

Material Change of Use Development Proposal

TOURIST PARK

233 Barretts Creek Road | Lot 231 BK15737

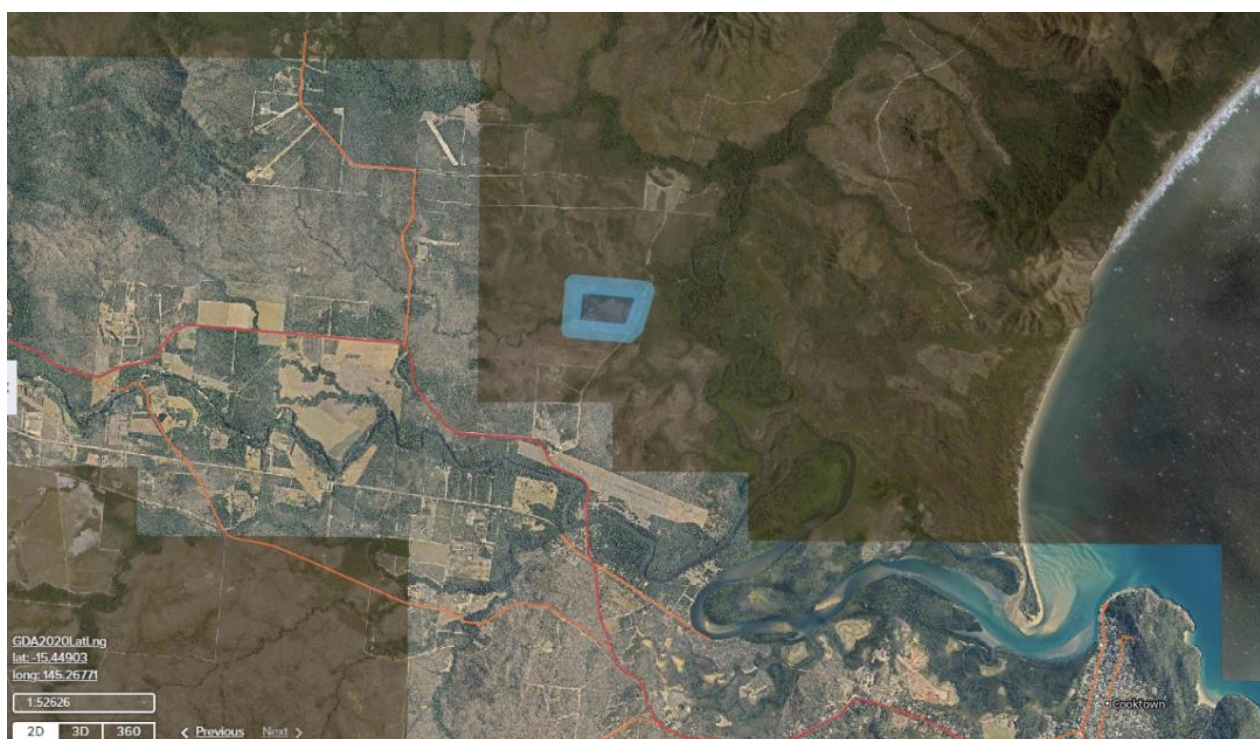
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Proposal

This application seeks approval for a Material Change of Use to establish a low-impact, nature-based Tourist Park on Lot 231 BK15737, located at 233 Barretts Creek Road, Cooktown. The development is designed to support seasonal, self-contained camping across approximately 65 hectares of rural land. With a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability, minimal infrastructure, and compatibility with the site's natural values, the park will operate only during the dry season (May to October) to ensure safety and resilience in response to environmental hazards. The proposal aligns with the strategic vision and performance benchmarks of the Cook Shire Planning Scheme 2017 v2.0.

Lot 231 is located on Barretts Creek Road along the eastern boundary and shares its southern, western, and northern boundaries with the Hope Vale Shire Council. The property is situated approximately 3 km from Cooktown Airport and 15 km by road from the centre of Cooktown.



The 160-acre property offers ample space for multiple large, private, and secluded campsites, as well as shared communal areas that highlight the site's natural beauty and points of interest. The land is relatively flat, with gentle undulations around waterways and dams and is predominantly covered in natural vegetation.

The campground is proposed to operate from 1 May to 31 October, weather permitting. During prolonged periods of heavy rainfall, the park will close to prevent site damage from heavy vehicles.

Located within the Rural Zone, the site boasts abundant bird and wildlife, a meandering creek with extensive tributaries, and waterways adorned with waterlilies and freshwater species, framed by paperbarks and rainforest vegetation.

2.1 Strategic Framework (Part 3)

3.2 STRATEGIC INTENT

The development supports the overarching goal of achieving sustainable economic growth, environmental stewardship, and resilient communities. By promoting eco-tourism and responsible visitor experiences, the Tourist Park contributes to the Shire's long-term vision of a diversified economy and enhanced tourism offering. It respects environmental constraints and supports land stewardship in a rural context.

3.3 ECONOMIC WELLBEING

Strategic Outcomes:

The Tourist Park contributes to growing Cook Shire's tourism sector by encouraging longer stays and offering unique, nature-based experiences.

It creates opportunities for local businesses through visitor spending, while maintaining low infrastructure demands on Council.

It aligns with the Planning Scheme's support for rural tourism ventures and helps diversify the economy beyond agriculture and resource extraction.

Specific Outcomes:

The development captures tourism visitation in a location that offers proximity to natural features, with minimal infrastructure impact.

It supports small-scale, sustainable eco-tourism which in turn enhances community resilience and local employment opportunities.

3.4 LAND USE PATTERN

Strategic Outcomes

The proposal reflects efficient use of rural land without compromising rural productivity or environmental values.

It maintains rural character through low-impact, self-sufficient campsites and avoids unreasonable burden on Council infrastructure.

Specific Outcomes

The proposal is a form of rural-based tourism that is consistent with the Planning Scheme's support for non-urban, eco-friendly tourist activities.

Development is minimal and carefully located away from environmentally sensitive areas, consistent with the intent to protect natural assets and manage land sustainably. It avoids urban expansion and is not located in an area designated for urban infrastructure growth.

3.5 ENVIRONMENTAL WELLBEING

Strategic Outcomes

The design avoids adverse environmental impacts by locating campsites away from essential habitats and remnant vegetation.

Specific Outcomes

The development maintains water quality through careful siting of campsites and the requirement for guests to be self-contained.

It avoids erosion, preserves natural hydrology, and incorporates rotational campsite use to allow land recovery.

Environmental values, including wetlands, riparian zones, and biodiversity corridors, are retained and enhanced through minimal-impact infrastructure and natural track access.

3.6 INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICING

Strategic Outcomes

The proposal requires no new infrastructure and is designed to be fully self-sufficient, reducing pressure on Council resources.

Site access is existing and maintained at a standard sufficient for seasonal tourism operations.

Specific Outcomes

No reticulated water, sewer, or electricity is required; guests provide their own services and manage their waste.

Site inspections by the operator maintain environmental health and site amenity.

Emergency access and firebreaks are incorporated in site design to manage bushfire risk, supporting safety infrastructure objectives.

3.7 STRONG COMMUNITIES

Strategic Outcomes

The development enhances community vibrancy through cultural and environmental tourism.

It supports community values of resilience, environmental connection, and low-impact lifestyle experiences.

Specific Outcomes

By preserving visual amenity and avoiding intensive development, the Tourist Park aligns with the desired rural and natural character of the area.

It promotes environmental awareness and education among guests while supporting the cultural landscape of the Shire.

CONCLUSION

The proposed Tourist Park on Lot 231 BK15737 is well-aligned with the Strategic Framework of the Cook Shire Planning Scheme 2017 and advances its overarching vision for sustainable, resilient, and economically diverse communities. The development delivers clear outcomes across the core policy themes, including:

- **Economic growth**- through support for tourism and increased visitor stays;
- **Rural compatibility**- by integrating sensitively within the existing landscape and avoiding conflict with rural values and uses;
- **Environmental protection**- by safeguarding significant ecological features and promoting low-impact land use;
- **Infrastructure efficiency**- by operating without reliance on reticulated services; and
- **Community strength**- by enhancing regional tourism offerings and contributing to the local economy in a sustainable manner.

By facilitating seasonal, self-contained, nature-based tourism, the proposal supports a land use that is both appropriate to the site's characteristics and consistent with the Shire's long-term planning goals. It represents a considered and responsible approach to rural land use development that preserves the natural environment while contributing to the economic and social vitality of the region.

Assessment against applicable codes

This section assesses the proposal against the relevant assessment benchmarks from the Cook Shire Planning Scheme 2017 v2.0 including:

- Section 6.2.9
- Parking and Access Code

RURAL ZONE CODE RESPONSE

The proposed development is consistent with the purpose and overall outcomes of the Rural Zone under the Cook Shire Planning Scheme 2017. It introduces a low-impact, compatible land use that preserves the rural character, safeguards environmental values, and contributes to economic diversification within the region.

The tourist park is designed to operate in harmony with the rural setting by providing self-contained, eco-friendly camping experiences that offer visitors a connection to the Shire's natural landscapes. Located near Cooktown Airport and only a short drive to Cooktown, the site presents a valuable opportunity for nature-based tourism without compromising the amenity, visual character or ecological integrity of the area.

Rural character is maintained through low-scale infrastructure, thoughtful site layout, and the absence of clearing for significant vegetation. Campsites are strategically sited to remain unobtrusive from neighbouring properties and Barretts Creek Road. Environmental outcomes are further supported by rotational site use, guest self-sufficiency, and minimal reliance on services or earthworks.

Importantly, the tourism use is compatible with ongoing rural activities. The long-term vision for the site includes complementary ventures such as native freshwater aquaculture and a native species educational display, reinforcing its value for both sustainable agriculture and environmental education.

RURAL ZONE CODE 6.2.9

The proposed Tourist Park has been carefully designed to align with the purpose and overall outcomes of the Rural Zone Code by promoting low-impact, tourism-based activities that maintain the rural landscape, protect environmental values and avoid land-use conflicts. The following assessment demonstrates compliance with key performance outcomes PO1-PO5 from table 6.9 of the Planning Scheme:

PO1: Built Form

The proposal does not incorporate any new built form. The use is entirely based on low-impact, seasonal camping that does not require permanent buildings, fixed structures, or large scale infrastructure. This ensures consistency with the rural character and landscape values of the area.

PO2: Siting and Setbacks

Campsites will be located no closer than 10 meters from roads and adjoining property boundaries. All neighbouring land consists of undeveloped, uninhabited bushland, thereby minimising the potential for visual amenity impacts. The absence of nearby sensitive land uses reinforces the appropriateness of the proposed setbacks.

PO3 Amenity and Visual Buffers

Extensive natural buffers, including dense vegetation are present along all boundaries of the site creating effective screening and environmental separation between development area and the public road or neighbouring lots.

PO4: Agricultural Land Protection

The development does not involve the use of land for permanent plantations. The sites ecological features and seasonal inundation constraints make it unsuitable for intensive agricultural activities. The proposed use therefore does not compromise the Shire's agricultural land base or productive capacity.

PO5: Non-Residential Buildings

No built structures form part of this development. Campsites are designed for self-contained vehicles and tents, requiring no constructed amenities or service buildings. This supports the integrity of the rural landscape and avoids land use conflict with rural or residential values.

Conclusion

Overall, the development strikes a balance between tourism growth and rural land stewardship, aligning with both the intent of the Rural Zone and the broader strategic framework of the Planning Scheme. The development proposes no urban expansion.

BUSHFIRE HAZARD OVERLAY RESPONSE

The **Bushfire Hazard Overlay** identifies the majority of Lot 231 as being subject to **medium bushfire potential**. The development has been designed to appropriately respond to this risk through strategic site layout, natural firebreaks, and robust management procedures.

Natural and Constructed Buffers:

- **Barretts Creek**, which bisects the property, serves as a natural green buffer, reducing the potential for bushfire spread between the northern and southern portions of the site.
- **Barretts Creek Road**, located along the eastern boundary, acts as an additional firebreak and provides safe egress and access for emergency vehicles.
- Existing **access tracks** along the southern boundary and part of the western boundary function as supplementary firebreaks, providing both separation and access for fire response.

Emergency Access: All internal access tracks will be maintained throughout the park's operating period to ensure continuous access for emergency service vehicles. These routes will be kept clear of overgrowth and debris as part of regular property management.

Bushfire Management Plan

A **Bushfire Management Plan** will be implemented as part of park operations, including the following key measures:

- **Early Evacuation Protocol:** All guests will be required to evacuate the site if a bushfire threat is identified within the general vicinity. This requirement will be clearly communicated upon arrival and included in guest information materials.
- **Low Infrastructure Risk:** The camping areas themselves will not contain fixed or vulnerable infrastructure. This reduces the risk to life and property and simplifies evacuation procedures.
- **Vegetation Management:** Regular maintenance, including slashing and fuel load management, will be undertaken to reduce bushfire risk within the developed areas of the property.
- **Perimeter Protection:** Existing infrastructure located away from the camping areas will be protected through controlled hazard reduction burns, undertaken in accordance with best practices and with relevant approvals where necessary.

BUSHFIRE HAZARD OVERLAY CODE 8.2.3

The subject site, Lot 231 BK15737, is identified on the Bushfire Hazard Overlay Map as being subject to medium bushfire potential. In response, the proposed development has been designed to manage and mitigate bushfire risk in accordance with the performance outcomes of the overlay Code. The following assessment demonstrates compliance with PO₁ to PO₉:

PO₁: Siting in Bushfire Hazard Area

The development is located within a mapped bushfire hazard area; however, the extent of development has been minimised and includes no built structures or services that could be impacted by fire. Much of the area where camping will take place is surrounded by *Melaleuca quinquenervia* or paperbark trees.

The thick, papery bark provides natural insulation making the species relatively fire resistance. Consequently, bushfires and controlled burns in the area are tend to be slow moving and low in intensity.

PO2: Safety of People and Property

The layout incorporates multiple layers of safety:

Barretts Creek bisects the property and is identified as a potential impact buffer on the Bushfire Hazard Overlay OM2 Mapping.

Existing access tracks act as functional firebreaks and emergency evacuation routes.

Barretts Creek Road provides safe vehicular access and a defined egress route for evacuation. It also provides a fire break from areas of high potential fire risk.

Collection of fallen wood and general clean-up of sites will contribute to lessening fuel load in and around camping areas.

These features and practices ensures the protection of people and property in accordance with this outcome.

PO3: Landscaping and Flammable Vegetation

No landscaping will be introduced that increases the bushfire risk. The proposal relies on existing vegetation and will undertake regular slashing and vegetation management to maintain defensible space around camping areas.

This satisfies the requirement to avoid contributing to bushfire intensity or spread.

PO4: Access and Egress

All internal access tracks will be maintained to allow for uninterrupted emergency vehicle access and guest evacuation during park operations. These tracks will be:

- Regularly cleared of overgrowth and debris
- Kept open and trafficable during the operating season (May to October)

This ensures safe ingress and egress in accordance with bushfire safety standards.

PO5: Vulnerable Uses

The development does not involve vulnerable or community uses. The use of the land for seasonal, self-contained camping limits the number of persons on site and allows for rapid evacuation, reducing overall risk.

PO6: Bushfire Management Plan

A Bushfire Management Plan will be implemented and maintained as part of operational procedures. It includes:

- Early evacuation protocols for guests

- Communication of bushfire risks upon check-in, and
- Routine inspection and maintenance to ensure readiness.

These provisions demonstrate compliance with PO6 and support operational resilience.

PO7: Firefighting Infrastructure

Although the development is not serviced by reticulated water, no built infrastructure is proposed that would require active fire protection. The natural buffers and open site design ensure fire response efforts can be supported effectively, satisfying PO7 in context. A dam and home water supply is available and can be provided if required for fire response.

PO8: Bushfire Reduction Treatments

The proposal incorporates controlled hazard reduction burns around existing infrastructure (outside camping areas), which will be conducted in consultation with appropriate authorities and in accordance with current best practices. This proactive approach mitigates fuel loads and fire intensity, fulfilling PO8.

PO9: Environmental Impacts

All bushfire mitigation activities – including track maintenance and hazard reduction burns – will be undertaken in a manner that minimises disturbance to natural landforms and ecological values. Vegetation management will focus on previously disturbed areas, avoiding unnecessary impacts and meeting the intent of PO9.

BIODIVERSITY OVERLAY

The subject site contains areas designated under the **Biodiversity Overlay** of the Cook Shire Planning Scheme as **State Environmental Areas**, comprising **regulated vegetation, essential habitat, and Category B vegetation**. The proposed development has been carefully designed to avoid adverse impacts on these ecologically significant areas and to support long-term conservation outcomes.

Site Design and Setbacks: To protect sensitive vegetation and habitats, all campsites will be located a minimum of 10 metres from identified environmental values, including remnant vegetation, essential habitat zones, and riparian areas. This buffer ensures minimal disturbance to flora and fauna and supports the preservation of ecological processes.

Access and Low Impact Infrastructure:

- Campsite access and associated tracks will remain unformed and natural, avoiding soil compaction and vegetation clearance. These will be regularly monitored for erosion and environmental degradation.
- Rotational use of campsites will be implemented to mitigate landform disturbance, allow natural regeneration, and reduce pressure on any one area.
- A carefully planned network of walking trails will provide guests with controlled access to experience the site's natural features without degrading environmental values.

Camp Areas and Environmental Characteristics:

- **Camp Areas A and B** are located in open sclerophyll forest near two man-made dams, which connect seasonally to Barretts Creek. These water bodies support native aquatic species such as perch and cherabin. Campsites in these areas will be set back from the water's edge to:
 - Prevent runoff and protect water quality,
 - Minimise disturbance to aquatic ecosystems,
 - Preserve the integrity of the surrounding habitat.

Open grassed areas adjacent to these dams will remain accessible for recreation but will not be designated for camping, preserving their ecological function.

- **Camp Areas C and D** contain a mix of dense regrowth and closed sclerophyll forest, providing a secluded and immersive natural experience. This area offers direct access to a series of walking tracks that follow Barretts Creek and its tributaries, leading to natural ponds and riparian corridors. The layout has been designed to maximise privacy while safeguarding ecological values.

BIODIVERSITY OVERLAY CODE 8.2.2

The proposed development demonstrates full compliance with the performance outcomes of the Biodiversity Overlay Code. It has been carefully designed to avoid areas of environmental significance, and maintain the ecological integrity of the site. Assessment against PO₁ to PO₅ is provided below:

PO₁: Avoidance of Environmental Significance

The subject site, Lot 231 BK15737, does not include any wetlands or watercourses identified on OM₁₂ Wetlands and Watercourses Overlay Map. As such, the development does not impact sensitive aquatic features and complies fully with PO₁.

PO₂: Siting within State Environmental Areas

The development is not sited within a State Environmental Area and therefore satisfies PO₂.

PO₃: Vegetation Clearing

Minimal vegetation clearing may be required to facilitate safe access for larger vehicles, such as caravans and campervans. However, campsites will be located within naturally open areas, and all access tracks will follow the existing landscape contours to limit environmental disturbance.

No clearing will occur within 10 metres of any waterway, ensuring riparian zones remain undisturbed and ecologically intact. This site-sensitive approach preserves native flora, maintains habitat connectivity, and supports ongoing ecosystem function, in accordance with the intent of Performance Outcome PO₃.

PO₄: Protected Areas and Fish Habitats

The property is not situated within or adjacent to a Protected Area, Marine Park, or Declared Fish Habitat Area identified on the OM₁ – Biodiversity Overlay Map. Therefore, the development does not

pose a risk to regulated environmental assets or marine biodiversity and meets the requirements of PO4.

PO5: Wetland Protection Areas

Lot 231 does not contain any wetland protection areas mapped on OM1 – Biodiversity Overlay. Accordingly, no buffers are required, and the development avoids impacts to these sensitive ecosystems, complying with PO5.

FLOOD AND OTHER COASTAL HAZARDS OVERLAY CODE 8.2.6

The proposed development at Lot 231 BK15737 is subject to the Flood and other Coastal Hazards Overlay due to proximity to natural waterways and low-lying terrain. However, the operational model of the Tourist Park – which is strictly seasonal and involves no permanent structures or vulnerable infrastructure – ensures full compliance with the Overlay Code’s Performance Outcomes (PO1 to PO6).

PO1: Avoidance or Minimisation in Hazard Areas

The development has been deliberately scheduled to operate only during the dry season (May to October), when flood risk is minimal. The park will not operate during wet season or during periods of early or extended rainfall, effectively avoiding exposure to flood hazards. This seasonal timing removes the need for structural flood mitigation.

PO2: Safety of People

Visitor safety is ensured by the park’s early closure protocols in the event of unseasonal weather or flood risk. Guests are advised at the time of booking and arrival that operations will cease if flooding is forecast, and the site will be vacated. The lack of permanent occupancy further supports compliance with this outcome.

PO3: Protection of Property

There is no fixed or vulnerable infrastructure proposed for the development – no buildings, no utilities, and no-flood sensitive assets. As such, there is no risk of damage to property on site, nor any long-term investment exposed to flooding. This satisfies the requirement to minimise property damage.

PO4: Evacuation or Refuge

The development incorporates existing, trafficable access roads, including Barretts Creek Road and internal tracks, which allow for safe and timely evacuation. Since guests are self-contained and mobile, evacuation is straightforward and can be executed at short notice. There is no need for on-site refuge infrastructure.

PO5: Infrastructure Impact

Because the development does not involve services such as reticulated water, sewerage, electricity, or telecommunications, it will have no adverse impact on flood conveyance capacity, drainage characteristics, or infrastructure vulnerability. The natural hydrology of the site will remain unaltered.

PO6: Environmental and Coastal Processes

The development is not near erosion-prone areas. By closing seasonally and maintaining the natural character of the land, the proposal minimises impacts on both environmental values and hydrological functions during periods of potential flooding.

PARKING, ACCESS, AND SERVICING

The proposed development has been designed to operate in a self-contained, low-impact manner, consistent with the rural character of the area and the absence of urban infrastructure.

Access

- Access to the site is provided via an existing gravel driveway from Barretts Creek Road.
- Internal access will consist of unformed tracks appropriate for the flat terrain, helping to minimise environmental disturbance and soil compaction.
- These tracks cannot be maintained during the wet season, and as such, the tourist park will not operate during that period. This ensures safety for guests and prevents unnecessary damage to the landscape.
- During the operational period, internal tracks will be maintained in a trafficable condition and will support safe vehicle movement throughout the site. Selected campsites will feature drive-through layouts to improve accessibility and circulation.

Parking

- **On-site parking** will be provided at each designated campsite, sufficient for at least one vehicle per site. No roadside parking will be required or permitted.

Servicing and Utilities

- **Reticulated Services:** Lot 231 is not connected to reticulated water, sewerage, or the electrical grid.
- **Water Supply:** Guests will be required to bring their own potable water. No water will be supplied on site.
- **Sewerage:** Guests must use self-contained on-board or portable toilet systems. There will be no effluent or greywater disposal facilities on site.
- **Electricity:** No powered sites will be provided. Guests will need to be self-sufficient with regard to power, using low-impact sources such as solar or battery systems.
- **Waste Management:** All waste, including rubbish and greywater, must be removed by guests upon departure. The site manager will conduct routine inspections to ensure compliance and remove any leftover waste.

RESIDENTIAL USE CODE

AO1.3 Site suitability for Tourist Park

The combined campsite area is 10.5 hectares and far exceeds the 1 hectare requirement. Lot 231 is approximately 65 hectares in total.

Barretts Creek Road provides direct access and is a constructed public road.

The park does not operate during the wet season, and any seasonal flooding risk is avoided by timing of operations and natural drainage patterns.

AO10.1 Minimum Site Areas

All proposed sites will offer generous separation between campers. The natural layout, lack of fixed infrastructure, and rotational use model result in site areas well above the minimum required for tents, caravans, or campervans.

AO10.2 Separation Distances

There is no shared infrastructure such as communal amenities or a built office check-in area. Campsites will be spread well beyond 3 metres minimum due to the low density layout.

AO11.1 Safe Vehicle Movement

Sites specifically for caravans are serviced by internal tracks with turn-around areas, and have either separate entry and exit points or have enough area for easy turnaround of vehicle and van.

Check-in procedures will occur on-site with designated bays near the entry, and clear instructions will be given upon booking.

AO12.1 Landscaping

The entire perimeter of the site is naturally vegetated with dense bushland. These areas provide a natural landscape buffer well exceeding the minimum width requirements and no clearing is proposed.

SITE PLAN

The site plan demonstrates logical access routes, adequate separation between camp areas and existing buildings and clear buffer zones from waterways and environmentally sensitive areas. Camping areas are located no less than 15 meters from the property boundary on the southern and western boundary.

White areas denote designated camping areas. Approximate areas of each camping area are marked on the site plan.

Orange dashes shows the main access road from Barretts Creek Road to the check-in area.

Inner unformed access tracks to camping areas are shown in bright green.

Existing buildings are denoted by red outlines.



D - 8753 m2

C - 14.7 hectares

B - 2.62 hectares

A - 1.15 hectares

231
BK15737

Barrett Creek

Barrett's Creek Road

Barrett Creek