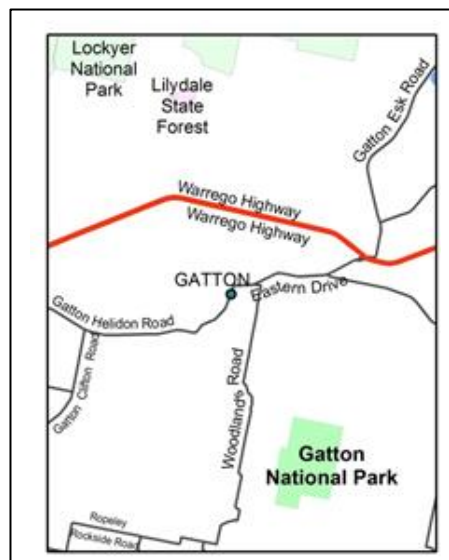# Gatton National Park
Management Statement 2015

Context

Gatton National Park conserves six regional ecosystems, two of which have a biodiversity status of endangered and two are of concern. Several species of international conservation significance birds have been recorded on the park.

The park is surrounded by residential development, predominately small acreage-lifestyle blocks and rural properties. On the western boundary the neighbouring Gatton Glenore Grove Rifle Club has a firing range template over the park when operating. The rifle club operates most Saturdays with protocols in place to temporarily close off tracks to visitors for safety. Warning signs are erected for the affected section of park prior to commencement of shooting.

The park provides opportunities to observe and study remnant ecosystems once common in the area. Gatton National Park is used by students from the University of Queensland Gatton campus.

The parks primary conservation purpose is to protect the endangered and of concern regional ecosystems which both have low representation in the state's reserve system. The extent of both of these systems is very small and isolated.

The park has a history of native timber harvesting, grazing, apiculture and recreation. It contains cultural remnants related to the prior use of the land, including remnants of a charcoal pit, fencing and a dam.

Bioregion	South Eastern Queensland	**Area**	426ha
Local Government Area	Lockyer Valley Regional Council	**State electorate**	Lockyer
Management Obligations	Rifle Range Template Area by agreement with the Gatton Glenore Grove rifle club		

This management statement provides high level strategic direction for the protection and management of key park values. Management will be undertaken in accordance with the management principles for the tenure as defined in the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and supporting regulations, other appropriate legislation, government policies, procedures, and protocols.

Key park values

While all parks are important, and all values help make parks worthwhile, management needs to focus on protecting and presenting the most important values – the key values. These are the values that will form the basis of ongoing evaluation of management effectiveness. Protecting these key values will help frame the purpose of management for each park. The table below shows how each key value's condition is represented, how the condition is trending and the confidence in the information used to make the ratings. Details of key values are listed in **Table 1** and illustrated in **Map 1**.

Key to condition, trend, and confidence icons

	Good	Good with some concern	Significant concern	Critical
Condition	●●●●	●●●	●●	●
Description	*The value is in good condition and is likely to be maintained for the foreseeable future, provided that current conservation measures are maintained.*	*The value is likely to be essentially maintained over the long-term with minor additional conservation measures to address existing concerns.*	*The value is threatened by a number of current and/or potential threats. Significant additional conservation measures are required to preserve the value over the medium to long-term.*	*The value is severely threatened. Urgent additional large-scale conservation measures are required or the value may be lost.*
Trend rating	Improving ↑	Stable ↔	Deteriorating ↓	No consistent trend ⊖
Confidence	Inferred ○	Limited ◐	Adequate ●	

1. Semi-evergreen vine thicket

Description	Condition		Trend	Confidence	
				Condition	**Trend**
Endangered semi-evergreen vine thicket with *Brachychiton rupestris* on sedimentary rocks.	2015: ●●●	Desired: ●●●●	↔	○	○

This endangered regional ecosystem has been extensively cleared for pasture and cropping in the Lockyer and Fassifern Valleys causing fragmentation and habitat loss to remaining remnants. It has low representation in the state's reserve system. The extent of this remnant vegetation is very small and isolated. It is located in the southwest corner of the park.

Threats: The main threatening process is repeated burning of the edges of the vine thicket from unplanned fire events in dry conditions. Historically the park has had a high incidence of arson, with ignition on average every one to two years since 2004. The secondary threatening process is the damage to the understorey by pest plants such as velvety tree pear *Opuntia tomentose.* Giant rat's-tail grass, found in open woodland/forest on the edge of the vine forest, has a high biomass which contributes to the fuel load, increasing the chance of damage by wildfire.

Strategic management directions: The aim is to improve the condition of the vine thickets by excluding fire, implementing planned burns in surrounding areas, and reduce the impacts of key weed species within, and surrounding, the vine scrub area.

2.   Eucalypt open forest

Description	Condition		Trend	Confidence	
				Condition	**Trend**
Of concern *Eucalyptus moluccana* open forest on sedimentary rocks. Breeding habitat for migratory birds.	2015: ●●●	Desired: ●●●●	↔	○	○

This of concern regional ecosystem has been extensively cleared or thinned for grazing causing fragmentation and habitat loss to remaining remnants. It has low representation in the state's reserve system. The extent of this remnant vegetation is very small and isolated along the southern boundary of the park. It is also important breeding habitat for internationally significant bird species.

Threats: The primary threatening process is the change in ecosystem caused by both too frequent and infrequent fire (arson).

The secondary threatening process is ecosystem damage from pest plants such as Lantana *Lantana camara*, mother-of-millions *Bryophyllum tubiflorum*, giant rat's-tail grass, *Sporobolus jacquemontii*, groundsel bush *Baccharis halimifolia* and velvety tree pear *Opuntia tomentosa.*

Strategic management directions: The aim to improve the condition of the open forests by mitigating wildfires through higher frequency of mosaic planned burns and reduce impacts of exotic grasses with a high biomass in the open forest.

Table 1. Gatton National Park — Strategic management direction for key values

Condition	Trend	Key threatening process	Strategic management directions: Values	Priority (1-5)
1. Semi-evergreen vine thicket				
2015: ●●● Desired: ●●●●	⟷	Fire Introduced weeds	Exclude fire from the vine thicket community. Implement planned burning in surrounding area of the vine thickets. Reduce impacts of velvety tree pear and giant rat's tale grass on the periphery of the vine forest.	1
2. Eucalyptus open forest				
2015: ●●● Desired: ●●●●	⟷	Human intrusion and disturbance - arson Introduced weeds	Mitigation of wildfires through higher frequency of mosaic planned burns. Reduce impacts of exotic grasses with a high biomass in the open forest.	2

Levels of Service

Levels of Service (LoS) standards have been developed to identify the current and desired future standards for a range of critical management elements and associated performance measures. Gatton National Park has been assessed as requiring a basic level of service for most aspects of management based on the identified:

• values
• threats and pressures
• community interface challenges
• special management intervention.

The desired LoS standards for nine management elements have been identified to guide the level of management effort required for Gatton National Park within a state-wide context. These nine elements reflect the most common management activities undertaken by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service across all protected lands and waters and include Indigenous cultural heritage management and engagement, fire and pest management, visitor management and natural values management.

For further detail on the levels of service standards for Gatton National Park, refer to **Table 2**.

Table 2. Gatton National Park – Strategic management direction for Levels of Service

Management element	Levels of Service			Strategic management directions	Priority
	Current	Desired	Description		
1. Fire	Base	High	Fire is currently managed at a very broad scale consistent with generic guidelines to protect life and property on and adjacent to the park and mitigate threats to key fire affected park values. Planned burns focus on life, property, and special conservation purposes. Fire must be managed at an intermediate scale with focus on park specific guidelines as well as generic. In addition, planned burns will need to focus on ecosystem resilience purposes.	Increase focus of planned burning to prioritise mitigation of threats and conservation of key values.	1
2. Pest	Base	Medium	Pests are currently managed at a very broad scale consistent with generic guidelines to exclude new introductions and mitigate impacts of existing critical and very high priority species on key pest affected park values and neighbouring land uses. Pest management focuses on exclusion, containment, and key value protection. Pests need to be managed at a slightly finer scale.	Improve documentation of pests impacting on key values. Engage and cooperate with local government and other local stakeholders for pest management.	1
3. Natural values	Base	Base	Natural values are currently managed at a very broad scale consistent with mostly generic guidelines to mitigate critical and very high level threats and maintain key park values. Known threats are managed to prevent, stabilise or slow the rate of unacceptable decline in the condition of natural values. Documented critical and very high priorities are implemented.	Maintain current level of service.	4
4. Indigenous cultural values and engagement	Base	Base	Indigenous cultural heritage values are currently managed at a very broad scale consistent with generic guidelines to mitigate critical and very high level threats and maintain key Indigenous cultural heritage values. Known threats are managed to prevent, stabilise or slow the rate of unacceptable decline in the condition of Indigenous cultural heritage values. Documented critical priorities are implemented. Notification of potential impacts follow routine advisory, negotiated and consent doctrine.	Maintain current level of service.	4
5. Historic heritage	Base	Medium	Historic heritage values are currently managed at a very broad scale consistent with generic guidelines to mitigate critical and very high level threats and maintain key values. Known threats are managed to prevent, stabilise or slow down the rate of unnatural decline in the condition of key values (including graceful decline). Documented critical priorities are implemented. Historic heritage values need to be managed at a finer scale with focus on very high priorities.	Improve documentation of historic heritage assets, confirm the significance of the values and identify the actions to maintain or improve the condition.	4
6. Other community and commercial engagement	Medium	Medium	Community and commercial engagement currently occurs at a broad scale consistent with mostly generic guidelines to ensure critical and very high level risks are managed. Effective engagement with commercial and community interests to ensure critical and very high priority initiatives are delivered. Operational management activity is aligned with documented priorities. Documented critical and very high priorities are implemented.	Continue informal local consultation with community stakeholders as required to progress specific park management issues, including Gatton Glenore Grove rifle club.	3

7. Visitors	Base	Base	Visitor management currently occurs at a very broad scale consistent with generic guidelines to maintain the safety and sustainability of very limited existing visitor opportunities. Park values protected from major new unacceptable visitor impacts. Reasonable visitor safety achieved through shared responsibility framework. Diversity of opportunity is maintained. Management focus in landscape class, values protection, setting protection, and visitor safety.	Maintain essential management, tenure and safety signage only. Continue to offer limited low-key undeveloped opportunities for self-reliant recreation.	4
8. Field management capability	Medium	Medium	Management capability typically located very remotely with a small, mostly generalist and/or limited on-ground management presence to respond to critical and very high priority issues. The intensity and timing of management effort currently ensures critical and very high priority initiatives are delivered. Operational management activity is aligned with documented priorities. Documented critical and very high priorities in annual operational business plans are implemented.	Maintain minimum 3 month routine inspection or planned visits in response to identified issues. Maintain current level of service.	4
9. Operational planning and management	Medium	Medium	Operational planning and management currently occurs at a broad scale consistent with mostly generic guidelines with limited expert support for planning, implementing, and evaluating park management activities. Management focused on critical and very high priorities only. Planning processes ensure significant park values are identified with actions identified and taken to maintain them in at least a stable or slightly improved condition. Low level planning processes are undertaken in accordance with the LoS standard.	Maintain current level of service.	4

Thematic strategies

Each protected area will require one or more thematic management strategies depending on the key values identified and complexity of management requirements. The levels of service standards provide guidance for each individual element to indicate the requirement for a thematic strategy and its appropriate level of detail.

Thematic strategies provide a linkage between the strategic management direction identified in this document and the delivery of operational management actions. Thematic strategies present detailed actions to address the strategic management directions identified to manage key values and achieve target levels of service.

Thematic strategies required for Gatton National Park

- Fire strategy
- Pest strategy

Evaluation and reporting

Management effectiveness will be evaluated for Gatton National Park as part of a monitoring framework. This will guide an adaptive management approach to set clear benchmarks for management, ensure the condition of key values is within acceptable thresholds, deliver transparent and accountable reporting and inform future management. Management effectiveness will be measured against:

- condition and trend for key values
- achievement of Levels of Service standards
- implementation of management actions
- outcomes of strategic management directions.

Map 1: Gatton National Park - key values