

# MATTERS OF NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE

## Kia Ora Hut and Toilet Replacement

### RAA 3883 Executive Summary

The proposal is to replace the public hut and toilet at Kia Ora . Kia Ora is the fourth overnight node on the Overland Track (OLT), the hut based multi-day traverse of Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair National Park, and Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA). The proposed works will upgrade existing facilities to meet contemporary building and environmental management standards, and accommodate the daily independent walkers registered on the OLT.

### RAA 3883 Section 3.1.1 EPBC Act 1999

The Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the EPBC Act) provides a legal framework to protect and manage nationally and internationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places—defined in the EPBC Act as Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES). MNES include World Heritage Properties such as the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA).

Approval from the Federal Minister is required under the Act, if an action will have, or is likely to have, a significant impact on a MNES. The test for ‘significant impact’ requires a world heritage value to be degraded, altered or modified. An assessment report of potential impacts to the outstanding universal values of the TWWHA is provided in Appendix 6. The report identifies no significant impacts to world heritage values. The proposal is not considered to be a significant impact to MNES and no further assessment under the Act is considered necessary.

### Self-Assessment, Matters of National Environmental Significance Guidelines

An action is likely to have a significant impact on natural heritage values of a World Heritage property if there is a real chance or possibility that the action will:

### Geology or landscape values

Potential Impacts	Proposal	Impact
damage, modify, alter or obscure important geological formations in a World Heritage property	No geo-conservation sites were identified in the Kia Ora overnight node. The hut will be partially located on a glacial moraine. The moraines appear to extend for several kilometres. The NVS concluded the small footprint of the hut site and extensive nature of glacial geomorphic values in this area suggests that overall impacts on these values will only be minor	Minor
damage, modify, alter or obscure landforms or landscape features, for example, by excavation or infilling of the land surface in a World Heritage property	The proposal requires building footings to be excavated and back filled with cement. The footings are a small impact compared to other building methods such as slabs that would require more excavation. The footings are minor in scale and will only create a minor change to the natural ground level. .	minor
modify, alter or inhibit landscape processes, for example, by accelerating or increasing	The proposed building will not change any natural landscape processes. The landscape was formed by ancient glaciers that are no longer active in TWWHA.	Nil

susceptibility to erosion, or stabilising mobile landforms, such as sand dunes, in a World Heritage property	The proposal is not located in dynamic environment such as tidal areas, dunes, rivers, landslide or flood zones.	
divert, impound or channelise a river, wetland or other water body in a World Heritage property,	The proposal will not change any natural drainage channels, streams or rivers. Rainwater will be collected from the buildings and disbursed through a bottomless sand filter.	Nil
substantially increase concentrations of suspended sediment, nutrients, heavy metals, hydrocarbons, or other pollutants or substances in a river, wetland or water body in a World Heritage property	The proposal is highly unlikely to create erosion or sedimentation of waterways. The proposal will not change existing ground levels and exposed soils will be back filled and stabilised during construction or rehabilitated with native vegetation. The proposed buildings will not pollute the TWWHA or introduce foreign substances into the environment.	Nil

### Biological and ecological values

Potential Impacts	Proposal	Significant
reduce the diversity or modify the composition of plant and animal species in all or part of a World Heritage property	The proposal will modify native vegetation and increase the built footprint in the Kia Ora overnight node. A bushfire hazard management area will modify approximate 1200m <sup>2</sup> of understorey vegetation. Standing trees will be retained and the existing scrub and coral ferns converted to native grass species or marsupial lawns. The lawns will improve the bushfire safety at the hut. The TWWHA is approximately 1.6 million hectares in area and the proposed impacts are considered minor. The intent of the proposed hut is reduce the unbounded environmental impacts from informal camping and toileting.	minor
fragment, isolate or substantially damage habitat important for the conservation of biological diversity in a World Heritage property	No threatened species, critical habitat or vegetation communities will be impacted by the proposal. The hut site was relocated to avoid the <i>Alpine Sphagnum bog and associated fen</i> , which is a nationally threatened ecological community listed under the <i>Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> .	Nil
cause a long-term reduction in rare, endemic or unique plant or animal populations or species in a World Heritage property	No threatened species, critical habitat or vegetation communities were identified in development area for the proposed the Kia Ora hut and toilet buildings. The threatened community the Alpine Sphagnum bog and associated fen will be avoided on-site by the proposal. The proposed hut and toilet are for environmental purposes, to concentrate use on hard stands and reduce the impacts of unbounded camping and bush toileting.	Nil

fragment, isolate or substantially damage habitat for rare, endemic or unique animal populations or species in a World Heritage property	No threatened species, critical habitat or vegetation communities were identified in development area for the proposed the Kia Ora hut and toilet buildings. The threatened community the Alpine Sphagnum bog and associated fen will be avoided on-site by the proposal.	Nil
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### Wilderness, natural beauty or rare or unique environment values

Potential Impacts	Proposal	Significant
involve construction of buildings, roads, or other structures, vegetation clearance, or other actions with substantial, long-term or permanent impacts on relevant values	The proposal is to replace an existing hut and toilet on Australia's premier alpine bushwalk, the Overland Track. The facilities are provided for environmental protection by concentrating walkers on hard stands and waste management. The hut is small scale building will footings to minimise its impact on the site. The buildings will be permanent, and vegetation must be cleared to accommodate the buildings. The buildings will have little to no impacts on the aesthetic beauty or wilderness values of the area. A visual analysis of the proposal considers the unlikely to distract form the dominant landscape features. The proposal will also not change the wilderness quality of the TWWHA, as assessed by the Wilderness Quality Assessment tool.	Minor
introduce noise, odours, pollutants or other intrusive elements with substantial, long-term or permanent impacts on relevant values	The proposal will not introduce any environmental nuisances such as odours, noise or pollutants. The proposed hut contains emergency exit lighting as required by the National Construction Code (NCC) and small LED lighting in communal areas. Small amount of artificial light may escape the building but it's unlikely to impact the environment. The hut will include a gas heater, although little to no odours are expected to be emitted. The proposal hut includes a greywater system to prevent any additional nutrient loading in the area from food scraps.	Nil

### Historic Heritage values

Potential Impacts	Proposal	Significant
permanently remove, destroy, damage or substantially alter the fabric of a World Heritage property	No cultural monuments, buildings or sites have been identified in the works area. The proposal includes minor infrastructure works for sustainable management purposes. The proposed hut and toilet replacements will concentrate walkers on hard stands and manage waste at the site. The proposal is to control negative impacts from walkers at the site.	Minor
extend, renovate, refurbish or substantially alter a World Heritage property in a manner	The proposal will not change or alter a cultural monument, building or site.	Nil

which is inconsistent with relevant values		
permanently remove, destroy, damage or substantially disturb archaeological deposits or artefacts in a World Heritage property	The proposed hut and toilet replacements are in an area with a low likelihood of archaeological deposits or artefacts, as identified by the Aboriginal Heritage Assessment Report (AHAR).	Nil
involve activities in a World Heritage property with substantial and/or long-term impacts on its values	The proposal will support the ongoing sustainable use of the Overland Track (OLT). The OLT has been in use for over 100 years and is one of most popular activities in TWWHA. The activity and proposed walker facilities are not considered a substantial or negative impact on the values of the TWWHA.	Nil
involve construction of buildings or other structures within, adjacent to, or within important sight lines of, a World Heritage property which are inconsistent with relevant values, and	No cultural monuments, buildings or sites have been identified in the works area. The visual impact of the proposal has been considered and rated as low, regarding wilderness values and sightlines from surrounding mountain peaks. The historic or cultural use of the site has also been rated as a low likelihood in the AHAR.	Nil
make notable changes to the layout, spaces, form or species composition in a garden, landscape or setting of a World Heritage property which are inconsistent with relevant values	No cultural monuments, buildings or sites have been identified in the works area.	Nil

#### Other cultural heritage values including indigenous heritage values

Potential Impacts	Proposal	Significant
restrict or inhibit the existing use of a World Heritage property as a cultural or ceremonial site causing its values to notably diminish over time;	The proposal will not change the current use and access at the Kia Ora overnight node. The site can be accessed by walking tracks, the main track being the OLT and some other alternative tracks from the upper Mersey area.	Nil
permanently diminish the cultural value of a World Heritage property for a community or group to which its values relate	No Aboriginal heritage sites or specific areas of elevated Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity were identified during the survey assessment of the Kia Ora Hut overnight node. Consultation with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community did not identify the proposal as a potential negative impact to the cultural values.	Nil
alter the setting of a World Heritage property in a manner which is inconsistent with relevant values	The proposal is consistent with walker facilities provided in overnight nodes on the OLT. The facilities are for sustainable management purposes. The proposal is considered to consistent with TWWHA values.	Nil

remove, damage, or substantially disturb cultural artefacts, or ceremonial objects, in a World Heritage property, and	There is a total of 18 registered Aboriginal heritage sites located within an approximate 6km radius of the area, with one of these situated within the Kia Ora overnight node. A site survey could not relocate the isolated artefact or any other heritage sites or areas. The AHAR concluded that based on the findings of the field survey, the development works proposed at the Kia Ora Hut overnight node will not impact on any known Aboriginal heritage sites, and there is a very low potential for impacts to any undetected Aboriginal sites.	Nil
permanently damage or obscure rock art or other cultural or ceremonial features with World Heritage values	The AHAR concluded that based on the findings of the field survey, the development works proposed at the Kia Ora Hut overnight node will not impact on any known Aboriginal heritage sites, and there is a very low potential for impacts to any undetected Aboriginal sites.	Nil

#### Conclusion:

The values of the TWWHA and Kia Ora creek and surrounding area will be maintained by the proposal. The proposal is located in grand landscape, internationally recognised for its outstanding universal values. The Overland Track traverses the TWWHA and has done for 100 years of use, and this proposal is the next stage in its evolution. The large-scale natural features of the area will remain visually dominant over the proposed small-scale buildings. The proposal will result in negligible change to the wilderness, natural and cultural heritage values of the TWWHA. The proposal is not a MNES and does not require further assessment under the EPBC Act.