



The **Marine Parks Association** is a not-for-profit community group of scientists, naturalists and concerned citizens. It is committed to supporting sustainable marine resource management through research, education and advocacy across all sectors of the community. The Marine Parks Association is proposing to prepare a bid for the inclusion of the Port Stephens – Great Lakes and Catchment Area to be submitted for inclusion in the World Heritage site listing.

The nominated land and water within the catchment and estuary closely represents the original Worimi Nations country, going back several thousand years. The Worimi Nation is invited to participate in the development of this bid.

### What is a World Heritage Site?

**World Heritage Sites** are **cultural** and/or **natural sites** considered to be of 'Outstanding Universal Value' which have been inscribed on the **World Heritage List** to become part of the universal heritage of all humankind. Selected sites are nominated to and designated by the World Heritage Convention through the World Heritage Committee of the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). The proposed area qualifies for this designation because it incorporates world class scenic, natural, cultural, and recreational values and represents outstanding examples of ecological and biological processes that contribute directly to the evolution and sustainability of a unique community of terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine plants and animals.

### What area does the World Heritage proposal cover?

The proposed area is located on the north-central coast of New South Wales and will take in the unique Port Stephens Estuary and Myall Lakes region, including the Myall and Karuah rivers and many of their feeder creeks. The area forms a large triangle of around 7,000km<sup>2</sup> extending from Stockton to the south, north to Smiths Lake, and west to the Barrington Tops, small portions of which have already been designated as the Gondwana World Heritage Rainforest. This new proposal will incorporate and link some of these existing areas to the Port Stephens Estuary and catchment. [See map].



### What is so special about this area?

If this bid is successful, it will be the only designated World Heritage estuary and catchment in Australia. This area supports an extraordinary biodiversity:

- The most extensive mangrove and seagrass ecosystems in NSW.
- Rich aquatic and marine environments with more than 600 species of fish, including endangered species such as grey nurse sharks, sea turtles, White's seahorse, the black cod, and the newly discovered Nelson Bay anglerfish. Approximately 120 bottlenose dolphins are resident in the estuary and an estimated 30,000 humpback whales that make their annual migration through the coastal waters of the area.



- A colony of endangered Gould’s petrels and little penguins nest on the islands that flank the seaward entrance to this estuary.
- The region also supports at least 50 species of mammals, 350 species of birds, and 2000 species of plants including some of the most significant koala population in the southern part of NSW.

**What are the benefits of a World Heritage listing?**

Inscription to the World Heritage List can produce benefits nationally and for local communities. This includes increased tourism and associated employment opportunities and improved planning and management of the area for better conservation outcomes.

The nominated area already receives some level of management protection through marine parks, national parks, designated RAMSAR wetland sites, the Worimi Conservation Lands, and other reserves and public properties. The World Heritage process will provide a framework for a comprehensive approach to managing these areas and to protect in perpetuity the universal values of the area for the benefit of all.

**What about property ownership and rights?**

A World Heritage listing **does not** affect land ownership rights, local legislation and regulations nor limit the range of existing activities in the area, be it grazing, commercial or recreational fishing. It **does not** become a Commonwealth property, **nor owned** by an international body or foreign power. Only existing State Reserves, National Parks and Marine Parks are being nominated for inclusion. **Privately held lands are excluded from the nominated bid area.**

**How can I help?**

Please support this nomination by joining and/or donating to the **Marine Parks Association**.

For more information, visit [www.marineparksassociation.org.au](http://www.marineparksassociation.org.au) and click on “PSGL World Heritage Estuary Proposal”.

