

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 What is a Plan of Management?

A plan of management provides the framework for managing public land. Warringah Council has designated Dee Why Lagoon Wildlife Refuge as a *Specific Area* in recognition of its key values, role and purpose within the reserves system.

It is a general requirement for Council to prepare plans of management for all land classified as "Community Land". This classification means that the land is owned by Council and is managed for use by the community. Plans of management are being prepared for all parcels of Community Land within Warringah. The plans are to be consistent with the Local Government Act 1993 and the Local Government Amendment (Community Land Management) Act 1998, the Crown Lands Act 1989 and other relevant legislation.

## 1.2 What are the aims of this Plan of Management?

This Plan of Management aims to provide a clear, concise and practical framework for the management of Dee Why Lagoon Wildlife Refuge. It aims to be performance oriented in order to contribute towards Council achieving its strategic goals, vision, mission and strategic outcomes. As a means of achieving these aims, the Plan uses a values-based approach to land planning and management. This approach facilitates strategies which will protect and enhance values, whilst identifying the issues which may pose a threat to these values. It ensures the longer term objectives of sustainable management.

The primary purpose of this Plan is to provide the community, users and Warringah Council with a clear statement on the future use and management of the Refuge. The efficient and appropriate management of this land is essential if its value to the community is to be maintained and enhanced.

In accordance with Council's broader goals and objectives, this Plan of Management aims to provide the following strategic outcomes for Dee Why Lagoon Wildlife Refuge:-

- Identify and assess the Refuge's values and uses;
- Define the Refuge's role within the Local Government Area and regional context;
- Identify and assess key issues affecting the resource base;
- Develop an understanding of the resource at an organisational level;
- Set a vision for the Refuge spanning the next 10 years;
- Establish management strategies and their resourcing implications;
- Assign directions and priorities in a strategic plan (5 years); and
- Develop a Masterplan.

## 1.3 Location & Area Description

Dee Why Lagoon Wildlife Refuge is located approximately 16 km north east of central Sydney within A ward of the Warringah Local Government Area (see Figure Two, page 5). The Wildlife Refuge incorporates an area of 77 hectares of which approximately 30 hectares is the waterbody of Dee Why Lagoon itself. The remaining 47 hectares are above the high water mark and the non-flood water levels of the lagoon and include remnant native bushland, grassed landscaped areas, James Meehan Reserve, carparking, Dee Why



Surf Life Saving Club, the dune system and a portion of Dee Why beach. The Refuge is bounded by Pittwater Road in the west, the southern boundary of the access road to Long Reef beach in the north, Astronomical High Water Mark in the east and the northern boundary of residential properties in the south.

Dee Why Lagoon Wildlife Refuge is a major scenic and open space feature of the Northern Beaches. The Refuge is adjacent to Pittwater Road, a main arterial road in Warringah, and is therefore a highly visible feature - particularly for travellers heading south who gain sweeping views across the lagoon, bushland and beaches as they round Long-Reef bends. Consequently, much of Warringah's community is aware of the changing natural conditions within the Refuge and any changes in the waterbody itself.

#### **1.4 Background Information**

The high conservation values of Dee Why Lagoon and the adjacent areas of natural vegetation were recognised in 1973 when the area was gazetted a Wildlife Refuge under the Fauna Protection Act, 1948 (a forerunner of the current National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974). The bushland and wetlands of the Refuge contain a sequence of coastal ecosystems rarely found in an urban environment and as such represent an important regional environmental and educational resource. Dee Why Lagoon Wildlife Refuge and the nearby Long Reef Aquatic Reserve are significant conservation areas and together are an important resource for resident and migratory wildlife. The Refuge provides habitat for endangered migratory bird species listed under international conservation agreements, as detailed in Appendix A.

#### **1.5 History of the Dee Why Lagoon Wildlife Refuge**



Photo 1: Black Swans on Dee Why Lagoon, early 1900's.  
(source: Local Studies Warringah Library Service)

Table One (overleaf) provides a summary of key historical events, since European settlement, related to Dee Why Lagoon Wildlife Refuge. For further information refer to the Bibliography, Section 10, or visit the Local Studies Warringah Library Service, Dee Why.

#### **Table 1. History of the Wildlife Refuge.**



<b>Year</b>	<b>Event</b>
1814-1819	William Cossar received two grants – one of 500 acres which included the northern part of the Refuge and one of 200 acres which included the southern part of the Refuge. The northern grant was made in 1814/15 and the southern grant in 1818/19.
1825	James Jenkins acquired the entire 700 acres, being the original 500 acre and 200 acre grants. This land completely surrounded the Lagoon.
1876	During the so-called Dandenong Gales, enormous seas washed the dunes into the Lagoon, creating the flat portion of land currently behind the dunes. Prior to 1876 this hind dune area was waterbody.
Post 1876	The Lagoon had two entrances for a period after 1876 as the seas actually broke through into the Lagoon at the approximate position of the current Dee Why Surf Life Saving Club. Confirmatory evidence of this was obtained in 1977.
1894	Elizabeth Jenkins (James Jenkins' daughter), in accordance with her Will of March 1894, conveyed all her real and personal property to the Salvation Army.
1909 & 1910	The Salvation Army claimed ownership of Dee Why Lagoon on the basis that the Lagoon was not open to the sea and the Salvation Army owned land on either side. A High Court challenge however, decided the Lagoon bed was in fact Crown Land. The Salvation Army retained ownership of surrounding lands.
1937	Council purchased the land surrounding the Lagoon from the Salvation Army. The purpose of the acquisition was to set aside the land for public recreation. A covenant was placed on the sale by the Salvation Army.
Early to mid 1940's	The dune system of Dee Why beach was flattened to allow an open vista of the ocean for defence purposes during World War II. The construction of a tank trap and defence network also occurred during World War II. Remains of the tank trap are present today in the form of wooden pylons in the South East corner of the Lagoon.
1950	Council prepared a plan for intensive development of the southern portion of the Lagoon. The proposal included provisions for a number of sporting facilities. The full scope of this Plan was not realised and by 1968 the cleared areas were covered with regenerating bushland.
1964	The Dee Why Lagoon Conservation and Preservation Committee developed a Management Plan for the Lagoon. The emphasis of this Plan was on wildlife conservation and low key passive recreation.
1968	A proposal was submitted to Council by Dee Why Bowling Club to develop 1.4 hectares of land for bowling greens and Club house. Following overwhelming public outcry and discussion this proposal was abandoned. It was subsequently established that there existed strong public support for the management of the reserve for conservation and passive recreation purposes.
Late 1960's	The south-eastern corner of Dee Why Lagoon Wildlife Refuge was used as a garbage tip, this area is now known as James Meehan Reserve.
1969	The National Parks and Wildlife Service prepared a Plan of Management for the Refuge. The Plan recommended that Council enter an agreement with the Service for Dee Why Lagoon to become a Wildlife Refuge in order to give the Refuge the protection of the then Fauna Protection Act (1948).
1973	The Dee Why Lagoon Wildlife Refuge (Number 373) was officially gazetted.
1977	On a request from the Crown Lands Office the Department of Public Works prepared a report on a dredging proposal from Warringah Council. Due to technical and administrative problems dredging was not carried out by Council.



1980	The community based group Friends of Dee Why Lagoon was established with a focus on the environmental management of the Refuge and its catchment. The Friends have initiated and participated in Lagoon enhancement activities such as the annual 'Clean-a-agoon' day, extensive bush regeneration projects, tree planting, dune revegetation and general litter clean ups.
Early 1980's	The dunes of Dee Why beach were reshaped and planted with native species. The sustained efforts of the Friends of Dee Why Lagoon over a period of eight years almost completely eradicated bitou bush infestation of the dune system.
1981	Council contracted the National Trust of NSW to carry out a bushland survey of the Refuge. Council then funded works by professional bush regenerators with the first contract let in March 1982.
1989	The two Crown Road Reserves (Reserve 100181) were reserved from sale for the purpose of "Public Recreation". NSW Government Gazette No. 48.
Early 1990's	Bush-regeneration work carried out by professional contractors concentrated on the Pittwater Road drainage lines and the fenced boundary. The Friends of Dee Why Lagoon also carried out a successful program of bush-regeneration along the Richmond Avenue/Avon Road edge.
1997	Dee Why Lagoon Wildlife Refuge was registered on the Register of the National Estate Database due to its natural heritage values.
2000	Two vegetation communities present within the Refuge, Sydney Freshwater Wetlands and Sydney Coastal Estuary Swamp Forest Complex, were listed as endangered ecological communities under the Threatened Species Conservation Act.



# WARRINGAH COUNCIL LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

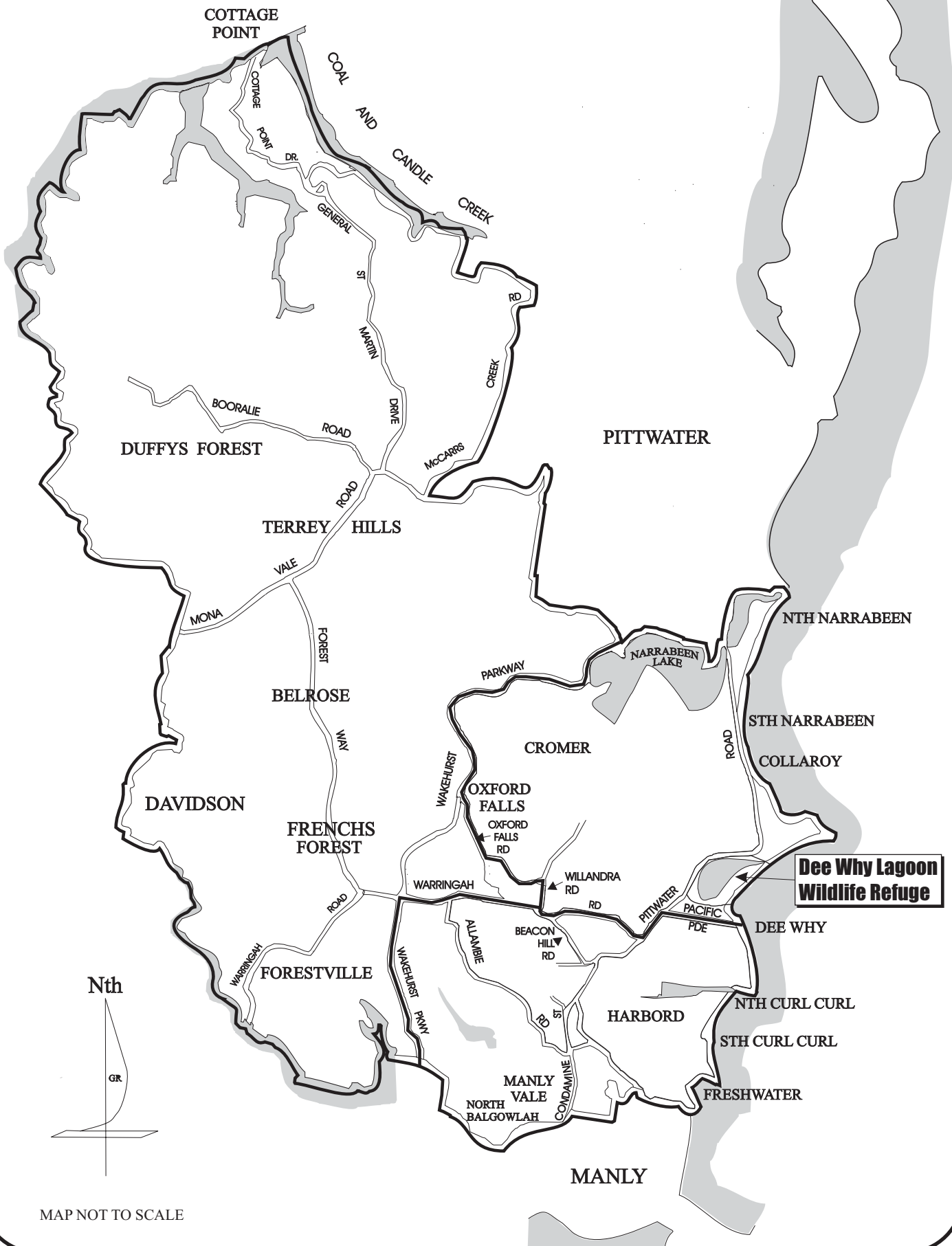


Figure 2: Location of Dee Why Lagoon Wildlife Refuge within a Regional Context

## 1.6 Land Status and Ownership

### **Ownership**

Dee Why Lagoon is considered to be a non-tidal lake - the Crown therefore owns the bed of the lagoon as at the date of the grant. Due to natural processes and movement of the lagoon over time, the Crown owns the bed of the lagoon as well as a portion of James Meehan Reserve and a portion of the Dee Why beach sand dunes. This land parcel is under the administration of the Crown (Crown Land Reserve 56146).

The majority of the Refuge is Community Land which is freehold land owned by Warringah Council. This Community Land parcel, Lot 2 DP 233606, contains the majority of the Refuge surrounding the Lagoon.

As discussed, in Section 1.5, it is this parcel of land which is subject to a covenant. The covenant states that:

“the land shall not be subdivided into building sites or allotments but at all times hereafter be used only as a public and recreation area provided however that anything herein contained shall not prevent the transferee from constructing over the said land a Marine Drive connecting the Strand, Dee Why with the land known as Griffith Park.”

“the transferee shall not sell or permit to be sold or consumed or connive at or be a party to the sale or consumption of any wines, beers, ales, spirits or any other intoxicating liquors of any kind whatsoever on the land hereby transferred.”

Two Crown Reserves, for which Council has care, control and management, are also included within the Refuge and this Plan of Management. These Reserves (reserve numbers 100181) were once Crown Road Reserves however they were closed in 1988, NSW Government Gazette No. 77, and reserved from sale for the purpose of Public Recreation in the NSW Government Gazette No. 48, April 1989.

Figure Three (overleaf) maps the ownership of the land parcels within the Refuge.

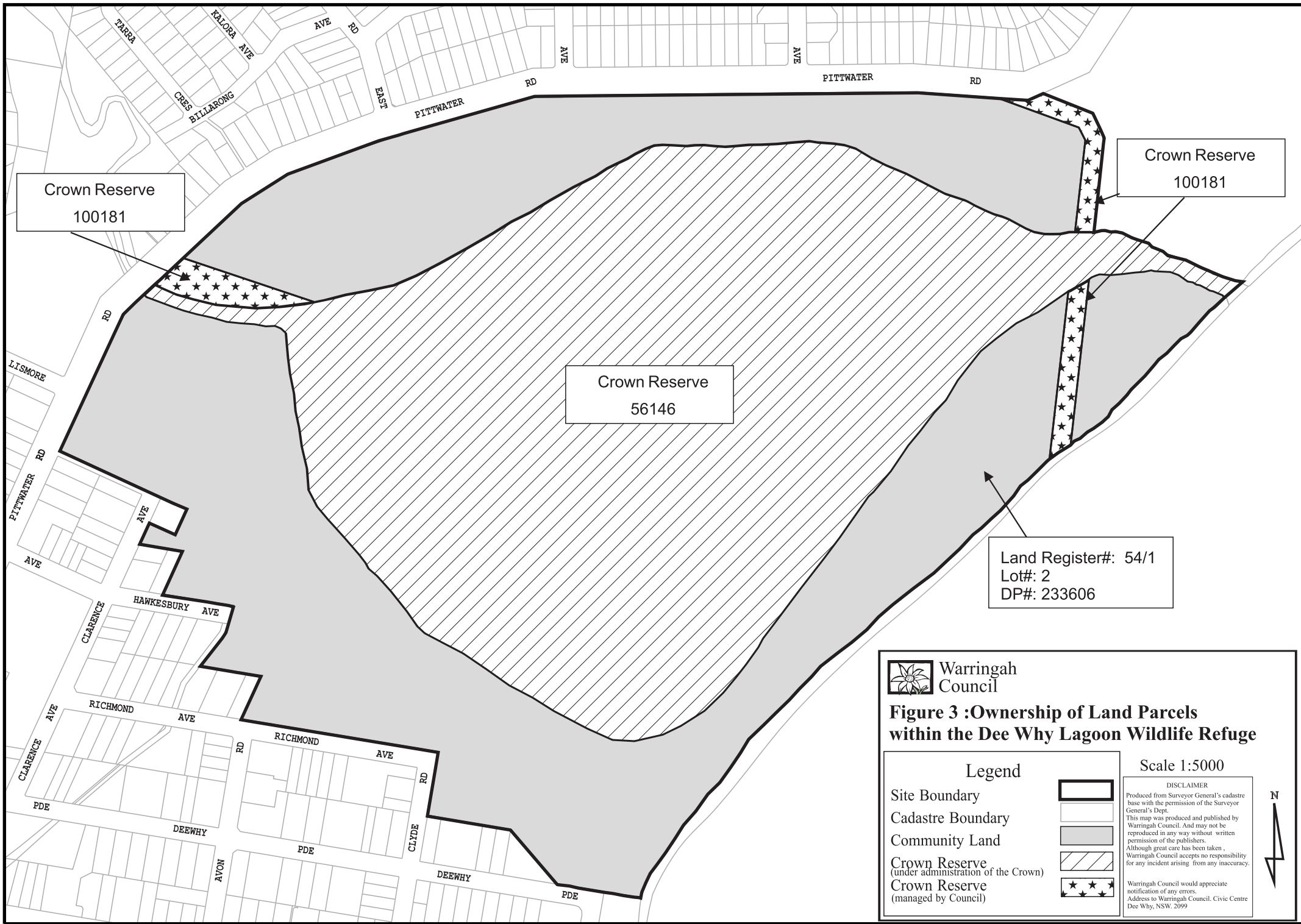
### **Wildlife Refuge**

The area has been declared a Wildlife Refuge under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974. Lands within a Wildlife Refuge are dedicated for the purposes of:-

- Preserving, conserving, propagating and studying wildlife;
- Conserving and studying natural environments; and
- Creating simulated natural environments.

This Plan of Management has taken into account the above purposes when defining the management actions for the Refuge.





Crown Reserve  
100181

Crown Reserve  
56146

Crown Reserve  
100181

Land Register#: 54/1  
Lot#: 2  
DP#: 233606



Warringah  
Council

**Figure 3 :Ownership of Land Parcels  
within the Dee Why Lagoon Wildlife Refuge**

Legend	
Site Boundary	
Cadastre Boundary	
Community Land	
Crown Reserve (under administration of the Crown)	
Crown Reserve (managed by Council)	

Scale 1:5000

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Warringah Council would appreciate notification of any errors.  
Address to Warringah Council, Civic Centre  
Dee Why, NSW, 2099



### **National Estate**

The Australian Heritage Commission is a Federal Government body which maintains the Register of the National Estate. This Register has an educational and advisory role and listing in the Register, in most cases, has no legal force.

The “Dee Why Lagoon Reserve” was registered in the National Estate Database on 24 June 1997. Following is the Statement of Significance as detailed in the database.

*“Dee Why Lagoon is one of the best examples, in the Sydney Region, of an estuarine lagoon. It is one of the few large estuarine barrier lagoons, remaining in a good condition, in the Sydney Region. The saltmarsh of the lagoon area is a regionally uncommon remnant of saline marshlands, which were formerly more widespread in the Sydney Region. The diversity of saltmarsh plants found at Dee Why Lagoon is high in comparison to other saltmarsh communities in the region. Dee Why Lagoon is also an important site for teaching and research associated with biological zonation, estuarine barrier lagoons and estuarine wetlands.”*



Photo 2: Aerial photograph of Dee Why Lagoon Wildlife Refuge, 2000.

### **Threatened Species Conservation Act**

In December 2000 a final determination of the NSW Scientific Committee was made to list the “Sydney Freshwater Wetlands” and the “Sydney Coastal Estuary Swamp Forest Complex” as endangered ecological communities on Part 3 of Schedule 1 of the Threatened Species Conservation Act. These two endangered ecological communities are present within the Dee Why Lagoon Wildlife Refuge. The communities have been categorised as Natural Area: Wetland which provides protection under the core objectives for this category. Any works within these communities will require a Section 91 licence from the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Appendix B provides a copy of the final determinations for these communities whilst Appendix A provides a list of threatened fauna which are known to occur within the Refuge.

