



13 Mallacoota

Mallacoota is the easternmost town in Victoria, close to the border of New South Wales. The town spans across the coast of Mallacoota Inlet and the open Bass Coast and is surrounded by the wilderness of Croajingolong National Park.

Coastal and marine areas include the open coast and Betka River, Bastion Point, the main town foreshore, Karbeethong, and Bucklands Jetty areas. Gypsy Point is also a Council-managed area between the Genoa and Wallagaraugh Rivers.

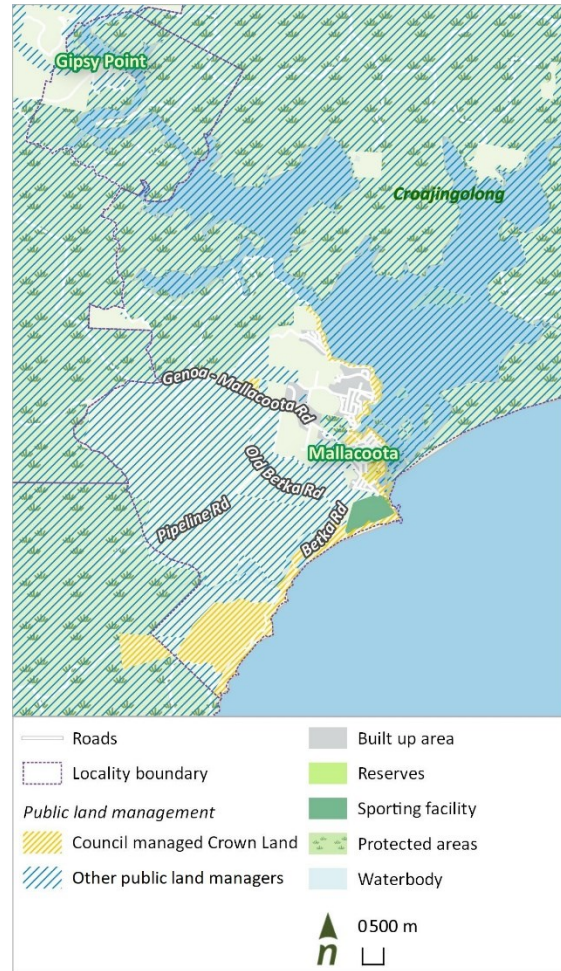


Figure 127. Mallacoota locality.

13.1 Community and connection to coast

Mallacoota had a population of around 1,200 at the last census. With an influx of tourists during summer, the population can rise significantly. Mallacoota is an older community. Nearly half are aged over 60. The town attracts many retirees. Less than half of the population in the workforce.

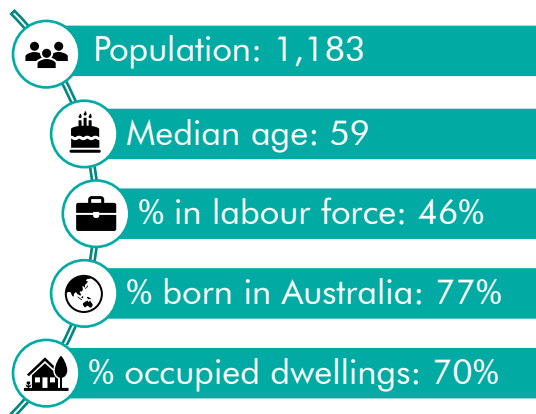


Figure 126. Key statistics for Mallacoota (ABS, 2021).

While no formal designation currently exists for the area surrounding Mallacoota these areas are important to a number of the region's Traditional Owner groups.

Traditional Owners were known to travel from the hills to the coast at different times of year to harvest different food sources such as abalone, mussels, shrimp and fish.



13.2 The coastal environment

The Genoa and Wallagaraugh Rivers feed Mallacoota inlet, which stretches out to Bass Strait, near Bastion Point. The inlet hosts many sand banks and islands with reedbeds, sedgeland and seagrass. Important ecological communities include:

- Littoral Rainforest and Coastal Vine Thickets (EPBC-listed)
- River-flat eucalypt forest on coastal floodplains (EPBC-listed)
- Sub-tropical and Temperate Saltmarsh (EPBC-listed)
- Clay Heathlands
- Warm Temperate Rainforest



Council-managed reserves with particularly high natural value include the southern and northern foreshore, Betka River area and Shady Gully (Ethos NRM, 2022). These areas hold a variety of threatened flora and fauna species, including:

- White-fronted, Little and Fairy Terns
- Great and Red Knots
- Gang-gang Cockatoo
- Curlew Sandpiper
- Mallacoota Burrowing Crayfish
- Eastern Curlew
- Southern Right Whale
- Eastern Bristlebird
- White-bellied Sea-Eagle
- Hooded Plover

Croajingolong National Park is designated as a World Biosphere Reserve and contains records for one quarter of all Australian bird species (Parks Victoria, 2023).

The extent and severity of the 2019/20 bushfires drastically impacted the region's natural values, particularly at Mallacoota.

13.3 Coastal processes and hazards

The coastal processes around Mallacoota are complex. The area is influenced by both riverine and coastal inundation. Surrounded by low-lying wetlands and marshes, inundation is an important natural process to support ecosystems.

Mallacoota Inlet is an intermittently closed-open estuary. The entrance can be closed for months at a time, if not years. Flooding of jetties, wharves, camping areas, carparks, boat ramps and moorings can occur when water levels are high.

Intermittently closed-open estuaries

The region hosts several estuaries that naturally open and close. This is influenced by river flows, rainfall, sea, and wind conditions. Some estuaries close for months or years.

These naturally dynamic systems support varied ecological, cultural and social values. Artificial openings can impact on these values, with poor water quality and fish kills.



The EGCMA monitors estuary health – analysing water levels, water quality, and weather conditions for potential closures and re-openings. Protocols guide entrance management, with further information at: egcma.com.au/what-we-do/estuary-openings

Changes in climate and sea levels could alter the flooding regime and may increase inundation across the Mallacoota foreshore. While most residences, commercial properties and assets are located on higher ground, public foreshore facilities could be increasingly impacted.

Vegetation cover strengthens dunes and provides some protection from erosion, especially on the open coast. There are also stretches of seawalls along the coast, particularly along the township foreshore and Caravan Park.



13.4 Coastal uses, reserves and facilities

The pristine natural coastal surrounds make Mallacoota a popular holiday spot for nature-lovers. Many recreational facilities are available for visitors and are centred around outdoor activities. These include:

- Camping and caravan parks including the Council-managed Mallacoota Foreshore Holiday Park
- Fishing jetties and wharfs, including Karbeethong, Bucklands and Gypsy Point Jetties
- Boat mooring and launching areas, including moorings along the caravan park and Bastion Point Boat Ramp
- Walking tracks and lookouts for sightseeing, birdwatching, and hiking.
- Surfing and swimming spots including sheltered areas in the inlet and open coast surf areas.



Recreational fishing-based tourism is considered to be a major contributor to economic activity in the town. Mallacoota Inlet was declared a fisheries reserve in 2004. The town also hosts commercial fisheries, specifically abalone and sea urchin harvesting.

13.5 Coastal and marine management

Council manage the foreshore reserves from Secret Beach, along the open coast and into the inlet, round to the edge of the township at Bucklands Jetty. DEECA manage large areas of State Forest. Parks Victoria manage surrounding National Parks. Gippsland Ports manage a range of public boating facilities and the Inlet itself.

The Mallacoota Foreshore Management Plan (2005) and Urban Design Framework (2007) have guided past management but are now outdated. Perspectives and setting have also changed since the 2019/20 bushfires. The Mallacoota and District Recovery Association (MADRA) have developed a community-led recovery plan. Key values and priorities linked to coastal and marine management include:




- A love of our diverse, unspoilt wilderness landscape.
- Balance between natural values and bushfire safety
- A need to diversify the economy to balance tourist and resident needs
- Town planning and overlay updates to recognise hazards and consider emergency needs
- Replacement or upgrade of foreshore facilities and access.

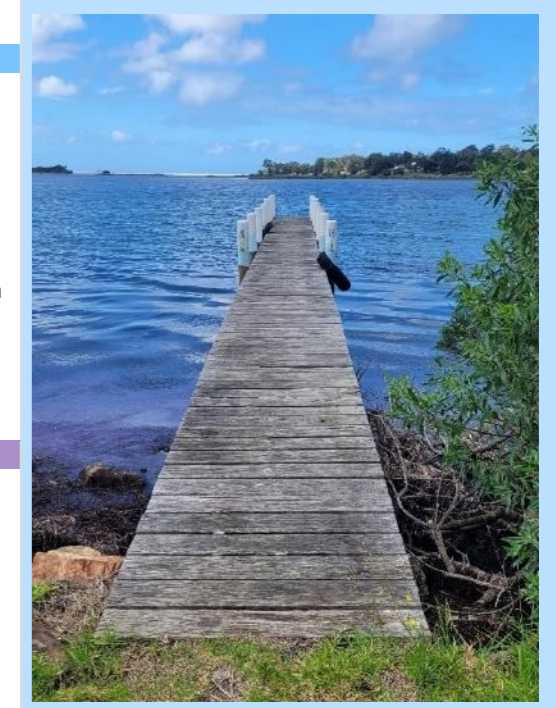
There are several recent or ongoing Council-led projects across Mallacoota:

- Bastion Point groin wall
- Streetscape upgrades
- Secret Beach stair reconstruction
- Mallacoota seawall reconstruction

Table 26 summarises community values, challenges and opportunities across Mallacoota, with focus areas for future management. Figure 128 to Figure 136 map key features, values, and management arrangements across the foreshore.

Table 26. Values, challenges and opportunities for Mallacoota coastal and marine management, with focus areas for future management.

		Mallacoota			
		Values	Challenges	Opportunities	Focus for management
	Traditional Owners' rights, aspirations and knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Far East groups connection to Country Significant Aboriginal Heritage places and sites (recorded and unrecorded) Broader community desire to understand Aboriginal culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unrecorded and unprotected sites and heritage No Registered Aboriginal Party with unclear arrangements of who can speak for Country. Challenges undertaking cultural heritage surveys, with multiple groups and minimal resources available Recreational use impacting on cultural values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify unrecorded Aboriginal Heritage sites and continue planning overlays and controls to protect Strengthen understanding of and relationships with Far East groups and desire/capacity for involvement in coastal and marine management Where appropriate, increase signage to communicate and celebrate Aboriginal culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate bushfire recovery efforts and funding, taking stock of actions completed and remaining areas for improvement, including restoring access paths and trails. Leverage off post-bushfire funding and engagement to deliver foreshore upgrades – streetscaping, amenities, walking connectivity etc.
	The marine and coastal environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High value natural vegetation and habitat across foreshore reserves – Mallacoota Coastal Reserve, Mortimers Paddock and Mallacoota Aerodrome Important vegetation communities - littoral rainforest, coastal vine thickets, river-flat eucalypt forest, coastal floodplains, saltmarsh, seagrass beds, clay heathlands and warm temperate rainforest Rare and threatened species - Gang-gang Cockatoo, Mallacoota Burrowing Crayfish, Southern Right Whale, Eastern Bristlebird, sea-eagles, terns and knots Mallacoota Inlet and dynamic estuary environment National Parks, Reserves and coastal wilderness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2019/20 bushfire loss of vegetation and habitat Balancing bushfire fuel management requirements with loss of native vegetation – e.g. vegetation removal controls and species selection Weed management and pest control, with few resources Management of burnt vegetation and environmental recovery following bushfires Impacts of human disturbance and dogs on beach nesting birds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetation protection and enhancement, including weed, pest and access management Holistic approach to vegetation management, including fire risk management and species selection advice Continued estuary water quality and water level monitoring to inform opening requirements Improved communication and protection for beach nesting birds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve definition and communication of purpose of foreshore areas including separation of conflicting users and communication of public open space through Caravan Park Consolidate and communicate land management arrangements including determining suitable managing agencies, communicating public open space areas and seeking opportunities for further open space.
	Natural processes and climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bushfire emergency evacuation routes, safe access and places of last resort, often on foreshores Recently upgraded seawall across Caravan Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing bushfire and coastal hazard risk Flooding associated with prolonged estuary closure occurs on roads, wharves and boat ramps. Erosion, sediment and ground movement at Bastion Point – sand build up and impacts on safe boating Swimming safety associated with entrance opening More frequent and longer duration estuary closures associated with climate changes and sea level rise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve emergency management and consider where evacuation locations, routes and service reliability may intersect with coastal and marine management Clearly communicate swimming hazards and whether beach are patrolled by surf lifesaving clubs. Investigate estuary dynamics and expected changes with climate change and sea level rise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate and plan for estuary opening regime changes and coastal hazard impacts associated with climate change. Work with Far East Groups to investigate and increase understanding of cultural heritage and ensure protection.
	Sustainable use and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trails, boardwalks and walking/cycling connectivity Access to foreshore parks and reserves - Betka River Reserve, Mallacoota Foreshore Holiday Park Safe boating and water access – foreshore mooring, Bastion Point and main township boat ramps, Karbeethong jetty, other jetties and moorings. Tourism and recreational values - fishing, camping, boating, safe swimming, surfing, festivals and events Commercial fishing and the abalone industry Coastal wilderness setting and sea views Peaceful meeting points and reflection areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extended footpaths and trail closures following bushfires Lack of 'sense of arrival' and seascape connectivity Parking availability, traffic flow and pedestrian safety at Bastion Point, particularly in peak season Poorly defined activity and recreation areas with limited public open space and access to existing space Tenure arrangements and the right agency for land Outdated amenities at Foreshore Holiday Park Aging Caravan Park facilities and Buckland Boat Shed Lack of surf lifesaving storage facilities and confusion over patrol timings, with potential inadequacy of patrols 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinstate walking track connectivity following bushfires Collect and utilise usage data to determine facility, parking and surf lifesaving patrol needs. Upgrade facilities at Foreshore Holiday Park and communicate this as public open space Reconfigure Bastion Point parking to improve pedestrian safety – utilise traffic counts to inform design and investigate additional golf course land Better define and communicate nodes and separate conflicting uses (e.g. children and boat ramp users) Streetscape upgrades (underway) 	
	Stewardship, knowledge, engagement and collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active and passionate community groups - Mallacoota and District Recovery Association and Mallacoota and District Business and Tourism Association, Friends of Mallacoota, Far East Landcare, Southeast Landcare Recreational groups - East Gippsland Sportfishing Strong sense of self-determination – community driven 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-bushfire engagement fatigue and higher prioritisation of other recovery projects Balancing community desires with roles and responsibilities of agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consolidate engagement opportunities to gather input on multiple issues Engage Place Managers and leverage off existing engagement information and networks (e.g. MADRA) Improved communication of Council activities 	



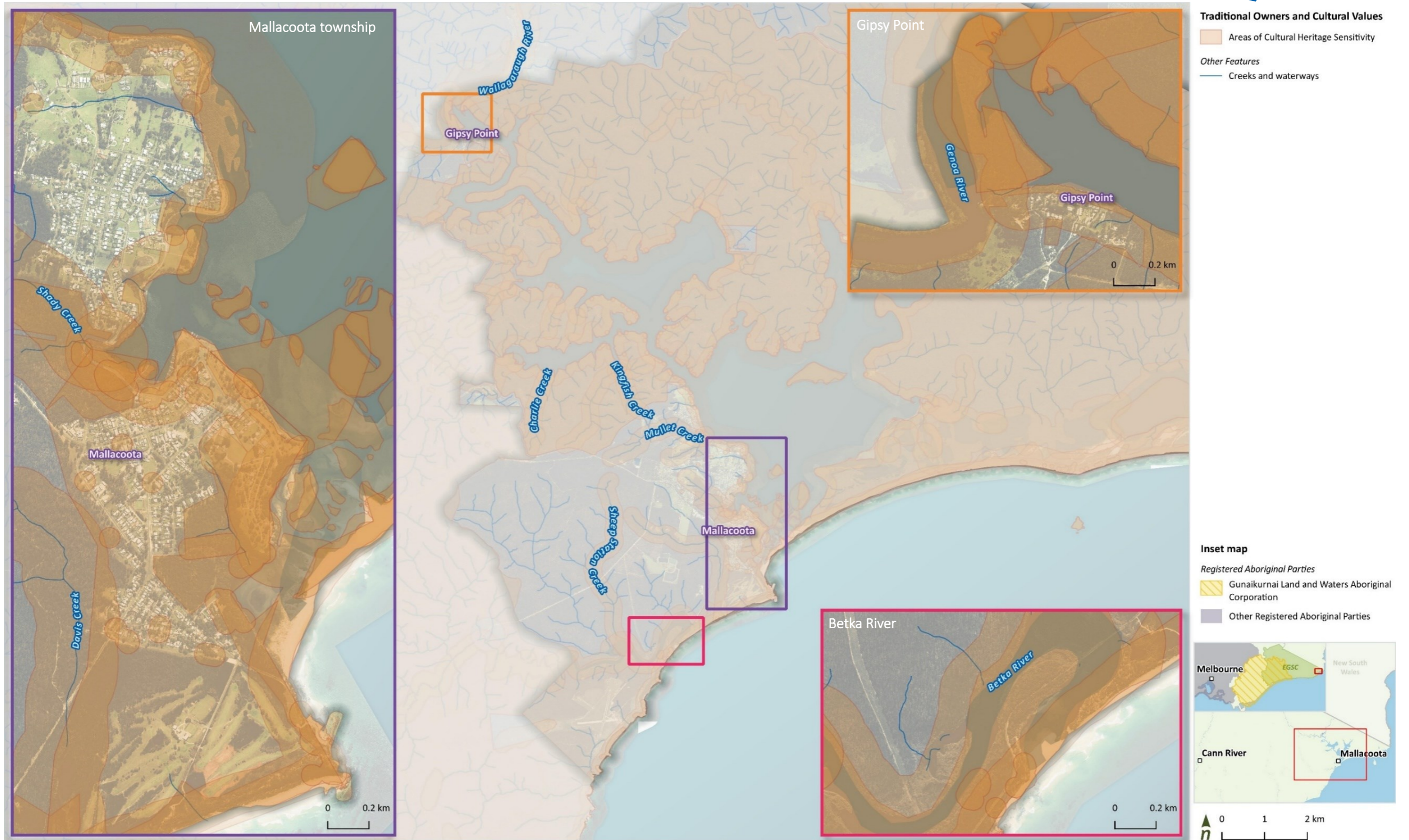


Figure 128. Registered Aboriginal Party areas, culturally sensitive areas and Joint Management areas for Mallacoota.

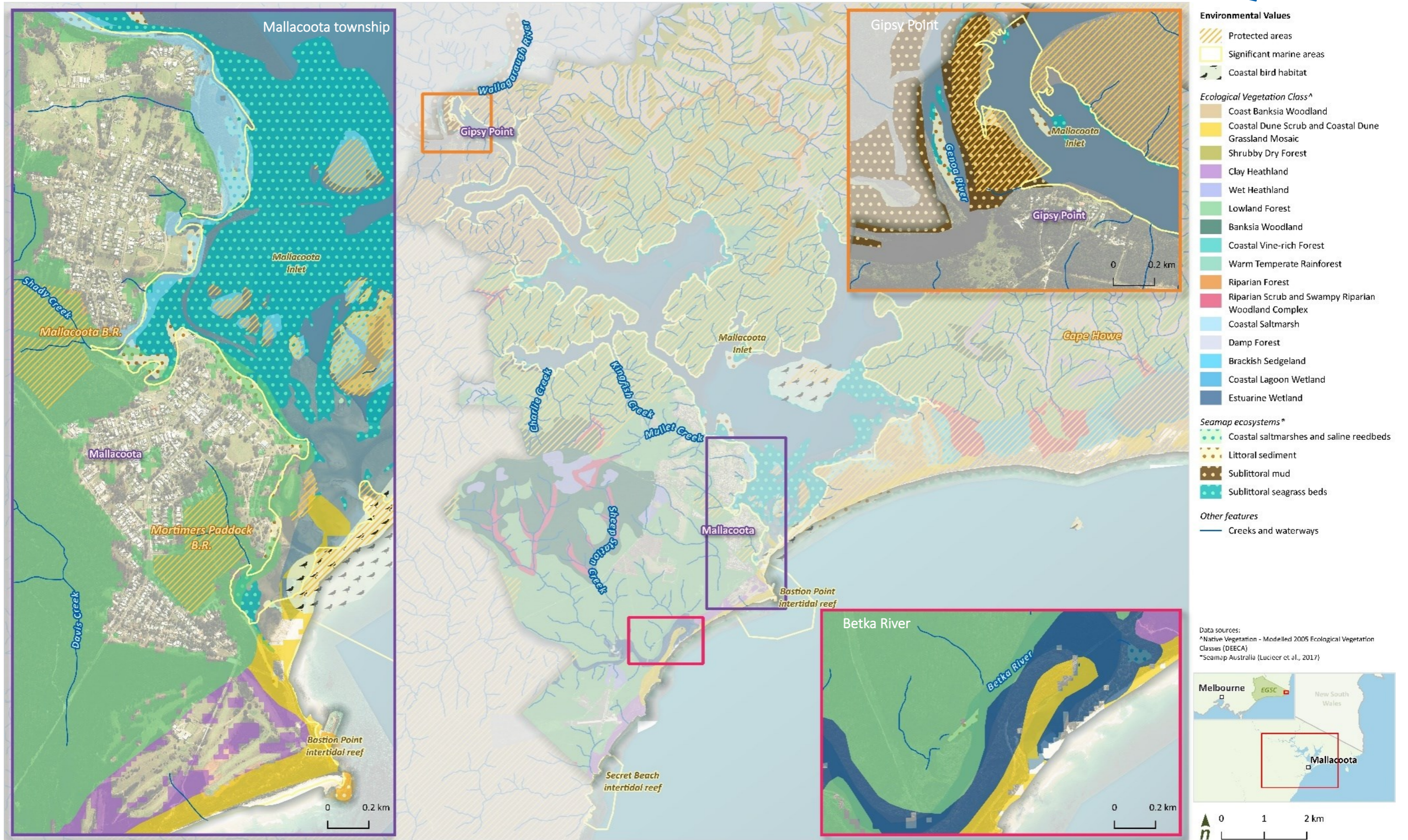


Figure 129: Key coastal and marine environmental values, including protected areas, ecological vegetation classes (EVCs) and biotypes for Mallacoota.

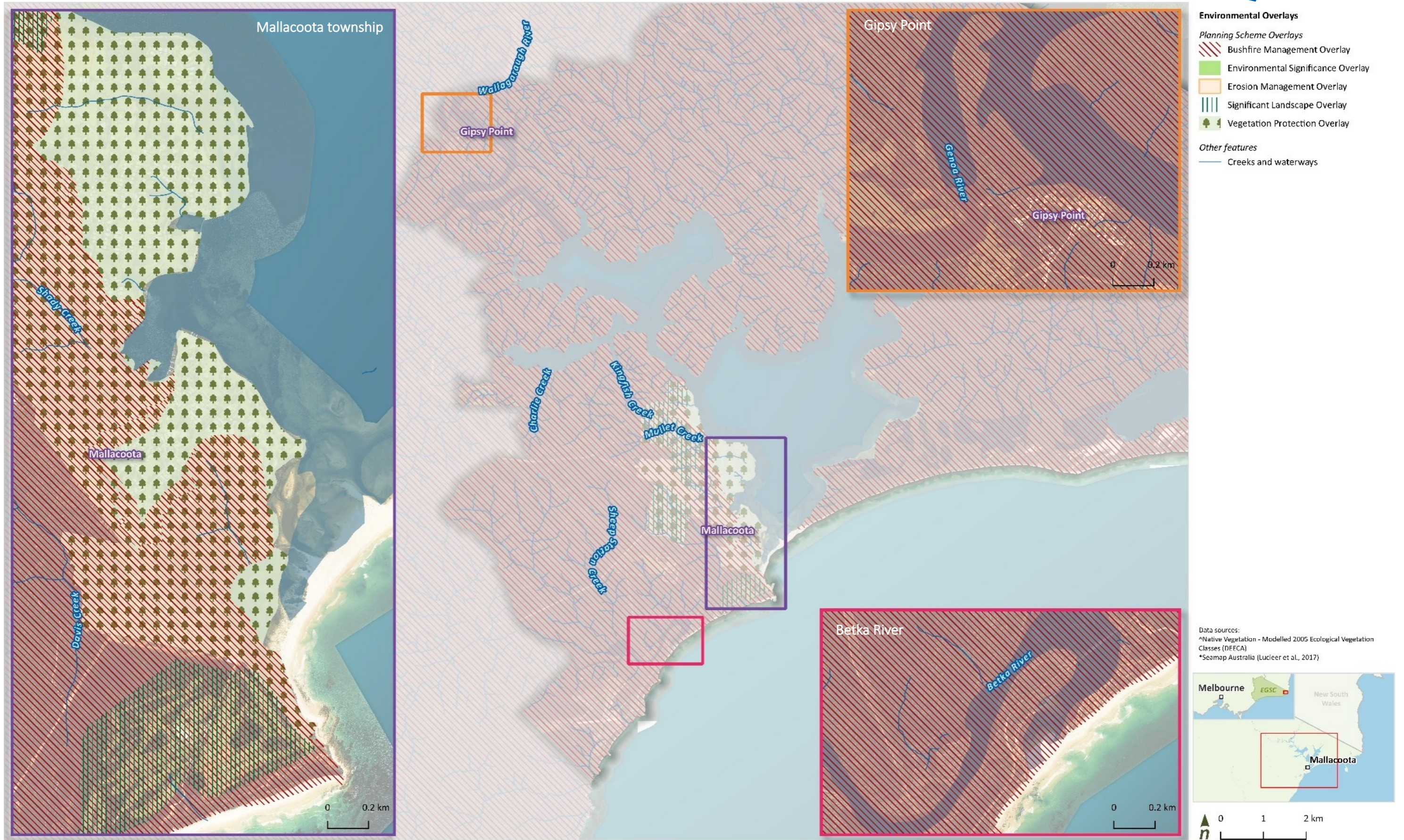


Figure 130. Environmental and land management planning overlays for Mallacoota.

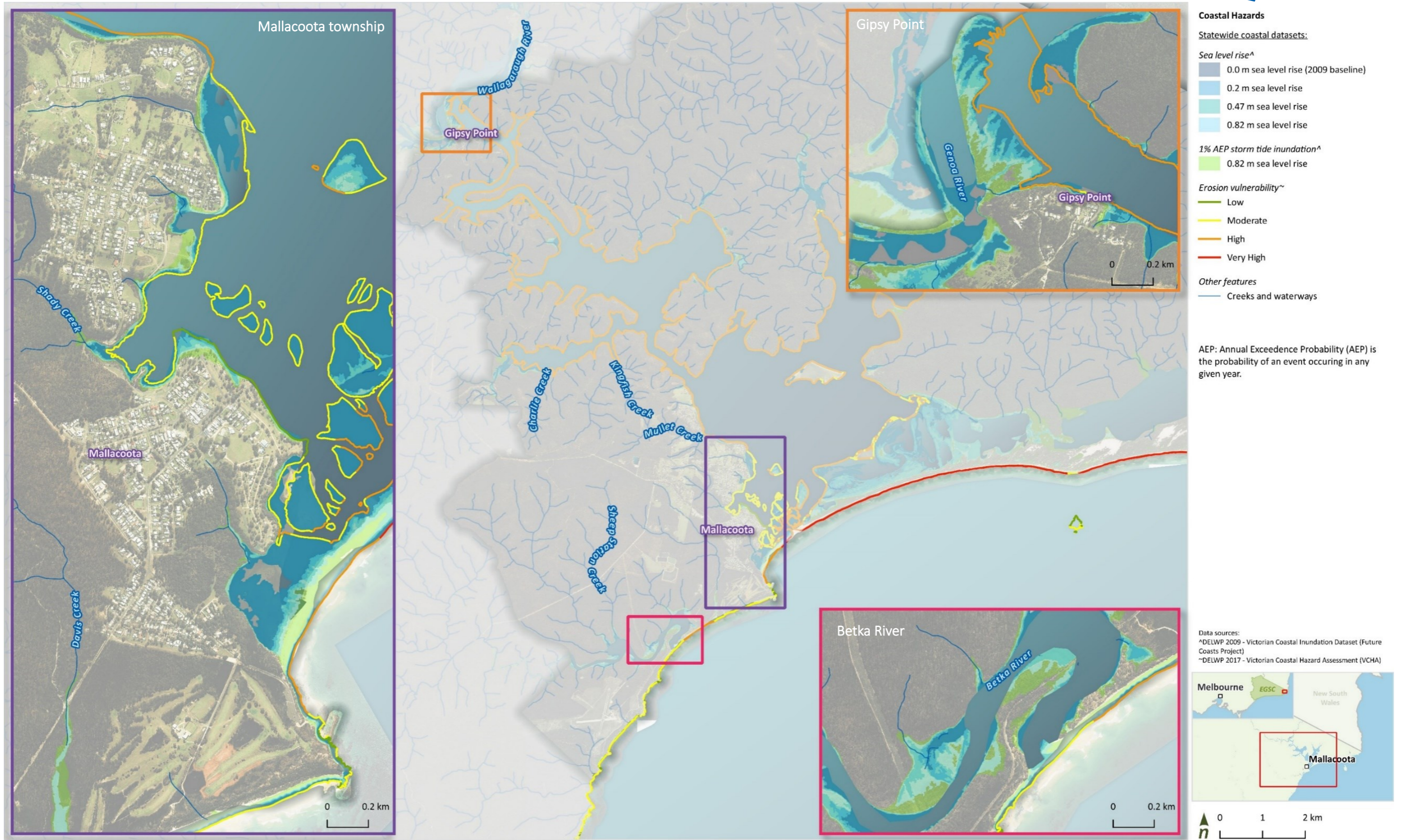


Figure 131. Coastal hazard mapping of Statewide coastal hazard data as part of the Victorian Governments Future Coasts Project and Victorian Coastal Hazard Assessment for Mallacoota.

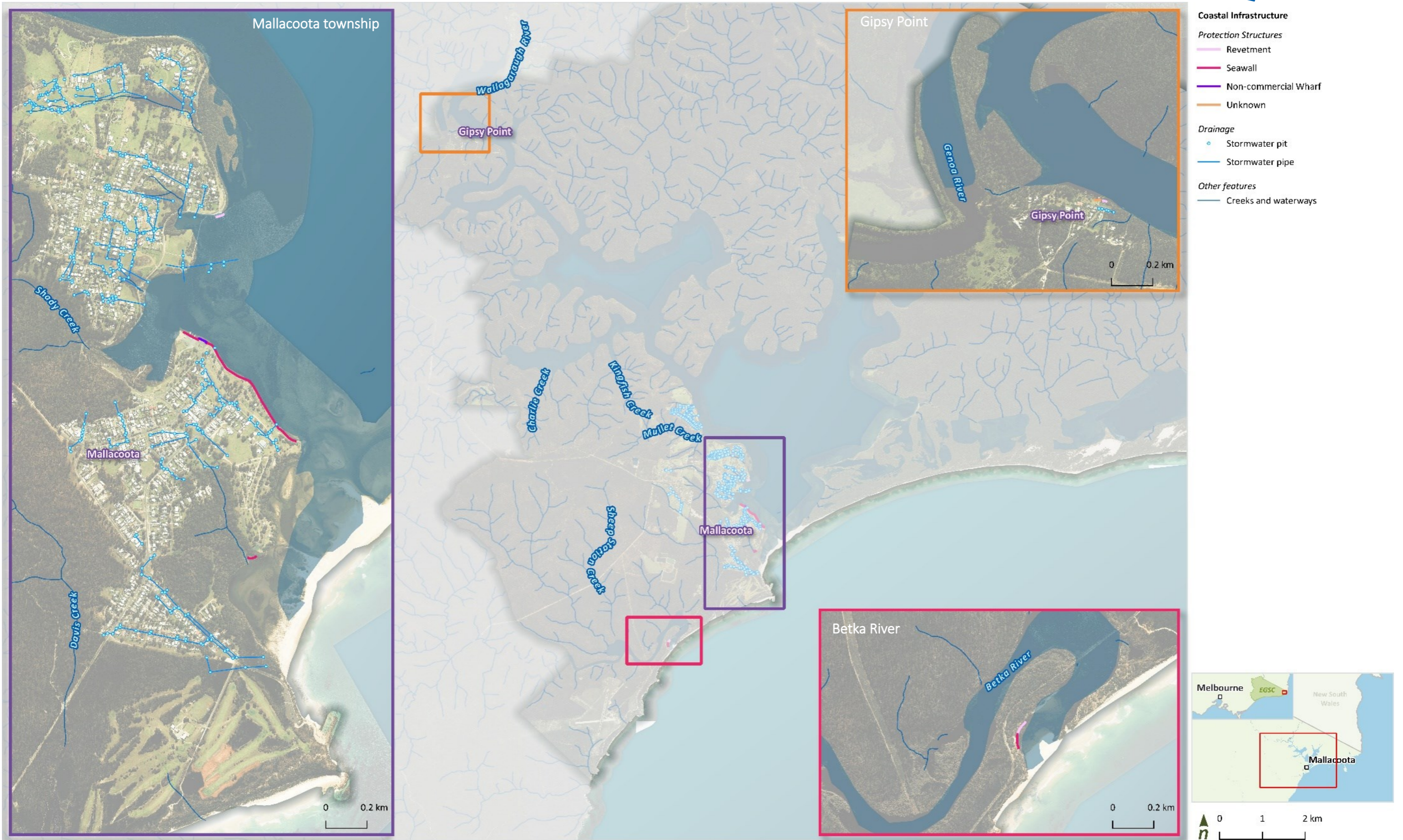


Figure 132. Coastal protection and drainage infrastructure for Mallacoota.

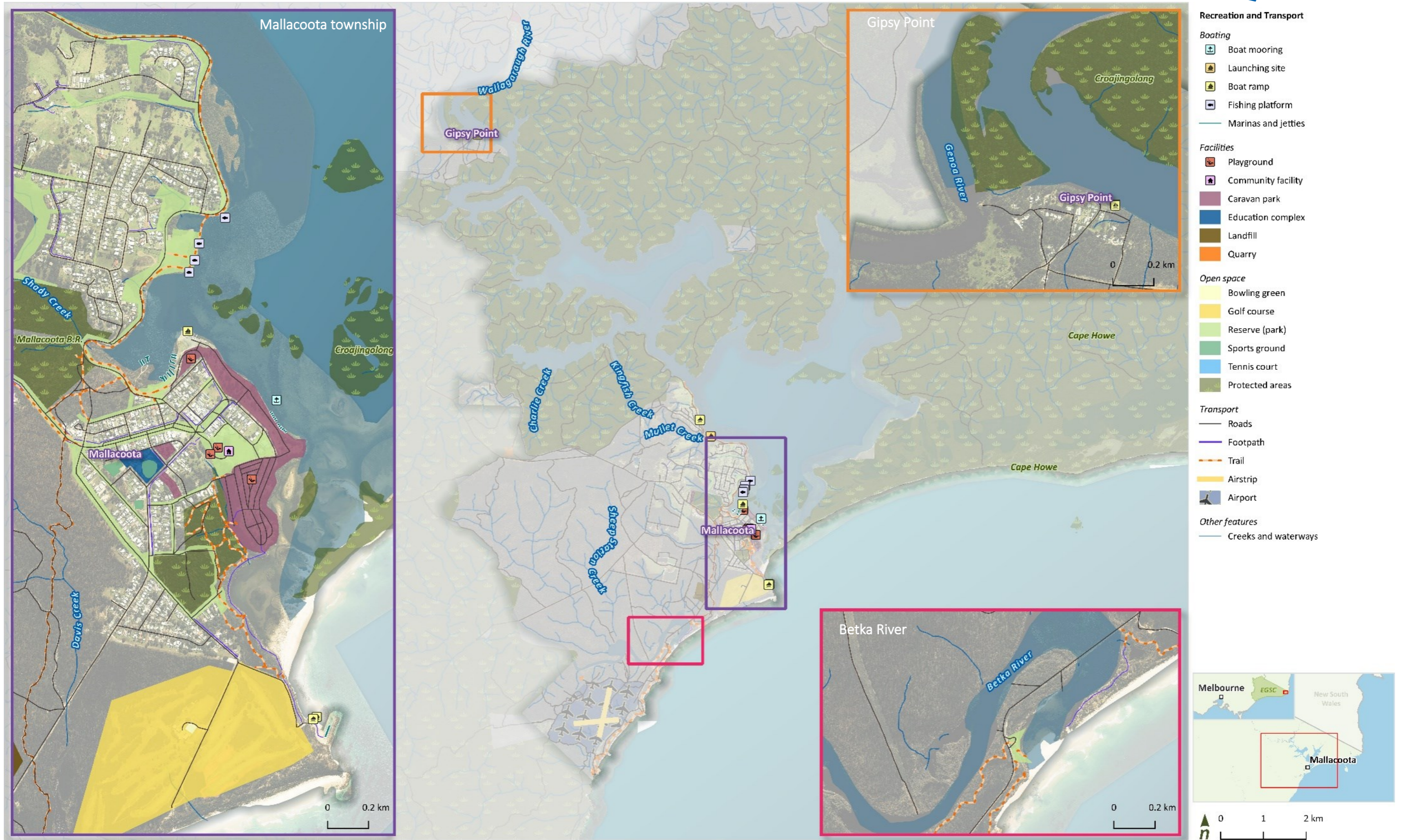


Figure 133. Recreation facilities and transport networks for Mallacoota.

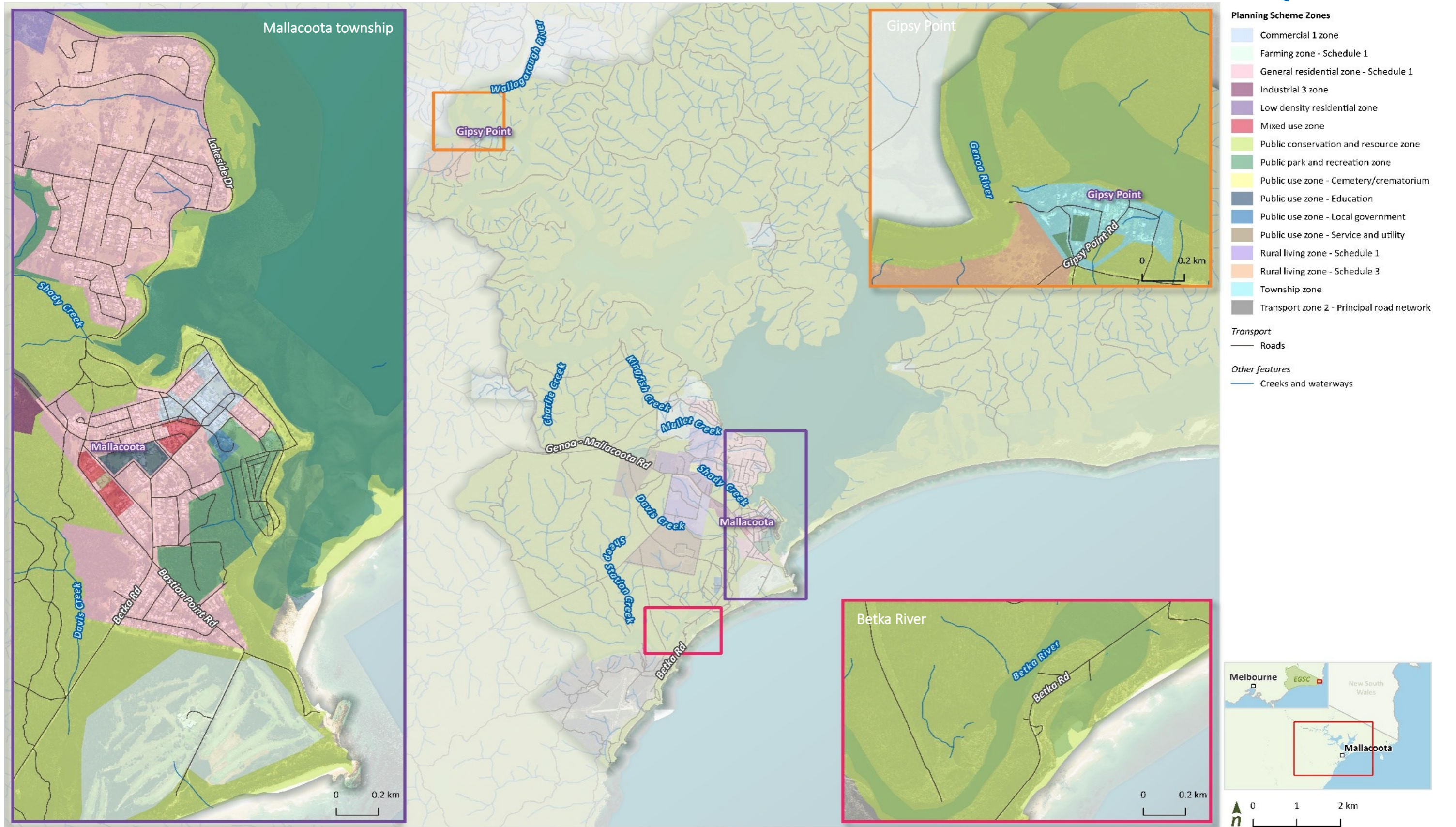


Figure 134. Planning scheme zones for Mallacoota.

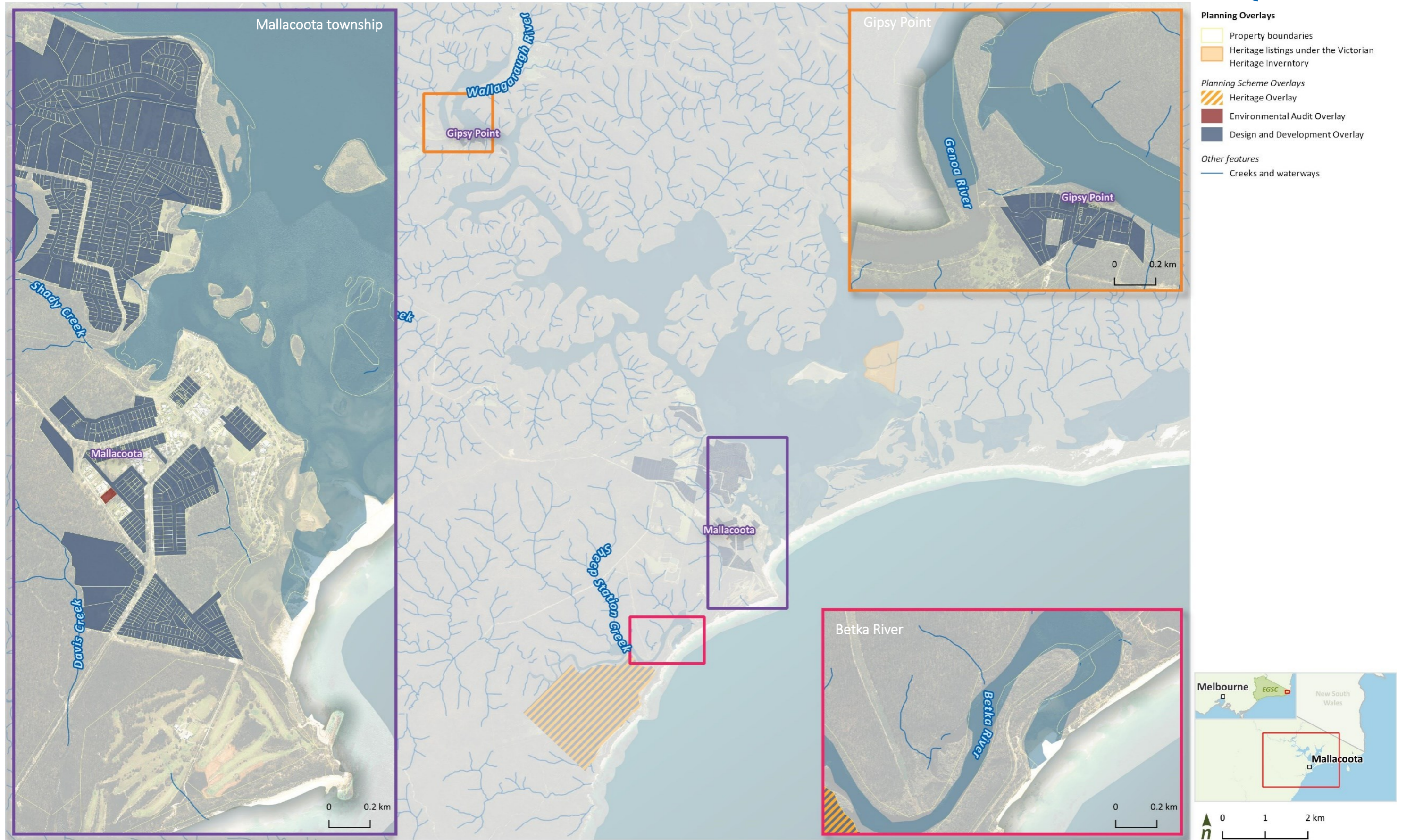


Figure 135. Other planning scheme overlays for Mallacoota.

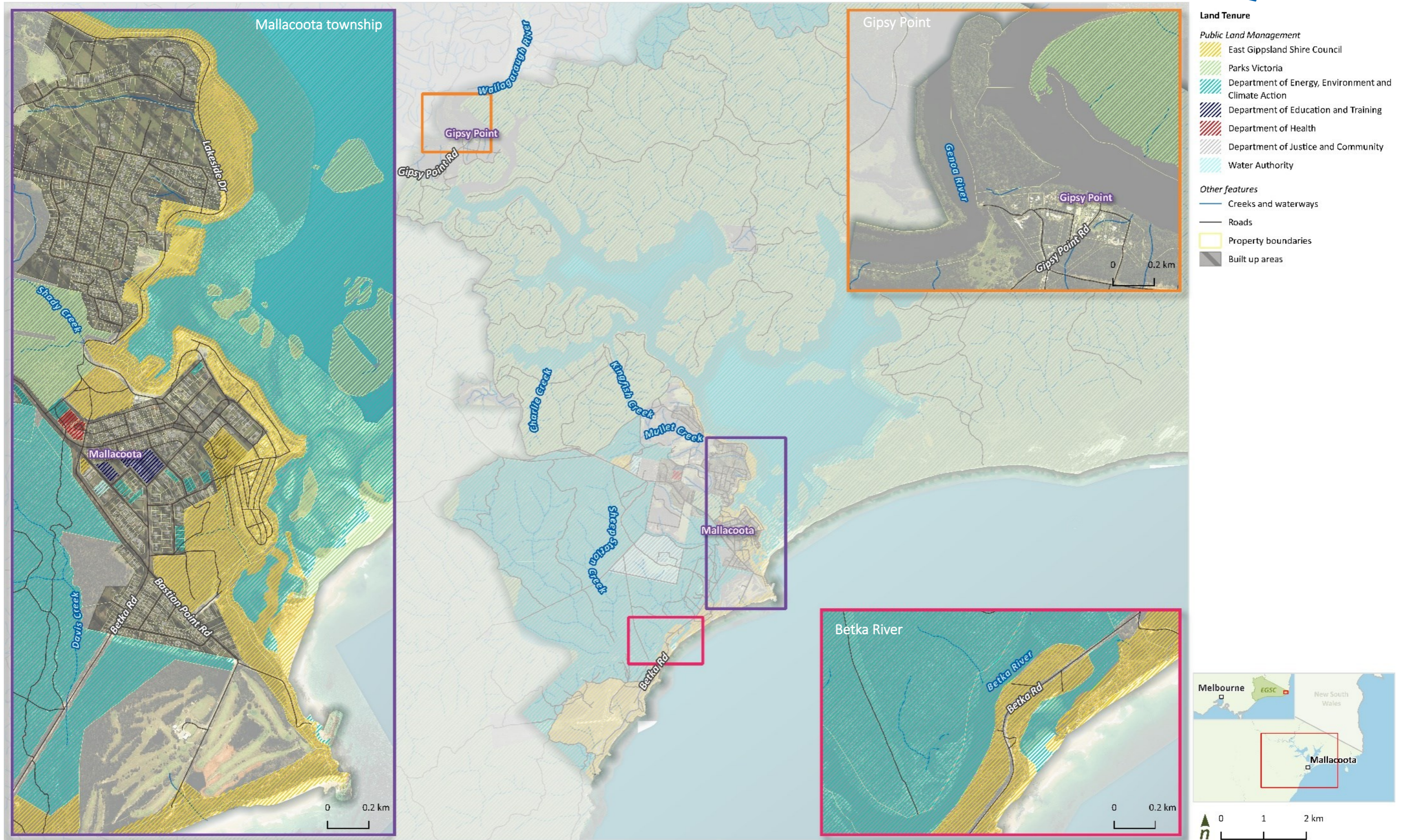


Figure 136. Public land management arrangements for Mallacoota.



13.6 Management actions

Table 27 details the CMMP management actions for Mallacoota.

Figure 137 presents site-specific management actions and maps activity and recreation nodes.

Table 27. Mallacoota management actions

Long-term objective	No.	Action	Priority	Council role	Partners
Objective 1: Acknowledge Traditional Owners' rights, aspirations and knowledge	ML1.1	Guided by Far East Traditional Owner Groups, support identification, management and protection of cultural heritage values across Bemm River coastal areas. In alignment with Shire Wide actions, this includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting Far East Traditional Owner Groups to identify unrecorded cultural heritage sites. Continuing to implement appropriate planning overlays and controls such as Cultural Heritage Management Plans to protect cultural heritage. Collaborating with Far East Traditional Owner Groups to better understand cultural values and inform future protection, in alignment with Action ML1.2. Incorporating culturally-sensitive design into all works across Council-managed coastal reserves. 	Ongoing	Participate	Far East Traditional Owner Groups
	ML1.2	Continue to advance relationships with Far East Groups, including Bidwell, Yuin, and Ngarigo Monero peoples, and strengthen EGSC understanding of desire and capacity among Far East Groups for collaboration in coastal and marine management across Mallacoota.	0-3 years, then ongoing	Lead	Far East Traditional Owner Groups
Objective 2: Protect and enhance the marine and coastal environment	ML2.1	Collaborate with BirdLife Australia, EGCMA and other stakeholders to promote important estuarine and coastal wetland habitats. Support education on impacts of inappropriate recreational use, presence of dogs, and vegetation removal.	Ongoing	Participate	EGCMA, BirdLife Australia, environmental and community groups
	ML2.2	Continue to support EGCMA and citizen science programs to monitor estuary water quality and levels to inform opening arrangements of Mallacoota Inlet. Communicate management roles and responsibilities with reference to EGCMA entrance management protocols. Aligns with Shire wide Action EG5.2.	Ongoing	Participate	EGCMA, Parks Victoria, citizen science programs
Objective 3: Respect natural processes and strengthen resilience to climate change	ML3.1	Collaborate with land managers and EGCMA to investigate and plan for Mallacoota Inlet estuary opening regime changes expected with climate change and sea level rise. Consider opportunities for accommodation and adaptation of surrounding built and natural environment, impacts of increased flooding associated with prolonged closures, and the reducing need for artificial estuary opening.	5+ years	Participate	EGCMA, land managers
	ML3.2	Continue to contribute to strategic bushfire recovery and management across coastal and marine areas through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DEECA, Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic) and CFA collaboration. Strategic vegetation management, considering environmental values and fuel management loads. Review of bushfire recovery projects, funding and outstanding actions. Aligning and coordinating bushfire recovery efforts with CMMP objectives, principles and actions. Strategic bushfire management activity communication (through Action ML5.1 and aligning with Action EG3.4). 	0-3 years	Participate	DEECA, FFMVic,



Long-term objective	No.	Action	Priority	Council role	Partners
Objective 4: Use and develop sustainably	ML4.1	In alignment with Action EG4.1, utilise activity and recreation nodes to clearly delineate distinct purposes and uses within foreshore zones, and ensure efficient development through co-location, partnership use, and consolidation of community assets. Includes delineation of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mallacoota Caravan Park between Maurice Avenue and Mallacoota Boat Ramp, and adjoining commercial centre as key activity node. • Bastion Point as recreation node for larger boat launching and open-coast swimming and surfing activities. • Betka River as recreation node for family and picnic activities. 	0-3 years	Lead	All other land managers
	ML4.2	In alignment with East Gippsland Housing and Settlement Strategy (2023), continue to foster Town character through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of existing foreshore facilities and investment in facilities, based on assessment of need. • Sustainable growth within extent of existing urban zoning through infill development and subject to environmental risk (bushfire, flood, coastal hazard) constraints. • Promoting adherence to township boundaries, planning overlays and land use planning. 	Ongoing	Lead	
	ML4.3	Progress and complete upgrade works to foreshore precincts and facilities that are currently underway including Mallacoota Streetscape Upgrade. Review designs and planning to ensure proposed works and upgrades align with CMMP objectives, principles, actions and State policy.	3-5 years	Lead	
	ML4.4	Support boating activities across the Mallacoota region by ensuring the ongoing maintenance and upgrade of a diversity of boating infrastructure, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bastion Point boat ramp as preferred facilities for larger boats, with upgrades and maintenance undertaken through Actions ML4.5 and ML4.6. • Gypsy Point and Mallacoota foreshore boat ramps as preferred facilities for small- to medium-sized craft, with maintenance and updates implemented as required. Communicate purpose and preferred usage of boating facilities in alignment with Action ML4.1.	0-3 years, then ongoing	Lead	Gippsland Ports, Boating Vic, Better Boating Victoria
	ML4.5	Review and investigate design upgrades to Bastion Point parking to improve parking availability, traffic flow, and pedestrian safety. Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of traffic count and monitoring data to inform designs and strategically manage parking availability throughout peak and low seasons. • Investigation of opportunities for land transfers. • Consideration of pathway upgrades, signage or other measures to improve pedestrian safety. • Site promotion as a recreation node for boat launching, ocean swimming and surfing activities in alignment with Action ML4.1 	0-3 years	Lead	Mallacoota Golf Club
	ML4.6	Continue to operate and maintain Bastion Point (Mallacoota Ocean Access) Boat Ramp in accordance with the Operation and Maintenance Environmental Management Plan and relevant approvals and conditions. Support independent audits, as required.	0-3 years	Lead	Gippsland Ports
	ML4.7	Collaborate with Life Saving Victoria and Surf Lifesaving Club to investigate opportunities to improve safety at Bastion Point, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of signage and communication of patrol operations (or lack of), in alignment with Action ML5.2. • Review of storage facilities, lifesaving equipment and opportunities for improved arrangements. 	0-3 years	Lead	Life Saving Victoria, Mallacoota Surf Lifesaving Club



Long-term objective	No.	Action	Priority	Council role	Partners
Objective 4: Use and develop sustainably (cont.)	ML4.8	Investigate opportunities to communicate the Mallacoota Caravan Park as public open space through dedicated pathways, wayfinding signage and maps of public trails.	0-3 years	Lead	
	ML4.9	Reinstate damaged walking tracks through Mortimers Paddock, including Pittosporum walk to improve connectivity along and to the coast. Undertake works in ecologically sensitive manner and including wayfinding and interpretive signage.	0-3 years	Lead	DEECA
Objective 5: Take a stewardship approach, build understanding and knowledge, engage and collaborate	ML5.1	Continue to support and collaborate with local volunteer community and environment groups e.g. Mallacoota and District Recovery Association and MADRA, Friends of Mallacoota, Far East Landcare. Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting community group activities in the coastal and marine space. Fostering open communication and engagement channels with community groups. Leveraging existing engagement information and knowledge, established community networks and place managers to improve communication of and engagement with of Council activities. Continuing to seek opportunities to increase community involvement, including through community grants and Council partnerships. Promoting and increasing citizen science opportunities (including environmental monitoring - Action ML2.2). 	Ongoing	Lead	All other management agencies, environmental and community groups and organisations
	ML5.2	In alignment with Action EG5.3, review consolidate and update foreshore signage across Mallacoota to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure consistency. Improve safety and recognise swimming hazards and surf lifesaving patrol arrangements. Promote connectivity and wayfinding including communicating Caravan Park as public open space and thoroughfare. Communicate land and asset management arrangements. Celebrate unique environments, history and culture. Support implementation of activity and recreation nodes (Action ML4.1). 	3-5 years	Lead	Other land managers, Far East Traditional Owner groups
	ML5.3	In collaboration with Gippsland Ports, continue to maintain clear communication with the community regarding Bastion Point dredging operations, procedures, impacts, environmental assessments and monitoring to ensure the community is informed by the best available information in a timely manner. Linked to Action ML4.6.	Ongoing	Participate	DEECA
	ML5.4	Review and consolidate land tenure and management arrangements including determining suitable managing agencies, communicating public open space areas and seeking opportunities to increase public foreshore open space. Communicate any management alterations clearly with all relevant stakeholders.	3-5 years	Lead	Other land managers (DEECA, Parks Victoria)

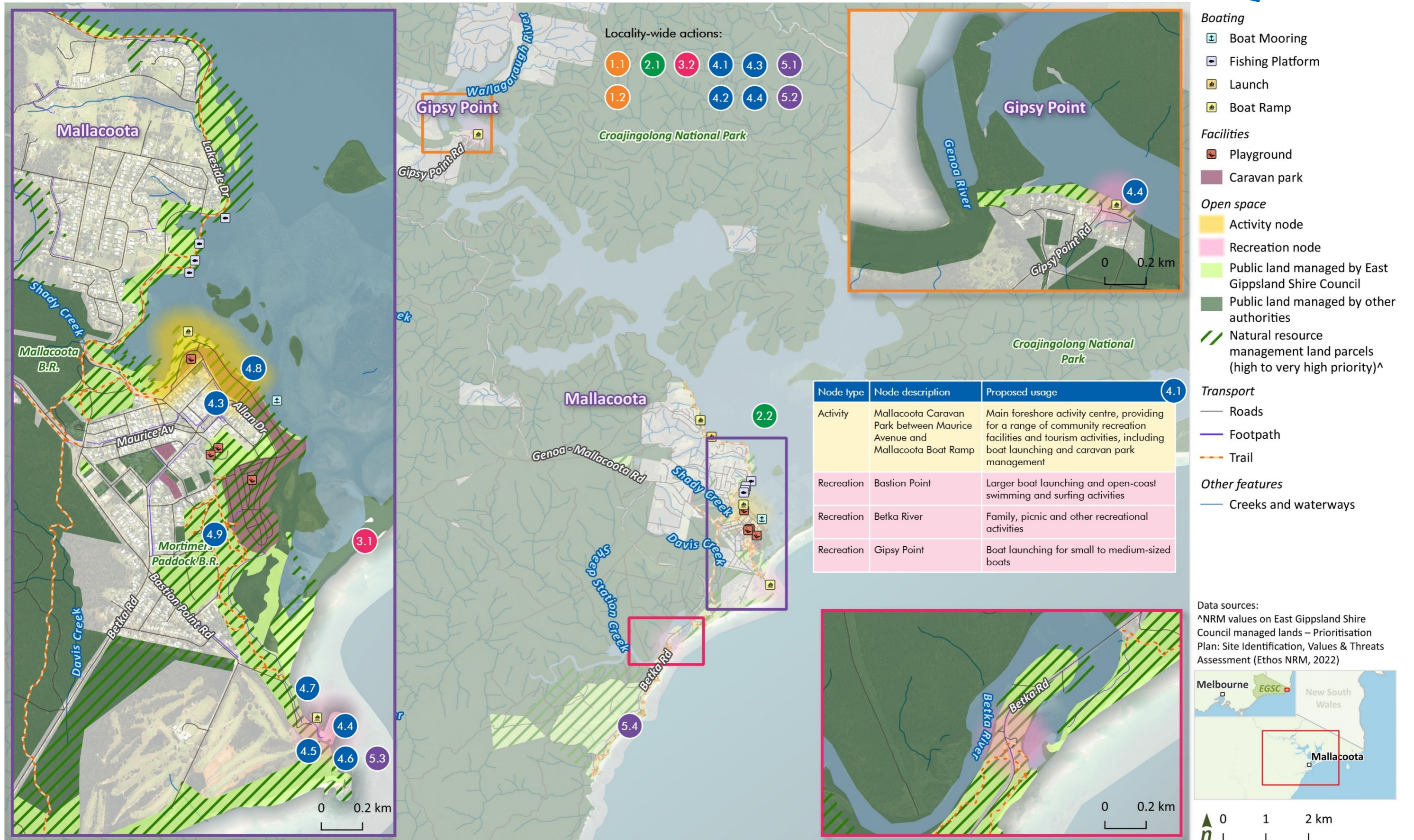


Figure 137. Mallacoota management actions and nodes