

TOWRA POINT

Towra Point is in southern Botany Bay, between Kurnell and Taren Point.

A large site is proposed, covering 1797 hectares (Figure 28). This proposed area expands on the existing Towra Point Aquatic Reserve (Figure 27).

CURRENT MANAGEMENT

The current Towra Point Aquatic Reserve was established in 1987, and extends from Shell Point on the western side of Woollooware Bay to Bonna Point in the east. It covers an area of 1448 hectares (Figure 27) including Weeney Bay and Quibray Bay. It is divided into two zone types, a refuge zone and a sanctuary zone.

Collection of any fish, cunjevoi, invertebrates or marine vegetation, whether alive or dead, is prohibited from anywhere in the reserve except for Aboriginal cultural use. Hand-held lines and lawful recreational nets can be used to take fish within the refuge zone.

Oyster aquaculture occurs on leases in Woollooware Bay that were active when the aquatic reserve was declared.

Botany Bay has been a recreational fishing haven since 2002 and is closed to most commercial fishing. Fishing closures also apply in some parts of the Bay, such as a prohibition on taking shellfish on the eastern side of Taren Point adjacent to the aquatic reserve.

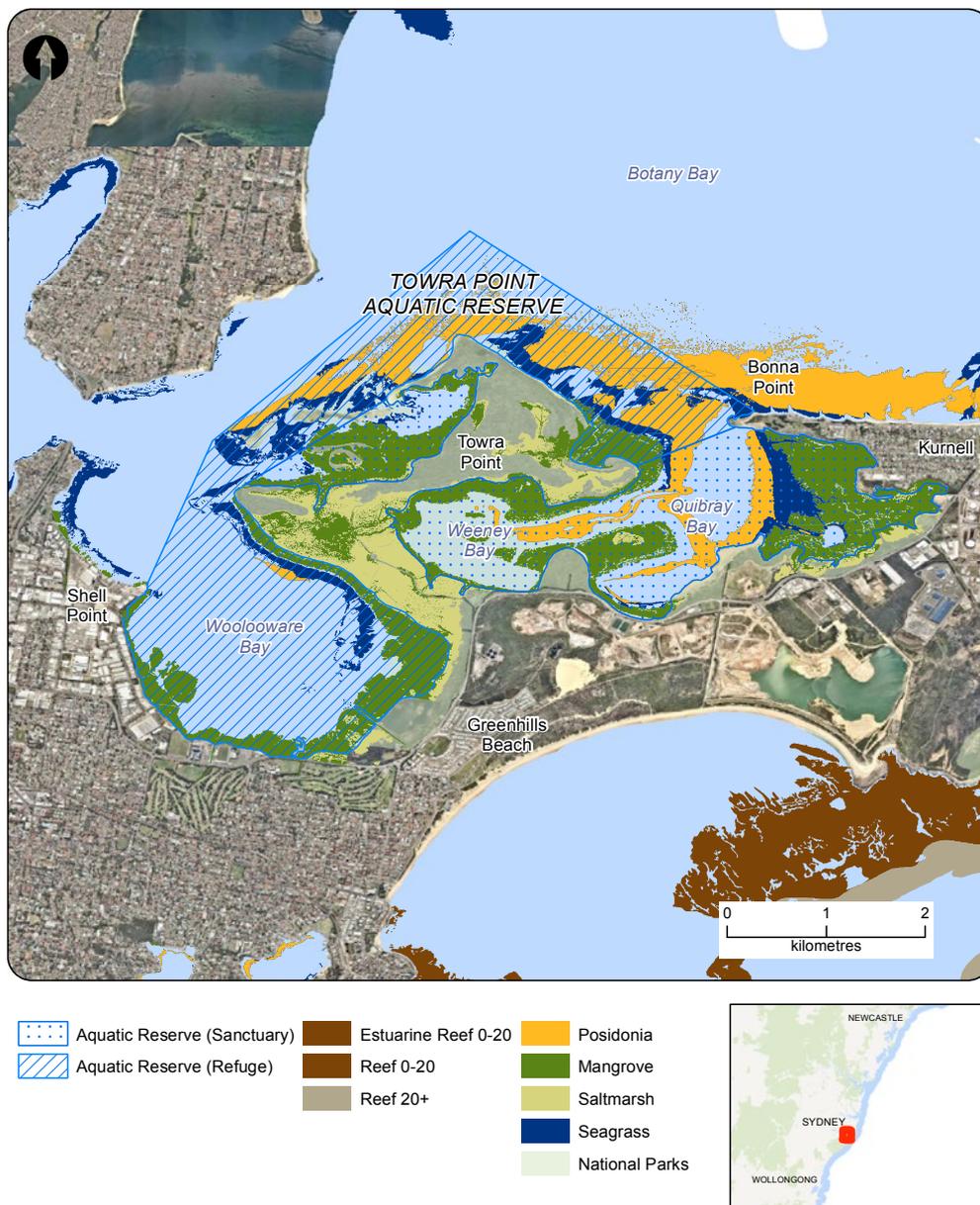


Figure 27. Current Towra Point Aquatic Reserve

SITE OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives for the proposed Towra Point site are to:

- enhance the conservation of marine biodiversity
- reduce risks to identified threatened and protected species of the bioregion
- reduce risks to identified habitats of the bioregion
- establish and maintain public infrastructure to support access and use of the bioregion, for example moorings, boat ramps
- enhance the intrinsic benefits derived by the community from the marine estate
- enhance bequest values for current and future generations
- provide baseline monitoring areas (scientific reference sites).

The secondary objectives that apply to this site are listed in Table 5.

ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC VALUES

The reserve protects the largest and most diverse wetland complex in the Sydney region. The Reserve is adjacent to the Towra Point Nature Reserve, a wetland of International Importance and a declared [Ramsar site](#)¹. It is an important nursery area for fish and invertebrates, it provides habitat for migratory seabirds, and it is rich in marine biodiversity.

The reserve includes much of the remaining seagrass, mangrove and migratory wader bird habitats in Botany Bay. It contains large beds of the endangered population of *Posidonia australis* seagrass.

The area has significance to the local Aboriginal communities. Spiritual sites and evidence of past cultural use, including shell middens and art have been recorded.

PRIORITY THREATS TARGETED TO ENHANCE BENEFITS AT THIS SITE

The threats that will be addressed at this site and expected benefits to be enhanced are listed in Table 41.

Table 41. Threats and expected benefits

	Environmental				Social, cultural, economic			
Threats	 Boating	 Climate change	 Recreational fishing		 Habitat disturbance	 Wildlife disturbance	 Reduction in species	 Lack of access infrastructure
Benefits	 Saltmarsh	 Seagrass	 Mangroves	 Shallow reefs	 Intrinsic & bequest	 Scientific reference sites	 Aboriginal cultural heritage & use	 Participation (wellbeing)
	 Fish assemblages	 Species protected under FMA	 Species protected under BCA	 Biodiversity	 Participation (socialising)	 Enjoyment (biodiversity & beauty)		

¹ Ramsar sites are Wetlands of International Importance determined under the intergovernmental treaty known as the Convention on Wetlands or Ramsar Convention. This includes sites that contain representative, rare or unique wetland types and must be managed to maintain their ecological character and retain their essential functions and values for future generations.

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PROPOSED MANAGEMENT RULES

The proposed reserve maintains the existing sanctuary zone (556 hectares; Figure 27), but it also extends the boundaries of the existing refuge zone to incorporate additional adjacent *Posidonia australis* seagrass and shore bird habitat as a special purpose zone (1241 hectares; Figure 28).

In the sanctuary zone, removal or harm of marine biodiversity is prohibited, including fishing by any method, harm to marine animals or plants, anchoring in seagrass, hand gathering or collecting marine organisms whether dead or alive except for Aboriginal cultural use (Table 42).

In the proposed special purpose zone, subject to other **NSW fishing rules and regulations**, fish could be taken by recreational hand-held lines and crab traps. Crab traps are preferred to witches hats and hoop nets that are currently permitted in the refuge zone. Hand gathering and collecting would be prohibited. Anchoring would be permitted outside seagrass areas. Aquaculture on leases that were included in the original aquatic reserve declared in 1987 would continue.

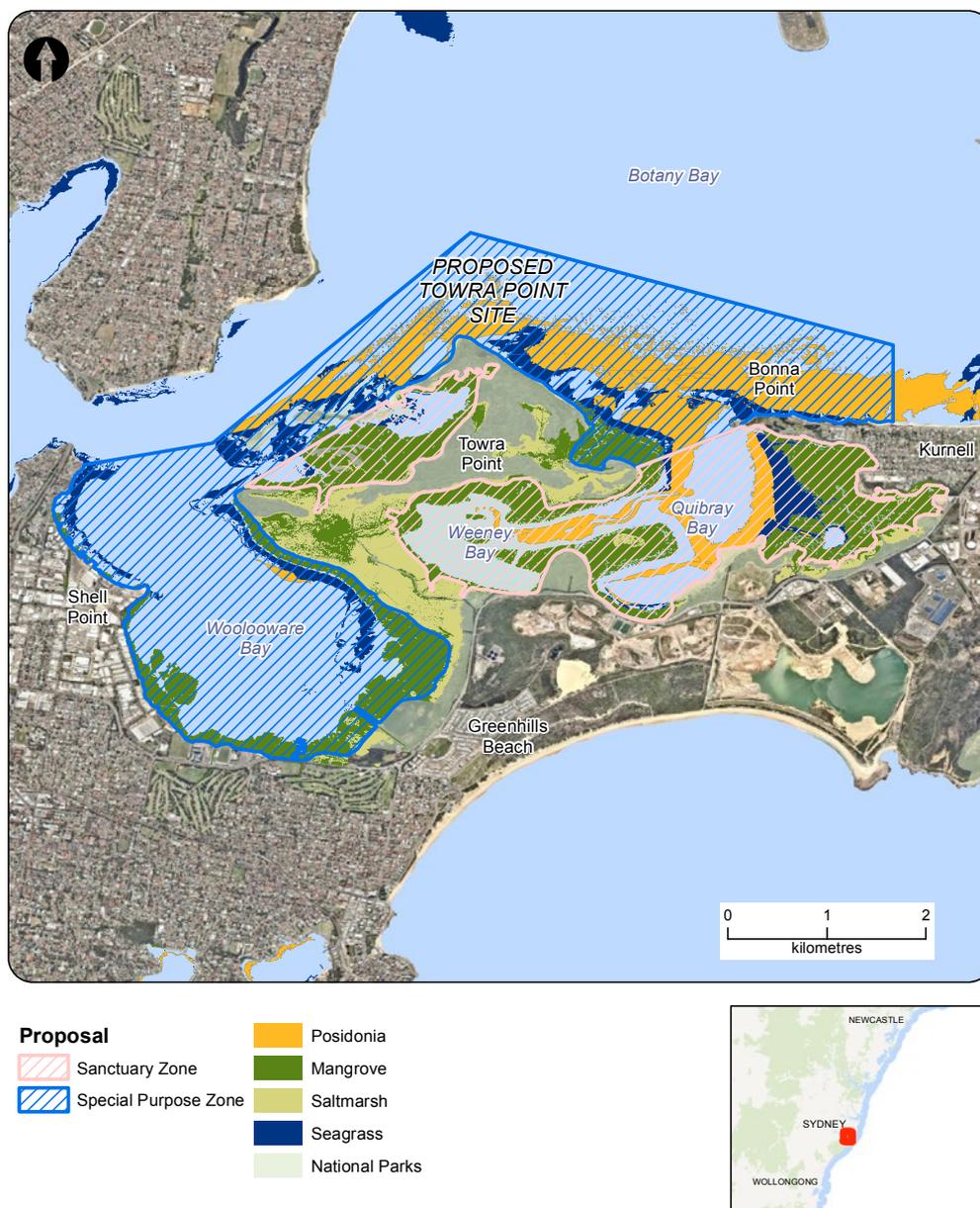


Figure 28. Proposed Towra Point site

Table 42. Current activities and suggested permissible activities in the proposed Towra Point site

Towra Point	 Boating	 Anchoring	 Line fishing	 Spear fishing	 Lobster fishing	 Abalone fishing	 Scuba diving /snorkelling	 Hand gathering	 Collecting marine vegetation	 Commercial fishing	 Aboriginal cultural heritage & use
Current aquatic reserve sanctuary zone	✓	✓ ¹	×	×	×	×	✓	×	×	×	✓
Current aquatic reserve refuge zone	✓	✓ ¹	✓	×	×	×	✓	×	×	×	✓
Proposed sanctuary zone	✓	✓ ¹	×	×	×	×	✓	×	×	×	✓
Proposed special purpose zone	✓	✓ ¹	✓	×	×	×	✓	×	×	×	✓

¹ Not in seagrass areas

FEEDBACK FROM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Towra Point was identified as a site with high environmental values, in particular by peak conservation stakeholders – the National Parks Association of NSW and Nature Conservation Council of NSW. The Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society made note of the significance of Towra Point as a nesting, roosting and feeding site for migratory shorebirds, and Sutherland Shire Council supported additional protection at this site.

Submissions from recreational fishers, including the Recreational Fishing Alliance and the Shooters and

Fishers Party, do not support any additional restrictions to fishing in the Botany Bay area, as fishing is already restricted in the existing Towra Point Aquatic Reserve, at the Botany Bay breakwall, and in the port and airport exclusion zones. Additionally, their view is that, as there is very little commercial fishing in the bay, there is no need for a marine park; therefore, declaration of an additional protected area in Botany Bay would be in direct conflict with its current status as a recreational fishing haven.

