



# Windermere Hut, Toilet and Group Platform

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Overland Track  
Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park

RAA 3744

September 2020

Published by: Parks and Wildlife Service

Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment

GPO Box 1751

Hobart TAS 7001

Cite as: Parks and Wildlife Service 2020, Environmental Assessment Report for Reserve Activity Assessment 3744 Windermere Hut, Toilet and Group Platform, Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, Hobart.

ISBN:

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Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment

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# Environmental Assessment Report

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Proponent</b>           | PWS Operations Branch, North West Region  |
| <b>Proposal</b>            | Windermere Hut, Toilet and Group Platform Replacements  |
| <b>Location</b>            | Windermere overnight node, Overland Track   |
| <b>Reserve</b>             | Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park   |
| <b>RAA No.</b>             | 3744  |
| <b>Document ID</b>         | Environmental Assessment Report – Windermere Hut, Toilet and Group Platform Replacements – September 2020   |
| <b>Assessment type</b>     | EIA Level 3, Landscape Division   |
| <b>Related initiatives</b> | Overland Track Hut Redevelopment Project<br>Windermere Site Concept Plan 2019<br>Waterfall Valley Hut Redevelopment RAA 3465  |
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# Contents

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|  |    |
|--|----|
| Glossary and abbreviations.....                      | 2  |
| Report Summary.....                                  | 3  |
| 1. Assessment Process.....                           | 4  |
| 2. Statutory assessment and policy requirements..... | 5  |
| 3. Proposal.....                                     | 6  |
| Proponent.....                                       | 6  |
| Objectives and outcomes.....                         | 6  |
| Summary.....   | 6  |
| 4. Need for the proposal and alternatives.....       | 8  |
| 5. Public and Agency consultation.....               | 10 |
| Stakeholders.....                                    | 10 |
| DPIPWE and Authorities.....                          | 10 |
| Public consultation of the EIS.....                  | 10 |
| 6. Evaluation of environmental impacts.....          | 11 |
| Toilet location.....                                 | 11 |
| Capacity of the hut and node.....                    | 11 |
| Location of the hut.....                             | 12 |
| Wilderness.....                                      | 12 |
| 7 Statement of Reasons.....                          | 13 |
| Assessment Criteria.....                             | 13 |
| Statement of Reasons.....                            | 14 |
| 8. Decision.....                                     | 15 |
| Appendix 1: Commitments.....                         | 16 |
| Appendix 2: Public Consultation submissions.....     | 18 |
| Submission 1.....                                    | 18 |
| Submission 2.....                                    | 19 |

# Glossary and abbreviations

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|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| AH Act 1975   | <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 1975</i>                                  |
| AHAR          | Aboriginal Heritage Assessment Report                                |
| AHT           | Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania   |
| BAL           | Bushfire Attack Level  |
| BHMP          | Bushfire Hazard Management Plan                                      |
| BSF           | Bottomless Sand Filter   |
| CEMP          | Construction Environmental Management Plan                           |
| EIS           | Environmental Impact Statement                                       |
| EPBC 1999     | <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> |
| FPA           | Forest Practices Authority   |
| FMZ           | Fuel Modified Zone   |
| FRP           | Fibre-reinforced plastic   |
| HHE           | Eastern alpine heathland   |
| HMA           | Hazard Management Area   |
| HSE           | Eastern alpine sedgeland   |
| KDO           | Key Desired Outcome  |
| MBE           | Eastern buttongrass moorland   |
| MNES          | Matters of National Environmental Significance                       |
| NC Act 2002   | <i>Nature Conservation Act 2002</i>                                  |
| NCC           | National Construction Code   |
| NCH           | Natural and Cultural Heritage  |
| NPRM Act 2002 | <i>National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002</i>               |
| NPWAC         | National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council                         |
| NVS           | Natural Values Survey  |
| OLT           | Overland Track   |
| PWS           | Parks and Wildlife Service   |
| RAA           | Reserve Activity Assessment  |
| RZP           | Recreation Zone Plan   |
| TFS           | Tasmanian Fire Service   |
| TSP Act 1995  | <i>Threatened Species Protection Act 1995</i>                        |
| TWWHA         | Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area                             |
| TWWHAMP 2016  | Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan             |
| UDP           | Unexpected Discovery Plan  |
| VIA           | Visual Impact Assessment   |
| WQA           | Wilderness Quality Assessment  |

# Report Summary

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This report completes the assessment of the proposal to replace the public hut, toilet and group platform at Windermere overnight node of the Overland Track (OLT), by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS). Subsidiary works include upgrading the greywater management system, removing the current public hut, retaining the adjoined ranger quarters, and removing the existing toilet.

This report has been prepared based on the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) prepared for the proposal (RAA 3744) and released for public consultation. The proposal incorporated advice from relevant DPIPWE agencies, specialist reports and included technical drawings for the buildings and wastewater systems. The documents were publicly available between the dates 1 - 28 August 2020, with one public submission received and one submission from the NPWAC.

This report provides an evaluation of the assessment process for the proposal in accordance with Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage (TWWHA) Management Plan 2016, PWS Environmental Management Policy and *National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002* (NPRM Act). PWS is the administering authority and proponent for the proposal.

The report includes three sections. Section one is a summary of the proposal, the assessment process, and statutory requirements and principles applied. Section 2 discusses the need for the proposal, alternatives considered, and advice received from Agencies, consultants, and the public. Section three evaluates the statement of reasons and decision to recommend the proposal.

Appendix 1 list the commitments outlined in the final Environmental Impact Statement.

Appendix 2 provides copies of the submissions received.

# 1. Assessment Process

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A draft EIA (RAA 3744) was released for public exhibition on 1 August 2020. Assessment process milestones are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1: Assessment process milestones**

| <b>Date</b>           | <b>Milestone</b>   |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>2019</b>           | Windermere Site Concept Plan 2019 endorsed following consultation with key stakeholder groups.           |
| <b>2019-20</b>        | Proposal development including building designs and specialist reports.                                  |
| <b>July 2020</b>      | Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared and accepted for public consultation.                |
| <b>1 August 2020</b>  | Commencement of public consultation  |
| <b>28 August 2020</b> | End of public consultation period.   |
| <b>September 2020</b> | EIS finalised for assessment following consultation.   |
| <b>September 2020</b> | PWS Environmental Assessment Report completed including statement of reasons, commitments, and decision. |

An application for planning, building and plumbing permits under the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993* (LUPAA) in relation to the proposal are required from the West Coast Council. No other local council permits are required to implement the proposal.

## 2. Statutory assessment and policy requirements

---

The *Nature Conservation Act 2002* (NC Act) is the regulatory mechanism in Tasmania through which land is proclaimed as a reserve. Schedule 1 of that Act sets out the purposes of reservation for the various classes of reserved land. For a national park the purposes are the protection and maintenance of the natural and cultural values of the area while providing for ecologically sustainable recreation consistent with conserving those values. The key statutory framework for achieving that aim is the *National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002* (NPRM Act).

Section 30 of the NPRM Act requires that the managing authority (Director National Parks and Wildlife) ensures development and use within a reserve area is in accordance with the TWWHA Management Plan 2016. The environmental impact statement (EIS) documentation (in this case RAA 3744) includes an assessment of the proposal and the degree to which it is in accordance with the requirements of the management plan and policies. The EIS includes consideration of Commonwealth and State legislative requirements.

As the proposal is within the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park, and the activity does not involve a lease or licence, the Director National Parks and Wildlife must make the decision as to whether or not the proposal is approved.

The TWWHA Management Plan 2016 was prepared in accordance with the requirements of Part 3 of the NPRM Act. The EIA includes consideration of Commonwealth and other Tasmanian government legislative requirements.

PWS Environmental Management Policy is the basis of the assessment process. The process requires environmental impact assessment documentation, public consultation and statement of reasons for decisions.





**Image: Proposed public hut render.**

The proposed full capture/pod toilet is centrally located within the node, within 50m of the proposed hut, group platforms, tent platforms and Rangers' quarters, and within 150m of the most distant platforms. The proposed toilet building will be a standard two cubical design, except the roof is marginally larger to accommodate the solar panels and batteries required for electricity generation.

The greywater system proposed will improve wastewater management at the site and connect the rangers hut, toilet and public hut systems.

Subsidiary works required in addition to the replacement hut and toilet include:

- relocating the group platform,
- removal of the former hut,
- retaining the ranger's quarters, and
- remediating the existing toilet building and site (after 12 months).

Relocating the group platform must occur before the new hut starts construction and works to the former hut and toilet will commence only when the new facilities are operational.

## 4. Need for the proposal and alternatives

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The OLT is Australia's premier alpine walk and attracts up to 10,000 walkers annually. The primary purpose of public huts and facilities is to concentrate use on hard stands and protect the environment from expansive informal camping and toileting areas.

The Tasmanian Government has committed to improving visitor accommodation and rectify inconsistent capacity and building conditions on the OLT. The Overland Track Hut Redevelopment Project has recently replaced the Waterfall Valley walker hut and Windermere is the second hut proposed by this project.

Both the hut and toilet structures at Windermere are at the end of their functional lives and need to be replaced. The buildings do not meet contemporary building and environmental management standards. The proposed new public hut and toilet will improve amenity, increase capacity, and upgrade standards at the site.

The proposed activities are considered the most suitable option to provide the best visitor experience while minimising impact on natural and cultural values of the national park and the OUV of the TWWHA.

The alternatives considered are summarised in the EIS (section 1.3) and Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Alternatives considered**

| Alternatives                | Description  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Eliminate the huts</b>   | OLT is a hut-based walk. Huts are part of the visitor experience and sustainable management of the track.  |
| <b>Do nothing</b>           | Existing hut is an aging building with insufficient capacity and poor building health.<br><br>Current toilet building is in poor condition and the waste management system poses a work health and safety risk to staff.   |
| <b>Upgrade existing hut</b> | An engineering assessment of the existing hut identified poor compliance with the health and safety requirements of the National Construction Code (NCC). The building would need to be replaced to comply with contemporary building standards.<br><br>The location of the existing hut would require substantial vegetation and tree clearing to establish a suitable bushfire hazard management area around the building.   |
| <b>New hut location</b>     | Windermere Site Concept Plan 2016 considered three possible hut sites – the existing hut site, a site east of the helipad, and the current group platform site. The existing hut site was not suitable due to tree coverage. The site east of the helipad has good solar access and views of Lake Windermere but is more exposed to weather and visually prominent in the landscape.<br><br>The group platform site was selected as it has good solar access, manageable bushfire hazards and visual screening of the building in the landscape. |

**New hut design**

The design of the proposed Windermere hut is similar to WFV hut, with the concept of two main pavilions (communal and sleeping) linked by the entry porch. Windermere hut would also use similar materials inside and outside the building.

The new Windermere hut design will maintain a difference between huts and sites that is part of the character of the OLT. The Windermere design responds to the sloping lie of the site and the wooded environment. The tapered shape of Windermere attempts to limit the visual impact to the best extent possible.

The use of eaves was discussed at length. The Architects considered the use of eaves or overhangs as more of a suburban reference, that is shedding water away from walls which traditionally haven't been built to a high standard of insulation, waterproofing and breathability. The Architect and engineer agreed minimising non-essential roof overhangs streamlines construction, avoiding costly eaves construction external to the wall line, and avoids waterproofing and maintenance complications at the overlap with the central roof.

**New toilet location**

The toilet needs to be located at a different site as waste material in the batching system must be left in-situ to compost for 12 months before being extracted. The Site Plan identifies the current toilet site as suitable for the Rangers hut in the future.

Providing temporary toilets for walkers during construction such as Port-a-loos, is not considered suitable at a remote site. These systems have high risk of over filling onsite and potential spills when extracted.

The proposed toilet site is preferred for its operational aspects such as being close to high use features (hut and platforms), good solar access for panels and gravity feed to a greywater treatment system at the hut. Due to its slightly elevated location, the toilet will be the more prominent feature in the arrival sequence, although this remains an acceptable moderate-low visual impact.

An alternate site for the toilet is considered in the EIS Visual Impact Assessment. This site is the current tent platforms, just south of the hut. Operationally, this site is also suitable with a central location, good solar access and can be connected to the greywater system. The site also allows for pods to be flown out of the node without crossing the walking track. Relocating the toilet to this location would reduce the visual impact of the arrival sequence.

At the alternate site the rear end of the toilet will be highly visible within the node. The toilet runway and queued pods will be visible from the hut and main walking track. The proposed site screens this area behind the façade and surrounding vegetation. Other flow-on affects from relocating the toilet include replacing the tent platforms within the node.

## 5. Public and Agency consultation

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### Stakeholders

The Windermere Site Concept Plan 2019 was prepared in consultation with key OLT stakeholder groups, to foster agreement and guide developments in the node. The draft Site Concept Plan was shared with 38 individuals and groups for comment and six submissions were received. The proposal is consistent with this site plan and stakeholder expectations.

During this consultation, some stakeholders requested to see the preliminary hut design and offered help with development planning. Preliminary hut design was shared with walking clubs and advocacy groups for feedback about functionality of the design.

### DPIPWE and Authorities

Nature Conservation Branch of DPIPWE completed the Natural Values Survey (NVS) of the site and contributed to the Windermere Site Concept Plan 2019. The NVS provided advice so that the proposed facilities are sited with the least impact to threatened species, critical habitats, or threatened communities.

Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania (AHT) were also consulted during site planning. AHT assessed the Aboriginal Heritage Assessment Report (AHAR) prepared for WFV and Windermere and issued consent for both proposals in 2019.

National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council (NPWAC) supports the proposal and the need for upgrading the infrastructure. The designs, location and systems proposed were noted as likely to improve walker experiences and resolve many of the current building condition problems. NPWAC raised some questions regarding capacity in the hut and overnight node.

West Coast Council accepted the planning permit application on the 4 August 2020 and advertised the application on 14 August for 14 days. The Council did not receive any representation against the proposal. The Planning Permit 2020/00039 was received on the 22 September 2020.

### Public consultation of the EIS

The proposal received one submission from the public during the consultation period. Appendix 2 provides a copy of this submission. The submission suggested the hut location be changed to Pine Forest Moor as it is more central location between Waterfall Valley and Pelion overnight nodes.

## 6. Evaluation of environmental impacts

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The EIS evaluated potential impacts of the proposal and listed a set of commitments for the planning, procurement, construction and rehabilitation phases of the development.

Issues raised from the draft EIS and during consultation that require additional explanation are addressed in the following section.

### **Toilet location**

The EIS identified two potential locations for the proposed new toilet. One site was recommended in the Windermere Site Concept Plan 2019 and the alternative was identified in the Visual Impact Assessment Report (VIA) 2020.

Both sites could function satisfactorily. The sites are centrally located within the node, have good solar access for the panels and could connect to the greywater system. The alternative toilet was identified as an option to reduce the visual impact of the building in the 'arrival sequence' that is to say the toilet is the more prominent building when viewed from the track as walkers approach the site.

However, the alternative site is highly visual within the node, where the whole toilet building will be visible from the hut, water tank area and main track. This would include the front access to toilet cubicles and the rear end of the toilet, including runway, access doors to batteries and electrical equipment, chemical store and queued effluent pods waiting to be extracted. Whereas walkers will only see the front façade of the toilet in the proposed site as the rear end is screened by vegetation.

The alternative site was presented in the VIA Report and draft EIS as an option during public consultation. The strategy was to find out if there was support or opposition to moving the toilet location. No public comments were received regarding the toilet location.

The VIA Report evaluated the proposed toilet site as moderate to low visual impact and acceptable in the wilderness landscape, where the geological and natural features will dominate the viewfield and walkers are expecting to see the buildings. Walkers will see 'less' of the toilet building in the proposed site. The alternative site would also cause flow on impacts in the node by needing to replace the tent platforms displaced by the toilet.

Due to there being no strong public opinion either way regarding the visual impacts and the alternative site likely to cause more environmental impacts in the node, the toilet site proposed in the draft EIS is the recommended site.

### **Capacity of the hut and node**

NPWAC raised the question of capacity in the hut and consideration for increased commercial operations. The hut capacity proposed at Windermere is equal to the number of independent walkers that can register on the OLT each day (34). In addition to the public hut, the node also includes seven public tent platforms with space for up to 14 walkers. Unlike other nodes, additional hut capacity at Windermere was not considered necessary as it is not accessible by an alternate track and there are no convenient side-tracks nearby to encourage walkers to stay more than one night.

Pelion hut has a larger capacity than 34 as it is an attractive overnight or weekend area to visit. Pelion can be accessed via the Arm River track and an OLT pass is not required. Walkers may also choose to stay for more than one-night at Pelion and complete the

multiple side-tracks nearby. Waterfall Valley overnight node is another attractive overnight walk or circuit with Scott Kilvert. The new Waterfall Valley hut also has a capacity of 34 walkers. Fluctuations in walker numbers are accommodated by walkers using the original Waterfall Hut with eight bunks and tent platforms for groups and independent walkers.

The Windermere Site Concept Plan 2019 notes that commercial operators have expressed interest in developing additional tourism services and facilities on the OLT. The PWS is responsible for maintaining the OLT and associated public facilities, all of which are existing activities approved under the TWWHAMP 2016. In accordance with the TWWHAMP 2016, any future developments on the OLT would need to be assessed through an EIA process and be able to demonstrate that the cumulative impacts of the existing activities and future development are acceptable within the TWWHA and in the OLT nodes.

## **Location of the hut**

A public submission raised the option of moving the hut to Pine Forest Moor on the OLT. This is a central location between Waterfall Valley and Pelion overnight nodes and would more evenly distribute the walking time for each day between these sites.

Relocating the hut and overnight node facilities was not considered an option for several reasons including

- the environmental impacts of relocating all the node facilities and rehabilitating the existing site would be inconsistent with conservation objectives;
- the OLT has evolved over 100 years of use and changing the iconic route would be considered unreasonable by many in the community; and
- the cost of relocation would also be prohibitively high and not within the construction and operating budget.

## **Wilderness**

Section 5.1.5 of the draft EIS, set the commitment to seek public comments regarding impacts to wilderness and if the proposal would achieve an acceptable balance of the statutory objectives to preserve wilderness and provide compatible recreation. No public or agency comments were received regarding impacts to wilderness nor a perceived imbalance between the proposal and statutory objectives.

# 7 Statement of Reasons

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This assessment has been based on the information provided in the EIS and incorporates advice provided by DPIPWE specialists and regulatory staff. This assessment has also addressed the issues raised in specialist advice and public submissions.

The statement of reasons is a summary of assessment criteria relevant to the proposal and how the criteria were considered by the delegated authority.

## Assessment Criteria

EIS Table 2 summarised the relevant statutory approvals required and their status.

EIS Section 5 outlined the potential impacts and the policies, standards and guidelines applied to minimise impacts.

EIS Attachment 8 described how the relevant Key Desired Outcomes (KDO) identified in the TWWHA Management Plan 2016 were addressed including:

- KDO 5.8: The aesthetic qualities of the TWWHA are maintained or improved.
- KDO 6.3: A diverse and accessible range of quality visitor experiences that are consistent with the protection of values is provided in the TWWHA.
- KDO 6.4: A range of recreational walking experiences is provided and maintained in the TWWHA through the provision of appropriate levels of corresponding track infrastructure and management.
- KDO 6.8: There is sustainable management of walking tracks and recreational walking throughout the TWWHA.
- KDO 8.2: Risk of bushfire ignition from visitors is reduced and illegal campfire occurrence is reduced or eliminated.
- KDO 8.3: The risk of bushfires to visitor safety is actively managed according to visitor management strategy.
- KDO 8.5: Wilderness is managed for the protection of the integrity and the natural and cultural values of the TWWHA and the quality of the recreational experience it provides.

The Windermere Site Concept Site Plan 2019 addresses the requirements of relevant policies and plans and the needs of OLT stakeholder groups to guide future developments in the node. The Site Concept Plan addresses the following plans and policies

- TWWHA Management Plan 2016 – sets out relevant assessment criteria and KDO;
- Parks and Wildlife Service Overland Track Emergency Response Plan 2017
- Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service *Draft Overland Track - Recreation Zone Plan 2014* which sets out management strategies for the Overland Track including the overland nodes;

The proposal is consistent with the recommendations of the Plan and identified stakeholder expectations for the node.

## Statement of Reasons

1. The proposal is acceptable because
  - the environmental impact statement under the identified assessment criteria demonstrates that the proposal would not cause significant adverse impacts;
  - the proposal supports the reserve management requirements of the TWWHA Management Plan 2016; and.
  - the proposal promotes the conservation of natural and cultural values of the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park while providing for compatible recreation.
  
2. The proposal can be implemented in accordance with the commitments stated in Appendix 1 of this report and Section 6 of the final Environmental Impact Statement.

## 8. Decision

---

I am satisfied that:

1. The proposal is acceptable because
  - the environmental impact statement under the identified assessment criteria demonstrates that the proposal would not cause significant adverse impacts,
  - the proposal supports the reserve management requirements of the TWWHA Management Plan 2016, and
  - the proposal promotes the conservation of natural and cultural values of the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park, while providing for compatible recreation.
2. The proposal can be implemented in accordance with the commitments stated in Appendix 1 of this report, and Section 6 of the final Environmental Impact Statement.



Jason Jacobi  
**DEPUTY SECRETARY**  
**PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

11 October 2020

The EIA process is completed when the managing authority signs this environmental assessment report and provides it to the PWS Regional Manager North.

# Appendix 1: Commitments

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| Number | Commitments  | Phase   |
|--------|--|---|
| 1      | Public comments will be used to finalise the EIS before assessment and be published on the website with assessment reports.  | Planning  |
| 2      | Obtain all relevant permits and approvals before works commence, as outlined in Table 2. Statutory Approvals Pathway.  | Planning,<br>Construction                       |
| 3      | <p>Business Continuity Plan to include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- informing potential walkers of works before registering on OLT,</li> <li>- visitor safety maintained around the construction site with signage and closed off construction areas,</li> <li>- minimising disruption to independent walkers and commercial operators, and</li> <li>- any additional emergency response strategies required during construction.</li> </ul>   | Planning.<br>Construction                       |
| 4      | <p>Specifications for procurement and CEMP documents, including (but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- UDP to be followed in the event aboriginal heritage is located during works.</li> <li>- Standard weed planning and hygiene guidelines to keep clean all equipment, plant/machinery helicopters and spraying work boots with Phytoclean™ prior to leaving the walkers' car park or helipad .</li> <li>- FRP walkway construction specified to included stained pine.</li> <li>- Retain on-site, all sediments, soils and native vegetation removed during construction for use in rehabilitation works.</li> <li>- Bushfire risk mitigation and response strategies.</li> <li>- Construction site layout and controls to minimise ground disturbance.</li> <li>- Procedures for containing impacts within the construction site boundaries including erosion sediment controls, waste management and chemical use, storage and spills response.</li> </ul> | Procurement,<br>Construction,<br>Rehabilitation |

- Procedures to limit hazards to walkers during construction.
- Site rehabilitation including removing all temporary structures and natural surface levels re-established with retained sediments and soils.

|           |  |                             |
|-----------|--|-----------------------------|
| <b>4a</b> | <p>Contractors are to ensure operations are suspended immediately once the Forest Fire Danger Index is calculated as equal to or greater than HIGH 20, or the relative humidity is equal to or less than 30%. Contractors will not undertake hot works in reserves until the Forest Fire Danger Index has dropped below High 20 or the relative humidity risen above 30%. Hourly weather observations will be taken at the site of the works as directed by the supervisor.</p> <p>Adequate and operational firefighting equipment will be maintained onsite during construction.</p> <p>Schedule construction work during winter season to minimise potential for hot works issues.</p> | Procurement<br>Construction |
| <b>5</b>  | <p>Helicopter pilots comply with Fly Neighbourly advice for the TWWHA</p> <p>Identify flight paths to avoid potential nesting habitat and avoid eagle interactions</p>   | Construction                |
| <b>6</b>  | <p>Rehabilitation works to be completed to satisfaction of PWS and to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preparing ground, including some ripping of compacted soils, for regeneration of native species.</li> <li>- Mulch vegetation (retained from construction) and spread over exposed soils.</li> <li>- Fence rehabilitation areas to protect them from walkers and browsing animals until ground covers are re-established.</li> </ul>  | Rehabilitation              |

# Appendix 2: Public Consultation submissions

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**Table 3: List of submissions**

| Number | Name                                       | Submission        |
|--------|--|-------------------|
| 1      | Darren Barone                              | Individual        |
| 2      | National Parks & Wildlife Advisory Council | Statutory Council |

## Submission 1

Subject: Windermere Hut

Having walked the Overland Track many times I've always believed Windermere hut is too close to Waterfall Valley 7.4km

(2-2.5hr walk). Day 3 is too long 15km (4.5-6hrs) and a killer for many walkers with that final stretch incline up to Pelion

Hut. This would be eased if 2nd hut was positioned closer to Pine Forest Moor (where there is a private hut). It would be a

shame to remove current hut which could be used for emergencies or hikers wishing to walk Barn Bluff on Day 2.

Regards

Darren Barone

## Submission 2

RAA 3744 Replacement of Windermere Hut, toilet and group platforms

At its last meeting, NPWAC received a presentation from [Regional Manger NW] regarding the above development. NPWAC supports the proposal as outlined in recent correspondence to you on this matter (see attachment).

Malcolm Wells

Chair

24 August 2020

### NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE ADVISORY COUNCIL (NPWAC)

Preliminary comments on RAA 3744 - Windemere Hut

The two Council members consulted support the proposal for the new Windermere hut, toilet and associated infrastructure, as presented in the circulated documents. Both regard the site plan, concept plan and supporting documents are clear, comprehensive and easy to follow.

Both liked the design (and was pleased they did not have the vents that the huts on 3 Capes track have in the communal areas, that appear to be ineffective design and counter to energy efficiency). Is there ever consideration given to installing solar panels (given the size of the roof) to provide electricity for internal low watt lighting?

There is a clear need for the infrastructure at this site to be upgraded for both environmental and user experience reasons. The hut and toilet have been adversely affected by the historic rationale of siting infrastructure amongst vegetation (to minimise visual impacts), often resulting in damp, cool conditions that are not good for the infrastructure or users.

The new, very modern building is in keeping with the environmental setting and the layout is likely to better reflect the requirements of current users. In particular, the low profile of both the hut and the associated decking is appropriate, as is the use of timber and dark colours to minimise the visual impacts. The flow and separation of the various components of the infrastructure across the site seems appropriate.

No threatened species or communities are likely to be impacted by the proposed development, as assessed in the Natural Values Report. (Note that *Gleichenia alpina* is present (NVR), not *G. microphylla* (concept plan).)

Past problems with the toilet and with grey water in this damp environment with saturated ground conditions, as illustrated by the presence of *Gleichenia* ferns and buttongrass moorland, have resulted in environmental issues. The past system and setting was unable to effectively cope with the grey water from the hut. The fly-out toilet system and the upgrading of the above ground grey water system with bottomless sand filter to cope with the current demand is supported.

Does the proposed upgrade have sufficient capacity to effectively deal with an increase in visitor usage?

The proposal to make use of the disturbed ground associated with the former group platforms and rangers' hut, as well as the proposal to rehabilitate disturbed ground is supported. As noted in Attachment 11, strict construction methods are required to ensure that the retained vegetation is protected to mitigate visual impacts.

The recommendation in the Natural Values Report to mulch disturbed areas to inhibit the spread of the weed *Poa annua* is supported.

The VIA analysis (Attachment 11) indicates that the proposed development is likely to have little impact on visual amenity. However, the proposal to move the proposed new toilet block to the existing FIT platform to minimise visual impact may be worth considering.

Visitor usage data presented indicates that independent walkers and larger groups have increased. Both Council members queried the need to include text in the concept plan about the potential for expansion of commercial developments in the area (2.2.7). No doubt, they had the undefined second stage of Halls Island proposal in mind and the undesirability of future, as yet undefined developments being sanctioned with a “throw-away line”!

PWS policy requiring commercial operators to use existing PWS facilities to minimise spot developments elsewhere in the TWWHA needs proper explanation and the proposed development should take into consideration the ability to cope with any known and/or likely demand. This is not necessarily suggesting expansion but the inclusion of the rationale for an accommodation cap when considering environmental impact and walker experience.

Malcolm Wells

Chair

**Table 4. Responses to submissions**

| <b>Issue</b>                             | <b>EIS</b>                      | <b>Response</b>   |
|--|---------------------------------|---|
| 1. Hut location                          | 2.1                             | <p>A public submission raised the option of moving the hut to Pine Forest Moor on the OLT. This is a central location between Waterfall Valley and Pelion overnight nodes and would more evenly distribute the walking time for each day between these sites.</p> <p>Relocating the hut and overnight node facilities was not considered an option for several reasons including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ the environmental impacts of relocating all the node facilities and rehabilitating the existing site would be inconsistent with conservation objectives.</li><li>▪ the OLT has evolved over 100 years of use and changing the iconic route would be considered unreasonable by many in the community; and</li><li>▪ the cost of relocation would also be prohibitively high and not within the construction and operating budget.</li></ul> |
| 2. Solar panels and internal lighting.   | 2.3.2                           | <p>Electricity will be required to power emergency lighting and smoke alarms prescribed by the NCC, plus interior LED lighting, and thermostats and timers necessary to maintain building health. It is proposed to mount solar panels on the roof of the new toilet and house the batteries under the cubical.</p>   |
| 3. Greywater capacity and visitor usage. | 2.3.4                           | <p>The system is designed to capture grey water from the handwashing tap at the toilet, sink at the water tank and sink at the Rangers Hut.</p> <p>The system capacity is based on existing use rates. Visitor numbers are managed by the OLT booking system. Little additional use is envisioned as the site cannot be accessed by an alternate track and there are no side-tracks to encourage walkers to stay more than one night.</p>   |
| 4. Toilet location.                      | 2.3.3<br>5.1.4<br>A. 1<br>A. 11 | <p>The alternate toilet site was identified as an option to reduce the visual impact of the building in the 'arrival sequence'.</p> <p>However, the alternative site is highly visible within the node, where the whole toilet building could be viewed from the hut, water tank area and main track. This would include the front access to toilet cubicles and the rear end of the toilet, including runway, access doors to batteries and electrical equipment, chemical store and queued effluent pods waiting to be extracted. Whereas walkers will only see the front façade of the toilet in the proposed site as the rear end is screened by vegetation.</p>  |

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The alternative site would also cause flow on impacts in the node by needing to replace the tent platforms displaced by the toilet.

Due to there being no strong public opinion either way regarding the visual impacts and the alternative site likely to cause more environmental impacts in the node, the toilet site proposed in the draft EIS is the recommended site.

5. Site Plan and commercial use.

A. 1

The Windermere Site Concept Plan 2019 was prepared in consultation with stakeholders. NPWCA participated in this process.

The Site Plan notes that a commercial operator has expressed interest in developing additional tourism services and facilities on the OLT. This tourism proposal was announced in a media release from the Tasmanian Premier in February 2019. The proposal was considered relevant to the node, and it has been determined that the proposal must co-utilise and if necessary (upgrade) existing toilets at the existing OLT hut nodes to reduce further cumulative impacts. Any platforms constructed were noted in the Plan with reference to the TWWHAMP 2016 assessment process that is required for all future developments.

6. Hut capacity and walker numbers.

2.1

3.2.3

PWS are responsible for maintaining the OLT and public facilities, which are existing activities and approved under the TWWHAMP 2016. In accordance with the TWWHAMP 2016, any future developments on the OLT would need to be assessed through an EIA process and be able to demonstrate that the cumulative impacts of the existing activities and future development are acceptable within the TWWHA and in the OLT nodes.

The hut capacity proposed at Windermere is equal to the number of independent walkers that can register on the OLT each day. In addition to the public hut, the node also includes seven public tent platforms with space for up to 14 or more walkers. Unlike other nodes, additional hut capacity at Windermere was not considered necessary as it is not accessible by an alternate track and there are no convenient side-tracks nearby to encourage walkers to stay more than one night.





## CONTACT DETAILS

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