



DRAFT Executive Summary

Nambour to Coolum Recreation Trail Feasibility Study 2015
by Inspiring Place Pty Ltd

*This document has been prepared by Sunshine Coast Council based on the
Inspiring Place Nambour to Coolum Recreation Trail Feasibility Study 2015*



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Acknowledgements

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Purpose

The purpose of this Executive Summary is to provide a summary of the Nambour to Coolum Recreation Trail Feasibility Study completed by Inspiring Place Pty Ltd.

Background

The Nambour to Coolum Recreation Trail Feasibility Study (the Study) was completed in November 2015 by Inspiring Place Pty Ltd on behalf of the Sunshine Coast Council.

The purpose of the Study was to determine the feasibility and options for a recreation trail from Nambour to Coolum. The Study was commissioned following community representation, community discussions and interest in various forums. Relevant Council planning documents also make reference to a potential trail between Nambour and Coolum.

In particular, there has been strong community support from various stakeholders to create a recreation trail that follows the historical cane rail line alignment (used from 1897 to 2003 to service cane growing activities and as a passenger train on the Maroochy Floodplain).

All recommendations, statistics and conclusions documented in this Executive Summary are directly referenced from the Study and do not necessarily reflect Council's position.

Feasibility analyses

The Study evidences support for a recreation trail linking Nambour to Coolum via key historical and natural features based on growing demand for recreation trails, gaps in existing trail opportunities, population growth, community and visitor benefits and potential economic benefits.

Demand

The Study evidences significant demand for the trail network based on:

- The size of the population – “Resident base population is in excess of 40,000 in the three surrounding settlements and the expectation for high population growth in the next fifteen years”.

- “High participation rates in organised and non-organised walking, cycling and running events”.
- The growing appeal of outdoor activities amongst visitors as a reason to visit the Sunshine Coast.

“Community desire for better quality and more trails has been consistently identified in community surveys and engagement projects across Australia and within the Sunshine Coast”. For example, the results of an online survey conducted as part of the *Sunshine Coast Recreation Trail Plan 2012* concluded that “stakeholders rated multi-use trails in natural areas and walk/cycle paths as the most important element of all sport and recreation infrastructure provided by Council”.

The Study identified strongest appeal (by visitors and residents) for “recreational walking, running and cycling trails in close proximity to population centres”. Specifically, the Study highlights elements of demand for each user group:

- Local walkers – “short links and circuits to and from major settlements”.
- Runners – “close proximity to settlements with return links”.
- Recreational Bike Riders – “off-road opportunities to explore areas with strong natural and or cultural interest in close proximity to major settlements”.

Bicycle commuters indicated “limited support for the proposed trail, unless there was a cycle path or lane along Petrie Creek Road”.

Mountain bike riders indicated limited interest in the proposed trail “due to a lack of topographic and surface challenges”. However, if the trail linked Nambour, Coolum or Bli Bli community centres to the Parklands Conservation Park (where there are high quality mountain bike trails); “mountain bike riders would be more supportive”.

Bushwalkers are less interested “due to a lack of visual difference”, but again this interest would increase if the trail linked access to the bushwalking tracks in Parklands Conservation Park.

The Study also suggests “growing popularity in creating multi-activity opportunities where

users can combine walking, running and bike riding with water activities such as canoeing, kayaking and surfing”.

Gaps in existing opportunities

There are “very few recreational trails within close proximity to Nambour and Bli Bli”. The *Recreation Trail Plan 2012* identified a shortfall in local recreation trails on the Sunshine Coast.

In particular, there are “limited options for long exercise experiences (up to 1.5hours)”. Currently, the only link between the townships of Coolum, Bli Bli and Nambour is via road. The Study drew parallels to the popularity of existing coastal trails around Coolum and suggested that the proposed Nambour to Coolum trail could “provide a major tourist attraction”. This could be achieved by linking these coastal trails to the longer inland trail proposed in the Study.

“The Parklands Conservation Park (a State owned and managed area containing a series of bushwalking, mountain biking and horse riding trails) is a popular destination for recreational activities for both residents and visitors to the Sunshine Coast”. However, Parklands Conservation Park is limited with regards to linkages to other destinations and the need to access the Park via car.

The Sunshine Coast Active Transport Plan 2011 – 2031 and *Sunshine Coast Recreation Trail Plan 2012* both identify the need to provide trails that link community hubs (such as Bli Bli, Nambour and Coolum) to Maroochydore Central Business District. A recreation trail from Nambour to Bli Bli and Coolum could achieve this by linking these hubs to the Cycle / Coastal Pathway Corridor to Maroochydore.

Potential community and visitor benefits

The Study identifies several generic benefits of a Trail from Nambour to Coolum:

- Health benefits include improved fitness, health and wellbeing for trail users.
- Potential to provide economic benefits by creating increased demand for existing businesses such as food, equipment hire, accommodation, trail walking / bicycle equipment repairs and sales.

- Potential to provide a cheap and easy to access transport option. Users accessing the trail for transport purposes would lead to reducing air pollution and noise pollution, reducing traffic, and reduce costs associated with road and vehicle maintenance.
- The community as a whole would benefit from a stronger sense of community pride and from the follow-on impacts of increased social interaction amongst users.
- Families would benefit from having safe and controlled spaces for children to pursue physical activity.
- The overall amenity of the area would be sustained through protection of open space.
- Environmental outcomes for the area would be increased through a reduction of motor vehicle use, improved management practices on and around the trails and increased awareness of the natural assets of the area.
- Potential to increase visitor interest in the surrounding areas and it may also influence visitors to stay longer (and in turn spend more money in the region).

Feasibility Conclusions

- **A recreation trail from Nambour to Coolum with various network connections and entrance points established over a 20 – 30 year period has merit.**
- **Following the full length of the historical cane rail line is not feasible due to impacts on private land owners.**
- **A continuous link from Nambour to Coolum is not achievable in the short term however is feasible in the long term.**
- **Short term local links should be prioritised as a catalyst whilst investigations continue into longer term options.**
- **The proposed trail should be recognised in relevant planning documents to ensure its protection.**

Proposed Trail

The Study recommends (refer to attached maps):

- **Prioritising short-term opportunities to deliver local trails** from Nambour to Saltwater Bridge, Coolum to Twin Bridges and Bli Bli to Kirra/ Burtons Road.
- **In the medium term**, investigate and deliver a connection from Twin Bridges to Bli Bli and another connection from the Nambour Local Trail to Parklands Conservation Park.
- **Longer-term investigations** and delivery of trail extensions.

The Study identifies a proposed recreation trail route that includes a Primary Trail, Local Links and Extensions. The study concludes that the proposed trail route delivers "...good recreational experiences for trail users, connects with key cane heritage features, provides access to new features of interest and avoids adverse impacts on private landholdings".

However, the Study identifies several sections of the Primary Trail and Extensions which will require longer term investigations to resolve alignment issues – these are referred to as Strategic Links. **Therefore, in the short term, the Primary Trail and Extensions are not continuous.**

Refer to Map 1 for graphical illustration of the proposed routes.

- Primary Trail – Green
- Local Links – Yellow
- Extensions – Purple
- Strategic Links – areas between red brackets.

Opportunities of Proposed Trail

Local Trails

The Study suggests that the "greatest value of the proposed trail lies in its ability to serve local needs for quality recreation trails particularly for recreation walking, bike riding and fitness". This highlights an obvious opportunity to address local trail gaps in Nambour, Bli Bli and Coolum.

Connectivity

The Study also suggests that the proposed Primary Trail and Extensions could link other points of interest in the area (e.g. Maroochy River, Mount Coolum, Petrie Creek, Dunethin Rock and Parklands Conservation Park). This is of particular significance for residents and visitors wishing to combine several activities or visits to several landmarks in the one trip.

Currently, "there are few opportunities for large distance experiences (20km+) on the Sunshine Coast". By linking to the extended Coastal Trail and consequently other local and rural trails on the Sunshine Coast, the Proposed Trail and Extensions could offer a range of long to very long trail experiences.

Heritage and Environment

The Proposed Trail provides opportunities to access various historical and environmentally significant sites (e.g. Dunethin Rock, Maroochy Wetlands, Parklands Conservation Park, Coolum Conservation Park, Historical Cane Lift Bridge, Mount Coolum, and the Maroochy River). The trail would also link users to the Nambour Museum, the Moreton Sugar Mill and the proposed 'Heritage Tramway'.

Sporting events

"The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service have reported an increase in the number of event applications in recent years for long distance running, mountain biking, charity events and multi-sports events". A trail of this nature is ideal for such events.

"Linking the trail to non-motorised watercraft facilities also opens various opportunities for users to have access to multi-activity experiences". Offering multi-activity experiences provides opportunities for multidiscipline and endurance sporting events

(e.g. Orienteering, off-road triathlons, adventure races), which can attract potential commercial opportunities.

Tourism

On its own right, the Study suggests that the trail is “unlikely to attract a high level of domestic or international visitation to the area”. However it would be a substantial complement and linkage to existing recreational trails across the Sunshine Coast that have proven to be tourism attractions.

Increase in day visitation – “The Sunshine Coast is a key recreational destination for South East Queensland day trippers”. “Many Brisbane residents travel to the Sunshine Coast for recreational pursuits such as bush walking, mountain bike riding, trail running, coastal track walks and horse riding.” Having an additional trail on offer would promote greater repeat visits to the Sunshine Coast.

Economic

There are opportunities for existing businesses offering directly relevant products and services such as walking and cycling equipment, food, and accommodation. However, the trail may offer unique opportunities for the development of new business offering heritage, environmental or sporting tours which incorporate the trail.

Policy and planning framework

Current Local and State policy and legislative provisions relevant to health, social policy, planning and active transport are all very supportive of medium and long distance recreational trails. The following policies and plans support the recreation trail (either directly or implicitly):

- *The South East Queensland Regional Plan 2009 – 2031*
- *The Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme 2014*
- *The Sunshine Coast Council Corporate Plan*
- *Sunshine Coast Open Space Strategy 2011*
- *Sunshine Coast Biodiversity Strategy 2010-2020*

- *Sunshine Coast Economic Development Strategy 2010-2014*
- *Sunshine Coast Waterways and Coastal Management Strategy 2011-2021*
- *Sunshine Coast Sport and Recreation Plan 2011-2026*
- *Sunshine Coast Social Infrastructure Strategy 2011*
- *Sunshine Coast Sustainable Transport Strategy 2011-2031*
- *Sunshine Coast Active Transport Plan 2011-2031*
- *Sunshine Coast Tourism Opportunity Plan 2009-2017*

Case Study / Example

Examples of other success stories – A comparative example is provided in Derby, Tasmania where \$2.5M was spent to develop 80kms of trails primarily for mountain biking. As a result of the works, the town has hosted the Australian Marathon Mountain Bike Championships which attracted hundreds of competitors and fans. Since then, the number of cafes in the area has doubled and tourist accommodation has tripled. Within three years, mountain bike tourism is expected to contribute \$15M to the area and generate nearly 100 Jobs.

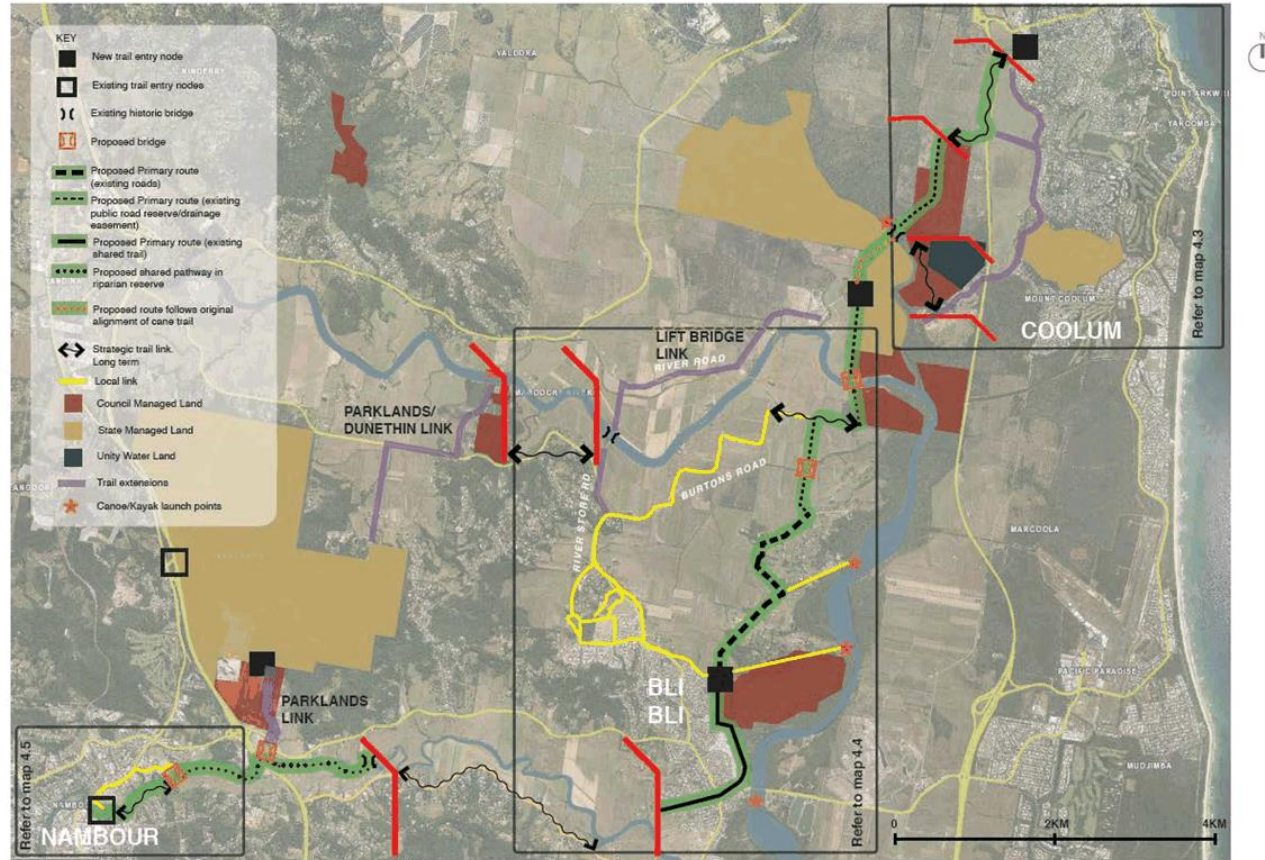
Findings

The Nambour to Coolool Recreation Trail Feasibility Study by Inspiring Place recommends that:

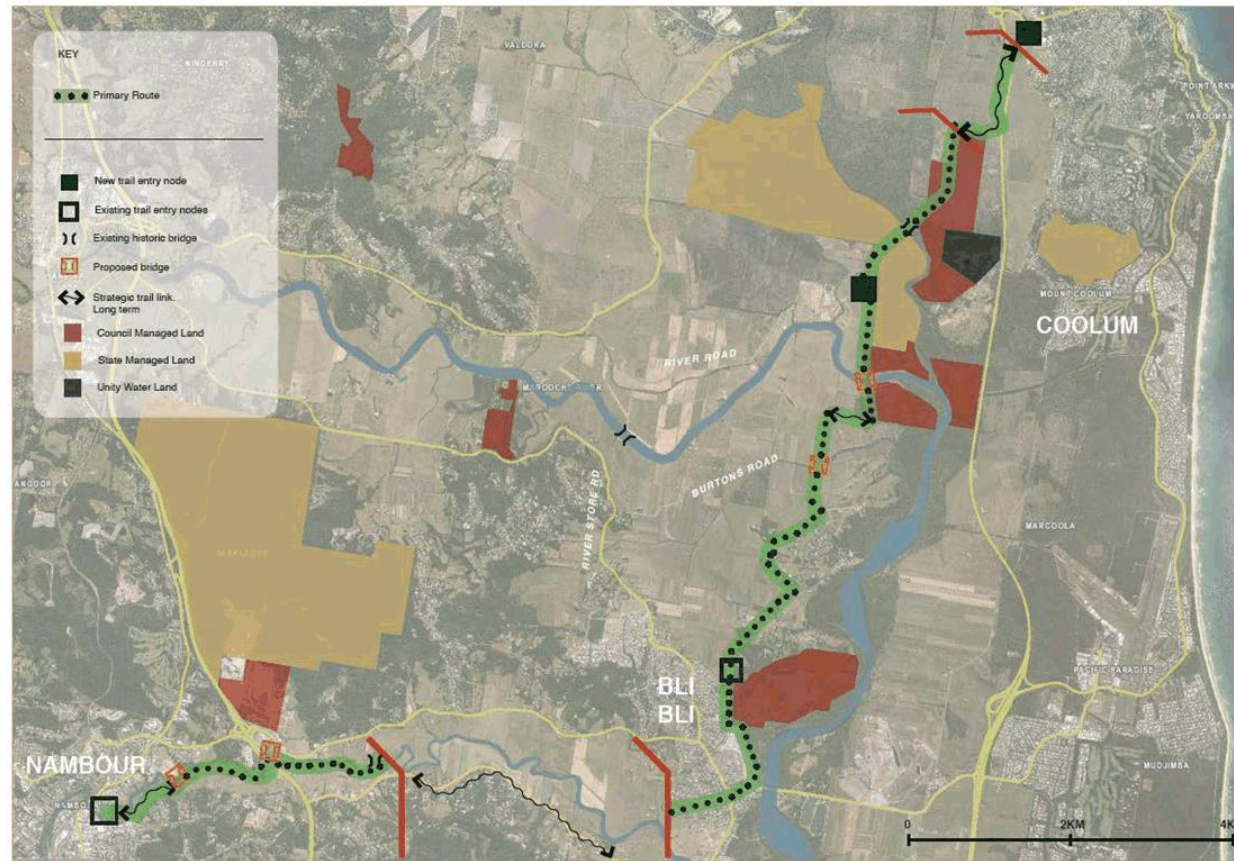
- The proposed Nambour – Coolool Trail should be approved as a long-term initiative by Council.
- Priority given to a number of catalyst projects focused on local areas.
- Implementation should include a five year plan to develop local trails focusing on
 - a. Nambour to Saltwater Bridge;
 - b. Coolool to the Twin Bridges; and
 - c. Bli Bli Town centre to Kirra Road/Burtons Road.
- A detailed 5 Year Implementation Plan should be prepared outlining proposed works, costs, estimated time frames and

responsibilities. An annual status report should monitor and evaluate the progress. A major review of the 5 Year Implementation Plan should be conducted every 5 years for Council consideration.

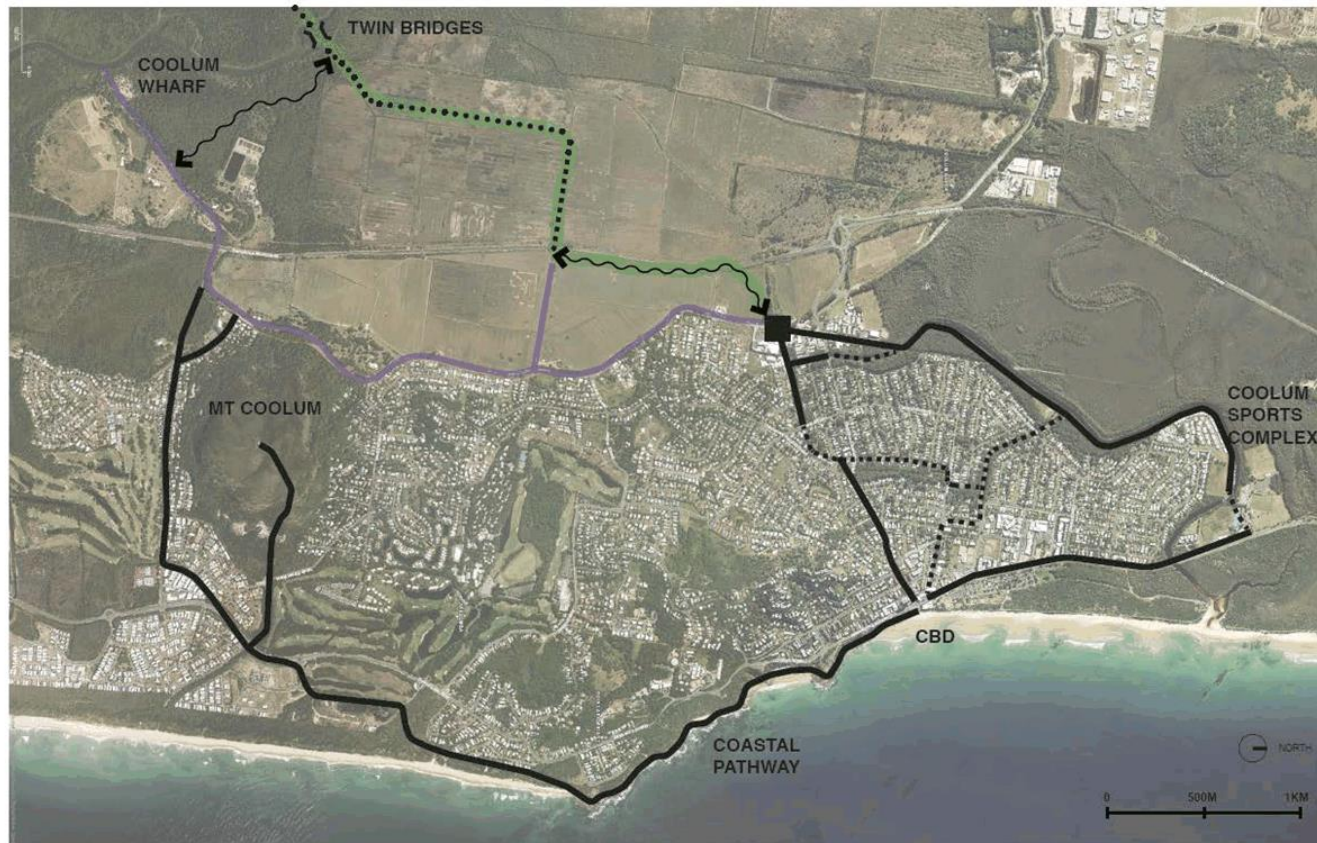
Inspiring Place Feasibility Study - Maps



NAMBOUR COOLUM RECREATION TRAIL
 Map 4.1 : OVERALL ROUTE OPPORTUNITIES

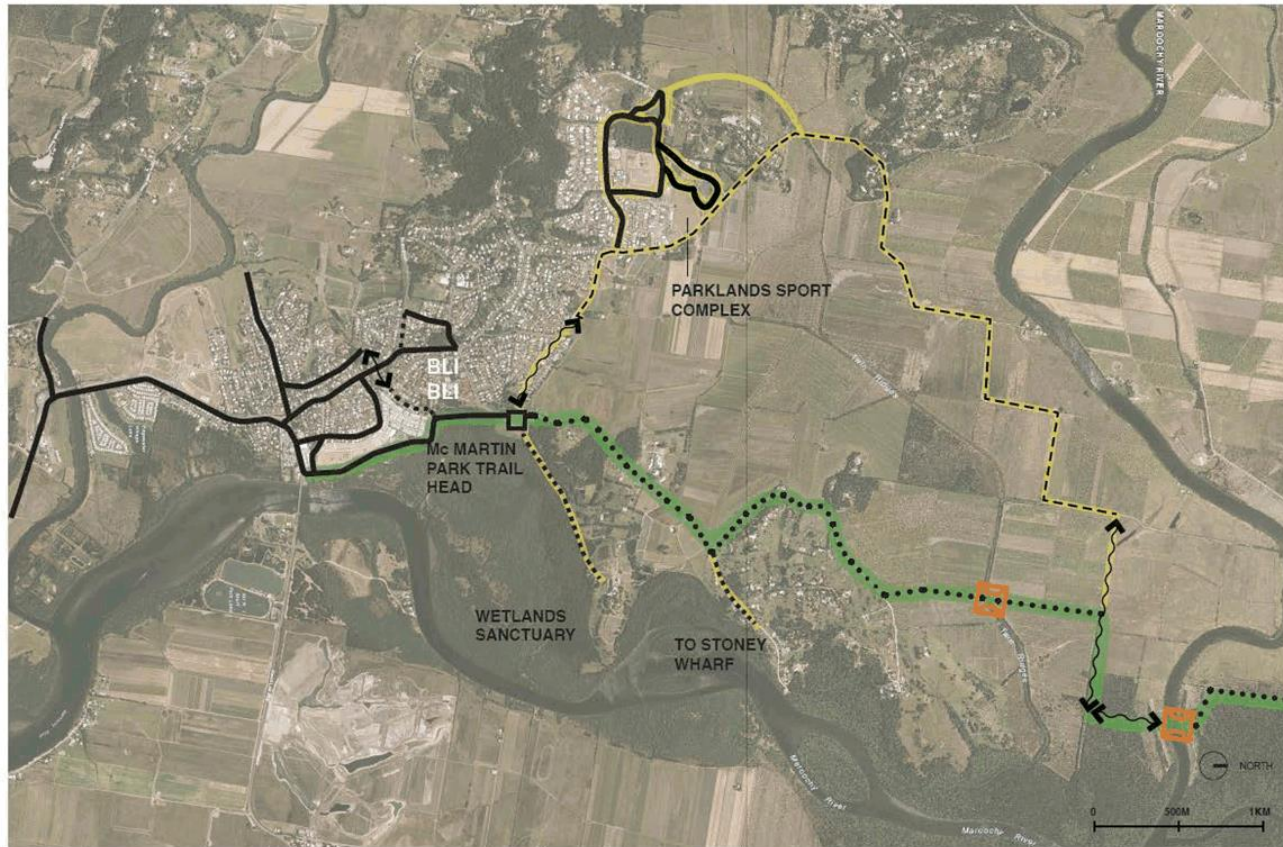


NAMBOUR COOLUM RECREATION TRAIL
Map 4.2 : PROPOSED PRIMARY TRAIL



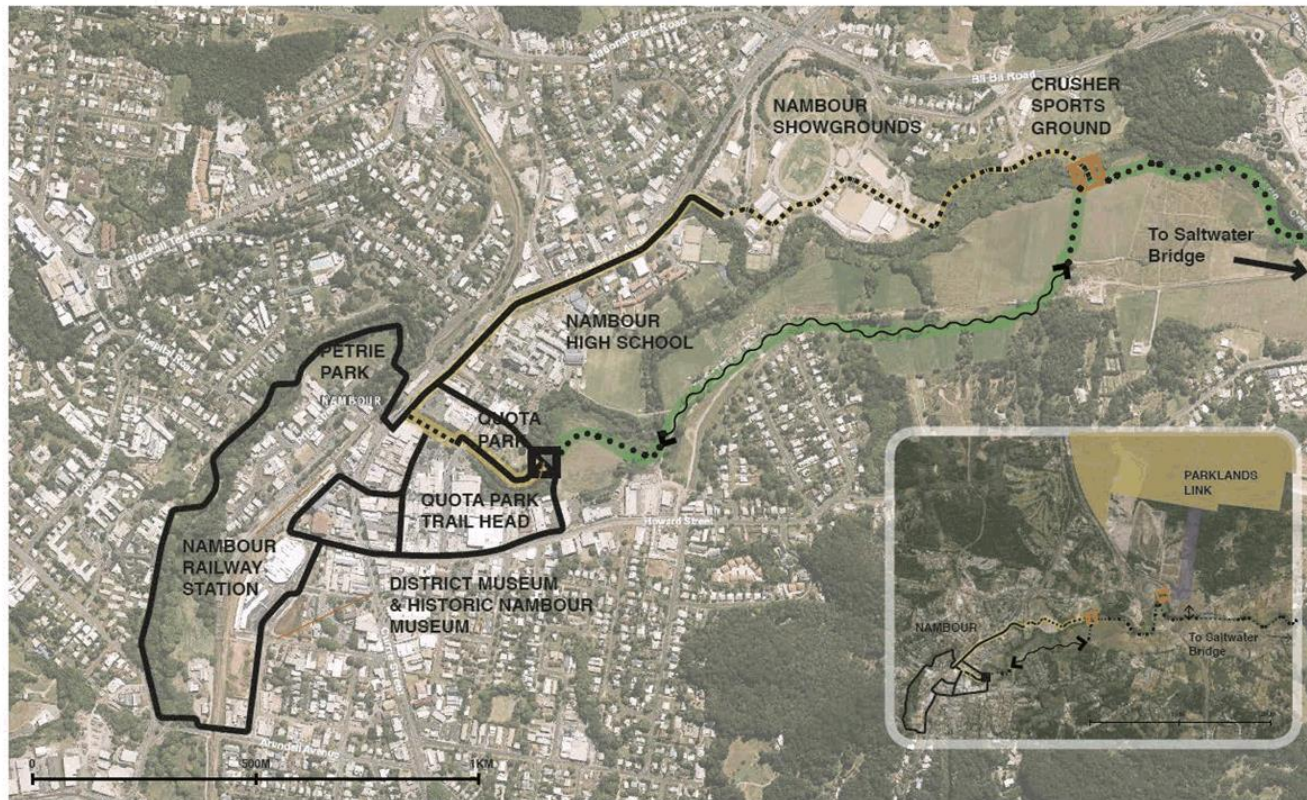
NAMBOUR COOLUM RECREATION TRAIL
 Map 4.3 : COOLUM

KEY	Existing local path network	Trail extension	Strategic trail link, long term	Local link
	Proposed local path network	Primary Nambour Coolum Route	New trail entry nodes	Existing historic bridge



NAMBOUR COOLUM RECREATION TRAIL
 Map 4.4 : BLI BLI

KEY	Existing local path network	Primary Nambour Coolum Route	Existing trail entry node	Local link
	Proposed local path network	Local trail links	Strategic trail link, long term	Proposed bridge



NAMBOUR COOLUM RECREATION TRAIL
 Map 4.5 : NAMBOUR

- KEY
- Existing local path network
 - - - Proposed local path network
 - Primary Nambour Coolum Route
 - ↔ Strategic trail link, long term
 - Existing trail entry node
 - ▭ Trail extension
 - Local link



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