the Marshes are integrated into the GWP website.	26. DMM Task Force to provide DMP Steering Group with information on Heritage and Arts events to integrate into the GWP and River Trails websites.	DMMTF
Develop and promote touring routes and trails	Review product audit to develop common themes, eg artesian spa trail, rhino adventure, solar galaxy, wine, heritage, aboriginal,	Ensure Macquarie Marshes are included on any appropriate touring routes and trails.	27. The current Great Western Plains visitor map doesn't list the Macquarie Marshes Nature Reserves or even show the area in green but does list Tiger Bay Wetlands, Macquarie Marshes and Heritage Walking Tour on the reverse side. The map should be updated prior to the next print run.	RiverSmart with DMP Steering Group (Jacki Parish)

	agricultural		28. The Great Inland Way foldout detailed visitor map doesn't identify any 'green' for the Marshes, and doesn't list the Marsh Nature Reserves. This map should be updated prior to any further print runs.	DMMTF
			29. Work with Warren Shire Council to help secure the funds to improve access along Gibson's Way, especially at Monkeygar Creek crossing.	DMMTF
		RiverTrails to become a formalised "touring route" on the NSW Road Trips site .	30. Apply through TASAC to formalise Macquarie Valley Trails as a NSW touring route - Touring route application David Douglas (ph 9931 1483) is the key contact.	Macquarie Valley Trails/RiverSmart

5.1.2 Accommodation

DMP Objective	DMP Action	Destination Macquarie Marshes Opportunity	Destination Macquarie Marshes Recommended Actions	Lead role(s)
To inform and support the development of local accommodation industry programs	Facilitate industry development sessions and connect operators with industry bodies/standards programs as appropriate. Liaise with DNSW to align efforts and ensure minimal overlap	Increase online presence and accessibility of accommodation	31. Provide industry training to move all accommodation providers to online booking systems.	DMMTF in partnership with DMP Steering Group.
			32. Ensure all operators are IT savvy with email and web-based presence through basic and intermediate training.	DMMTF in partnership with DMP Steering

				Group
			33. Provide industry training for accommodation, food and beverage operators to help raise the quality on offer, explore opportunities to value-add to existing offers and meet (or exceed) visitor expectations.	DMMTF in partnership with DMP Steering Group
			34. Provide social media training to operators.	DMMTF in partnership with DMP Steering Group
		Introduce a simple data collection process for accommodation operators to collect and submit baseline data to help understand current occupancy rates, and gather more data about travellers.	35. Establish baseline occupancy and visitor data including where from, length of stay, accommodation type, local economic impacts, satisfaction and travel route.	DMMTF in partnership with DMP Steering Group
			36. Use baseline data to inform the DMP Task Force of shifts in length of stay as part of the Destination MM initiative.	DMMTF in partnership with DMP Steering Group
To proactively canvas and communicate to industry for funding to enable industry investment, expansion, development and improvement	Identify grants and communicate within DMP groups as appropriate	Identify funding opportunities to implement the DMM Action Plan.	37. Work with the DMP Steering Group to identify funding opportunities to progress priority actions, including the Signage Strategy (Section 6).	DMMTF in partnership with DMP Steering Group
	Use white paper data to attract investment. Leverage opportunities and resources	RiverSmart to continue discussions with NPWS regarding any potential future	38. RiverSmart to maintain a dialogue with NPWS regarding any future potential acquisitions of key Marshes property with easy access to prime	RiverSmart, NPWS, OEH

	between agencies eg LGA's and NPWS.	investments in a strategically located Macquarie Marshes access property.	wetland areas. Any such acquisition would offer an unprecedented level of access for visitors to the Marshes including canoe trail, potential for guided flat bottom punt experiences, guided walking tours, and installation of boardwalks and bird hides.	
	Facilitate the development of unique accommodation options to support the growth of nature based tourism	Work with regional caravan parks to develop unique value-add offerings (such as the bush poetry campfire dinners at Kidman's, Bourke).	39. Encourage the regional caravan parks and the WoW Centre to introduce after hours family friendly "entertainment" such as bush poetry, campfire and dinner, storytelling, Indigenous storytelling, etc, to further introduce the local culture to visitors, inviting them to explore the area and stay longer.	DMMTF, caravan parks and WoW Centre
			40. Facilitate the development of more B&B and farmstay style accommodation in the 'gateway' communities of the Marshes.	DMMTF

5.1.3 Visitor Information Services

DMP Objective	DMP Action	Destination Macquarie Marshes Opportunity	Destination Macquarie Marshes Recommended Actions	Lead role(s)
Improve local industry engagement and optimise business operations	Optimise buying power through investigating collaborative opportunities through collective VIC eg	Increase brand awareness through development of MM merchandise lines	41. Consider developing and producing low cost, high volume Macquarie Marshes focussed merchandise for sale at 'gateway' town VICs and the WoW Centre such as magnets,	DMMTF

	new souvenir and merchandise lines		postcards, re-usable water bottles, hats, etc. See Signage Strategy (Section 6) re developing of common logo for the Marshes.	
	Improve destination networks and collaboration between towns – encourage inter-town familiarisation programs	Increase the knowledge and understanding of the Macquarie Marshes product offer.	42. Run regular 'famils' for Walgett, Warren, Nyngan, Coonamble, Gilgandra and Bourke tourism/VIC staff showcasing the Macquarie Marshes, Aboriginal and European cultural experiences, accommodation options etc.	DMMTF
			43. Keep 'gateway' town VICs and Tourism Officers up to date on accessibility, events and useful information about the Macquarie Marshes via a web portal.	DMMTF
		Ensure the industry have opportunities to get to know the new Destination Network for this region (see Section 2.1).	44. Once available distribute information and details of opportunities to operators to be actively involved in the new Destination Network.	DMMTF
	Ensure consistent in-store promotion of GWP	Ensure GWP and Macquarie River Trails information is available in all 'gateway' VICs and VICs along the Trail.	45. RiverSmart to provide RiverTrails booklet (whilst in printed format) to Walgett, Coonamble, Warren, Bourke, Nyngan VICs in addition to those in Wellington, Dubbo and Narromine. Taronga Western Plains Zoo should also continue to stock the booklet and all outlets that form part of the programme. Once the shift to electronic-only occurs, ensure the website and downloadable apps are well promoted.	RiverSmart

			46. Detailed Macquarie Marshes maps (once available) to be provided to 'gateway' VICs and accommodation providers.	DMMTF
To ensure information centre accessibility	Information boards around town	Promote Destination Macquarie Marshes on information and tourism boards in the 'gateway' towns and at the WoW Centre.	47. DMM Task Force to ensure DMM information is included on their towns' information/tourism board(s).	DMMTF, WoW Centre
To enable Visitors Centre diversification of services. All opportunities to provide increasing accessibility and delivering more value to visitors	Investigate investment/expansion opportunities, that is art gallery, coffee shop, consigned goods sales, RV dump points, pet friendly services, luggage storage, free WiFi, Tour Guides, City Famils, Office Hire	Continue to develop the WoW Centre as a key anchor product for Macquarie Marshes touring.	<p>48. The WoW Centre in Warren (including the Kookaburra Kiosk and Tiger Bay Wetlands) should be positioned as an anchor product for Destination Macquarie Marshes. To be financially sustainable the WoW will need to consider the following activities as part of its on-going operations:</p> <p>Continue to house regional art exhibitions with art on consignment;</p> <p>Sale of appropriate merchandise (see Recommendation 41.);</p> <p>Display and sale of Wayilwan Indigenous artworks;</p> <p>Booking centre for guided tours;</p> <p>Meeting point for guided tours;</p> <p>Morning tea, lunch or afternoon tea for packaged tours;</p>	WoW Centre - RiverSmart

			School Holiday and night time activities; Event hire; Hire of canoes and bikes; Self-guided tour information; Children's outdoor experience; Wine bar licence for events and tastings.	
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5.1.4 Regional RV and Caravanning Strategy

DMP Objective	DMP Action	Destination Macquarie Marshes Opportunity	Destination Macquarie Marshes Actions	Lead role(s)
Ensure camping and Caravan Parks cater to growing traveller requirements.	Audit of sufficient and accessible dump points, clean amenities, activities, entertainment for kids holiday programs.	Ensure current RV visitors have access to information on the local and regional 'products' offer.	49. Work with 'gateway' VICs to identify opportunities for event boards at each of the caravan parks and free camping RV sites to provide information on activities and events that could lengthen visitor stay in the region, and ensure Macquarie Marshes opportunities are included on each board.	DMMTF

5.2 Events

Objective - Provide opportunities to engage with the local community, stimulate re-visitation and tell a unique destination story through authentic event experiences, thereby contributing to the region's 2020 potential

DMP Objective	DMP Action	Destination Macquarie Marshes Opportunity	Destination Macquarie Marshes Recommended Actions	Lead role(s)
Develop appropriate resources and infrastructure to support delivery of events	Councils to ensure street beautification programs are considered in their master plans. Councils to invest in street scaping, street flags, billboards etc	Work with the Marsh Shires and 'gateway' towns to identify wetland-themed street beautification opportunities to further establish DMM branding.	50. Encourage the Council's and 'gateway' towns to identify opportunities to design and install flags (displaying the shared Marshes logo – see Signage Strategy Section 6), banners, mosaics, and/or artworks with a wetland theme.	DMMTF
Review the region's event calendar to identify opportunities to address gaps	Review regional event offering and identify potential packaging and event opportunities. Identify event opportunities to link and leverage across destinations	Increase visitation and length of stay by inviting sporting event organisers to consider Destination Macquarie Marshes and the 'gateway' towns.	51. Undertake a detailed inventory of existing regular events across the Marshes 'gateway' towns (and along major travel routes) and use this to identify opportunities for collaborative promotions, back-to-back-timing, and gap filling through new event development.	DMMTF
			52. Ensure all events are included on the regional events calendars, promoted through social media, e-newsletters etc and listed on Get Connected .	DMMTF
			53. Attend appropriate regional events and distribute information to help promote	DMMTF

			Destination Macquarie Marshes.	
Raise broader community and local business community awareness across the region's destinations regarding value of events	An events board or space available in all member LGAs to support promotion of events across the region	Promote regional events to encourage travellers to extend their stay or plan arrivals accordingly	54. DMM Task Force members to ensure all 'gateway' town VICs and accommodation providers are aware of any upcoming events in and around the Macquarie Marshes and that each event is shown on the MM Web page.	DMMTF
Guide mentor and support event organisers	A quarterly regional newsletter promoting key events and providing references for support in LGAs.	Create a network of regional event organisers to share information and promote collaborative marketing.	55. Encourage networking among event organisers. All DMM events to be listed on DNSW Get Connected site.	DMMTF
Attract niche and target markets	Investigate collaborative opportunities using a mix of media to promote the region as a destination for events	Increase visitation and length of stay by inviting sporting, cultural or music event organisers to consider the Macquarie Marshes and 'gateway' towns as suitable sites.	56. Further to recommendation 51 above, explore opportunities to address identified gaps in the event calendar. For example, bird watching, cycling or paddling events.	RiverSmart, DMMTF and Tim Hosking (OEH)
			57. Support RiverSmart's annual hosting of the Macquarie River Fishing Classic, Carp Muster and River cleanup event based in Warren. Use the event to promote Warren for fishing enthusiasts and the possible evolution of this event into a River Festival.	RiverSmart, Warren community and small businesses.
			58. Encourage the other 'gateway' towns to develop river or Marsh-focussed events and continue to support the NPWS October long weekend 'open days' at the Nature Reserves.	DMMTF

5.3 Industry engagement and workshops

Objective - Increase the capacity of tourism operators and industry stakeholders to deliver on consumer expectations, enabling the region to deliver on its 2020 Potential

DMP Objective	DMP Action	Destination Macquarie Marshes Opportunity	Destination Macquarie Marshes Recommended Actions	Lead role(s)
To provide relevant regional industry training	Identify hub sites for regional training	Offer training at key regional centres such as the WoW Centre.	59. Work with the DMP Steering Group to identify operator training to be run at key regional locations covering digital marketing, digital booking systems, packaging, partnerships, value-adding, social media and growth strategies.	DMMTF
		Increase understanding of visitor expectations	60. Provide simple spreadsheet (aligned to the spreadsheet used by VICs) to collect consistent data through VIC, WoW Centre and operators to identify visitor demographic (age, gender, travel party size), where they live, how long they're staying, are they a first time or repeat visitor, how well their needs are being met, their purpose of travel to the area, what we could do better, and their email address if they'd like to be kept informed of regional activities and events.	DMMTF

5.4 Marketing

Objective - Increase the appeal of the destination, maximise stakeholder resources and positively influence overnight tourism expenditure to deliver on 2020 Potential

DMP Objective	DMP Action	Destination Macquarie Marshes Opportunity	Destination Macquarie Marshes Recommended Actions	Lead role(s)
Double overnight visitation to the region by 2020	<p>Leverage opportunities with National Parks & Wildlife Service</p> <p>Nature Lovers: Targeted niche marketing opportunities focused on key nature themes (soft adventure, bird watching, bushwalking etc).</p>	Managing visitor expectations is essential, and no more so than in the Macquarie Marshes where water is variable, bird breeding events are seasonal, water dependent and inconsistent, and access is unreliable or by appointment only. As such it is recommended that a central digital information page is created (on the www.rivertrails.com.au or another dedicated site) providing up-to-date information on accessibility of the Marshes, upcoming events, current breeding, species and habitat news, tour opportunities and self-drive maps and information.	61. DMM Task Force to work collaboratively with OEH, NPWS RiverSmart, WoW Centre, and operators, to create this resource, and to update at least fortnightly (or more regularly during flooding events). Updates should also be communicated via social media.	OEH, NPWS, DMMTF, RiverSmart, WoW Centre
	Develop itineraries and packages to transition day trip visitors towards	See Section 5.1.1 Product accessibility, promotion and	See Section 5.1.1 Product accessibility, promotion and development	DMMTF

	overnight visitors.	development		
	Ensure all regional operators are listed on ATDW and Get Connected to maximize reach through digital channels and DNSW marketing efforts.	Ensure all regional operators are listed on ATDW and Get Connected to maximize reach through digital channels and DNSW marketing efforts.	62. Work with all operators to ensure they are listed on ATDW and Get Connected to maximise reach to potential visitors.	DMMTF
	Education Sector: Niche marketing opportunity to work with school and training institutions to increase visitation to the region.	Grow existing educational tourism sector via Destination Macquarie Marshes.	63. RiverSmart to continue to work with OEH and NPWS, to contact Environmental Education Centres and Universities, and invite students to visit the WoW Centre and the Marshes during educational excursions to the area.	RiverSmart, Terry Korodaj (OEH), Nicola Brookhouse (NPWS)
			64. RiverSmart to work with DMP Steering Group to conduct a direct marketing campaign to department of education and Catholic education informing them of the educational opportunities (history, indigenous, nature, arts and astronomy) for students in the region.	RiverSmart and DMMTF

6. Signage Strategy

6.1 Objectives

The key objectives of this Signage Strategy are to:

- Identify ways to create more visual accessibility and way-finding to the Macquarie Marshes, for motorists travelling on the Great Inland Way; and throughout the Great Western Plains, thus increasing day and overnight visitation;
- Increase linkages between key Great Western Plains visitor experiences (including the Window on the Wetlands Centre in Warren), and ultimately the Macquarie Marshes;
- Instil the Macquarie Valley Trails brand through appropriate signage options;
- Create a sense of safety and comfort for those who choose to drive, ride and cycle throughout the Marshes;
- Create a shared logo/brand in order to facilitate co-marketing between the 'gateway' towns to the Marshes;
- Offer additional information for visitors and the community; and
- Ensure consistency with, and achieving objectives within the Central Inland NSW Destination Management Plan.

The driving forces behind identifying signage opportunities include:

- Improved visitor awareness, safety, and access to tourist activities and facilities;
- Improved visitor satisfaction;
- Increased business activity for tourist and service operators, suppliers, and retailers; and,
- Improved economic outcomes for 'gateway' towns and regions.

This strategy is primarily focussed on signage that is directional, informational and educational, however advertising key assets linked to the Marshes is also considered.

6.2 Methods

1. Existing signage in and around the key 'gateway' towns and roads into the Macquarie Marshes was reviewed, with particular focus on Warren, Walgett, Coonamble, Bourke, Carinda, Quambone, Nyngan, Dubbo and Narromine.
2. Discussions were held with the relevant officers in the Coonamble, Walgett, Bourke, Dubbo and Warren Councils, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Office of Environment and Heritage, existing operators and land owners regarding the signage strategy.
3. An investigation of TASAC processes and requirements was undertaken.
4. Research and review of relevant Council sign posting policies and guidelines was completed.
5. Potential signage locations were identified, and,
6. A series of recommendations were developed and circulated for comment by the relevant government agencies and the wider community.

6.3 Tourism and advertising signposting regulations

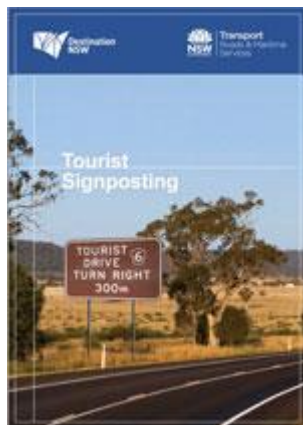
6.3.1 Tourism signposting – State Roads

Tourism Signposting (white on blue, or white on brown) on State roads is co-ordinated by the Tourist Attraction Signposting Assessment Committee (TASAC), utilising the [NSW Tourist Signposting Manual](#) for the approvals process. TASAC is made up of representatives from Destination NSW, NSW Roads & Marine Services (RMS), Regional Destination Networks and a Secretariat. At time of writing the TASAC Secretariat is Maria Zannetides.

TASAC has overall responsibility for the planning and implementation of tourist signposting systems which: “safely and efficiently guide motorists to their destination; and inform visitors of the range of major attractions and services available within a destination”.

TASAC’s key activities include:

- Developing Tourism Signposting Policy for NSW;
- Assessing applications for tourist signposting to determine their eligibility;
- Providing input to National Tourist Signposting Policy;
- Communication of tourist signposting policy, initiatives and issues to stakeholders; and,
- Quality control of tourist signposting.



Tourist signs in NSW have a white legend on a brown background and serve to:

Indicate to motorists, establishments, features or places that are major tourist attractions;

Detail the routes of themed or regional tourist drives; and

Welcome visitors to the state and its tourism regions.

Signs for Visitor Information Services are also managed by TASAC.

Visitor Information Services include information bays, visitor radio and accredited Visitor Information Centres (VICs). These signs have a white legend on a blue background, except where an italicised yellow ‘i’ appears for accredited Visitor Information Centres (VICs).

All applications for tourism signage on State roads must be through the formal TASAC application process (see Section 6.5).

6.3.2 Tourism signposting – Secondary Roads

Signage applications will either be a Local Government or RMS determination. This depends on which road (ie the type of road – local or State), if there’s an existing signpost, and how many signs are already on the signpost. Signage applications can be complex for this reason so the first step is to photograph the proposed location and speak to a Council Officer to determine the process.

Typically, the maximum number of signs that can be installed at an intersection and be readable, understood and acted upon with safety is **four**, depending on the lengths of legends (ie how many words). This would include a road nameplate, a green/white geographic destination sign and up to two tourist or service signs. This policy complies with the Australian Standard Signposting Principles.

6.3.3 Advertising signage – Public and Private lands

[SEPP64](#) applies to all outdoor signs on land on which the Warren, Walgett, Bogan and Coonamble Shires' Local Environmental Plan(s) apply.

Specifically, the SEPP64 provides the following relevant restrictions for signage deemed to be “advertising”:

Prohibited advertisements

- (1) Despite the provisions of any other environmental planning instrument, the display of an advertisement is prohibited on land that, under an environmental planning instrument, is within any of the following zones or descriptions:
 - environmentally sensitive area*;
 - heritage area (excluding railway stations)*;
 - natural or other conservation area*;
 - open space*;
 - waterway*;
 - residential (but not including a mixed residential and business zone, or similar zones);
 - scenic protection area;
 - national park; and
 - nature reserve*.

**indicates an area relevant to the study area.*

6.4 Types of tourist signs

Tourist attraction signs (white on brown) come in many forms. These signs can refer to single tourist attractions or to several tourist attractions.

6.4.1 Gateway signs (white on brown)



← (White lettering on a brown background)

← (The addition of this service sign has white symbols and / or lettering on a blue background)

Image: Maitland City Council

Gateway signs, erected at or near the entry points of a region, city, or town can provide visitors with information about key local tourist themes, attractions and drives. A gateway sign can also include a row of white on blue symbols to denote the availability of services. Where a gateway sign is located close to an intersection advance direction information (eg. TURN RIGHT 400m) may be included on the sign.

6.4.2 Advance signs (white on brown)



Advance signs provide travellers with advance notice of a tourist attraction or service, subject to the following:

- Signs in advance of a rural intersection will only be considered where intersection signs are permitted; and
- Signs are not permitted in built-up areas except in cases where road safety is a concern or the attraction is of a significant nature.

6.4.3 Intersection signs (white on brown)



Intersection signs are placed at intersections to indicate the turn-off to one or more attractions. Aggregation of attractions onto one intersection sign is encouraged.

6.4.4 Position signs (white on brown)



If the entry to a tourist attraction cannot be made obvious from signage within the property line, position signs are placed to

indicate the point of entry.

Position signs are sometimes a smaller single post mounted fingerboard (like a street sign), and these would have narrow uppercase font.

6.4.5 Reassurance signs (white on brown)



When areas and attractions of regional significance are signed from a considerable distance away, reassurance signs are placed after major intersections so travellers can be confident that they are still travelling in the right direction.

6.4.6 Route markers (white on brown)



Route markers and route shields may be used along tourist drives to fulfil the role of advance intersection and reassurance signs. This option also removes the need for costly tourist signage.

6.4.7 Service signs (white on blue)



Service signs, with white lettering on a blue background direct visitors to facilities and services that may benefit them. With the exception of some accommodation facilities, signage to other services use Australian Standard symbols (see viii below). Service signs include those for:

- Accommodation facilities;
- Caravan and camping parks;
- RV dump sites;
- Visitor Information Centre;
- Tourist information bays;
- Service stations;
- Public toilets;
- Rest areas;
- Parking areas.
- Airport;
- Bicycle track;
- Boat ramp;
- Fireplace/BBQ facilities;
- Potable water;
- Food/Dining;
- Disabled access; and
- Tea/Coffee.

6.4.8 Symbols

Only symbols approved under the Australian Standard 2342 (AS2342) can be used on tourism signage. These symbols include the following:



6.5 Signposting processes

6.5.1 Tourism signposting – State Roads

An application must be submitted to TASAC, demonstrating how the criteria for the particular tourist signage category are being met. The categories are outlined below, with those believed potentially applicable to the Macquarie Marshes shown in **green**:

Category	Application forms
1. Major Tourist Attractions A number of categories of major tourist attraction are eligible for signposting. Some general eligibility criteria apply to all the categories and there are also additional criteria specific to each category. Please select from the list adjacent for more information on the requirements for each category.	Galleries (PDF 453 kb) Museums (PDF 427 kb) Craft Based (PDF 448 kb) Aboriginal cultural centres & sites (PDF 341 kb) Historic properties or sites (PDF 422 kb) Wineries (PDF 374 kb)

	Primary and secondary industry (PDF 417 kb) Outdoor based (PDF 505 kb) Theme parks (PDF 422 kb) Architectural/engineering structures (PDF 457 kb) Other attractions (PDF 456 kb) State significant (PDF 416 kb)
2. Tourism Product Categories These are clusters of tourism product that fit into a shared theme, and which have been deemed eligible for signposting. For example, some towns have a number of well-presented and interpreted historic sites and properties (and meet all the other required criteria) to make them eligible to be signposted as Historic Towns.	Wine tourism regions (PDF 368 kb) Historic towns, villages and precincts (PDF 361 kb) National Parks, State Conservation Areas, State Forests & Major Water Storage Areas (PDF 403 kb) Major regional tourist centres (PDF 336 kb) Seaside towns and villages (PDF 353 kb)
3. Identification and Information These are signs that highlight eligible visitor information services or welcome visitors to an area.	“Welcome” signs (PDF 261 kb) Accredited Visitor Information Centres (PDF file, 128 kb) Non-accredited visitor information services (PDF 169 kb)
4. Driving Experiences The review of the driving experience category is nearing finalisation. Tourism NSW and RTA (now RMS) were significant contributors at a national forum which reviewed the Australian Standard for tourist signposting in June 2007. The review of this category will deliver an enhanced signage treatment which will meet the needs of the visitor and will allow the NSW tourism industry new criteria under which to apply. For further information on this review please contact David Douglas on 9931 1483.	Touring route application (PDF 378 kb)

Once an application for signposting has been submitted to TASAC, it will be reviewed against criteria at their monthly meeting. Attractions under certain specialist categories are also referred to relevant organisations with expertise in that area. For example: Historic sites involve the NSW Heritage Office, Galleries involve the Museum and Galleries Foundation, etc. TASAC then reviews the recommendation of these organisations to ensure consistency in approvals.

If the application is deemed eligible the RMS then reviews the possible siting(s) of the sign(s) to ensure sites are available, identifies the appropriate signage treatment to direct visitors to the attraction and ensures the proposed signage will meet the Australian Standard. It will take a minimum of 6 months from the time a signposting application is submitted until the signs are installed.



For some categories of tourist attractions, symbols have been developed to facilitate recognition. These symbols can be incorporated onto the sign face in conjunction with the approved wording for the attraction.

The signs offered will be based on each individual situation. For example, if the signage is to direct visitors to a business, the solution offered will be determined by the business location in relation to the approach roads. The

types of issues that will determine the signage offered include:

- The distance of the attraction from a State road;
- The number of intersections between the attraction and the main road turn-off;
- The visibility of the attractions' entrance from the road.

The RMS develops a signage treatment to suit each situation. It may be that only one sign is needed, however, there may be a need for a number of signs to guide a visitor from the State road network.

6.5.2 Tourism signposting – Local Roads

If the attraction/place can be approached from the local road networks, then it will require signage authorisation from the local council for installation. This is relevant to most of the recommendations outlined in Section 6.6.

6.5.3 Once a sign is approved

The RMS has a list of preferred manufacturers who can produce signs that meet the standards required for tourist signs. The RMS will arrange the manufacture and installation of the sign(s) in conjunction with local government once you have accepted the costing estimate.

The applicant is responsible for covering the costs of the sign(s) and its installation. The costs for signs vary, depending on the type of sign required. The RMS provides an estimate once a specific signage treatment has been approved.

Specific questions about tourist signposting can be directed to:

TASAC Secretariat
Angelini Planning Services
Shop 7/108 Penshurst Street
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6.6 Situational analysis and Recommendations

This Signage Strategy forms a significant part of the overall Destination Macquarie Marshes Action Plan. Implementation should be considered as part of the Action Plan as some elements of it need to be implemented prior to the Signage Strategy to ensure meaningful and sustainable outcomes.

6.6.1 TASAC/RMS Approved Highway signage

Current situation

White on brown signage

The roads and visitor attractions in and around the Macquarie Marshes currently have very little white on brown tourism signage (from any direction).

For those travellers heading south on the Great Inland Way (Lightning Ridge – Coonamble – Gilgandra – Dubbo) there are currently no way-finding or interpretive signs that would provide awareness or information on the Macquarie Marshes.

For those visitors travelling the Mitchell Highway (Bourke to Dubbo) there are no way-finding or interpretive signs that would provide awareness or information on the Macquarie Marshes.

For those travelling from Sydney, Mudgee or Newcastle along the Castlereagh Highway through Gilgandra and Gulargambone, there are no way-finding or interpretive signs that would provide awareness or information on the Macquarie Marshes.

The same applies to those travelling along the Mitchell Highway from Forbes to Parkes to Dubbo, and from Orange to Dubbo via Molong and Wellington. In the former case a white on brown sign at the turnoff to Narromine from Tomingley would be a great asset, providing visitors with the opportunity to experience the Marshes.

White on Blue or White on Green Signage

The RMS reports that white on blue signage is only permissible for town services of significance, and these signs are supported in instances where they would provide information for visitors from outside of the area. These regulations have become more stringent over recent years. In the past, it was possible to gain approval for signage for libraries, clubs etc. However, these facilities are no longer supported with blue on white signs unless they are regionally or state significant in their own right.



Image: White on green signage on the Mitchell Highway (Tara O'Connell)

Whilst the gateway towns and roadways in and around the Macquarie Marshes were found to have an excellent supply of white on green town signage, and a solid presence of white on blue signage, there is an opportunity to install white on blue and white on brown signage to enhance the visitor experience throughout the area.

Recommendation 1:

The NSW Tourist Signposting Manual states that “all National Parks, State Forests and Reserves are eligible for brown and white tourism signage, and any service facilities within such areas may also be eligible for blue and white service signage”.

Action:

Work with the NSW NPWS to apply for and install (a) white on brown tourism signage for the Macquarie Marshes, and (b) white on blue fingerpost signs to direct visitors to the Bird Viewing Platform on Gibson's Way.

Implementation:

1. Hold discussions with NSW NPWS to advance an application and installation of white on brown “Macquarie Marshes” directional signs to be installed at key intersections including (but not limited to):

- (a) Mitchell and Oxley Highway intersection at Nevertire;
- (b) Warren-Carinda Road and Oxley Highway intersection, Warren;
- (c) Oxley Highway intersection, Gilgandra;
- (d) Castlereagh Highway and Quambone Road intersection, Coonamble;
- (e) Carinda-Walgett Road and Castlereagh Highway, Walgett.

2. Hold discussions with NSW NPWS to advance an application and installation of white on blue services signage directing visitors to the Bird Viewing Platform on Gibson's Way to be installed on the existing sign post currently featuring “Willie Retreat” on the corner of

Gibson's Way and the Warren-Carinda Road. The Viewing Platform is on a road reserve and overlooks private property but is maintained by NPWS. Any application for signage will need to be supported by Warren Shire Council.

3. Hold discussions with the relevant Councils regarding installation of white on blue services signage directing visitors to the Gibson's Way Bird Viewing Platform to be installed in (a) Quambone at the Warren-Carinda Road and (b) Sandy Camp Road intersection. This would also link with the town entry signage (see Quambone example image below).



6.6.2 Macquarie Marshes directional signage and information for, and along, driving routes and points of interest

Current situation

For visitors to the Marshes presently there is no signage to help direct them to points of interest or alert them of potentially difficult road conditions. The Macquarie Marshes Bird Watching Trail map (see Section 2) is the best available to support this at present but it is limited only to points of interest for bird watching and is in print and downloadable pdf form only.

Recommendation 2:

Increase visitor awareness of the Macquarie Marshes via key gateway towns by developing a Macquarie Marshes Driving Route icon or logo (in consultation with the NSW NPWS, NSW DoE&H, local Councils and RiverSmart) to signpost key locations.

One option to consider is the existing logo/design on display in Quambone (see photo above) which would avoid the need for replacing these existing signs and reduce costs with logo development etc.

Recommendation 3:

Work with Bogan Shire Council to design and install high quality map-based visitor information on the existing signage infrastructure (currently vacant) on the Mitchell Highway, Nyngan (opposite Rotary Park) showcasing the Macquarie Marshes with key

marketing message being visitation to the Nyngan VIC, the WOW Centre in Warren, and downloading the Macquarie Valley Trails app.

Recommendation 4:

Destination Macquarie Marshes Task Force members should work with Councils in the 'gateway' towns to ensure Macquarie Marshes information is included on the town's tourist and other information boards.

Recommendation 5:



Work with the relevant management authorities to ensure the VICs in Coonamble, Walgett, Warren, and Nyngan have up-to-date touring information for the Macquarie Marshes. In addition, the Window on the Wetlands Centre in Warren also houses extensive information on the Macquarie Marshes, as well as other local attractions, events, accommodation and more. As such a white on blue "i" could be placed on a 'sandwich board' style sign for those travellers on

the Oxley Highway, particularly on weekends when the Warren VIC is closed. See also the several related recommended actions in Section 5, the Action Plan.

6.6.3 Macquarie Valley Trails (and similar) signage

Current situation

Macquarie Valley Trails (MVT) signage has been created to support this touring initiative in the region creating excellent trail/brand consistency. It communicates and showcases the Nature, Bird watching, River, Heritage, Produce, Cycling, Fishing, Art, Education, River beds and Tucker 'trails' on offer for visitors, as well as the associated website, app and Glove-Box Guide.



Macquarie Valley Trails signage at 'Willie Retreat', Macquarie Marshes (Bill Phillips)

This signage is currently installed at the following locations:

1. Lake Burrendong State Park - entry kiosk.
2. Wellington – at the junction of the Bell and Macquarie Rivers.
3. Dubbo - Near the boat ramp.
4. Dubbo - BIG4 Dubbo Parklands.
5. Dubbo -Taronga Western Plains Zoo (RV parking area).
6. Narromine - Rotary Park, by the Macquarie River.
7. Trangie - Argonauts Park - Goan Waterhole.
8. Warren - Macquarie Caravan Park.
9. Warren – Window on the Wetlands Centre (designated HQ of Macquarie Valley Trails).
10. Macquarie Marshes - 'Willie Retreat'.
11. Nyngan - Riverside Tourist Park, near the Bogan River.
12. Coonamble - rest stop on the way into town - near the Castlereagh River.

Recommendation 6:

Update, make and install the MVT signage at the following key gateway locations and visitor stops along the touring route to further encourage visitation to the Macquarie Marshes and surrounding towns, thus increasing length of stay for visitors:

1. Gilgandra – Cooe Centre;
2. Walgett – (location to be decided with Walgett Shire Council tourism staff);
3. Brewarrina – near the “Indigenous fish traps” visitor location;
4. Warren – two at free camping locations (Sandy Camp and Bob Christenson Reserve);
5. Trangie Caravan Park;
6. Dubbo - Council owned Caravan Park (near the Cattlemen's Motor Inn);
7. Byrock – Mulga Creek Hotel, Caravan and Camp Grounds between Bourke and Nyngan, at the junction of Mitchell Highway, Gongolgon Road, and Cobar Street;
8. Parkes Visitor Information Centre and telescope;
9. Warrumbungles National Park or Coonabarabran VIC;
10. NSW NPWS Pilliga Discovery Centre, Barradine;
11. Gulargambone (2828 café)
12. Dunedoo (town centre)
13. Mendooran (Caravan Park)

Implementation: These signs should be organised through a consultation process between RiverSmart (as the operator of the Macquarie Valley Trails initiative), the relevant Council and/or land owners and will require grant or other funding assistance to proceed.

6.6.4 Window on the Wetlands Centre signage

Current situation

The Window on the Wetlands Centre in Warren is a key anchor point/product for visitation to the Macquarie Marshes and the designated HQ of Macquarie Valley Trails. With a growing visitor base, and full access to information 365 days per year the WOW Centre needs to be signposted as a key visitor information and education attraction.

Presently there are seven signs promoting the existence of the WOW Centre on the three main approach roads into Warren. Each one was funded by a local business advertiser/sponsor. At the front of the Centre there is also a very large billboard (see photo).



Recommendation 7:

Install additional Information and Directional Signs for the WOW Centre to increase visitation; increase visitor satisfaction (avoiding dissatisfaction from those who travel long distances to the Marshes only to find they are not accessible); add value to the visitor experience, and increase length of stay in Warren and the region.

Implementation:

1. Install white on blue "i" signs on roadside entrance to the WOW centre (large sandwich board style sign) for weekends.
2. Work with Warren Shire Council to install white on blue services fingerpost signs on appropriate existing signposts.
3. Work with Warren Shire Council to install a travellers' drive-through Information Bay at Nevertire.
4. In Warren – in addition to two Macquarie Valley Trails signs at the free camping locations (Sandy Camp and Bob Christenson Reserve) – see under previous recommendation – modify these signs to encourage visitation to the WOW Centre.
5. Also in Warren, seek the approval of Warren Shire to install WOW Centre signage at the RV dump site in Oxley Park and near the toilet block in the same Park.
6. Seek Council agreement to installing several promotional flagpoles beside the existing billboard facing the Oxley Highway.
7. Explore sign writing a directional sign to the WOW Centre and adjoining Tiger Bay Wetlands on the large green water tower opposite Uncle Clarries Service Station in Warren (see example below).
8. As part of street beautification activities in Warren's CBD promote the towns key role as a 'gateway' to the Macquarie Marshes and home of the WOW Centre (see examples of other cities and towns – in Australia and overseas) that have been highly innovative in 'branding' themselves for nearby natural attractions).



6.6.5 Interpretive signage

'Studies have shown that good interpretation will engage, involve, educate, challenge and entertain visitors. It provides a sense of place and meaning and brings people and the environment to life. Effective interpretation (delivered via skilled guides, visitor centres, displays, signs or multimedia) is seen as one of the key aspects of satisfying visitor needs and expectations.' Tourism Queensland, Innovation in Interpretation,

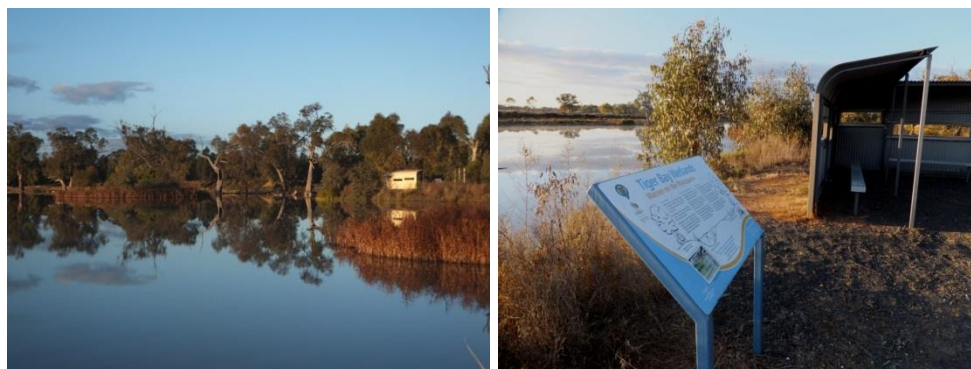
Current situation

The recent developments undertaken in Warren have made a significant difference to the depth of experience available for visitors to the area. The Window on the Wetlands Centre on the Oxley Highway has a large outdoor interpretive experience for visitors, offering (when finished in 2017) 56 information panels on local and regional natural 'assets' including the Macquarie Marshes and River, early European explorers and heritage plus the Wayilwan Indigenous people. RiverSmart is also partnering with the Warren Macquarie Aboriginal Lands Council currently to create an Indigenous heritage walk from the WoW Centre, around the Tiger Bay Wetlands to the nearby Beemunnel Aboriginal Reserve.



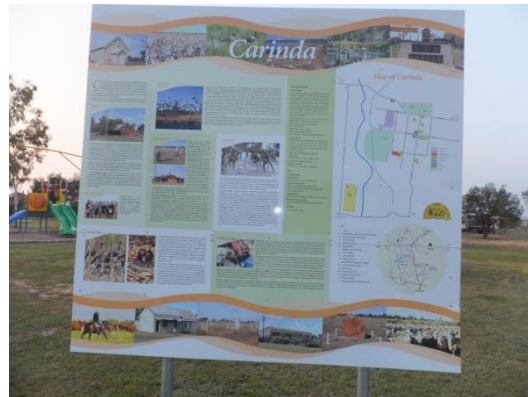
Education signage at the WoW Centre (Bill Phillips)

The adjacent Tiger Bay wetlands in Warren also offer interpretive signage, walking trails and three bird hide viewing stations.



Tiger Bay Wetlands, Warren (Bill Phillips)

The parklands opposite the Quambone General Store feature a map and information on the local area and Carinda showcases the local heritage trail through signage (see below).



Carinda's signage promoting the region's heritage (Bill Phillips)

Once in the Macquarie Marshes, visitors can find an Observation Platform with a series of wetlands and bird signs, as well as several flora identification signs on Gibson's Way. These signs were installed over 10 years ago and are in need of updating with relevant and accurate information.



Wetland viewing platform on Gibson's Way (Bill Phillips)

The Macquarie Marshes Nature Reserve is not well serviced with directional/way-finding signage. Once visitors do find the Nature Reserve they will see NPWS signage marking the site. This site is currently only open annually on the October long-weekend for guided walks by prior arrangement with NPWS.



Macquarie Marshes Nature Reserve signage (NPWS)

For those travellers heading south on the Great Inland Way (Lightning Ridge – Coonamble – Gilgandra – Dubbo) there are currently no way-finding or interpretive signs that would provide awareness or information on the Macquarie Marshes.

For those visitors travelling the Mitchell Highway (Bourke to Dubbo) there are no way-finding or interpretive signs that would provide awareness or information on the Macquarie Marshes.

Recommendation 8:

Work with the Office of Environment & Heritage and NSW NPWS to have replacement signs designed and installed which are consistent with this overall Strategy and the overarching Action Plan (see the following Recommendation also).

Recommendation 9:

In addition to what is available at the WoW Centre in Warren it is desirable to have more interpretive signage positioned in key locations in the 'gateway' towns and key points of interest along the driving routes. Rather than 'reinventing the wheel' the (proposed) Destination Macquarie Marshes Task Force should identify opportunities (and then seek the funds) to re-use, or slightly modify to suit, the existing graphics on display at the WoW Centre at their own key locations, especially those panels relating directly to the Marshes.

(Post script – at the times of writing the Trangie Action Group has recently paid to have the Macquarie Bird Watching Trail information sign from the WoW Centre modified slightly for installation at the Goan waterhole in Trangie. This also identifies where the WoW Centre is.

Obvious locations for the installation of additional panels are in the 'gateway' towns and drive-through information bays or RV camping areas. In the Marshes, such panels would be helpful at either end of Gibson's Way, in Carinda, Quambone and at the Nature Reserves.

6.6.6 Signposting and interpretive signage at private landholder sites

Current situation

Apart from the caravan parks and free camping areas surrounding the Macquarie Marshes there are also several private properties offering accommodation and in some cases interpretive signage. Section 4.3 refers to these properties which include 'Willie Retreat' on Gibson's Way, Haddon Rig's Jackaroo Lodge, Billabulla's Country Quarters and Kiameron's Riverside Cottage. The latter is accessed off the Warren-Carinda Road on the way to the Macquarie Marshes, while access to Haddon Rig and Billabulla is via the Quambone road (see map on page 15).

In 2005 a group of local Macquarie Valley landholders formed the Macquarie Marshes Environmental Trust (MMET) to buy a small (259 hectare) property right in the heart of the Macquarie Marshes (approximately 130 kms from Warren on the Carinda road). They named it "Burrima" which means Black Swan in the language of the Wayilwan Aboriginal People, who are the traditional owners of the Macquarie Marshes. The MMET refer to "Burrima" as a "window on the Marshes" as in a small area it gives a snapshot of each of the main vegetation associations to be found in the Marshes. At "Burrima" there is a covered

rest/picnic area with some interpretive signage, a toilet and a walking trail. The property is not currently open to the public unless by prior arrangement.

In the future it is expected that other private landholders may wish to open up their properties for pre-arranged visits. In these cases, the opportunities for sign-posting and installation of interpretive signage should be explored.

Recommendation 10:

The Destination Macquarie Marshes Task Force should discuss with the existing private landholders whether they would be willing to have information and educational signage installed at their respective properties.

'Willie Retreat' already has a Macquarie Valley Trails sign but the Bird Watching Trail sign and those developed for the WoW Centre about the Macquarie Marshes would be beneficial at this site. The same applies for the Haddon Rig, Billabulla and Kiameron properties.

Enquiries should also be made with the Macquarie Marshes Environmental Trust regarding their plans for having "Burrina" open to the public, and if so is there scope for signposting, additional interpretive signage etc.

A pre-condition of any such promotion or assistance with sign-posting etc on private properties has to be that the interpretive signage on display is apolitical in nature and helps visitors understand and appreciate the Macquarie Marshes and wetland ecosystems better.

6.7 Conclusions

Whilst the recommendations throughout this Strategy are ready for implementation, they will all require committed funds and as such stakeholders should work closely with the Destination Macquarie Marshes Taskforce Group (also charged with implementing the broader Destination Macquarie Marshes Action Plan) to identify funds to progress implementation in a timely and coordinated manner.

6. Acronyms

ATDW	-	Australian Tourism Data Warehouse
CW-CMA	-	Central West Catchment Management Authority
DMP	-	Destination Management Plan
DMMTF	-	Destination Macquarie Marshes Task Force
LGA	-	Local Government Area
MM	-	Macquarie Marshes
NPWS	-	National Parks and Wildlife Service
NSW	-	New South Wales
OEH	-	NSW Office of Environment & Heritage
WoW	-	RiverSmart's Window on the Wetlands Centre (Warren)