



19 Achieving the Vision

The Lake Mokoan Future Land Use Strategy sets out a vision for the study area, which aims to capture the imagination, interest and commitment of a range of people with a stake in the future of this area.

Most critical to achieving the vision will be government and community commitment to the outcomes, and a continued partnership approach between stakeholders. These partnerships must do two things. Firstly, they must provide a high level of **support for achieving the vision**. Secondly, acknowledging that **every stakeholder has a role to play, and must show commitment** over a period of time. This recognises that the vision has a range of potential benefits to many stakeholders over time. This includes all levels of government (Federal, State and Local), local and regional communities, visitors and tourists. There are naturally also a range of intrinsic benefits to the environment that come from restoration of an ecosystem at this scale.

Achieving the vision will take time. The FLUS indicates that a 15-year period will be required to deliver the vision. A sustainable ecosystem is expected to establish towards the middle of this period. As this occurs, it is expected that visitor and tourist numbers will increase.

To the extent that the establishment of the Winton Wetlands will be a 'drawcard', there is an important investment to be made in the 'core attraction' – the ecosystem restoration, with appropriate infrastructure support to ensure management and visitor access. Many things will change over the 15-year period. As the Winton Wetlands become an increasingly popular destination, it is expected that commercial and tourism opportunities will arise, and the private sector will become key partners in achieving the vision. It is expected that, to a large extent, investment in infrastructure will drive tourism numbers higher, and this needs to be recognised in developing a business case.

The vision for 2021 is clear and exciting. The key factor in achieving this is a base level of investment by government to rehabilitate the wetland and dryland ecological values and to provide focussed services and access for management and visitors.

Further enhancement of tourism and recreation will come by development of a business case that integrates actual and expected visitor numbers with the need to attract further investment from government, in recognition of the potential such investment will have to expand regional tourism and economic development. This would occur in conjunction with some certainty that in moving closer to the vision, other funding sources will be available to assist the project, including: the private sector, federal government, private conservation land management organisations and potentially international wetland organisations.



19.1 Partnerships and Commitment

There is a necessary commitment from government agencies to deliver on a base level of investment. The opportunity to go further than this, and achieve the 'big' vision articulated in this FLUS is exciting, and will require in time, the necessary assessments of value to be derived from this investment. From a Government perspective, a business case for further investment beyond the initial stages is required. From the private sector perspective, a commercial case must be developed that demonstrates if a profitable return on investment is possible.

This document sets out a clear direction with recommended objectives, actions and costs for twelve main Strategies. The costs provided are indicative only, but provide the government and community with a clear indication of opportunities and costs that will allow decisions to be made about future funding, with a reasonable level of certainty.

Support from a range of stakeholders is clearly required to achieve the vision. It will require commitment from government, as the major project sponsor. It will also require commitment from the local and regional community. The support of Benalla Rural City Council is essential in promoting and implementing all phases of the vision. While those commitments will differ, the establishment of a common purpose and partnership, aimed at achieving the vision is critical.

Throughout the FLUS, there are three key periods of time identified:

- The **decommissioning phase** – years 1-3 (from 2006-2009), up until the decommissioning of Lake Mokoan in 2009;
- The **establishment phase** – years 4-8 (from 2010-2014), up until a reasonable level of rehabilitation of the wetland and dryland systems (from 2010-2014)
- The **enhancement phase** – years 9-15 (from 2015-2021), up until the establishment of major tourist and visitor facilities based around strong regeneration of wetland and dryland ecosystems.

It is expected, that around mid-way through the establishment phase, capital investment in the initial stages will be complete or nearing completion. There will, of course, be recurring costs associated with responsibilities of the land manager. Leading up to this point, additional work will be required

to determine whether further investment in the reaching the vision is warranted. A range of factors may be considered at this point.

This process is demonstrated in Figure 20.

Figure 21 provides an indicative project program for capital expenditure projects and maintenance over the next 15 years, or through to 2021. The program demonstrates the physical changes that will occur in relation to the study as the FLUS is implemented. The first visible changes will begin around year 3 or 4, with a major focus on ecological restoration and the first recreation infrastructure being constructed. During this early period, it will be important to establish signage and interpretive information on the site to inform visitors to the area on what the future could look like at the Winton Wetlands. From year 4 onwards, there is a steady progress towards the vision with a range of projects being carried out. It is expected that as infrastructure is developed, visitor numbers will increase. Ultimately, the development of the Winton Wetland Tourism and Education Complex in around year 9 or 10 (or earlier, depending on demand) will form a 'centerpiece' for the Winton Wetlands.

Figure 20: Progressing towards the Vision

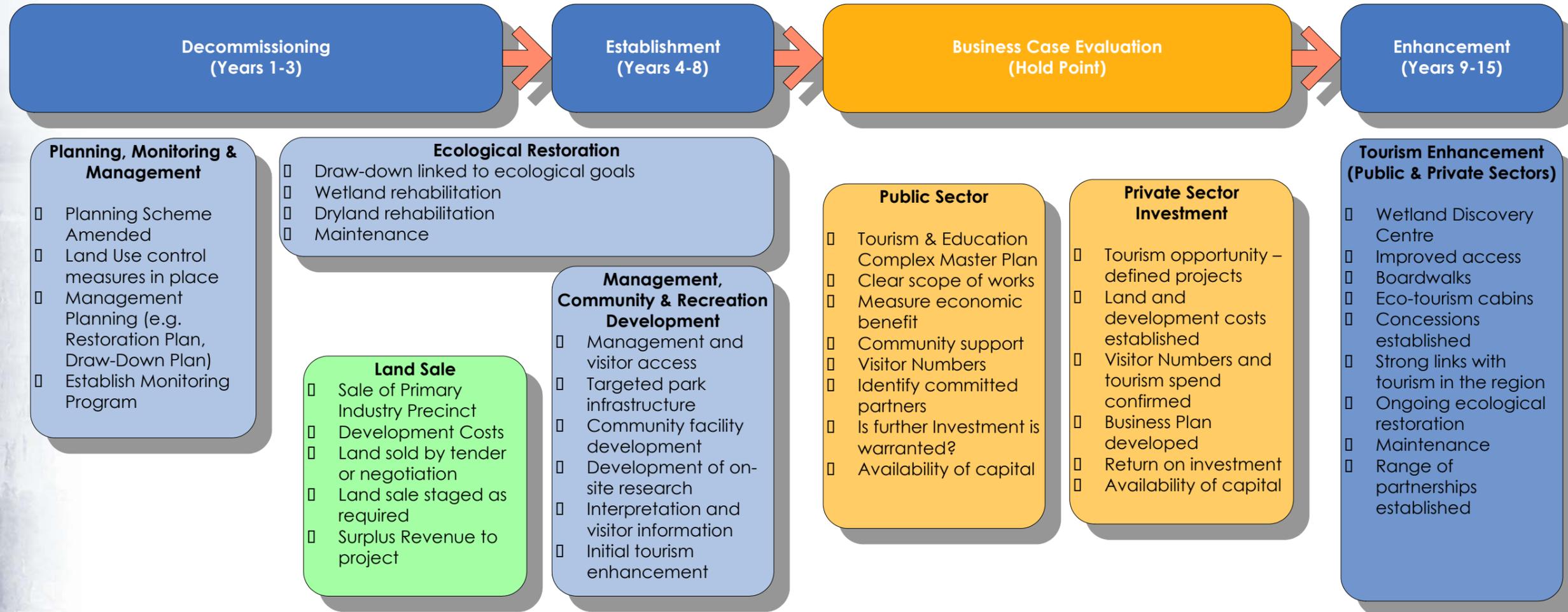
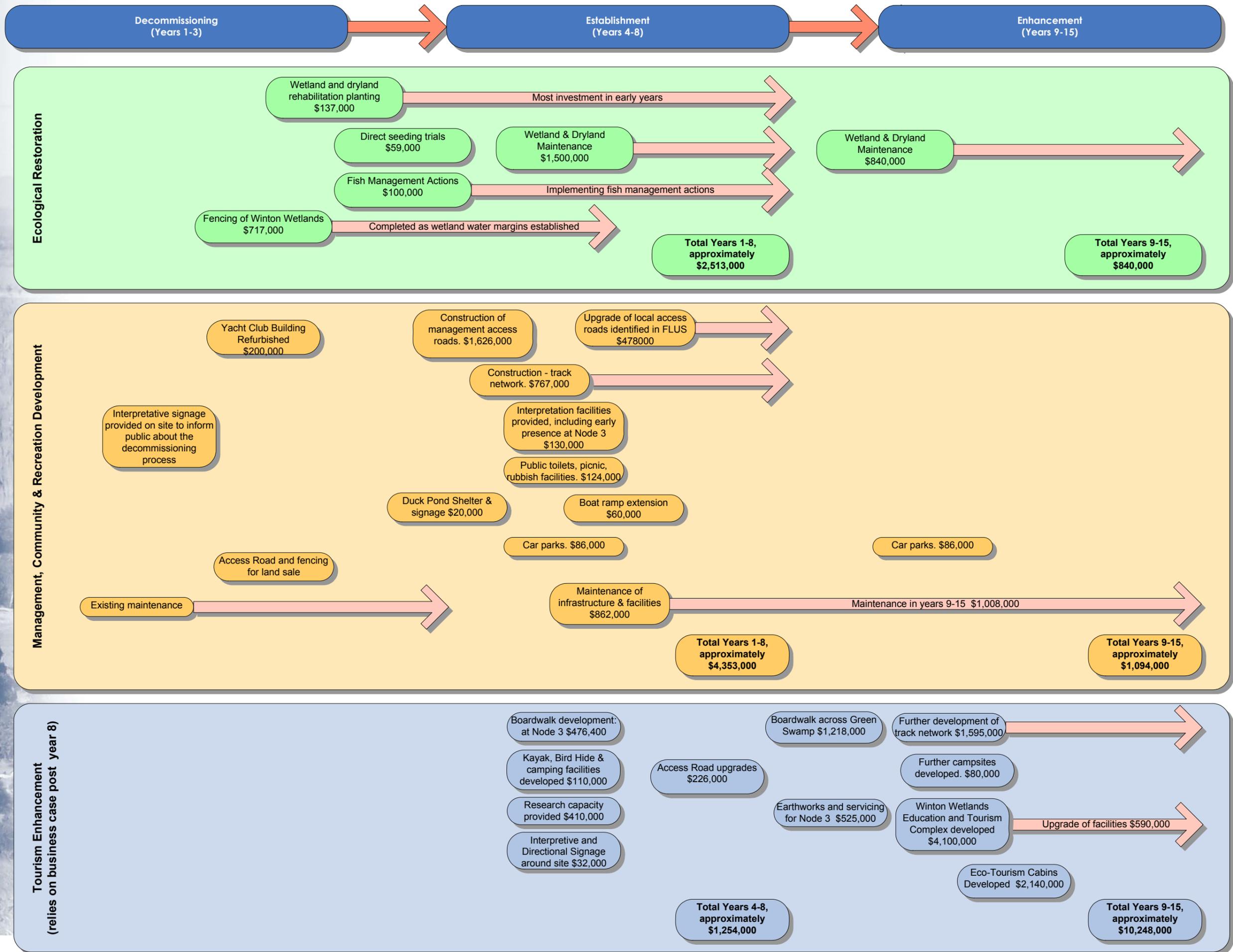


Figure 21: Infrastructure, Restoration and Maintenance Program





19.2 Project Costs

19.2.1 Land Sale

One of the first key tasks is the divestment (sale) of land in Precinct B, which is approximately 2,066ha. This will occur once the wetland margins in the study area have been determined and final survey of these boundaries can occur. There may be a staging process whereby those areas furthest from the wetland can be surveyed and sold prior to the final lots. This decision should be made at a later date.

There are two key costs associated with divestment of land. These are:

1. Fencing around each lot. This is expected to be approximately \$0.8M. There is potentially around 72km of fencing to be provided in this category. This cost may be reduced as a result of large-scale savings on the contract price for fencing, reducing the number of lots and hence fencing required prior to sale.
2. Access to B1 will be provided. The current road access will be upgraded and an unsealed rural road will be constructed to extend into the subdivision. All other areas (B2-B5) are assumed to have adequate access, or, can be sold to adjoining property owners. The cost for this access road is identified as approximately \$1.6M.

Capital raised from the sale of land is identified as approximately \$5M. This leaves a potential contribution to implementation of around \$2.6M. This is considered to be a reasonable and conservative estimate, based on \$2,400/ha. Clearly if the value of land varies from this rate, the contribution to the project may change, depending on the level of investment required to achieve that value.

19.2.2 Professional Services

The FLUS identifies a range of costs associated with professional services. This includes project management of the implementation activities, to preparing more detailed management plans for specific issues, park management planning, planning scheme preparation and exhibition, through to ecological research and field monitoring (e.g. for species regeneration, weed monitoring). Where possible, an indicative budget has been placed

against these items in each strategy. For some tasks, it is assumed that professional input will be provided by government agencies at no additional cost to the project. An indicative budget of approximately \$1.34M has been identified for additional professional services, largely occurring through the decommissioning and early establishment phase. Requirements for ecological monitoring and management costs will continue for the duration of the project, at a proposed cost over 15 years of \$4.04M.

19.2.3 Maintenance Costs

The FLUS identifies a number of recurring maintenance costs. Indicative costs for maintenance from year 3 to year 15 have been included in this study for ecological and infrastructure maintenance.

There will be a particular focus on maintenance of those areas under active rehabilitation that are being planted or seeded until they are established. From that point forward, normal management arrangements would be applied. This may be 'active management' from the land manager, or more passive forms of land management (e.g. grazing). The most important land management issue will be weed control. Maintenance costs will also be required for facilities, roads, fencing, firebreaks and other physical infrastructure.

Undertaking these maintenance works will clearly improve the visitor experience and is considered to be a very important component underpinning the whole project.

Maintenance Costs are indicated in Tables 17 and 18.

19.2.4 Achieving the Vision – Ecological Restoration

Restoration of the ecological function of the Winton Wetlands is the most important aspect of this project.

The proposed ecological restoration costs include fencing, rehabilitation planting and direct seeding, weed control, pest animal control and other maintenance activities. Implementation actions for fish management have also been included. These have been identified in detail in each strategy, and a summary of these costs (rounded) is provided in Table 17.

Table 17: Achieving the Vision – Ecological Restoration

Item	Rounded Cost	
	Decommissioning and Establishment 1-8 yrs	Enhancement 9-15 yrs
Rehabilitation		
Wetland and Dryland Replanting	\$137,000	
Fencing for ecological monitoring and grazing exclusion areas	\$86,000	
Direct seeding trials and works	\$59,000	
Wetland and Dryland Maintenance 6 years (years 3 to 8)	\$1,500,000	
Wetland and Dryland Maintenance 7 years (years 9 to 15)		\$840,000
Fencing		
Fencing for all Precinct A areas to exclude stock from wetland margins and other sensitive environments	\$631,000	
Fish management actions	\$100,000	
Total	\$2,513,000	\$840,000

19.2.5 Achieving the Vision – Management, Community and Recreation Development

Recreation and community use of the Winton Wetlands, particularly by the local community, will be an important component of the overall visitation into the restored wetland.

Developing the area for management purposes and to allow for visitor and community use, requires a number of important infrastructure development projects, including establishment of roads, management tracks and walking tracks, upgrade of community assets (Yacht Club, boat ramp) and provision of signs and basic visitor facilities.

It is important that these assets generally be constructed in the establishment phase, as this will be critical to meet a combination of outcomes including fire protection, management access and visitor use. Staging is likely to be over a 5-6 year period.

A summary of costs is present in Table 18.

Table 18: Achieving the Vision – Management, Community and Recreation Development

Item	Rounded Cost	
	Decommissioning and Establishment 1-8 yrs	Enhancement 9-15 yrs
Access and Car Parks		
Construction of North-South Management Access track from Lake Mokoan Road to Keenen Road. Includes allowances for gates and culverts.	\$524,000	
Provision for walking tracks and footbridges, including along northern shoreline	\$767,000	
Provision of 4 car parks and signage at: Node 3, Node 4 (Duck Pond), Humphries Lane and entry to Management access track	\$86,000	\$86,000
Upgrade of Humphries Lane and Nelson Road	\$478,000	
Management of access around B1	\$500,000	
Southern access track upgrade	\$598,000	
Gates on management roads	\$4,000	
Community Facilities		
Provisional allowance for upgrade of Yacht Club as a community meeting space/facility or seed funding for new development	\$200,000	
Recreation Facilities		
Provision of public toilet facilities – locations to be determined, potentially duck pond and at Node 1/Dam Wall)	\$120,000	
Allowance for boat ramp extension	\$60,000	
Picnic table and rubbish bin at each car park	\$4,000	
Provision of shelter and signage at the Duck Pond, including interpretative signage	\$20,000	
Allowance for visitor displays to be established (preferably located at Node 3)	\$130,000	
Maintenance		
Maintenance facilities and infrastructure 6 years - includes fire breaks (Years 3-8)	\$862,000	
Maintenance of facilities of infrastructure - includes fire breaks (7 years, 9-15)		\$1,008,000
Total	\$4,353,000	\$1,094,000



19.2.6 Achieving the Vision – Tourism Enhancement

It is clear that development of the Wetland Discovery Centre, Eco-tourism cabins and associated projects at the Winton Wetlands Tourism and Education Complex, will provide the catalyst for greater visitor numbers and ensure the area is recognised and valued as a major tourist asset.

Moving to this next stage of the vision will require further detailed business cases to be prepared, plus development of partnerships with the private sector, including to provide investment in a number of facilities, specifically those associated with the Wetland Discovery Centre. Should this investment prove to provide a worthwhile return, both for private investors and for government in terms of broader economic benefit to the region, the following list of projects (and costs) would need to be developed over time.

Eco-tourism cabins could be built at any time if a suitable investor was found. The numerous regional attractions, close links to the Hume Highway and the ‘restoring wetlands’ story, may be sufficient to attract investment, at any stage. It is important that if this occurs, the Master Plan for the Winton Wetlands Tourism and Education Complex is prepared and agreed before any development occurs.

A summary of costs is presented in Table 19.

Table 19: Achieving the Vision – Tourism Enhancement

Item	Rounded Cost	
	Establishment 4-8 yrs	Enhancement 9-15 yrs
Access and Car Parks		
Improvement to access roads on southern edge of Winton Wetlands in line with increased usage (specifically Keenan and Gould Roads)	\$ 226,000	
Provision of major access tracks for walking, cycling, horse riding, including upgrade of track along northern shoreline.		\$1,595,000
Earthworks Node 3		\$ 25,000
Recreation and Tourism Facilities		
Boardwalk development		\$1,218,000
Provision of a Boardwalk in key locations linked to Node 3	\$476,400	
Kayak Facilities	\$ 10,000	
Bird Hides	\$ 20,000	
Campsite, provision of basic facilities	\$ 80,000	\$80,000
Allowance for interpretative and directional signage	\$ 32,000	
Development of Wetland Discovery Centre and Associated Facilities		
Wetland Discovery Centre		\$4,100,000
Seed funding for establishing research facilities on site	\$ 410,000	
Eco-tourism Cabins		\$ 2,140,000
Allowance for site servicing and earthworks		\$ 500,000
Upgrade of car park to 200 car spaces		\$ 177,000
Sealing of access road (200m)		\$ 413,000
Total	\$1,254,400	\$10,248,000

19.3 Cost Estimates and Contingency

As with any project at this strategic and visioning stage, the preparation of cost estimates is a broad-brush exercise. The level of accuracy expected at this stage is approximately +/- 40% overall.

As with any long-term project and at this early strategic stage, it is also prudent to adopt a conservative approach with respect to the overall project budget. Typically, a contingency allowance over and above the total project budget would be set aside to deal with detailed issues not considered at this stage. The level of this contingency is at government’s discretion, but might

be in the order of 15%. This might account for matters such as uncertainties in the design of infrastructure, ground conditions, visitor demands and uncertainties with the ecological restoration process and success.

It should also be noted that all costs have been presented in 2006 dollars, with no cost of living adjustments. Future funding and planning processes should note the need to include inflation cost components, if necessary.

19.4 Project Revenue

Revenue will be derived from a number of sources, including sale of land, concession fees for tourism activities and grazing licenses.

The following table provides a summary of revenue opportunities by time period:

Table 20: Summary of Revenue Opportunities

Revenue Source	Total
Land Sale (land sold at \$2400/ha)	\$2,600,000 (net)
Sale of land at Node 3 (indicative value, to be confirmed)	\$200,000 (potential only)
Grazing Licenses fees for areas identified as suitable for grazing, with lease value determined at 3% of land value	\$50,000p.a. (potential only)
Concessions from tourism activity (indicative value, to be confirmed)	\$50,000p.a. (potential only)

19.5 Achieving the Vision – Summary

Achieving the longer-term vision will, to a large extent, depend on the degree to which the strategies proposed during the decommissioning (years 1 to 3) and establishment (years 4 to 8) phases are implemented. The net cost (after land sale) of developing the vision over the first 8 years of FLUS implementation, is estimated to be \$8.9 million.

The potential costs associated with building the foundation for the longer-term vision, over the first 8 years, includes:

Element of Implementation Program	Cost
Ecological restoration including maintenance for 6 years (yr 3 to 8)	\$2.51M.
Provision of visitor facilities, access for visitors and management, and upgrade to community assets and maintenance of all assets	\$4.35M
Initial development of tourism assets including one boardwalk and bird-hide establishment	\$1.25M
Planning and technical input	\$1.27M.
Monitoring and Management including staff time to support the project	\$2.08M

Direct revenue available to the project following land sale and associated costs, is estimated at \$2.6M. It is recommended that this funding be used to assist in implementing the initial stages of the project. Revenue from grazing is estimated at \$50,000 pa. This will need to be closely linked to ecological outcomes and is therefore not included in the net revenue at this stage. Potential revenue from tourist activities is indicated, but is also not included in net revenue.

The costs of achieving the broader vision beyond the first 8 years, including further development of recreation and tourist facilities, tourist accommodation and the Wetland Discovery Centre, have been broadly estimated in this report. Considerably more work is required before these projects would be ready to proceed. This investment will need to be driven by partnerships between the private sector and federal, state, and local government. Support and leadership from government will be an essential component. The investment will, in most cases, be subject to developing an appropriate business case, which is likely to occur once greater certainty is evident on the success of the ecological restoration program.

Further revenue may also be derived from partnerships with the private sector, or through funding from other external grants and federal sources.



Although this cannot be guaranteed, the FLUS indicates that every effort should be made to secure these partnerships.

19.6 General Recommendations

This report includes a large number of recommendations for the future management of the study area in two main components:

- Key strategic recommendations related to the preferred Land Use Strategy are contained in Part II.
- More specific recommendations and actions for twelve Strategy areas are contained in Part III.

General recommendations that will assist implementation of the first stage of the Future Land Use Strategy, following Government endorsement, include:

1. That the governance model for the implementation phase of this FLUS be determined as soon as possible, including the Land Manager for the Winton Wetlands.
2. That funding for the initial series of actions in this FLUS be secured, to particularly allow key planning processes to be undertaken and works commenced at decommissioning.
3. That a commitment be made to fund the business case for further tourism investment as soon as possible.
4. That the community continue to have a significant involvement in planning and management of the study area.
5. That key partner agencies, authorities and stakeholder groups become informed, engaged and involved in developing solutions for the management of the study area.
6. That Terms of Reference be developed for a Technical Reference Group, and the group is convened as soon as possible, to assist in ecological restoration planning, implementation and monitoring.
7. That the proposed Wetlands Monitoring Plan be developed as soon as possible and monitoring commence on key components of the ecosystem, including the present state and condition of the wetland fringe vegetation.
8. That the Lake Mokoan Draw-down Plan be completed as soon as possible and fully integrated with the present operations of the Lake, to ensure maximum coordination in the next two to three years, while water supplies are still required from the Lake.
9. That G-MW undertake management and maintenance works in the next two years, particularly pest plant and animal control, in line with the recommendations in the FLUS, to maximise opportunities for restoration to occur.
10. That negotiations are commenced with research and tertiary institutions to determine short term options for partnerships, particularly to develop projects addressing research knowledge gaps identified in this Strategy.
11. That arrangements be finalised for continued indigenous involvement in planning and management of the study area, including identifying the priorities for further archaeological surveys.
12. That negotiations commence to integrate the vision for the Winton Wetlands into longer term Regional Tourism and Recreation strategies, including regional 'tracks and trails' planning.
13. That State and Federal planning approval processes are undertaken as required, utilising the information prepared as a component of this study, including the additional flora and fauna study.
14. That the stakeholders and community are kept regularly informed on the implementation of the FLUS, through a well considered communications plan that operates in conjunction with other projects within the 'Mokoan - Return to Wetlands' Program.