WA Hiking Strategy

Bushwalking and trail running
in Western Australia **2020 - 2030**

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The authors of the WA Hiking Strategy acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

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Cover image: Karijini National Park. Image credit Tourism WA.

COMMON GROUND

Department of **Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries**
Department of **Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions**

GOVERNMENT OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Contents

Frenchman Peak, Cape Le Grand.
Image credit Tourism WA

Foreword

Western Australia is renowned for its vast and spectacular natural landscapes which attract bushwalkers, trail runners and outdoor enthusiasts from across Australia and around the world.

Recreational walking continues to be the most popular form of physical activity in Australia, with participation in trail running growing like never before. Trails are increasingly becoming a crucial part of the tourism offerings of the world's great nature-based locations – with quality walking and hiking options helping to attract visitors from all over.

Bushwalking, trail running and recreational walking provide many personal physical and mental health benefits, with well-planned hiking trails helping to deliver unique and accessible experiences for people of all ages and abilities.

The WA Hiking Strategy is the first of its kind in the country and will assist Western Australia to develop safe and sustainable hiking experiences. It will help guide government investment and lead to stronger community development and economic outcomes – including regional development and job creation – throughout the State.

The Strategy is an important step towards capitalising on the full potential Western Australia offers as a world-class hiking destination – ensuring local people and visitors can experience our magnificent forests, waterways and other natural attractions.

Hon Mick Murray
Minister for Sport and Recreation

Hon Stephen Dawson
Minister for Environment

Respected Aboriginal Elder Dr Noel Nannup has collected numerous song lines and trade routes from Aboriginal Elders over many years. These and other Aboriginal trails across Western Australia are some of the oldest trails in the world.

"In Australia according to science, Aboriginal trails are in excess of 60,000 years old. Each piece of country where these trails are located has its own story. It is believed that heroic deeds were performed on these trails in the Dreaming by sacred ancestral beings which are now referred to as totems. This connected people to a certain piece of country. It is from this belief that Aboriginal people pursued their spirituality.

"I can think of nothing better than for the general Australian community and our international guests to visit these places as part of their personal awareness of Aboriginal cultural ways."

Dr Noel Nannup

Executive summary

"All Western Australians and visitors have the opportunity to connect to country and explore natural landscapes through bushwalking and trail running"

Western Australia is remarkable for its landscapes and climate. The diversity of a temperate coastal region, semi-arid and arid deserts of the interior, and a tropical north sustains its vast, unique and distinctive landscapes.

There is a vibrant bushwalking and trail running community in the State, made up of a diverse range of individuals, commercial providers, organisations and agencies. Participation in trail running is growing exponentially and recreational walking continues to be the most popular form of physical activity. Hiking provides immense and far-reaching social, cultural, economic, environmental, health and wellbeing benefits to Western Australian individuals, communities, and the State.

Western Australia is leading the way in the strategic planning for high-quality hiking experiences, having an extensive user-friendly website of trails and being the first State to develop an activity-specific strategy for bushwalking and trail running.

Hiking = bushwalking + trail running

To enhance readability in this document, bushwalking and trail running will be referred to as 'hiking'. The strategy supports the shared interests of all people exploring trails and landscapes on foot.

The WA Hiking Strategy was informed by a review of existing literature, a community survey that attracted 1720 responses, targeted interviews, statewide industry forums and public comment. The findings have resulted in the identification of four strategic objectives, with accompanying recommendations.

This strategy has determined that trail runners have many of the same motivators and needs and enjoy most of the same trails and infrastructure as bushwalkers. However, improvements need to be made in regards to barriers to participation, event management, governance structures, advocacy, and resourcing to ensure the safe and sustainable growth of these activities.

Almost two-thirds of Australians are insufficiently active and children with at least one inactive parent are 68% more likely to be inactive themselves. Existing hikers identified one of their strongest reasons

for participating was to support their mental and physical health, whilst appreciating the scenic beauty of their natural surroundings. There is a need for more gateway opportunities to hiking, more pathways to develop skills, and more experiences of varying challenge, whilst decreasing barriers to participation.

In the year ending June 2019, WA saw an 11.5% increase in holiday visitors. WA's unique and pristine natural environments, including its beaches and coastline, are the main reasons visitors choose to holiday in our State. Aboriginal cultural and tourism experiences are sought by residents and visitors alike. Growing the visitor economy will be facilitated through increased awareness of existing trails and experiences as well as supporting the development of new iconic, multi-day and Aboriginal cultural experiences.

Achieving sustainable trails will require innovative and collaborative trail planning, design, funding, maintenance, training and management.

Research revealed that hikers cite being able to access trails close to home as a strong reason for their use. Almost 80% of WA residents live in the Perth metropolitan region, yet only about one quarter of existing hiking trails are within close proximity and are not necessarily serving the needs of users.

One of the central recommendations for this strategy is to determine and set up a governance structure for hiking activities. A new steering committee, guided by the Trails Reference Group, will develop an implementation plan in the first six months of the publication of this strategy. Encouraging cross-industry advocacy and strengthening hiking groups and their volunteers will contribute towards effective governance and advocacy in the long term.

Objective 1: **Maximise participation outcomes** Encourage participation at all levels and capitalise on the benefits of trail running and bushwalking.	1.1	Grow participation to maximise the positive impact on individuals, communities and the State
	1.2	Increase hiking opportunities of varying experience and classification across targeted Western Australian locations
	1.3	Reduce barriers to participation and develop a strong and vibrant hiking community
	1.4	Encourage and support responsible and safe hiking
Objective 2: **Grow the visitor economy** Grow visitation by increasing the reputation of Western Australia's new and existing experiences, including commercial enterprises, events and activities.	2.1	Increase awareness of Western Australia's hiking offerings within local, domestic and international markets
	2.2	Increase hiking travel and tourism
	2.3	Support the development of new hiking experiences to increase visitation
Objective 3: **Sustainable trail development and maintenance** Develop and manage sustainable hiking opportunities in Western Australia.	3.1	Develop a Statewide network of sustainable hiking experiences
	3.2	Identify innovative and ongoing sustainable trail funding opportunities
	3.3	Implement appropriate trail management
Objective 4: **Effective governance and advocacy** Increase and optimise the management and resourcing of hiking activities in Western Australia through strong governance and advocacy.	4.1	Implement the WA Hiking Strategy
	4.2	Develop a governance structure for hiking activities
	4.3	Encourage cross-industry advocacy for hiking
	4.4	Encourage hiking groups and their volunteers to strengthen, grow and prosper

Mighty Jarrah Trail Run, Dwellingup. Image credit Clip Motion Media

1. Introduction

1. Introduction

The magnificent natural areas of Western Australia have been explored by foot for more than 60,000 years.

Aboriginal people have long used trails to connect food sources, for social gatherings and to access deeply spiritual places.[1] Hikers continue to traverse these landscapes. Trail running is growing globally and recreational walking continues to be the most popular physical activity in Western Australia.[2]

1.1 The purpose of the strategy

The purpose of this document is to provide a strategic direction for hiking in Western Australia. It identifies the potential social, cultural, economic, environmental, health and wellbeing outcomes for the State, and articulates a direction for realising these. It seeks to maximise the opportunity for all Western Australians and visitors to benefit from access to an appropriate range of hiking experiences and will guide the sustainable development of hiking activities and associated trails' infrastructure.

Collaboration between key government agencies, community organisations, service providers and user groups has identified deficiencies and gaps in existing knowledge, governance structures, infrastructure, and availability of hiking experiences.

The recommendations outlined in this document should be used for the consistent and coordinated approach to:

* provide a guiding strategic document to the Western Australian hiking community
* provide a clear framework to guide government decision making, investment, and resourcing of bushwalking and trail running
* establish an implementation plan for the WA Hiking Strategy 2020-2030.

1.2 Project methodology

This project was informed by a range of data collection and analyses including:

* a review of existing research, strategies and worldwide trends
* interviews with specific agencies, organisations and eminent persons
* an industry forum facilitated across multiple regions
* a public survey that attracted 1720 responses and
* multiple theme development sessions.

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1   Indigenous Australia. Aboriginal Trade Routes. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.indigenousaustralia.info
2   AusPlay survey results. Australian Sports Commission. Retrieved from www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au

Golden Quest Discovery Trail. Image credit Tourism WA

1.3 Vision

"All Western Australians and visitors have the opportunity to connect to country and explore natural landscapes through bushwalking and trail running"

1.4 Guiding principles

The following Western Australian Strategic Trails Blueprint 2017-2021 Guiding Principles were created to facilitate the development of trails in WA. These principles can be applied to guide the WA Hiking Strategy's implementation by substituting "hiking" for "trails" in the explanatory text below.[3]

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3   Department of Sport and Recreation. Western Australian Strategic Trails Blueprint 2017-2021. (2017)

Access	Consumer focus	Consistency
Consideration is given to ease of access for all members of the community, including local residents and visitors	Trails are planned and developed to match current community and market needs and respond to future change	Lead agencies and relevant stakeholders enact change consistent with the Blueprint
Sustainability	**Evidence base**	**Innovation**
Trail planning and development take into account short and long term community, health, social, economic and environmental considerations	Effective monitoring and evaluation are undertaken to contribute to planning	Global advances in trail development and emerging relevant technologies (such as media, measurement, research) are reflected in trail improvements
Community benefit	**Visitor economy contribution**	**Engagement**
Trails offer economic, health, wellbeing and community connection outcomes for WA residents	Opportunities are realised for trails to support tourism growth resulting in increased visitors, spend, new business enterprises and job creation	The community and user groups have the opportunity to become ambassadors for the trail sector through consultation, feedback and active participation in trail use and events
Quality trails	**Aboriginal participation**	**Environment and culture**
Good planning, maintenance and support networks result in a diverse network of fit for purpose, sustainable and high quality trails	Opportunities are realised that contribute to awareness of Aboriginal culture and values through trail initiatives	Trails help protect, interpret and conserve environmental, water, cultural and heritage values

The Hiking Project introduces new participants to bushwalking. Image credit Bibbulmun Track Foundation

2. Hiking in Western Australia

Hiking = +
bushwalking   trail running

Throughout this strategy, bushwalking and trail running will be referred to as 'hiking'.
The strategy supports the shared interests of all people exploring trails and landscapes on foot.

2. Hiking in Western Australia

Walking and running are two of the top five physical activities undertaken by Western Australians.[1] This is no surprise given these activities can be performed by the majority of people at any stage of their life. As accessible as these activities are, 45% of the State's population are not sufficiently active.[2] This section identifies what is involved in hiking, as well as local, national and international trends influencing these activities.

Through consultation, it has become apparent that participation in trail running is growing exponentially within the State and bushwalking continues to grow steadily. For Western Australia to capitalise on the increasing popularity and growth of hiking, it is important to have an in-depth understanding of bushwalking and trail running. While there are some key differences between these activities, there are synergies (see Figure 3).

The public survey showed hiking activities have wide demographic appeal. Bushwalkers range from children walking with parents through to retired seniors, and similarly trail runners are spread across age groups. A diverse range of experiences allows participants to select an experience according to their capability and how much time they have, resulting in an activity that can be enjoyed at any stage of life. It is critical for young children to interact with their natural environment, both to develop a positive regard for the environment and to flourish as healthy individuals.[3] Continued participation in outdoor recreation is important for maintaining quality of life into later years.

Bushwalkers and trail runners seek experiences in natural environments and access to diverse landscapes. Participants assess elevation, distance, aesthetics, and technical aspects of a trail to decide if it is the experience they desire. While some are motivated by the opportunity to walk or run with family or friends, others are motivated to participate in solitude. There is a segment of the population looking for more varied places to walk the dog and others seeking a personal challenge through multi-day, unassisted expeditions (see Figure 1).

1   AusPlay survey results. Australian Sports Commission. Retrieved from www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au
2   Walk WA: A Walking Strategy for Western Australians. Be Active WA. 2007-2020
3   Why is Exposure to Nature Important in Early Childhood. Kristen Poppell and Martha C. Monroe. October 2015. Retrieved from https://edis.ifas.ufl. edu

Participation spectrum

Outdoor aware	Virtual or visual	On-screen viewing and/or spectating
	Incidental	Spending time in green spaces near home
	Outdoor play	Play and exploration of outdoor places
Outdoor active	Managed outdoor recreation	Participation in low-risk outdoor activities in managed environments
	Adventure recreation	Participation in more challenging activities and extended visits to natural environments
	Outdoor immersion	Multi-day activity and/or overnight camping in natural environments
Outdoor adventure	Wilderness experience	Self-sufficient, multi-day experience in remote locations
	Extreme adventure	Life-affirming, life-changing challenge in extreme conditions

Figure 1. Taken from More People More Active Outdoors 2019

Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Class 5
No bushwalking experience required. Flat even surface with no steps or steep sections. Suitable for wheelchair users who have someone to assist them. Walks no greater than 5km.	No bushwalking experience required. The track is a hardened or compacted surface and may have a gentle hill section or sections and occasional steps. Walks no greater than 10km.	Suitable for most ages and fitness levels. Some bushwalking experience recommended. Tracks may have short steep hill sections a rough surface and many steps. Walks up to 20km.	Bushwalking experience required. Tracks may be long, rough and very steep. Directional signage may be limited.	Very experienced bushwalkers with specialised skills, including navigation and emergency first aid. Tracks are likely to be very rough, very steep and unmarked. Walks may be more than 20km.

Figure 2. Australian Walking Track Classification System (based on AS 2156.1–2001)

Note: Class 6: Very experienced bushwalkers only, able to navigate in unmarked terrain cross-country without a track. Fully self-sufficient in all aspects.

41/59
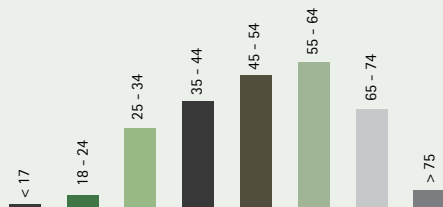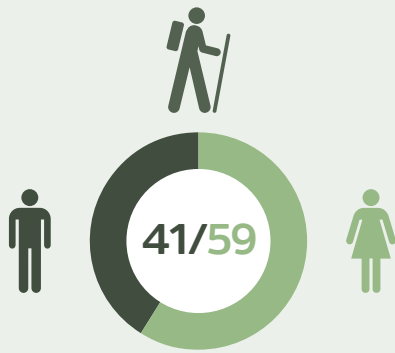
25% of bushwalkers are aged 55-64

67% of bushwalkers usually walk with a friend or partner

31% of bushwalkers are a member of a club or online social media group

22% of bushwalkers had volunteered for an event, club committee or trail building

9% of bushwalkers indicated they also participate in trail running

most often walk in Perth & South West

50/50
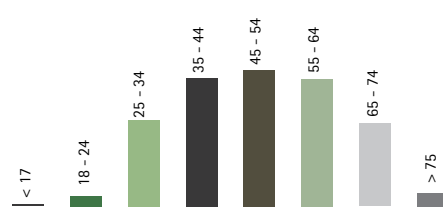
23% of trail runners are aged 45 - 54

60% of trail runners usually run solo

77% of trail runners are a member of a club or online social media group

70% of trail runners had volunteered for an event, club committee or trail building

51% of trail runners indicated they also participate in bushwalking

most often run in Perth

Figure 3. Bushwalker and trail runner participation.
(Source: Exploring WA's bush on foot survey 2018)

East Mt Barren, Fitzgerald River National Park. Image credit Tourism WA

2.1 Existing experiences

While many opportunities exist for hiking throughout the State, there has been relatively little planning to ensure community satisfaction with the mix of trails provided. There are many local trails loved by residents and a few State-based iconic trails loved by Western Australians and visitors alike.

In the past 30 years, there has been very little visible large-scale investment in hiking trails in WA. Stand out bushwalking projects include the Commonwealth/State Bicentennial Commemorative Program in 1988, the completion of the Bibbulmun Track in 1998, the completion of the Cape to Cape Track in 2001, upgrades to the Fitzgerald National Park in 2014, the Wadjemup Bidi trail network on Rottnest Island, completed in 2017, and the newly completed 20km Wiilman Bilya trail along the Wellington Dam.

In 2017, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) reported more than 20 million visits to national parks and reserves under its management.[1] The Bibbulmun Track and the Cape to Cape Track are the most well-known trails in the State, but there are additional wonderful hiking experiences across a variety of landscapes within the State's national parks, regional parks, conservation areas and local bushland. Western Australia hosts more than 300 bushwalking trails of varying experiences and quality.

Trails WA is a free resource providing detailed information on recreational trail experiences, including maps and imagery. While Trails WA seeks only to include maintained and signed trails on their website, many trails are in various states of disrepair or are simply fire-break tracks. Some designated trails have little or no wayfinding signage and are unknown to most people.

Short distance trail experiences

Close to Perth, some of the most popular trails are located in John Forrest National Park, Ellis Brook Valley Reserve, Bold Park, Kings Park, and Bells Rapids Park. In addition, the unmarked tracks around Kalamunda, Wungong Regional Park, and Lesmurdie Falls National Park are popular. Amongst the marked options, most are short, linear trails, which offer hikes at the least challenging end of the spectrum represented in Figure 2 (Section 2). Trail running race organisers design a variety of exciting loop routes for events, which are subsequently walked or run by race participants, either for training or as an alternative experience alone or with others.

State trails	Regional trails	Local trails
An extended trail or trail network that is of sufficient quality and with appropriate facilities, products and services to be recognised beyond the State and to attract visitors to WA.	A major trail or trail network that services a population centre or large regional community, with facilities and services of a standard and appeal that could attract visitors from outside the region.	A trail that services the local community and provides facilities suited to local use. Some local trails may have potential for development to regional status.

Long distance trail experiences

Western Australia is home to several point-to-point long-distance trails, including the Bibbulmun Track and the Cape to Cape Track. These experiences attract visitors from all over the State, interstate, and overseas. They are multi- day experiences that can also be walked or run in short sections. While the trails are often traversed end-to-end in a linear fashion, the large number of access points allows trail users to tailor their own itineraries to suit the preferred length of journey.

The Bibbulmun Track extends 1000 kilometres from Perth to Albany and is world-renowned, having been included in the National Geographic 20 'World's Best Epic Hikes.'[2] The 125 kilometre Cape to Cape Track is the only Western Australian 'Great Walk' (see National Trends). The trail winds along the spine of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park in the southwest of the State.

Western Australia is also home to the 180 kilometre Pilgrim Trail, a multi-day point-to-point route from Subiaco to New Norcia. It is primarily accessed as an eight day supported hike.

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1   Department of Parks and Wildlife 2016-17 Annual Report
2   World's Best Hikes: Epic Trails. National Geographic July 2012. Retrieved from www.nationalgeographic.com

Australia's
North West
125km

Australia's
Coral Coast
89km

227km
Australia's
Golden
Outback

Experience
Perth
1188km

Australia's
South West
1258km

Perth

Cape to Cape Track

Bibbulmun Track

Albany
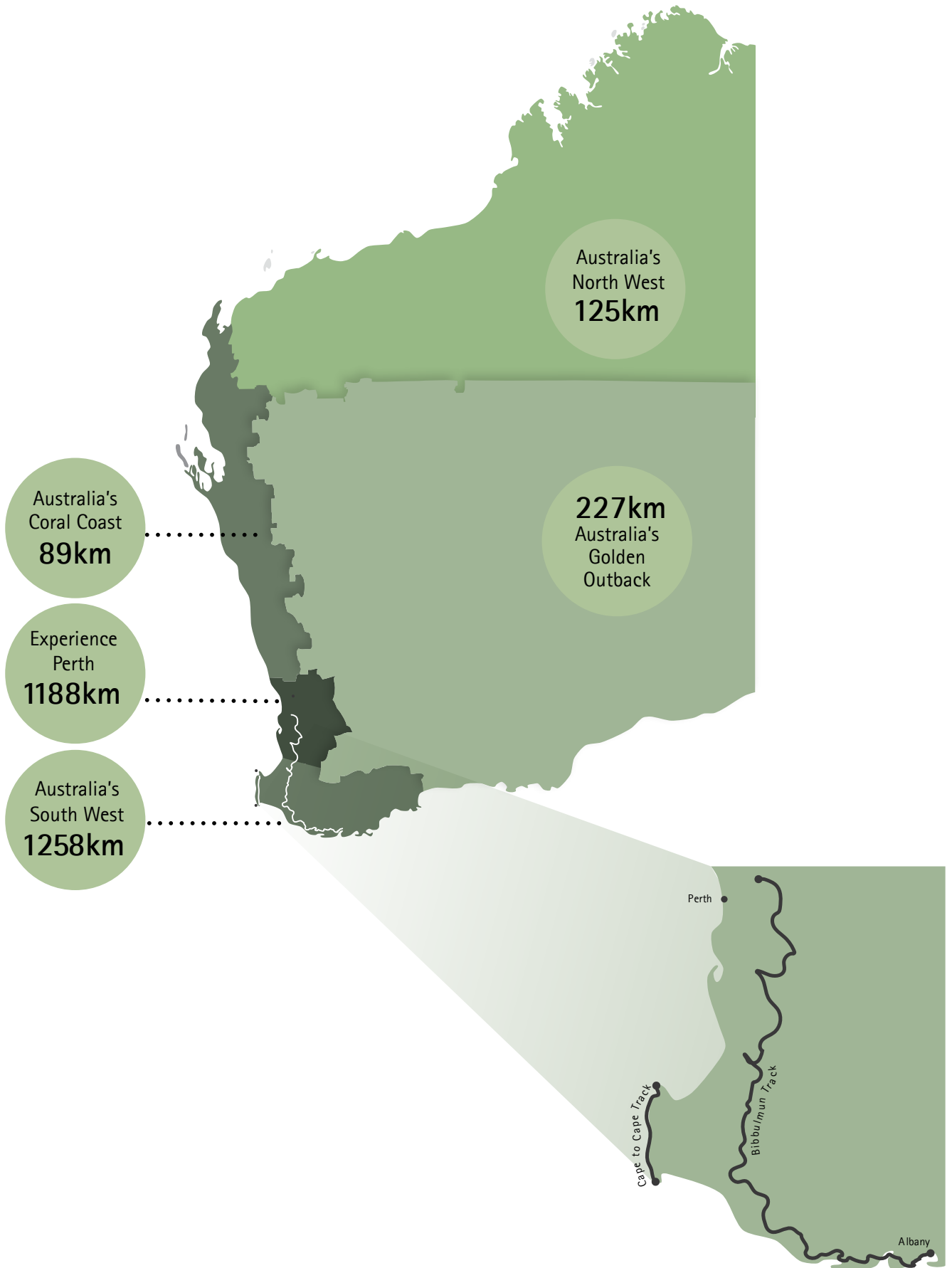
Figure 4. Total kilometres of bushwalk trails
Retrieved from trailswa.com.au
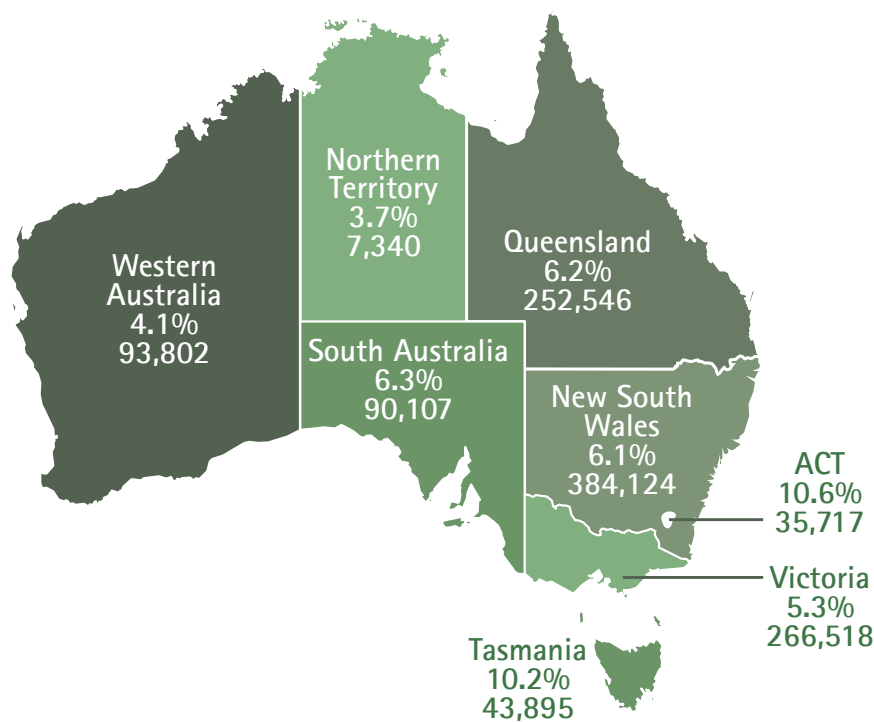
Figure 5. AusPlay Survey: Bushwalking participation levels by state/territory

2.2 Trends influencing Western Australia

National trends

Generally, physical activity levels in the Australian population are declining. AusPlay reports that from October 2015 to June 2019, the ACT had the highest percentage of active adults, with nearly half of the Territory's residents participating in organised sport or other physical activity. This was the case for both adults and children. WA had the highest participation rate nationally for adult sport–related participation. In the 2019 AusPlay State of Play report for bushwalking specifically, the ACT was found to have the highest bushwalking participation rate, while WA had the second lowest.[1]

Australia is one of the largest countries in the world, consisting of eight ecoregions, each characterised by exceptional contrasting landscapes, perfect for exploration on foot.[2] There are extensive hiking opportunities in every state.

Tasmania is the smallest state in Australia, but it has more than 2800 kilometres of managed walking tracks (only 300 kilometres less than the walks promoted on the Trails WA website) and 880 separate walks

in national parks, reserves and conservation areas.[3] Tasmania is home to five of the 12 'Great Walks of Australia' branded trails, while Western Australia, the country's largest state, only has the Cape to Cape Track.

Funding for bushwalking trails in Western Australia is minimal compared to other states and territories. In 2015, the $25.5 million Three Capes Track in Tasmania opened after seven years of construction funded by state and Federal governments.

With the publication of this document, WA becomes the first state to develop an activity-specific hiking strategy, with the vision of connecting all Western Australians to hiking.

International trends

New Zealand has thousands of kilometres of tracks in scenic landscapes, providing many opportunities to meet the needs and ability of all users and is an example of a leading global bushwalking destination. For residents of the country, walking was reported to be the most popular sport and recreation activity, according to the 2013/14 Active New Zealand Survey.[4] Running and tramping appeared in the top 10 list of activities for both men and women.

Hikers are willing to travel for high quality experiences.

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1 AusPlay survey results. Australian Sports Commission. Retrieved from www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au
2 Australia's ecoregions www.environment.gov.au
3 Walking in Tasmania. Discover Tasmania. Retrieved from www.discovertasmania.com.au
4 Special Interest, Market Information About Our Visitors and Our Active Considerers (published June 2019), Tourism New Zealand. Retrieved from https://www.tourismnewzealand.com/markets-stats/sectors/special-interest/

Up to 73% of visitors to New Zealand participated in bushwalking in the last three years, and 14% cited bushwalking as a factor influencing their choice of the country.[1] A comprehensive, easily-navigated website makes hiking experiences more accessible to visitors and residents.[2]

Nationally and internationally, more hikers are seeking lengthy, potentially transformational experiences, in the form of thru-hikes and pilgrimages. The high altitude Annapurna Circuit of Nepal, the border-to-border Pacific Crest Trail spanning the length of the USA, and the network of pilgrimages comprising the Camino de Santiago (Europe) are but three of the increasingly popular long-distance hikes. The World Trails Network, created in 2012, is a new organisation that represents walking trails globally.

Mt Buller in Victoria had pre-existing infrastructure for winter snow activities and subsequently created summer outdoor opportunities for trail runners, bushwalkers and mountain bikers. Coed y Brenin in the UK created a dedicated mountain bike environment, followed by a dedicated trail running network for novices and experienced runners alike.

1   Sport New Zealand, 2015. Sport and Active Recreation in the Lives of New Zealand Adults. 2013/14 Active New Zealand Survey Results.
2   100% New Zealand. Retrieved from www.newzealand.com

Carinyah area. Image credit Bernadette Benson

Zamia Bushwalking. Image credit DLGSC
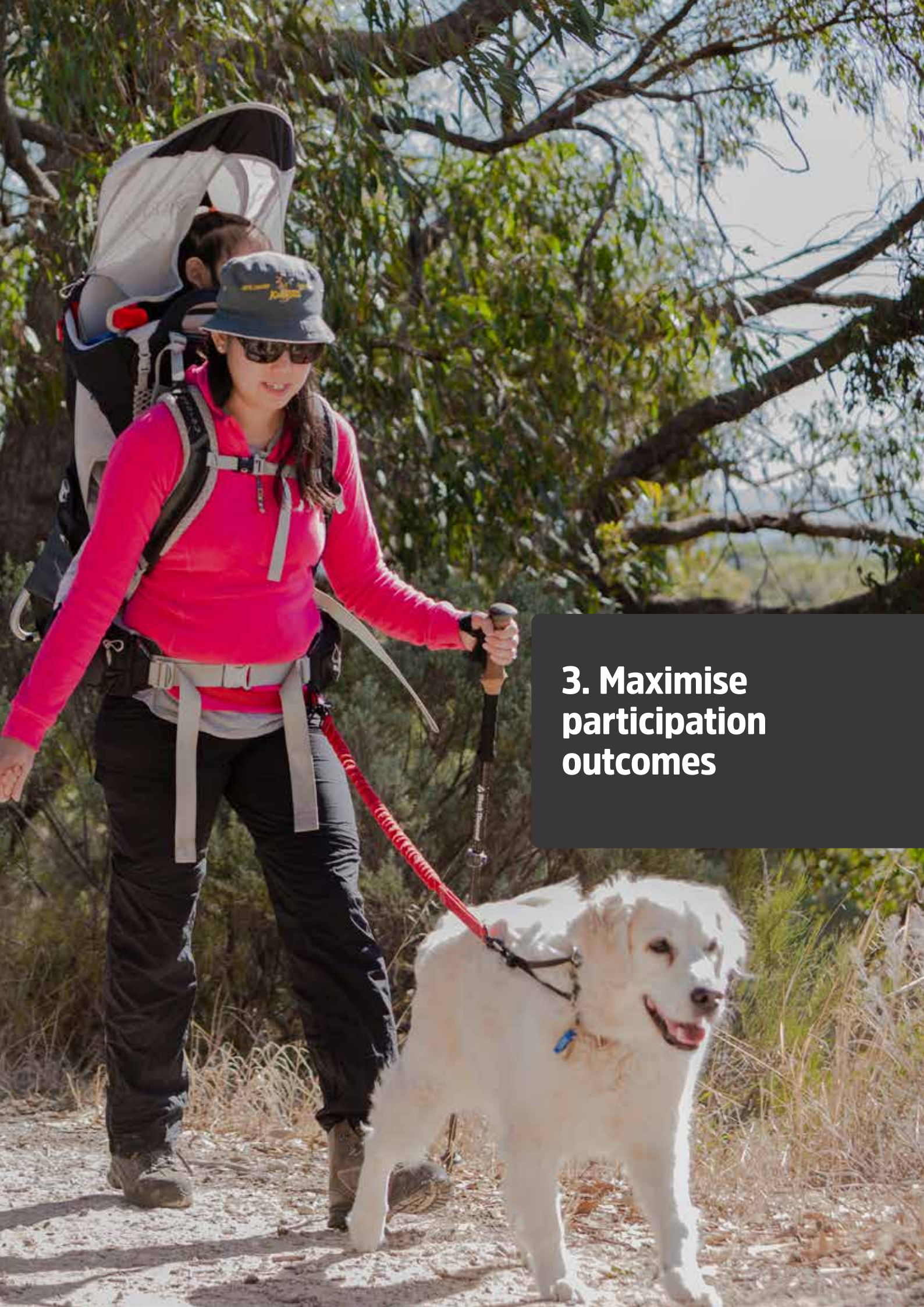
3. Maximise participation outcomes

3. Maximise participation outcomes

"Australians need to put down the remote control and mobile devices and head outdoors for a half-hour walk."
Dr David Hughes, AIS Chief Medical Officer[1]

Consultation with the hiking community in developing this strategy has provided further insights on the:

- motivating factors influencing people's decision to participate
- benefits hiking provides to individuals, communities and visitors
- user preferences in terms of frequency, duration and intensity of outings
- popular hiking trails and locations
- barriers preventing people from either taking part in an activity, advancing their existing skills, or seeking new challenges or experiences
- roles of schools, clubs, social groups, event promoters and tour operators in facilitating hiking
- preferred supporting trail facilities (such as accommodation, ablution facilities, car parking)
- distance participants are willing to travel to participate in hiking.

This section includes information gathered through public consultation as well as other data collection and analyses and seeks to provide information and guidance to Western Australian stakeholders. The motivators, benefits, and barriers to participation in hiking are outlined. There is an opportunity to break down participation barriers and encourage hiking throughout the State to achieve a happier, healthier population.

3.1 Motivators - why go outside?

When asked about the main reasons for using their preferred trails in WA, survey respondents from the two user groups varied slightly. More bushwalkers than trail runners used trails as a holiday activity, while more trail runners used trails due to events being held there or the ability to join in with a club or social group. The majority of all participants generally choose trails in order to be in nature, prefer trails close to home, seek a physical challenge, and highly regard the quality of a trail and its associated facilities. Many trail users identify time with friends and family as important and seek out trails with safe parking and access to transport.

Bushwalkers' and trail runners' motivators are as varied as the individuals. Motivators are linked to a person's stage of life, interests, needs, and preferences, and can be categorised as follows:

- Connecting to nature — being immersed in a natural landscape with high visual, emotional, and/or educational value

- Challenge — a diversity of challenging landscapes providing physical and/or mental challenge

- Competition — trail running/racing and walking events such as ultra-marathons or the 100 kilometre Oxfam Trail Walk

- Escapism — disconnecting from urban environments, routine, technology, or other aspects of daily life, often providing a sense of remoteness or adventure

- Experience — flooding the senses with amazing experiences, for example, reaching the summit for an expansive view

- Health benefits — mental or physical health benefits

- Social engagement — opportunity to connect with other people, providing a sense of community and belonging

- Social and other media — taking to the trails as a result of being inspired by others, or as social influencers themselves

- Visibility and accessibility — easy or progressive and well-marked trails with good facilities, located close to residential areas, public transport and short-stay accommodation.

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1   Sport Australia launched to get nation moving. August 2018. Retrieved from www.sportsaus.gov.au/media_centre/news/sport_australia_launched_to_get_nation_moving

3.2 Benefits of hiking

Many of the perceived benefits of outdoor recreation are being confirmed by scientific research into physical and mental health and wellbeing. DLGSC's "More People More Active Outdoors" (2019) referenced much supporting research, which was summarised within "five pillars" supporting the benefits of outdoor recreation. These pillars include (a) personal development, challenge and enjoyment, (b) improved health and wellbeing, (c) outdoor learning, (d) connection to nature, and (e) economic development. It is not only of great benefit to the individual to be recreating in nature, it is also in the interest of employers, health care providers, and educators. Encouraging participation in outdoor pursuits assists individuals in reaching their full potential, both physically and mentally.

Consultation with the hiking community of Western Australia outlined the perceived benefits to participation, which are tabled below. Physical and mental health were the most popular responses, along with connection to nature.[2]

2   Western Australian Bushwalking and Trail Running Strategy Industry Survey 2018

	Benefit
Health, Social, and Cultural	Physical and mental health benefits
	Positive family and social relationships
	Connection to nature and time away from technology
	Building resilience and self-confidence through the development of outdoor skills, and challenging oneself
	Volunteering opportunities, leading to a sense of community
	Participation in events, leading to a sense of community and achievement
	Breaking down cultural barriers
	Education through interpretation and knowledge sharing, including increased awareness of Aboriginal heritage
Environmental	Greater outdoor awareness and education
	Conservation by trail stewards
	Well-planned and developed trails reduce the potential for unsanctioned trail creation
	Passive surveillance in nature can deter unwanted behaviours (such as dumping of rubbish, illegal trail use, illegal activity)
Economic	Tourism opportunities; small business opportunities (such as commercial tour and event operators, retail outlets)
	Trails attract visitors and encourage visitors to stay longer in regional areas
	Job opportunities during construction and ongoing management as well as for the procurement of materials for construction and maintenance
	A healthier population alleviates pressure on the health care system
	Charity fundraising opportunities through sponsorship for events

Table 1. Perceived benefits of hiking (source: Exploring WA's Bush on Foot Survey 2018)

Figure 6. Exercising, socialising and being in nature: positive trail benefits contributing to healthy minds and bodies.

3.2.1 Health, social and cultural benefits

The community survey revealed the top three reasons for participating in hiking are exercise and fitness, socialising, and being in nature. All three of these identified reasons are similar in that they release feel-good hormones. Physical activity releases endorphins; socialising creates a feel-good cocktail of oxytocin, serotonin, and dopamine; and being out in nature in the fresh air stimulates serotonin production.[3] Hikers have tapped into these positive feelings and know the benefits to be gained from time on the trails.

One in five Australians experiences a mental health condition in a given year and almost one in two will experience a mental health condition at some point in their lifetime.[4] Physical exercise, socialising, and spending time in nature are known to be recommended complementary and preventative treatments for anyone suffering, or at risk from suffering, from mental health conditions.

Doctors in Scotland are giving out 'nature prescriptions' as part of a pilot supplementary treatment program to encourage patients to partake in nature walks.[5] This program is easily transferable to the enviable climate of Western Australia. In 2018, the Move It AUS campaign was launched due to reduced overall health and vitality of the nation, with the aim to have every adult commit to 30 minutes of exercise daily.[6] The Scottish nature prescription and Move It AUS programs both have valid health benefits. Hiking activities support achieving the recommended movement goals and may even be a commuting option in some areas.

The public survey results showed 44% of respondents volunteered in a hiking-related activity, including trail building or maintenance, events or activities, clubs or committees, and trail advocacy. Volunteering has a valuable positive effect on people, communities, and society in general.

3.2.2 Environmental benefits

Growing populations are putting pressure on the environment, including air quality, water quality, and biodiversity. Trails help manage access to natural environments, including plant and animal species by directing hikers to a single path.[7]

The South West region of WA is one of the world's 36 biodiversity hotspots. These are defined as areas where exceptional concentrations of endemic species are undergoing exceptional loss of habitat. A lack of knowledge among the local community of the amazing diversity of the South West region is cited as one of the reasons it is not cared for as well as it should be.[8] Raising awareness through responsible hiking in the South West creates an opportunity to create environmental stewards, protecting Western Australia's unique environment for future generations. Exposure to hiking throughout life, including through school, can assist in understanding the Leave No Trace principles and enhance understanding of the natural environment and how to protect it.[9]

3.2.3 Economic benefits

Investment in improving participation has the potential to provide significant benefits to the community. Increased participation can alleviate pressures on the healthcare system, through decreasing the risk of heart disease, obesity and depression. In 2012-13, cardiovascular disease was responsible for the greatest expenditure in the Australian healthcare system, both public and private.[10] One study predicts Australia could face $88 billion of extra health and social costs over the next 10 years if no further action is taken to curb the growth in obesity.[11] Western Australians need opportunities and environments that encourage them to walk and run more.

3   Better Health Channel. Victoria State Government. Retrieved from www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au
4   Australian Bureau of Statistics. National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing: Summary of Results. (2008). Retrieved from www.abs.gov.au
5   The Guardian. Scottish GPs to begin prescribing rambling and birdwatching. (2018). Retrieved from https://theguardian.com
6   Sport Australia, Find Your 30. (n.d.) Retrieved from www.sportaus.gov.au/findyour30
7   Trails and Greenways Clearinghouse (1999). Enhancing the environment with trails and greenways
8   Australia's South West: a hotspot for wildlife and plants that deserves World Heritage status. Retrieved from www.theconversation.com
9   Leave No Trace. Retrieved from www.lnt.org.au/
10 Australia's Health 2016. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Retrieved from https://www.aihw.gov.au
11 Weighing the cost of obesity: A case for action, PWC (2015)

Hiking also drives commerce. Experiences in regional and remote areas attract visitors. Great experiences encourage visitors to stay in WA. In 2018, Tourism Western Australia (Tourism WA) recorded 9.1 million intrastate overnight visitors, with a total intrastate holiday visitor spend of $2.9 billion.[12] Western Australians like to travel within their own State; more opportunities may decrease the desire to look interstate.

Hiking creates jobs for those working in hospitality (including tourism operators, guides, accommodation providers and cafes), for transport operators, and for retailers. People who work in publications (for example, guidebooks, photography), marketing and outdoor education can be positively affected by the hiking economy, as can those who work in planning (such as regional or trail specific), design, construction and maintenance.

Although little gear is required to participate in hiking, specific equipment enhances many people's experiences. This includes clothing, footwear, walking poles, electronic devices (navigation and personal safety devices), packs (day packs, overnight packs, hydration packs) and camping equipment (tents, mattresses, sleeping bags, cooking equipment, torches).

3.3 Pathways to entry and progression

Hikers vary in age, gender, experience, ability, and motivation. The way people interact with trails generally changes throughout their lives, depending on their personal needs, time availability and physical abilities. An understanding of bushwalkers and trail runners is needed to underpin planning for trail needs, including associated infrastructure, and for participation programs.

Wungong Regional Park. Image Credit Bernadette Benson
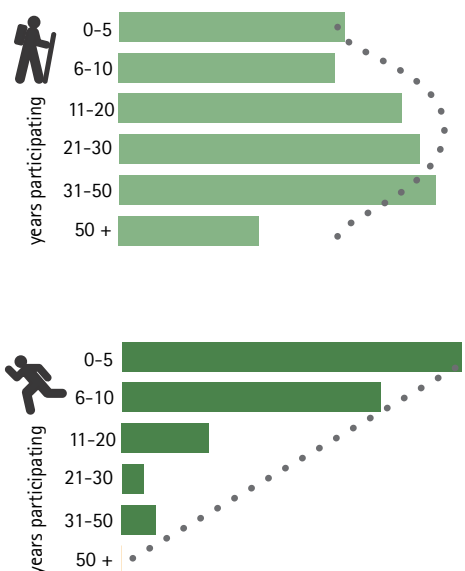
Figure 7. Comparison of years of participation between bushwalking and trail running. (Source: Exploring WA's Bush on Foot Survey 2018)

In 2015, Sport England and Outdoor Industries Association produced a report studying the characteristics of England's participants in outdoor sport and recreation. The average age for most individuals to get their start in outdoor activities was between 11 and 15 years.[13] Whilst participation tends to wane in early adulthood for 25% of active young adults, 20% take up some kind of outdoor activity again by their mid-adult years. Thus, not only is it critical to ensure sufficient supportive introductory opportunities exist for children and teenagers to get their start in hiking, there are likely to be specific unique factors relevant to adults who are late to enter the activity or who are considering re-engaging with the activity after a long-term lapse.

DLGSC's publication, More People More Active Outdoors: A Framework for Outdoor Recreation in Western Australia 2019, identified that ethnic background, socio-economic circumstance, physical limitations and gender impact on participation. Our increasingly urbanised population lack familiarity and experience with the Australian outdoors.[14]

In a recent WA survey, when asked how long they had been participating, the responses from bushwalkers and trail runners varied. Years-of-participation data created a curve from 0 to 50+ years, indicating bushwalking in WA has long been a popular pastime. Years-of-participation in trail running, however, revealed almost 49% of respondents participating for less than 5 years. There is a clear growth in popularity in trail running, which is aligned with the reported growth in event participation.

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12   Tourism WA. Domestic Visitation Fact Sheet (2018). Retrieved from https://tourism.wa.gov.au
13   Getting Active Outdoors: A Study of Demography, Motivation, Participation and Provision in Outdoor Sport and Recreation in England (2015). Retrieved from https://www.sportengland.org/research/understanding-audiences/getting-active-outdoors/
14   More People More Active Outdoors: A Framework for Outdoor Recreation in Western Australia 2019. Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au

The most common locations for bushwalking were in regional areas, whereas for running it was the Perth metropolitan area. Being in nature is the main reason both groups choose a particular trail, but proximity to home is equally important to runners. Both groups, bushwalkers and runners, prefer loops. The percentage of bushwalkers who reported they usually hike alone was similar between males and females. However, a greater percentage of female bushwalkers reported that they also often hike with a friend or partner, or in a small group, compared with males. On the other hand, the percentage of female trail runners who reported they usually run alone was significantly less than male trail runners, but both genders reported similar frequency of running with others.

Between 61% to 67% of walkers indicated that they use Class 3 and 4 trails monthly to several times per year, whereas 71% to 81% of runners use Class 3 to 4 trails on a weekly to monthly basis. A higher proportion of runners use all classes of trails more frequently, with almost half of all runners accessing a Class 3 trail on a weekly basis. 51% of runners and 70% of walkers, respectively, reported not using Class 5 to Class 6. A larger proportion of walkers than runners spend a full day on all classes of trails. On runs of less than two hours, most runners spend the majority of time on Class 1 and 2 trails. On longer outings, runners spend more time on a variety of terrain. Walkers and runners clearly require a range of trails and terrain to suit the spectrum of experience they have, their current needs (such as time available and fitness level), and to support their development in the activity.

Schools, clubs and groups

There are many outdoor programs around the State advocating for participation in hiking, and providing resources, information sessions, social events, and volunteering opportunities. School-based programs provide an important means for young people to have their first exposure to hiking. Groups, whether formal or informal, online or otherwise, help connect people to hiking. Event promoters, clubs, and groups also assist in connecting the community by hosting social outings and volunteer trail maintenance days.

3.4 Barriers

While hiking is a popular activity, and there are a considerable number of trails in Western Australia, there are many barriers limiting participation for first-time hikers and enthusiasts alike. Reducing barriers will facilitate happier, healthier communities.

Barriers to participation identified during the community consultation include:

- lack of awareness of available information on existing experiences, including dog-friendly trails
- lack of knowledge on how to engage safely and responsibly with the outdoors
- limited variety of experiences to satisfy the spectrum of existing competencies and desires, and experiences to facilitate progression
- lack of well trained and qualified leaders in hiking
- lack of iconic trails to entice participation
- a perception that the Australian bush is dangerous, including landscapes, antisocial behaviour, climate, and wildlife.
- restrictions on the land available for recreation (such as protected areas, protection zones for drinking water catchments, mining leases)
- limited availability of safe and accessible hiking opportunities, particularly in close proximity to population centres
- lack of time to travel for hiking experiences
- a large geographical spread of trails with insufficient interlinking transport systems
- a lack of loop trails
- lack of supporting infrastructure, including disabled access toilets, water, safe parking
- a perception that trail running is too hard and lack of awareness of trails suitable for trail running, including the gradient, distance, and technicality
- perceived high cost of specialised equipment.

Boranup Forest, Leeuwin Naturaliste National Park. Image credit Tourism WA

Trail Running Event. Image credit Perth Trail Series

Windjana Gorge National Park. Image credit Tourism WA

4. Growing the visitor economy

4. Growing the visitor economy

In recent years, Western Australia has seen a fluctuation in national and international visitors, motivating many local and State government departments to seek new opportunities for growth.[1] Increasingly, communities around the country are identifying unique natural areas, and creating accessible tourism products that cater for local demand as well as new visitor markets. According to the World Tourism Organisation, consumers are increasingly seeking authentic, exciting outdoor experiences.[2] There are few regions in the world with the diversity of WA. Now is the time to harness this advantage and create opportunities to promote unique hiking experiences that contribute to WA as a premier hiking destination.

In contrast to fluctuating international visitor rates, recent years have seen Western Australians increasingly holidaying at home.[3] This presents an opportunity to re-circulate the dollar through regional economies. It is estimated that Bibbulmun Track hikers account for $13.1 million in annual direct expenditure, much of this in regional communities.[4] In 2014–15, 93% of Bibbulmun Track hikers were Western Australians.

"Bibbulmun Track users account for $13.1 million in annual direct expenditure."

Encouraging day trippers to extend to overnight stays, and overnight stays to longer stays helps grow the visitor economy. To be successful in attracting visitors, however, there must be a large drawcard and sufficient infrastructure to support the increased visitation.

Destinations such as Tasmania and New Zealand attract visitors seeking adventure, wilderness, and experiences that provide a sense of discovery and personal achievement. Western Australian landscapes and wilderness areas offer a different experience to the alpine areas of New Zealand and Tasmania. The untouched wilderness of much of the State could be an attraction for adventure seekers. This should be considered in future planning and marketing. There should also be active efforts to harness interest within the State, negating the desire to travel interstate and abroad.

Iconic experiences appeal to local, national and international markets. Western Australia is unique in many ways and it is important this is conveyed to potential visitors, including hiking participants. Creating alluring experiences requires consideration of:

- Aboriginal tourism and heritage values
- high-quality, diverse, iconic and scenic trails
- events
- accessibility, accommodation, attractions and activities
- revenue generation opportunities
- a positive destination image
- partnerships and political support
- marketing and promotion – 'experience' packaging.

There are many locations throughout Western Australia already providing a combination of these qualities. Some locations are emerging destinations and will take time to establish sufficient infrastructure and supporting services required to attract significant visitor numbers. However, with targeted investment, these can be developed and marketed as world-class experiences attracting national and international markets.

4.1 Tourism

88% of repeat visitors to WA sought activities in natural landscapes.

International visitation for the year ending June 2019 increased across most states and territories, with the exceptions being Queensland and Tasmania.[5] Visitor Experience and Expectation Research 2017-2018 indicated 12% of surveyed visitors to WA reported a hiking-related motivation as one of their top three reasons for travel to this State.[6] A notable 88% of repeat visitors undertook activities in natural landscapes. The most popular age brackets to visit Western Australia for the first time were 45–54 and 55-64. In contrast, the most likely age groups for repeat visitation are the 25-34 and 65-74 age groups.[7] There is an opportunity to capture the interest of first-time visitors in the 45-64 age brackets and encourage repeat visits through positive hiking experiences.

1   Tourism Western Australia. International Visitation – Fast Facts (2018). Retrieved from www.tourism.wa.gov.au/Research-Reports/Latest_Visitor_Facts_and_Figures/pages/visitor-statistics.aspx#/
2   Global Report on Adventure Tourism (2014). World Tourism Organisation. Retrieved from www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284416622
3   Tourism Western Australia. Domestic Visitation – Fast Facts (2018). Retrieved from www.tourism.wa.gov.au/Research-Reports/Latest_Visitor_Facts_and_Figures/pages/visitor-statistics.aspx#/
4   The Bibbulmun Track Foundation. User statistics and surveys. User survey 2015. Retrieved from www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au/news/user-statistics-surveys/
5   International Visitor Survey (IVS) Report – June 2019. Retrieved from https://www.tra.gov.au/Data-and-Research/publications
6   Visitor Experience and Expectations Research (VEER) 2017-2018. August 2018. Retrieved from www.tourismwa.gov.au
7   Tourism Research Australia. Understanding Repeat Visitation to Western Australia (March 2018). Retrieved from www.tourism.wa.gov.au/Research-Reports/ Specialised-Research-Reports/Pages/Drivers-of-repeat-visitation.aspx#/

Tourism Research Australia reported that for the year ending June 2019, Australia saw a 4% increase in holiday visitors, whose spend increased by 6% from the previous year. Whilst Japan, USA, China, New Zealand, and the UK provided the most visitors, only Japan showed marked growth for the purpose of holiday. The UK market declined and China's visitors were primarily for education. Japan, Canada and Indonesia were identified as growing markets for holidays, with visitors from the first two nations reported to be beneficial for regional tourism, as they are more likely to venture outside of capital cities than the average tourist.[8]

In the year ending June 2019, WA received more than 970,000 international visitors, 1.79 million interstate visitors and 8.8 million intrastate visitors/trips.[9] According to Tourism WA, visitor spend was more than $10.5 billion, with an average stay of 6.1 nights for overnight visitors. Increasingly available direct flights to Perth provide opportunities to engage international visitors in hiking. Quality experiences across the State have the opportunity to draw visitors from Perth towards other regions, encouraging visitors to remain in the State longer.

Western Australia's diverse landscapes rival any bushwalking and trail running destination globally.

Tourism WA marketing has historically been broad scale, aimed at highlighting Western Australia as a destination, rather than specific activities. Both Tourism WA and Tourism Australia rely on industry supplied content. Hiking clubs, groups and stakeholders need to advocate further to include bushwalking and trail running activities in statewide promotions.

Sensible and sustainable marketing of Western Australia's natural environment is important. Marketing material should portray the health, social, cultural and environmental benefits of hiking. 'Experience' promoters need to work with land managers to ensure environmental and conservation values are protected.

There is an opportunity for WA to positively differentiate the State's hiking trails experiences from what is available elsewhere globally. The current 'undeveloped' state of many of WA's hiking opportunities could itself be a valuable attribute rather than a disadvantage. WA could benefit by retaining its relatively raw wilderness experiences.

4.2 Return on investment

Return on investment in the development of trails and infrastructure is prudent but demonstrating this requires more than simply counting the number of people on a trail. Economic benefits to communities often start before the person even leaves home for the trail head (for example, purchasing gear and maps).

There is a requirement for economic impact assessments for hiking in high-priority locations. The most suitable locations should be identified in regional master planning, where it exists. A list of high-priority projects should be developed, including a mix of iconic experiences, trail towns, local experiences, education

8   International Visitor Survey (IVS) Report – June 2019 Retrieved from https://www.tra.gov.au/Data-and-Research/publications
9   Tourism Western Australia. Visitation to Western Australia: Overview Year Ending June 2019 Retrieved from www.tourism.wa.gov.au/Research-Reports/Latest_Visitor_ Facts_and_Figures/pages/visitor-statistics.aspx#/

Image credit: Dennis Tan

and awareness programs, events support and marketing plans. Return on investment can then be evaluated, and the projects prioritised utilising a framework designed to reflect State and regional priorities.

4.3 Trail models

A trail model defines the extent of development for a particular trail facility. The range of trail models is described in detail within the WA Strategic Trails Blueprint (refer Figure 9). With careful planning, the most appropriate and cost-effective trail model can be selected and designed to accommodate present and future needs of a location. In addition to individual trails of varying distances and classification, there are trail networks, trail centres, and trail towns.

There are regional towns in Western Australia with diminishing industries, set in natural landscapes well-suited for hiking experiences. Recent trends show some communities are moving towards becoming

trail tourism destinations (Trail Towns). Such towns are identified through a range of studies and regional master planning for their offerings of trail experiences, infrastructure, accommodation, hospitality and complementary activities. Collie and Dwellingup are examples of regional towns developing experiences and supporting businesses in growing hiking tourism. Further investment in projects in these areas will help realise the full extent of economic stimulus that trail tourism brings to Western Australian regional communities.

4.4 Events

Trail running

Although non-commercial social runs are a major aspect of trail running in WA, events are common, as the activity is easily transferred to a competitive environment. Some trail runners feel safer running a
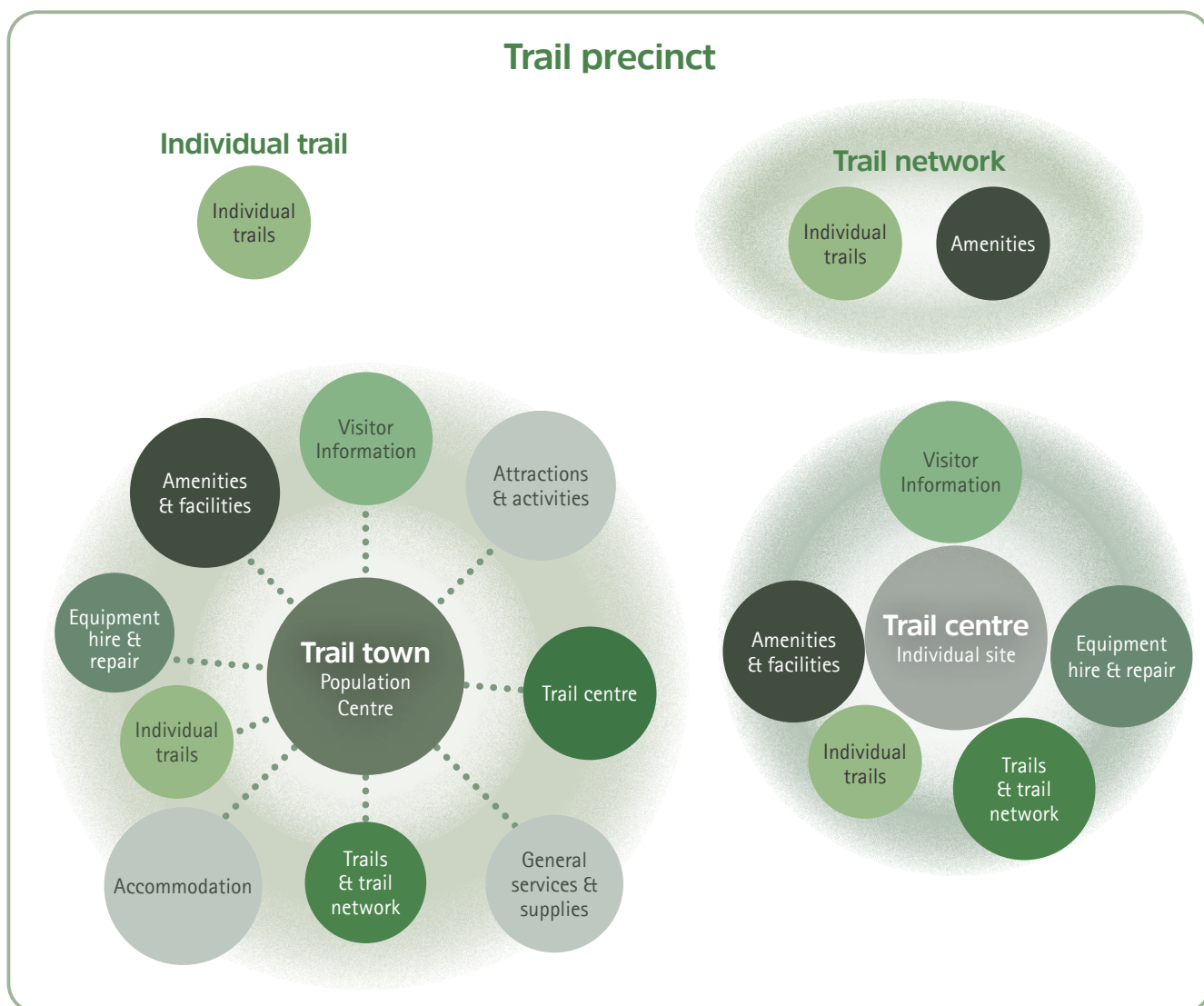

Figure 8. Trail models (source: Western Australian Strategic Trails Blueprint 2017–2021)

flagged course surrounded by other runners, particularly in WA where marked trails are minimal. Trail running events are becoming increasingly popular worldwide, including WA, with more events and increasing numbers of participants consistently reported over the past decade.

Anecdotal evidence on trail running participation shows there are considerably more trail runners participating in events than mountain bikers in mountain biking events. Data is being captured on the economic benefits of mountain bike tourism and the results are positive.

While there is a need for further research to support the anecdotal evidence, the potential in trail running events is notable. Ultra-Trail Australia, a trail running event held in the Blue Mountains of New South Wales, had 6000 participants and brought 16,000 people to Katoomba in 2018.

Trail running races are often commercial ventures. The distribution of events across the State contributes to intrastate tourism. Many runners travel with family to events and use it as a short holiday opportunity. Strategic location planning is important, as runners look favourably on venues with a range of facilities and activities to keep family members entertained during the race and to provide further entertainment for a short stay holiday.

Many trail running events in WA provide an introductory trail experience for runners who may not have the confidence to go out alone. Events provide safe and accessible running opportunities on temporarily flagged courses and provide a means for novice trail runners to learn from more experienced runners in a supportive setting. Perth-based event organisers are fielding more than 350 competitors at many of their events. Participants are primarily local runners for the short distance events but increasing numbers of competitors travel further (intrastate and interstate) for longer distance events. There are several other smaller statewide trail races, providing events ranging up to 350 kilometres. There is an opportunity to increase trail running visibility across the State by supporting more regional events.

Bushwalking

Commercial events in bushwalking are less common. Prior to 2018, Oxfam Australia ran an annual fundraising Trailwalker event in the Perth hills, where participants walked in a team to cover 100km in less than 48 hours or 50km in less than 24 hours raising money for their charity.

HikeWest is the peak body for bushwalking and links to 11 affiliated bushwalking clubs, which offer a range of activities and events. These include group walks,

navigation skill development, wilderness first aid training, outdoor safety, risk management education, and outdoor leadership development. The Bibbulmun Track Foundation also provides a similar range of regular non-competitive events year-round.

A number of online groups offer a means for coordinating bushwalking activities. Some of these have become commercialised and offer packaged bushwalking activities, including guided walks with gourmet meals or location yoga and incorporate local adventure-based businesses into the bushwalking package to create a full day of adventure.

4.5 Commercial operations

Commercial opportunities in hiking include, but are not limited to, guiding, on-trail accommodation, drop off and pick up services, bush awareness training courses including water sourcing, dehydrated food preparation, pack preparation and weight-saving techniques, navigation, emergency response services, and wilderness first aid training. Courses specifically designed for school groups, Scouts, and outdoor education groups facilitate participation in hiking at all levels. There is a large volume of information available on the internet, but many individuals may feel unable to discern reliable sources for best practice from the myriad of sources and would feel safer in a formal, supported learning environment.

Western Australia is behind the rest of the country in the provision of quality commercial operations to support and grow the hiking community. There are many quality commercial operations across Australia and New Zealand that can be utilised as benchmarks for WA.

Existing quality products and experience

The Larapinta Trail in the Northern Territory is an excellent example of a quality hiking product and experience. The business model provides a range of experiences from self-supported with pick up and drop offs, through to fully-guided adventures with backpack/luggage transport between camps. There are three-day experiences through to end-to-end support, meaning there are options for people of all abilities wanting to experience a trail in the Australian outback.

The Queen Charlotte Track in New Zealand is a very popular trail offering a variety of experiences from self-supported independent hiking or biking, through to fully-guided luxury packages. The guided walks include ensuite accommodation and the option for backpack transfers between hotels. Additional activities can be added to enhance the experience, including mountain biking, kayaking, and wine tours. The area surrounding

the Cape to Cape Track in WA's South West region has similar qualities to the experiences available in the vicinity of the Queen Charlotte Track.

There are a number of businesses currently selling packaged bushwalking experiences across Western Australia. These include multi-day experiences with guides, meals, accommodation and transfers. Such experiences exist on the Cape to Cape Track, the Bibbulmun Track, the Bungle Bungles and within Karijini National Park. Western Australia needs to highlight its points of difference to begin competing with New Zealand and other Australian states.

Aboriginal cultural experiences

In 2018, $4.3 billion was spent on tours by visitors to Australia.[10] A key finding from the annual Visitor Experiences and Expectations Research in 2017- 18, carried out by Tourism WA, found 82% of visitors were interested in Aboriginal cultural experiences, but only 26% participated.[11] This indicates a clear unmet opportunity for cultural tourism.

The Lurujarri Heritage Trail was initiated in 1987 with a goal of encouraging the Goolarabooloo community to be walking the country again, to facilitate non-Aboriginal people to improve their relationship with the land, and to promote cross-cultural understanding. The trail experience is booked out every year, with one event reserved for students. The experience fully submerses participants in the Goolarabooloo way of life, following songlines through the landscape, living off the land, cooking on fires, washing in the sea and learning handcrafts such as carving karli (boomerangs).

Ensuring culturally respectful Aboriginal ownership and leadership of bushwalking cultural experiences will facilitate capacity building within the Aboriginal community and ensure authentic cultural experiences for visitors.

4.6 Online resources

Social media

Social media consists of websites and applications that allow users to interact (including Facebook, Instagram, Strava). Accessing the great outdoors electronically through a computer or mobile phone may encourage more people to get outdoors, be motivated and inspired by others, and remove some of the fears that are barriers for participation.

Social media is a powerful tool in the 21st century. Trail-related groups and advocates of hiking in WA have an active presence on social media platforms. Online hiking groups are increasing in popularity, with 14% of surveyed individuals revealing them to be one of their main motivators for being out on the trails. Of surveyed runners, 48% are a member of an online group associated with trail running. A huge 74% of surveyed individuals follow social media pages associated with hiking. Social media is not only a useful tool for residents of the State to research hiking opportunities, but also helps attract national and international visitors.

Websites, blogs, and other online media

Trail specific websites, such as the Bibbulmun Track Foundation and Friends of the Cape to Cape sites are extremely useful for trip planning. Additionally, websites such as Trails WA, DBCA Explore Parks WA, and HikeWest provide varying amounts of information on how to access trails and hiking groups statewide, wilderness safety, and additional links to other resources such as tour providers, equipment providers and accommodation. There is some repetitive information across multiple online platforms. Trails WA should aim to have comprehensive information on hiking trails across the State.

46% of surveyed individuals have used the Trails WA website.

Over the past 15 years, blogging by outdoor enthusiasts has become an increasingly popular way to share experiences. Many people will search for blogs or other online articles on specific hiking trails or areas prior to embarking on a journey. Bloggers and other social influencers build a professional reputation and have the power to be an individual with authority within their discipline. They can build a loyal following of people.

Marketing strategies should consider including bloggers and other social influencers. Funding of these activities will result in a higher-quality product and could be used across multiple hiking marketing platforms and publications. A dynamic marketing campaign should contain a selection of content from imagery on social media platforms, formulated familiarisation tours with journalists, articles in specific publications, and direct engagement of bloggers and other influencers to reach a targeted market.

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10   Tourism Western Australia. Western Australia, Aboriginal Tourism Snapshot (2017). Retrieved from www.tourism.wa.gov.au/Research-Reports/
      Specialised-Research-Reports/Pages/WA-Aboriginal-tourism-snapshot.aspx#/
11   Visitor Experience and Expectations Research (VEER) 2017-2018. August 2018. Retrieved from www.tourismwa.gov.au

Coastal Walk Trail, Cape Le Grand National Park. Image credit Aaron McCreath

5. Sustainable trail development and maintenance

5. Sustainable trail development and maintenance

Sustainability is meeting the needs of the present without compromising the well-being of future generations.[1]

Growing participation and maximising the benefits of hiking is dependent on providing accessible, sustainable, and immersive trail experiences. An in-depth understanding of the benefits of hiking, as well as an anticipation of future needs of participants, is essential for sustainable growth.

A strategic approach to the expansion of Western Australia's hiking trail offerings requires:

- understanding the relevant statewide planning hierarchy, as well as world's best practice in trail development standards

- sustainable development and management of iconic and attractive trails tourism experiences

- evaluation, rejuvenation and upgrades to existing experiences

- encouragement of complementary participation programs, campaigns and incentives

- adequate funding and resources.

5.1 Consistent and collaborative trail planning

Western Australia has a large and diverse inventory of existing hiking trails. Many have been developed and continue to be maintained through collaborative partnerships between government, community organisations and passionate individuals. There are many accessible, unique and highly regarded trails, from modest local bushland trails through to the iconic Bibbulmun Track. However, broad community feedback has indicated there are a number of barriers preventing many people from accessing WA's trails, and some trails are failing to meet the needs of hikers.

There is a responsibility to ensure trails meet the needs of the people, protect the environment, are economically sustainable, and have a suitable governance model. The Strategic Trails Blueprint provides a statewide trail planning hierarchy to guide investment decisions across all trail types.[2] The Trails Development Series has been developed to assist land

managers in consistent, high-quality, sustainable trail development and management across WA[3]. The series sets out planning and management standards for all trails to guide all stakeholders in a consistent development process (see Figure 12). There is a clear trail development process, which encompasses eight stages, from proposal through to construction and management. More training and sharing about good trail construction techniques, standards and classifications is needed.

Implementing this strategy and developing experiences in accordance with the statewide planning hierarchy will enable a more coordinated approach than what has been done in the past (see Figure 11). The planning process ensures existing trail supply is assessed and optimised in conjunction with the introduction of potential new experiences. Optimising the existing supply may include physical infrastructure and upgrades, as well as implementing gateway participation programs.

Engaging a large cross-section of the trail community ensures transparency, cross-agency advocacy, and the opportunity to monitor and evaluate progress across all trail sectors, including hiking.

One of the greatest risks identified with increased trail development is the impact of 'over tourism'. Over tourism is a term that refers to tourism that has moved beyond the limits of acceptable change in a destination due to the quantity of visitors, resulting in degradation of the environment and infrastructure, diminished travel experiences, wear and tear on built heritage, and/or negative impacts on residents.[4] Rigorous trail planning, approval, and management processes will assist in avoiding over tourism.

The strategic development of trails in WA is guided by a Trails Reference Group (TRG) which is convened by the DLGSC. The TRG is made up of agencies and individuals from a wide selection of stakeholder organisations, including State government departments, funding bodies, community organisations, as well as individual community members. An Iconic Trails Subcommittee (ITS) was established in 2018 with the objective of identifying projects offering economic benefits to the State and maximising returns on investment by attracting trails tourists. Coordinating regional master planning, the TRG, and the ITS will ensure the consistent application of the planning processes, support an increase in hiking participation, and establish WA as a premier hiking destination.

1   UN Documents. Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future (1987) retrieved from https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf
2   Department of Sport and Recreation. Western Australian Strategic Trails Blueprint 2017-2021 (2017)
3   Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries. Trails Development Series (2019)
4   Center for Responsible Travel. The case for Responsible Travel: Trends and Statistics (2018). Retrieved from https://www.responsibletravel.org/docs/The_Case_for_Responsible_Travel_2018_FINAL_FOR_WEB.pdf

WA Strategic Trails Blueprint

1

2 WA Hiking Strategy:
Bushwalking and trail running in
Western Australia 2020 - 2030

Regional trails
master plans **3**

4 Localised
trails plans

Figure 9. Statewide trails planning structure

	Stage	Outcome.[5]		
Planning	1. Proposal	The proposed area is either supported in principle for trail development, or is not supported due to environmental, social or cultural constraints. The proposal could be to identify potential suitable areas for consideration.	Desktop	
	2. Framework	A project outline, developed by project steering group (stakeholders), including: project objectives, project management model, stakeholder roles, target market, requirements, standards, execution, and ongoing trail management model.		
	3. Site assessment	Undertake a broad scale study of the area, including constraints, soil types and vegetation.		Field
	4. Concept planning	Identify opportunities and conceptual trail plan including infrastructure requirements produced. Broad trail corridors are physically flagged in the field.		
	5. Corridor evaluation	Detailed assessment of corridor.		
	6. Detailed design	Detailed trail design produced and physically flagged in the field, including: trail classifications, technical trail features (TTFs), construction types and specifications.		
Construction	7. Construction	Trail is constructed in line with the detailed design.		
Management	8. Management	Management plan implemented detailing maintenance, monitoring and funding requirements.		

Figure 10. Trail Development Process
(source: Trails Development Series)

The Trails Development Series should be utilised by all land managers in all aspects of hiking planning, development and maintenance. Standardised planning and management processes across the State will ensure sustainable hiking experiences for trail users, trail managers and future generations.

Australian standards

When planning hiking experiences, relevant Australian standards should be consulted. All walk trail construction and walk trail infrastructure should be designed and constructed to meet Australian Standards AS 2156.1–2001 (R21018) Walking tracks – Classification and Signage, and AS 2156.2– 2001 Walking tracks – Infrastructure design.

In addition to physical trail construction standards, there are also the recently developed Australian Adventure Activity Standard and Good Practice Guides, which have been developed through collaboration with national and state outdoors bodies, including Outdoors WA. These have been developed by industry and activity experts and offer guidance based on the best available knowledge and past experience in outdoor activities.[5]

These should be worked towards or applied as an industry standard by organisations when conducting outdoor recreation activities for groups with dependent participants.

Trail classification systems

The Standards Australia "Walking Tracks Classification System" is the recognised system for walk trail classification, markers and signage in Western Australia (see Figure 2).

Trail running does not have a separate grading system in Western Australia. At Mt Buller, Victoria, a trail grading system has been specifically designed for trail runners. The network, referred to as Run Buller has adopted the Trail Score-Trail Run Route Grading System (TRRGS), which is copyrighted as a proprietary system for grading trails according to their suitability for trail running. The trails are classed green, blue, or black, in line with mountain biking and skiing globally. The trails are assessed on distance, total ascent, gradient inclusions, technicality, and route marking.

5   Australian Adventure Activity Standard: Key requirements for preparing and delivering adventure activities (2018).
    Retrieved from www.australianaas.org.au

A separate trail running trail grading classification is not recommended for the State. If a trail running facility were developed in WA in the future, a specific grading system may be merited.

Regional trails master planning

Regional trails master planning can help identify gaps in existing experiences. The process considers urban, rural and remote land owned and/or managed by the State government, local governments and private organisations/individuals, and includes national parks, State forest, regional parks, bushland reserves, local parks, and recreation reserves. During the master planning process, on-ground audits of existing hiking experiences are carried out, including the assessment of associated infrastructure. The current supply is assessed against demand. This leads to the identification of potential new locations as well as areas requiring re-evaluation, closures, maintenance and upgrades.

Regional trails master planning has commenced in some areas, but is still limited.

Such planning leads to a comprehensive prioritisation framework for projects identified. Master planning also assists in staged implementation as funds become available.

Broad constraints

In planning nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation experiences, it is important to consider potential environmental, social, cultural and economic impacts to ensure the unique values of an area are recognised and protected. This could result in some areas across the State being deemed unsuitable for hiking experiences. Constraints will become apparent as feasibility and planning studies are undertaken.

Hiking up Mt Cooke. Image credit Bibbulmun Track Foundation

5.2 Trail design

The two most common designs for trails are loop and point-to-point, although trails can be designed in a myriad of ways (such as lollipop or stacked loops), with consideration for the needs of the participants and the local landscape.

Loop (sometimes called circuit) trails start and finish in the same location, and these were reported through the survey as the most preferred experience. Point-to-point trails start and finish in different locations, allowing groups of trail users to park vehicles at either end or to access public transport or shuttle services to transport them back to the start.

Hiking an entire long-distance trail continuously as a multi-day journey is termed end-to-end hiking or thru-hiking. Such trails often connect towns and may be broken up into smaller sections. Some of the best-known global examples of long-distance trails include the Appalachian Trail in the USA, the Camino de Santiago in Europe, and the Te Araroa Trail in New Zealand. The Bibbulmun Track and the Cape to Cape Track are two examples of Western Australian long-distance trails.

5.3 Revenue generation models

Successful trail models worldwide utilise various income streams, which enable input of funds from private individuals, community organisations, businesses, corporations and government, and should be investigated further during the planning of any new proposed trails. A community model may include income through memberships, donations, and services. A diverse range of funding sources and revenue generation models will be required to ensure sustainable development and ongoing management of hiking trails and facilities. Given the current challenges of maintaining existing infrastructure to acceptable standards, and the reliance on volunteers, new and innovative revenue sources need to be explored.

These include:

- park entry fees
- trail access fees
- facility use fees, such as for camping, shelters, and parking
- shuttle fees
- lease of space to commercial operators
- event promoter donations
- per person participation fee and maintenance contributions
- trail sponsorship contributions
- café, retail and/or rental income.

Examples of trail models in other Australian states that implement trail access fees include the Three Capes Walk in Tasmania, the Jatbula Trail in the Northern Territory and Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail in South Australia. Revenue generated is directed to trail management and maintenance.

There is an opportunity for trails designed around this model in Western Australia. Private investment models, such as the Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail, allow for a complete experience, as opposed to the staged approach many government projects use due to limited funding.

5.4 Management and maintenance

Many of the existing trails in WA have a simple management structure, where the land owner is solely responsible for trail maintenance. The survey and consultations identified dissatisfaction with regards to trail maintenance.

Large scale maintenance issues were identified, including a lack of resources to support maintenance which is one of the greatest challenges for trail management.

Resourcing is usually provided through ongoing asset management budgets, however, funding is generally very limited. There are a number of alternative models involving fundraising and sponsorship, and the use of volunteer resources.

Lack of access to, or awareness of, volunteering opportunities was also noted. There is a potential to improve access to volunteering opportunities, which could lead to overall improvements in the maintenance of trails throughout the State. Consideration must be given to trail construction and maintenance teams working across the State.

Community partnerships can be successful in managing trail maintenance, where formal agreements set out maintenance standards and schedules to be carried out by volunteers. Individuals develop feelings of guardianship and pride over their trails, as they help ensure users have a rewarding experience. This maintenance model generates camaraderie, social experiences, is financially sustainable, and if managed well can be successful for trails of all types. The initial set up of a volunteer task force can be arduous, but the long-term benefits far outweigh the initial input. The survey results indicated 44% of respondents volunteered in some aspect of trail-related activity, including trail building or maintenance, events or activities, clubs or committees, and trail advocacy activities.

The Bibbulmun and Cape to Cape tracks, Western Australia's two premier hiking trails, are both largely maintained using community partnerships. The land manager for each of these trails is DBCA in partnership with dedicated not-for-profit organisations assisting with the maintenance and marketing of the trails.

Other types of community partnerships involve volunteer run 'Friends of' groups around the State assisting with maintaining trails in partnership with the land managers, who are usually local or State governments.

Trail maintenance activities are also coordinated by trail running event promoters to minimise the impact of their events on the trails and otherwise support the trail networks that participants appreciate using.

An alternative trail maintenance model has been successfully implemented by the not-for-profit organisation, Trail Fund NZ.[6] Founded in 2012, it is run solely by volunteers, supporting the development and maintenance of publicly available, environmentally sensitive and sustainable mountain bike accessible trails in New Zealand. Trail Fund NZ also focuses on educating the public regarding sustainable trail building, best practice guidelines and the benefits of trail projects. A trail maintenance fund would be highly beneficial to the Western Australian hiking community.

In order to ensure long-term sustainability, it is essential early planning stages consider the bodies that will be integral to ongoing management and maintenance. Volunteer task forces are economically, socially and environmentally positive maintenance models. Statewide coordination of trail maintenance volunteers and resources should be considered.

5.5 Monitoring and evaluation

Data collection is paramount for progressing experiences and increasing participation in hiking. Increased participation data will assist future strategic planning. Sport Australia monitors participation in sport and recreation through the annual AusPlay Survey. However, there are limitations with this data and trail running is not specifically identified. The American Outdoor Foundation carries out surveys to determine participation in hiking/trail running specifically, including a breakdown of ethnic backgrounds.[7] It is recommended Western Australia moves towards gathering this level of data. Detailed participation

data, for both residents and visitors, is required to inform future planning across the State.

On-trail data capture and stakeholder engagement can assist trail planning, design and ongoing management. Trail information is required to develop maintenance schedules, understand trail use, provide statistics for strategic document development, and for grant applications.

Data collection strategies include:

- motion/ trail counters
- physical counting
- satisfaction surveys (online or in person)
- scientific assessment of trail surface changes, including photographic monitoring
- event participation numbers and details.

It is recommended that a central body coordinates data capture to gain statistics in participation for both trail running and bushwalking. This should include participant demographics, trail type, infrastructure preferences, user numbers on key trails and known hiking destinations, and event participation numbers in WA.

5.6 Funding and resources

High-quality hiking experiences can require significant investment, but the benefits and returns in social, cultural, economic, and health outcomes should justify the expenditure. Where possible, hiking experiences should be designed to reduce pressures on government funding, for example, by including private investment funds and/or a pay-for-use model.

Large-scale projects may be funded in stages, and from different sources. A strategic approach to delivery is breaking projects into manageable phases that can be rolled out without negatively affecting the other phases. A combination of funding options should be considered, as funding availability will fluctuate with government and economic changes in the State. Alternatively, private investor trail development with a revenue raising focus alleviates pressure from governments' annual budgets and revenue would support trail management and maintenance.

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6   Trail Fund NZ. Retrieved from https://trail-fund.myshopify.com/pages/about-us
7   Outdoor Foundation. Outdoor Participation Report (2018). Retrieved from https://outdoorindustry.org/resource/2018-outdoor-participation-report/

Bungle Bungle Range Purnululu National Park
Image credit Tourism WA

6. Effective governance and advocacy

6. Effective governance and advocacy

6.1 Existing situation

Nationally, there are organisations governing or advocating for bushwalking and trail running to varying degrees.

Bushwalking Australia is a federation of State-based peak body organisations, which in turn have clubs and individuals as members. The federation is governed by a council consisting of an elected delegate from each State plus co-opted members.

The Australian Ultra Runners Association (AURA) governs the sport of running over distances greater than the marathon distance (42.2km); this incorporates trail, track, and road races. There are volunteer State representatives to assist in promoting participation in their jurisdiction. The International Trail Running Association (ITRA) is a young organisation created in Europe with aims to further develop the sport, particularly with regards to event participation (for example, safety, anti-doping, ranking of elite athletes). There are two ITRA representatives from Australia, one for runners and one for organisations.

In Western Australia, there are various bodies undertaking advocacy efforts including HikeWest, Trails WA and Outdoors WA. However, capacity to build awareness, increase participation, manage grants, and develop revenue streams is extremely limited within the various current organisational structures. HikeWest is the main representative body for bushwalking in the State and has a mission of promoting and fostering safe and responsible bushwalking. It advocates on matters that affect bushwalking opportunities and experiences in WA and provides public information via its website and social media. The majority of WA's bushwalking clubs are members of HikeWest.

Currently, Western Australia does not have a representative trail running body, although there are event providers building community camaraderie, interest and support. There are potential benefits of having State trail running representation, providing a voice to national and international trail running discussions.

The WA survey undertaken for this strategy indicated that the majority of bushwalkers (67%) and many trail runners (24%) are not members of a club or even an informal group. There is a need to support and facilitate the effective statewide operation of clubs and groups, including working to diversify services and articulate the benefits of membership to attract new members. This will strengthen clubs and groups.

Trails WA is an independent body that focuses on advocacy and marketing of trails and associated activities including trail running and bushwalking. It has a growing repository of approximately 600 trails (over half of which are hiking-specific) on its website, making it the strongest trails website in the State with opportunity to monetise in the future.

Outdoors WA is a not-for-profit organisation that supports the outdoor sector in Western Australia including camping, outdoor recreation and outdoor education. It has been particularly active in championing the development of the Australian Adventure Activity Standard with interstate counterparts.

6.2 Where we want to go

In order for the vision of this strategy to be realised for the benefit of all Western Australians, leadership is required to deliver on the recommendations identified. A formalised and endorsed structure is needed to coordinate all efforts across multiple stakeholders. Given the range of stakeholders with an interest in hiking, it is important to ensure management arrangements have broad representation and a willingness by all parties to commit to area(s) of responsibility. Long-term success will be bolstered by a collaborative relationship with all relevant stakeholders.

6.3 How we get there

Acknowledging and respecting the important work done by the existing organisations, agencies, groups and corporate bodies is essential in any further development of bushwalking and trail running.

To implement WA Hiking Strategy recommendations, a steering committee guided by the Trails Reference Group (TRG) should be established. The steering committee should have a strategic, leadership focus and should not be encumbered with members who are overly representative of organisations or interest groups. It should commence an immediate program to work with existing bodies to prioritise and deliver strategy recommendations. In this approach it will be important for the TRG to encourage agreement among all stakeholders and not to increase the burden on the personnel who make up the boards and work teams across the State.

Natures Window, Kalbarri National Park. Image credit Tourism WA
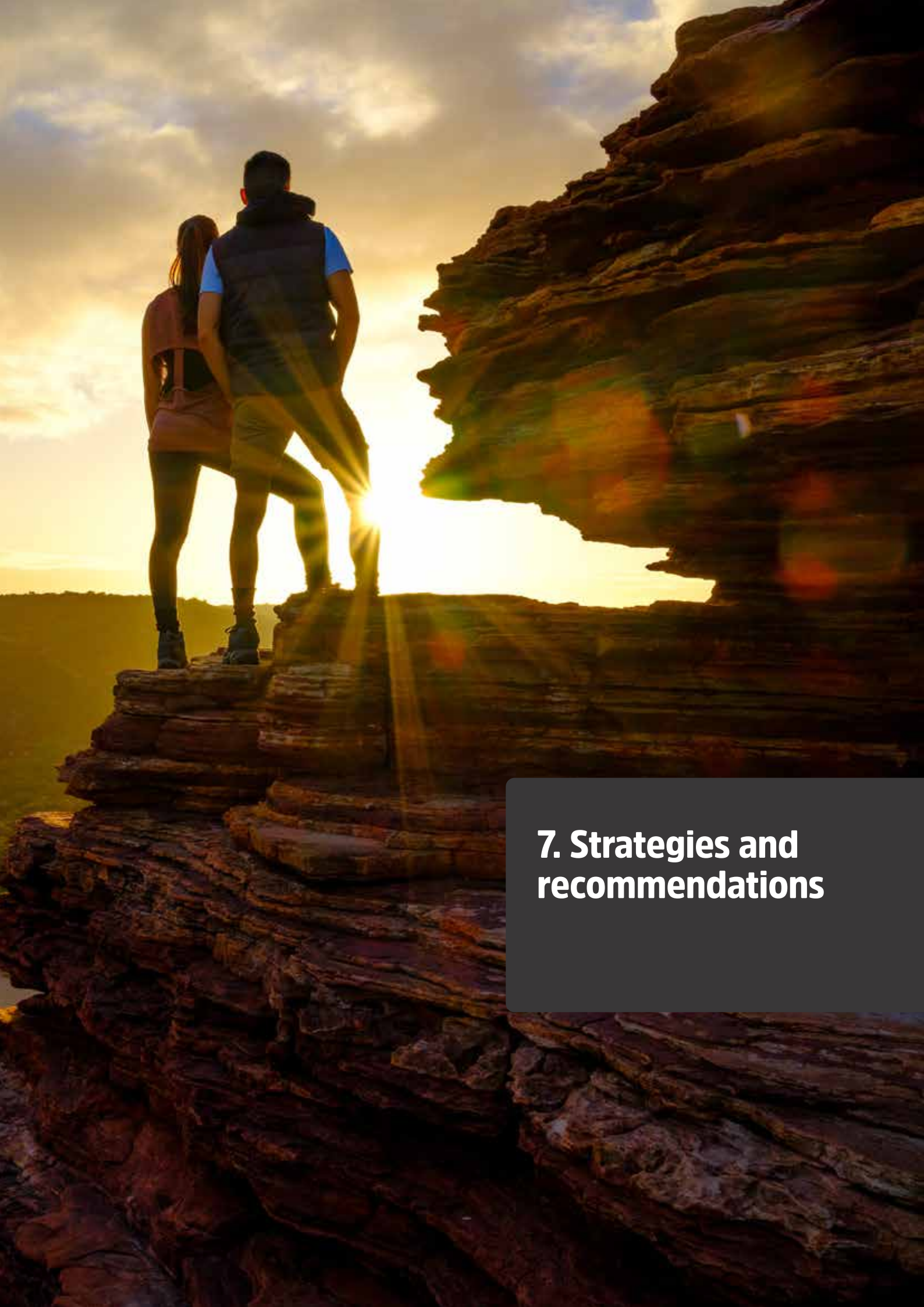
7. Strategies and recommendations

7. Strategies and recommendations

7.1 Objective 1

Maximise participation outcomes

Encourage participation at all levels and capitalise on the benefits of trail running and bushwalking.

Strategies	Recommendations	
1.1 Grow participation to maximise the positive impact on individuals, communities and the State	1.1.1	Increase gateway opportunities to engage new participants of all ages, cultures, and other demographic backgrounds to hiking
	1.1.2	Expand the pathway opportunities for participants to develop independence, including outdoor education, clubs, and community groups
	1.1.3	Encourage and promote more events and activities that increase participation and skills development
1.2 Increase hiking opportunities of varying experience and classification across targeted Western Australian locations	1.2.1	Implement regional trails master planning to ensure consistent, coordinated and sustainable planning across the State
	1.2.2	Identify and develop a spectrum of hiking experiences of varying challenge in parks and reserves across the State
	1.2.3	Develop more half- and full-day loop trails near population centres and adjoining long distance trails
1.3 Reduce barriers to participation and develop a strong and vibrant hiking community	1.3.1	Cross-promote bushwalking and trail running to ensure as much information is available to new users as possible
	1.3.2	Provide accessible and safe facilities, including secure parking, for bushwalkers and trail runners
	1.3.3	Improve hiking experiences linked to public transport networks
	1.3.4	Ensure wayfinding signage, brochures and mapping are accessible and consistent
1.4 Encourage and support responsible and safe hiking	1.4.1	Develop and promote a code of conduct for shared trail use
	1.4.2	Educate and increase awareness on planning and preparation for safe hiking
	1.4.3	Support the development of outdoor hiking leaders

7.2 Objective 2

Grow the visitor economy

Grow visitation by increasing the reputation of Western Australia's new and existing experiences, including commercial enterprises, events and activities.

Strategies	Recommendations	
2.1 Increase awareness of Western Australia's hiking offerings within local, domestic and international markets	2.1.1	Increase the visibility of the Trails WA website and continue improving content, including trail running information
	2.1.2	Dedicate marketing for hiking opportunities through tourism channels
2.2 Increase hiking travel and tourism	2.2.1	Identify and develop potential iconic multi-day hiking tourism products
	2.2.2	Review, improve or develop long-distance trail opportunities such as campgrounds, shelters, and lodge-style accommodation
	2.2.3	Where appropriate and within capacity, identify potential large-scale trail running events targeting interstate and international participants
	2.2.4	Increase visibility of existing Aboriginal cultural bushwalking experiences and support the appropriate development of more experiences across WA
	2.2.5	Increase data collection and data availability of trail use, trail inspired travel and event participation
	2.2.6	Increase awareness and recognition of the benefits, value, and business potential in hiking
2.3 Support the development of new hiking experiences to increase visitation	2.3.1	Conduct economic impact assessments on the major trails and trail towns to measure the impact of hiking in Western Australia
	2.3.2	Develop business cases and opportunities for priority projects and tourism product to increase hiking visitation

7.3 Objective 3

Sustainable trail development and maintenance

Develop and manage sustainable hiking opportunities in Western Australia.

Strategies	Recommendations	
3.1 Develop a state-wide network of sustainable hiking experiences	3.1.1	Use master planning to identify and prioritise potential locations for bushwalking, trail running, and multi-use trails
	3.1.2	Encourage use of the Trails Development Series to develop high-quality, sustainable trail experiences
	3.1.3	Consider dual- and multi-purpose trails to capitalise on existing assets where appropriate
3.2 Identify innovative and ongoing sustainable trail funding opportunities	3.2.1	Identify potential funding for the development of trail opportunities from sources including Federal, State, local governments, sponsorships and donations, commercial operations and fee-for-service
	3.2.2	Create a value proposition to encourage private enterprise investment and commitments towards trail development
	3.2.3	Develop self-sustaining financial models for trail maintenance and management
3.3 Implement appropriate trail management	3.3.1	Implement a rationalisation program to identify trails not meeting user needs
	3.3.2	Promote available means (Trails WA) for hikers to provide feedback on trail maintenance issues
	3.3.3	Facilitate the development of a statewide trail construction and maintenance program
	3.3.4	Collect data on participation and monitor trends to help inform decision making on trail development
	3.3.5	Support and facilitate the effective operation of community trail organisations (such as "Friends of" groups and clubs)

7.4 Objective 4

Effective governance and advocacy

Increase and optimise the management and resourcing of hiking activities in Western Australia through strong governance and advocacy.

Strategies	Recommendations	
4.1 Implement the WA Hiking Strategy	4.1.1	Develop an implementation plan for the WA Hiking Strategy within six months
	4.1.2	Activate, monitor and evaluate the implementation plan
4.2 Develop a governance structure for hiking activities	4.2.1	TRG to facilitate a steering committee to implement the strategy
	4.2.2	Secure long-term, sustainable resourcing for governance
	4.2.3	Develop functional governance and advocacy model(s) for hiking
4.3 Encourage cross-industry advocacy for hiking	4.3.1	Continue to foster positive relationships between stakeholders
	4.3.2	Encourage stakeholders to advocate for the benefits of participation in hiking and ensure cross-government agency communication and support
	4.3.3	Support the Western Australian trails industry to partner with all levels of government, landowners, land managers and volunteers in trail funding, planning, design, construction and maintenance
	4.3.4	Encourage research into the impacts of hiking on the environment to accurately define risks associated with recreation in protected areas
4.4 Encourage hiking groups and their volunteers to strengthen, grow and prosper	4.4.1	Support and facilitate the effective operation of clubs and groups
	4.4.2	Articulate the benefits of club and group membership
	4.4.3	Recognise the value of volunteers within clubs and groups and support their growth and development

Bunuba Country, Kimberley. Image credit Megan Watson