

# Capricorn Coast National Park

**Management Plan**

1999

Prepared by: **Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (QPWS), Department of Environment and Science**

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The Capricorn Coast National Park Management Plan 1999 has been extended in 2023, in line with the Queensland *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (s120G). Minor amendments have been made. There has been no change to the plan's original management intent or direction.

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## Summary

This management plan provides the framework and guidelines on how Capricorn Coast National Park will be managed. It sets out the considerations, outcomes and strategies that are proposed to form the basis on which day-to-day management decisions are made.

This plan was prepared in July 1999 in accordance with s 125 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (Act). In 2023 the plan was extended, in keeping with s 120G of the Act. For further information on this plan or the planning process, please contact the Department of Environment and Science [ParkManagementPlans@des.qld.gov.au](mailto:ParkManagementPlans@des.qld.gov.au).

# 1. Management directions and purpose

## 1.1 Management directions

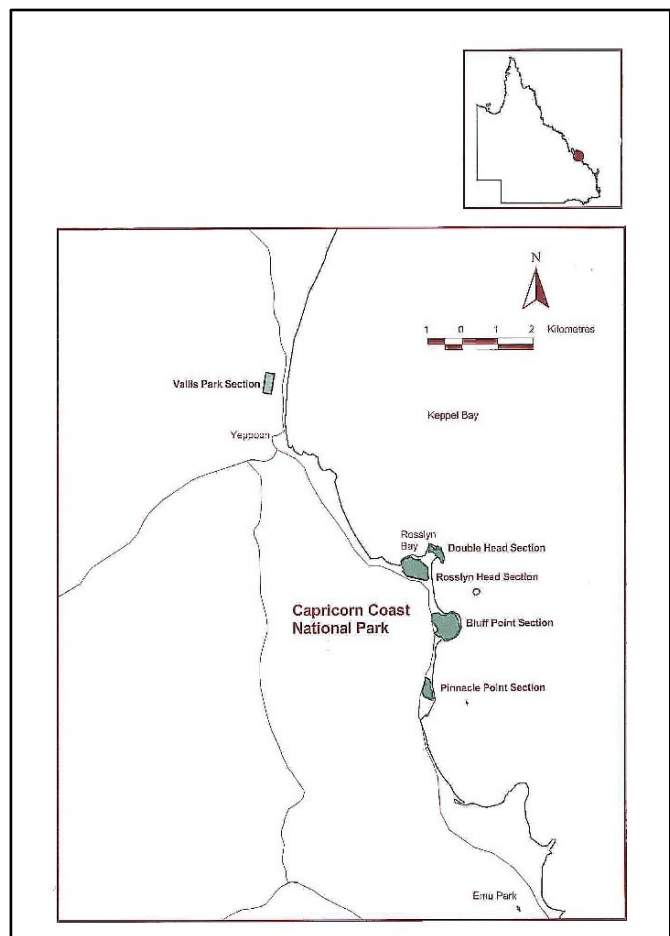
Capricorn Coast National Park covers about 117 hectares and comprises 5 sections: Vallis Park, Rosslyn Head, Double Heads, Bluff Point, and Pinnacle Point. These sections lie on the Capricorn Coast between Yeppoon and Emu Park in Central Queensland. The park was gazetted to conserve the scenic and natural values of some Capricorn Coast headlands and ridgelines.

The park will be managed to retain its scenic and biological values by minimising the impacts of surrounding land use, weeds, feral animals, fire and infrastructure located on the park. Sections of the park will provide picnic facilities and walking tracks to enable visitors to appreciate the scenic and natural attractions of the Capricorn Coast. Other sections of the park will be retained to preserve examples of the area's native vegetation.

## 1.2 Purpose

The major purpose of management will be to ensure that:

- the natural vegetation and geological formations are protected from the impacts of fire, weeds, feral animals and recreational activities
- the natural scenic value of the park is retained
- habitat and significant species are conserved by reflecting their requirements in management programs
- recreation, conducted in a safe manner, is encouraged while ensuring it has minimal impact on the park's environmental and cultural values
- infrastructure is designed and maintained to a standard that protects both the park and visitors
- natural and cultural resource understanding is advanced to facilitate effective park management
- sites and landscapes of special significance are managed in consultation with local government, local communities, Aboriginal and South Sea Islander groups and local heritage societies; and
- neighbours are aware of the impact of residential development on the park environment and the necessity for fire, and feral and domestic animal management, and weed control programs.



Map 1. Location map of Capricorn Coast National Park

## 2. Basis for management

Capricorn Coast National Park is gazetted under the Nature Conservation Act 1992 as a national park and will be managed in accordance with s 17 of the Act, which sets out the following principles of management:

- to provide, to the greatest possible extent, for the permanent preservation of the area's natural condition and the protection of the area's cultural resources and their values
- to present the area's cultural and natural resources and their values; and
- to ensure that the only use of the area is nature-based and ecologically sustainable.

The requirements of other legislation administered by the Service and other State and Commonwealth agencies will be met where necessary.

### 2.1 Bioregional context

Rosslyn Head, Double Heads, Bluff Point and Pinnacle Point are coastal headland areas, and were gazetted as separate national parks in 1943. Vallis Park was gazetted as national park in 1989. The five sections were amalgamated and gazetted as Capricorn Coast National Park in 1994.

The Vallis Park section is situated on a crest of the ridgeline overlooking Yeppoon township. This park section has a well-developed soil profile supporting a depauperate low closed forest and plays an important role in maintaining soil stability on this steep hill which rises to about 150 metres (m) above sea level. This section of the park is adjacent to the old 'Kanaka Trail' or 'Sugar Wagon Trail' that traversed the ridgelines from Yeppoon to Farnborough and was used to transport Kanaka workers and sugar to and from the cane farms north of Yeppoon.

The Rosslyn Head section is located between Statute Bay and Kemp Beach and is adjacent to the Rosslyn Bay marina to the northeast. It combines a rocky headland rising to 60 m above sea level and sandy dune areas along the southeastern perimeter. This park section contains eucalypt forest/woodland and coastal sand dune heath/scrub. An old mine shaft is located at the summit of the rocky headland.

The Double Head section is located at the eastern extremity of Rosslyn Bay harbour and includes two trachyte plugs. The vegetation includes dry rainforest in the sheltered areas, and windswept grassland and heathland on the exposed faces of the headlands. Quarrying of stone for the Rosslyn Bay breakwater was undertaken on the face of one of the headlands between 1968 and 1973. This section of the park has walking tracks to Rosslyn Bay Lookout, Fan Rock Lookout and the Blowhole, Pebble Beach and Kemp Beach. It also contains a carpark and a QPWS base for the local management unit.

The Bluff Point section is located at the southern end of Kemp beach and incorporates a headland that is a trachyte plug. The vegetation includes dry rainforest and open eucalypt forest in the sheltered areas, and grassland and heathland on the exposed face of the headland. Quarrying of scone for the Rosslyn Bay breakwater was undertaken in 1968 on the northeast face of the headland. This section of the park contains one of the most popular picnic areas on the Capricorn Coast and includes a 2.3 kilometer (km) circuit walking track offering outstanding views of the Capricorn Coast and Keppel Bay.

The Pinnacle Point section is located at the southern end of Mulambin Beach and incorporates a headland that is a trachyte plug. The vegetation includes eucalypt forest in the sheltered areas and grassland on the exposed southeastern face.

The park is located at the boundary between the Brigalow Belt biogeographic region and the Central Mackay Coast biogeographic region. The boundary passes through the headland at Rosslyn Bay.

QPWS is obliged to consider the *Surveyors Act 1977* regarding the permanent survey markers at the summit of the Bluff Point and Double Head sections of the park.

Land use adjacent to the park includes residential development; harbour development, commerce and industry; local government recreation areas; tourist accommodation and facilities; and road reserve.

## 2.2 Values of Capricorn Coast National Park

### 2.2.1 Geology and landform

Pre-Devonian geosynclinal rocks of the Curtis Island Group are the oldest in the Central Queensland coastal area. These now form a north-west trending belt parallel to the coastline. The Wandilla Formation within this group crops out along the Capricorn Coast and extends inland about 8 kilometres. It consists principally of mudstone but contains some greywacke and chert. Volcanic activity during the Upper Cretaceous Period about 70 million years ago produced the basalt flows and trachyte plugs of the local area. The main activity was centred 16 km west of Yeppoon where there is an area of gently undulating basalt derived black soil plain and 14 trachyte plugs. These plugs are steep sided protrusions, and roughly circular in shape. Double Head, Bluff Point and Pinnacle Point are three of four small trachyte plugs cropping out along the coast 6-10 km south of Yeppoon. Trachyte plugs were extruded into and through the Wandilla Formation sediments. The trachyte plugs, being harder than the sediments, stand out as steep sided hills.

Rocky shores, headlands, bay-head beaches and other small beaches occur between Emu Park and Yeppoon. These bay-head or pocket beaches form where sand becomes trapped between headlands. The sand dunes behind the bay-head beaches and other small pocket beaches in the area over-ly the rocky shore, as has occurred in the Rosslyn Head section of the park. The Double Head section of the park is a duplex trachyte plug. The west peak of Double Head is an imposing dome 82 m above sea level, and it overlooks Rosslyn Bay. The western face of this peak exhibits some of the finest exposed columnar jointing to be seen in Queensland. The eastern peak extends 70 m above sea level and contains a well-known feature referred to as the 'Blowhole'.

The Blowhole is the result of the inland collapse of the roof of a sea-cave. The name Blowhole refers to the fact that during storms, spray is forcibly blown into the air each time a breaker surges through the cave beneath. The Blowhole used to function during times of extreme strong winds from the southeast however, the top opening is now too large to act as a waterspout. A large slab of the cave roof has caved in and is lying at the bottom of the Blowhole. 'Fan Rock' is located at the side of the cave. It comprises numerous spectacular hexagonal columns that were formed when rock fractured as lava, cooled beneath the volcano. A rocky tidal platform extends beyond the base of the cliff along the south-western and southern sides of this section of the park.

The Bluff Point section of the park contains the largest trachyte plug on the Capricorn Coast. The seaward perimeter of Bluff Point is marked by vertical cliffs 10-100 m in height. As in Double Head, a rock platform at the base of the cliffs is exposed at low tide.

### 2.2.2 Plants and animals

The park's vegetation ranges from dry rainforest and eucalypt forest on the sheltered sides, to heathlands and grassland in more exposed locations. Seven vegetation communities have been described for the park. They are:

- rocky shore closed-heath and open-heath, which occur on the seaward side of the headlands and rocky shores. Generally, the vegetation is windswept, forming open-heath and closed-heath with a few emergent small trees in more protected situations.
- mixed Eucalypt low open forest, low woodland and woodland. The open forests and woodlands are layered with a well-developed understorey of open scrub or tall shrubland.
- depauperate low closed forest. Floristically, depauperate low closed forest is the most diverse community on the Capricorn Coast.
- Headland *Themeda australis* grassland, which is common on the exposed side of the large, and some smaller headlands along the coast. The windswept vegetation is dominated by clumps of *Themeda australis* grass as a pure stand or as a mixture with heath species.
- foredune closed-heath/scrub and open-heath scrub. This complex foredune heath/scrub vegetation occurs as a narrow band behind the strand communities on the frontal dunes. It merges into the closed-scrub formations in more protected situations at the back. The closed heath often occurs as clumps of vegetation with intervening open spaces occupied by herbs.

- spinifex-ipomoea herbland/open grassland that is often the first zone between the sea and the next strand community on the developing beach system. It occurs as a very narrow band, often only a few metres wide; and
- *Casuarina equisetifolia* subsp. *incana* (Coast She-oak) low open-forest to low open-woodland. These communities occur as narrow bands or in isolated clumps behind both exposed and protected beaches.

The rare plant species *Bertya pedicellata* and *Alyxia magnifolia* subsp. *magnifolia* have been recorded on the park.

The park has a diverse range of animals including unadorned rock wallabies, goannas, emus, scrub turkeys, rose-crowned fruit doves, varied trillers, spangled drongos, ospreys, and brahminy kites. The park provides a refuge for native fauna in an area rapidly undergoing residential development.

### 2.2.3 Cultural heritage

Little is known regarding the significance of the national park to Aboriginal people. Sections of the national park may have been used as lookout areas and food collection sites for people of the Darumbal coastal clans. Several middens are located in the Rosslyn Head section of the park.

The Vallis Park section of the park is adjacent to a portion of the 'Sugar Wagon Trail' or locally referred to as the 'Kanaka Trail'. This crack was built in 1884 by South Sea Islander people following the first crushing of sugar at the Farnborough Sugar Plantation. It was built to provide access from Farnborough Mill to Thompsons Point, which was the loading place for sugar boats. Loading facilities were subsequently moved to Ross Creek at Yeppoon. Horse-drawn wagons made the journey. The track was formed by cutting into the hill on the uphill side of the contour, and by pitching stones on the downhill side to create a flat platform. The crack varies in width from 3-4 m. The track is considered to be significant enough to have been nominated for inclusion on the Queensland Heritage Register.

### 2.2.4 Scenic and aesthetic

Capricorn Coast National Park contains outstanding scenic values including:

- spectacular views of the Capricorn Coast, Keppel Bay and islands from the headland sections of the park.
- prominent headlands which provide an important component of the Capricorn Coast's natural landscape.
- geological phenomenon such as the 'Blowhole' and 'Fan Rock ' are unique to the area.
- areas where visitors can escape from surrounding suburbia into a more natural environment; and
- locations for experiencing wildlife in their natural surroundings, such as turtle viewing from the lookouts on the Bluff Point walking track.

### 2.2.5 Scientific and educational

The national park has been used for environmental education by schools and local tertiary institutions. The park is an ideal location as it is close to Yeppoon and Rockhampton.

### 2.2.6 Recreation and tourism

The Double Head and Bluff Point sections of the park provide for day-use recreation. Recreational activities which commonly occur in these sections include:

- fishing
- bushwalking
- picnicking
- abseiling
- beach activities; and
- nature and geological appreciation.

The Bluff Point and Double Head sections of the park are some of the most popular recreation areas on the Capricorn Coast.

## 2.2.7 Economic

Protected areas can make a substantial contribution to regional development by providing natural resources that attract tourists. The protected areas of the Capricorn Coast, which includes Capricorn Coast National Park, Byfield National Park and Keppel Bay Islands National Park, are increasingly recognised as a major tourist attraction in the region. They offer significant economic benefits to the Livingstone Shire Council area and to the local communities of Yeppoon and Emu Park.

# 3. Natural resource management

## 3.1 Native plants and animals

### Background information

There are plant and bird lists for the park. The rare plant species *Bertya pedicellata* and *Alyxia magnifolia subsp. magnifolia* have been recorded on the park.

There are two populations of unadorned rock wallabies on the park, one in the Double Head section and the other in the Bluff Point section. Vehicles were removed from the quarry in the middle of the Double Head section because of concerns about the impact of visitors on the wallabies that come down at night to feed in the grassed areas of the old quarry.

### Desired outcomes

- Composition and extent of the vegetation types and their associated fauna are maintained, subject to natural change.
- Each section of the park acts as a refuge for native plants and animals and forms the foundation for broader conservation management in the local area.
- Comprehensive information on the flora and fauna, and their conservation values, is available to managers.

### Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- A vegetation map of all sections of the park will be produced to aid management.
- Vehicle access to the quarry in the middle of the Double Head section of the park will not be permitted except for management purposes. Vehicles will be excluded in order to minimise the impact of visitors on the unadorned rock wallaby population.
- Liaise with the local council and community groups to encourage expansion or retention of native vegetation communities adjacent to sections of the park.
- Liaise with the local council and community groups to update plant and animal lists for the area.

## 3.2 Introduced plants and animals

### Background information

Introduced plants found on the park include rubber vine, lantana, mother of millions, and guinea grass. Introduced animals found on the park include cats and foxes.

An active park weed control program reduces the area and quantity of major weeds. Cat trapping occurs on the park when populations of feral cats are located.

### Desired outcomes

- Introduced plants are controlled and, where practical, eradicated from the park. The impact of feral animals on the park is reduced.
- No new introduced species become established in the park.



### Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Weed control will focus on reducing the population and area of rubber vine and mother of millions, both of which are introduced species identified as priority pest plants in the Livingstone Shire Council Pest Management Plan. Guinea grass will also be controlled, principally for fire management purposes.
- Conduct a program to significantly reduce the numbers of feral cats in the Rosslyn Bay Harbour area.
- Monitor introduced animal numbers as part of general duties and through liaison with neighbours. Action will be taken if introduced animal numbers are determined to be significant.
- Liaise with neighbours and the local authority regarding cooperative efforts to control weeds and feral animals.

## 3.3 Fire management

### Background information

There is a set of wildfire response procedures for the park. In recent history two wildfires have occurred on the park, one in the Bluff Point section in 1993 and one in the Pinnacle Point section in 1994. Both fires started in areas of guinea grass and spread to adjacent eucalypt communities. There was also a small wildfire in the Double Head section in 1990 that started in native grass land.

Firebreaks have been developed and maintained in the Bluff Point section of the park. The Double Head, Rosslyn Head, Pinnacle Point and Vallis Park sections of the park have no control burning or firebreak program.

Fuel reduction burns are carried out on the southern side of Bluff Point for visitor safety and to decrease the risk of wildfires spreading to areas of dry rainforest in the park.

### Desired outcomes

- Fire-sensitive vegetation communities are protected, where appropriate, from the destructive effects of high-intensity fires.
- Visitors, park infrastructure and neighbours are protected from the effects of wildfire. Prescribed burning is based on regionally adopted fire management practices.

### Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Develop, maintain and implement a fire management plan for the park containing a fire management strategy, a fire management program and a wildfire response procedure.
- Firebreaks will be maintained as appropriate.
- An active management program to decrease the area of guinea grass will continue to reduce the risk of wildfire starting and spreading from this introduced plant community.

## 3.4 Landscape, soil and catchment protection

### Background information

The Double Head and Bluff Point sections of the park contain significant geological formations. All sections of the park contribute significantly to the natural scenic value of the Capricorn Coast area. Foreshore and cliff line areas present some of the park's most important landscape vistas. They are heavily used for recreation. Strong winds and heavy seas have affected vegetation in these areas. This erosion should be regarded as a natural part of the landscape, so long as it is not exaggerated by human activity.

Some areas of the park have suffered landscape alteration from past quarrying activities. The roof of the Blowhole in the Double Head section of the park collapsed during blasting operations in the adjacent quarry.

A fence has been erected along the roadway in the northern portion of the Double Head section of the park to protect vehicles from falling rocks.

QPWS has been approached with a suggestion to relocate the Yeppoon automatic weather station to the Double Head section of the park.

**Desired outcomes**

- Significant geological formations on the park are protected from the impact of human activity.
- Foreshore and cliff line areas are protected as far as possible from erosion, particularly that resulting from human interference.
- Visual intrusion of existing or future park developments on the landscape is minimised.

**Proposed policies, guidelines and actions**

- Visitor access to sites of geological significance will be managed to protect the formations.
- Where necessary, controlled access points will be established to minimise visitor damage to foreshores, cliff lines, and erosion-prone areas.
- Proposed structures on the park will be assessed to ensure that the visual character of the coastal landscape is not compromised.
- Relocation of the Yeppoon automatic weather station to the park will not be permitted.

## 3.5 Cultural heritage

**Background information**

The following sites of cultural or historical significance have been identified on or adjacent to the park:

- the Sugar Wagon Trail in the Vallis Park section
- middens in the Rosslyn Head section; and
- a mine shaft in the Rosslyn Head section.

The Sugar Wagon Trail has been nominated for inclusion in the Queensland Heritage Register.

A native title claim application has been made by the Darumbal people for an area that includes Capricorn Coast National Park.

**Desired outcomes**

- All cultural sites are managed in cooperation with relevant local and indigenous communities.

**Proposed policies, guidelines and actions**

- Assess any public safety risk associated with the mine shaft in the Rosslyn Bay section and implement recommended actions.
- Liaise with representatives of the Darumbal people over management of the midden sites in the Rosslyn Bay section of the park.
- Liaise with the Queensland Heritage Council and relevant local community representatives over the management of the Sugar Wagon Trail.

## 3.6 Recreation and tourism

**Background information**

The Double Head section of the park provides:

- a walking track to Fan Rock and Rosslyn Bay lookouts
- a walking track to Pebble Beach, a popular fishing spot
- access to Kemp Beach and a rock platform around Double Head, which is a popular fishing area
- opportunity for abseiling under certain conditions; and
- car parking facilities.

The Bluff Point section of the park provides:

- a picnic area with toilets, BBQs, and tables
- car parking facilities
- formalised beach access; and
- a 2.3 km circuit walking track from the picnic area traversing the summit of Bluff Point. This walking track also has two viewing platforms overlooking Keppel Bay.

Other sections of the park provide informal bushwalking opportunities.

People use the park to gain access to rock platforms for fishing. They have created trails through steep, erosion prone areas and these trails are safety hazards and impact on the native vegetation. Some of these trails have been closed and warning signs erected to discourage people from using them however, the signs are often ignored. People have been rescued from the rock platforms during rough weather.

#### **Desired outcomes**

- Recreational access and facilities do not compromise the park's natural or cultural values.
- Recreation facilities and tracks are maintained to a suitable standard.
- Visitor safety is considered in all aspects of park management.
- Recreational use of the park complements broader recreational strategies for the Capricorn Coast area.

#### **Proposed policies, guidelines and actions**

- Camping will not be permitted in the park.
- Open fires will not be permitted in the park.
- Maintain all lookout structures and walking track surfaces in a safe condition through regular inspections and maintenance as part of a risk management program.
- Monitor the number of visitors to the park. This may involve track counters, traffic counters and visitor surveys.
- Picnic and toilet facilities in the Bluff Point section will be regularly maintained.
- Patrol high visitation sites during busy periods.
- Any proposals for commercial activities in the park will be considered and approved only if they have no significant impact on the park's natural values and do not unduly restrict public use of the park.
- Abseiling as a recreational activity will only be permitted on the eastern face of the western peak in the Double Head section of the park, provided people wishing to undertake the activity are suitably qualified and accredited, take suitable safety precautions, have written permission and follow written conditions from the Ranger-in-Charge of the park.
- Rock climbing as a recreational activity will not be permitted in the park.
- Use all possible means to discourage people making and using informal trails on the park to gain access to fishing areas.
- Liaise with local government, the local community and local tourism organisations regarding the role Capricorn Coast National Park should play in a broader tourism strategy for the Capricorn Coast, and effective ways to promote such nature-based tourism.

## **3.7 Education and interpretation**

### **Background information**

Interpretive signage of geological and natural features, and recreational opportunities, are provided at the Double Head and Bluff Point sections of the park. There is a visitor information sheet available for Capricorn Coast National Park. Local schools, tertiary institutions and community groups are encouraged to use the park for environmental education.

### **Desired outcomes**

- The park's natural resources, values and management are presented to the community. Visitor use is consistent with responsible and sustainable use of the park.
- The community supports and is involved in park management.

### **Policies, guidelines and strategies**

- Use of the park by education and community groups will be encouraged provided the use is nature based and does not unduly restrict public use.
- Maintain and upgrade interpretive signage and visitor information as required.
- Develop, in liaison with local community representatives and tourism organisations, suitable interpretive programs and productions to communicate the values of the park to visitors.

## 3.8 Resource use

### Background information

A QPWS base is located adjacent to the Double Head section of the park.

### Desired outcomes

- Capricorn Coast National Park is managed by staff based in the Yeppoon area.

### Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Maintain existing workshop and office facilities adjacent to the Double Head section of the park.

## 3.9 Plan implementation and monitoring

### Background information

The Capricorn Coast Management Unit is responsible for managing the park. This unit works from the facility on the Double Head section of the park. The Capricorn Coast Management Unit manages Byfield National Park, Mt Jim Crow National Park, Capricorn Coast National Park, Causeway Lake Conservation Park, Keppel Sands Conservation Park, and Flat Top Resources Reserve.

### Desired outcome

- The management plan is an effective set of operational guidelines.

### Policies, guidelines and strategies

- Ranger-in-Charge of the park to submit a brief annual report on the success of the plan's implementation.
- Review of the management plan within 10 years from approval according to s 125 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

## 4. References

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J. K. Findlay | 1974. *Rosslyn Bay Boat Harbour. Engineering Geology- Double Head Area*. Geological Survey of Queensland Record Series 1974/25. Dept of Mines.