



Kia Ora Hut and Toilet Replacement



Overland Track
Cradle Mountain Lake St Clair National Park.

RAA 3883

July 2021

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Environmental Assessment Report

Proponent	Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) Operations Branch, North West Region
Proposal	Kia Ora Hut and Toilet Replacement
Location	Kia Ora overnight node, Overland Track (OLT)
Reserve	Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park
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Glossary and abbreviations

AH Act 1975	<i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 1975</i>
AHAR	Aboriginal Heritage Assessment Report
AHT	Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania
AS	Australian Standard
BAL	Bushfire Attack Level
BHMA	Bushfire Hazard Management Area
BHMP	Bushfire Hazard Management Plan
BSF	Bottomless Sand Filter
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
DPIPWE	Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment
EAR	Environmental Assessment Report
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPBC 1999	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>
KDO	Key Desired Outcome
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
OUV	Outstanding Universal Value
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
WFV	Waterfall Valley
WHS	Workplace Health and Safety
WQA	Wilderness Quality Assessment

Report summary

This Environmental Assessment Report (EAR) evaluates the proposal in accordance with the PWS Environmental Management Policy and the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage (TWWHA) Management Plan 2016. The unique assessment identifier is Reserve Activity Assessment (RAA) 3883. The EAR completes the assessment of the public hut and toilet replacements at Kia Ora overnight node of the Overland Track (OLT), proposed by the Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS).

The proposal is to replace the existing public hut and toilet in a node designated for overnight stays. The OLT is Australia's premier multi-day alpine walk. Public facilities are provided for environmental purposes. The proposed public hut will concentrate walkers on a hard stand and limit negative impacts from uncontrolled camping. The proposed public toilet will capture waste for extraction from the national park and treatment off-site.

This EAR is an assessment of the environmental impact statement (EIS) prepared for the proposal (RAA 3883) and submissions received during public consultation. The EIS has incorporated advice from relevant DPIPWE agencies, specialist reports and includes technical drawings for the buildings and wastewater system. The draft EIS and appendices were publicly available for four weeks in April 2021. The National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council (NPWAC) provided comment on the draft EIS prior to public consultation and three (3) public submissions were received during April 2021.

Section 1 of this EAR presents the steps in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process and the dates they were completed. Section 2 outlines the EIA statutory and PWS policy requirements. Section 3 is a description of the proposal. Section 4 summarises the public and agency consultation process. Section 5 evaluates the need for the proposal and alternatives to the proposal. Section 6 is an evaluation of the proposal and the management objectives and policies. Section 7 provides an assessment of the impacts to values, evaluation of the proposed management actions, and a summary of how the submissions have been addressed in the final design and management actions.

Appendix 1 provides a list of recommended commitments.

Attachment 2 provides copies of the public submissions and evaluation of issues raised.

1. Assessment process

The proposal was assessed as a Level 3 EIA due to the proposed construction works in the TWWHA, potential impacts to natural and cultural values and potential community interest in the proposal.

The draft EIS was prepared by PWS in collaboration with DPIPWE specialists and professional consultants. The draft was released for public consultation on 31 March 2021.

The new Tasmanian Planning Scheme – Meander Valley release coincided with the submission of the planning application. As such Meander Valley Council requested the application report be amended to address the new scheme prescriptions.

The assessment process and milestones are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Assessment process milestones

Date	Milestone
21 January 2021	Environmental Assessment Checklist endorsed EIA Level 3 PWS Executive and Deputy Secretary notified.
February - March 2021	EIS and supporting documents prepared by DPIPWE specialists and consultants.
30 March 2021	Draft EIS accepted for public consultation
30 March 2021	Crown Consent issued to submit planning permit application.
31 March 2021	Public comment period commenced.
15 April 2021	Planning application submitted to Meander Valley Council
30 April 2021	Public comment period ends.
May 2021	Draft EIS finalised to include additional information and public input. Environmental Assessment Report completed including statement of reasons, commitments, and decision.
12 May 2021	Meander Valley Council request further information regarding the new Tasmanian Planning Scheme - Meander Valley
21 May 2021	Further information submitted to Meander Valley Council.
26 June 2021	Planning Permit issued by Meander Valley Council.
July 2021	EAR considered for endorsement.

Other approvals

Table 2 outlines likely other approvals required that are assessed separately to the PWS EIA process.

Table 1: Other approvals

Approval or permit	Agency or Authority	Documentation and process
Bushfire Hazard Management Plan (BHMP)	TFS	<p>AS-3959 – Construction of buildings in bushfire prone areas.</p> <p>An accredited bushfire hazard practitioner has prepared a BHMP. The Tasmania Fire Service, as the permit authority under the <i>Building Act 2016</i>, will assess the BHMP.</p>
Certificate of Likely Compliance	Building Surveyor	<p>Building Surveyors are the delegates under the <i>Building Act 2016</i> for assessing building designs to ensure compliance with National Construction Code (NCC), AS and the <i>Building Act 2016</i>.</p> <p>The Building Surveyor will assess the detailed building drawings and engineering designs to ensure compliance with NCC, the Act and relevant AS before issuing the Certificate of Likely Compliance.</p>
Building Permit	Meander Valley Council	<p>Meander Valley Council is the permit authority under the <i>Building Act 2016</i> and will consider a Building Permit on receipt of the Certificate of Likely Compliance from the Building Surveyor.</p>
Plumbing Permit	Meander Valley Council	<p>Meander Valley Council is the permit authority under the <i>Building Act 2016</i> for issuing Special Plumbing permits.</p>

2. Statutory assessment and policy requirements

PWS Environmental Management Policy outlines the EIA process in determining proposals on reserved land. The PWS EIA process requires EIS documentation, public consultation and statement of reasons for a decision. The EIS includes consideration of Commonwealth and State legislation and local government requirements.

2.1 Statutory Requirements

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 NPWS) ensures development and use within a reserve is in accordance with a management plan or management objectives in the absence of a plan.

TWWHA Management Plan 2016 is applicable to this proposal.

The proposal's consistency with the management plan, PWS policies and legislation is evaluated in section 6 of this EAR.

The Director NPWS is delegated to determine if the proposal is acceptable.

2.2 Other approvals

PWS is the proponent and also the managing authority of the National Park. An authority under the NPRM Act is not required as works (including buildings) are listed functions of the managing authority in the Act.

Following Aboriginal Heritage Surveys, AHT advised a permit under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1975* is not required and an Unanticipated Discovery Plan (UDP) should be in effect during works.

Natural and Cultural Heritage (NCH) Branch advised that if threatened species cannot be avoided as part of the final project layout, a permit to take under the *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995* would be required.

Where the proposal impacts wildlife habitat, a permit to interfere with wildlife under the *Nature Conservation Act 2002* would be required.

Table 2: Approvals Summary

Legislation or requirement	Permit Required?	Details
<i>Nature Conservation Act 2002</i>	No	A permit to interfere with wildlife may be required.
<i>National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002</i>	No	Statutory authority to conduct works in reserves including construct buildings.
<i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 1975</i>	No	An Aboriginal Heritage survey was completed. AHT advised that the works could be conducted in accordance with an UDP.

<i>Threatened Species Protection Act 1995</i>	No	No threatened flora identified at the site.
<i>Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993</i>	Yes	A planning permit from Meander Valley Council was issued on 25 June 2021.
<i>Building Regulations 2016</i>	Yes	A certificate of compliance from a building surveyor is yet to be issued for the proposal. Once issued a Building Permit and Plumbing Permit will be sought from Meander Valley Council.
Tasmania Fire Service	Yes	An acceptable BHMP required.

2.3 EPBC Act 1999

The proposal was not referred to the Commonwealth Government for assessment under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). A self-assessment in accordance with Guidelines for Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) was completed and provided as an appendix to the EIS. No significant impacts were identified.



Image: Proposed public hut and toilet render.

The proposed full capture/pod toilet is centrally located within the node, within 50m of the proposed hut and existing group platform, and within 100m of public tent platforms and rangers' quarters. The proposed toilet building will be a standard three cubical design, where the roof will house the solar array and one cubicle will store the batteries required for electricity generation.

Other subsidiary works required include:

- new greywater management system,
- linking track from OLT to hut and toilet,
- retaining the ranger's quarters in the existing hut, and
- remediating the existing toilet building and site (after 12 months*).

All existing visitor facilities will remain open until the new facilities are completed and opened for public use.

*allows time for toilet waste to compost.

4. Public and agency consultation

4.1 Stakeholders

The Kia Ora Site Concept Plan 2021 was prepared for the entire node and in consultation with key OLT stakeholder groups. The draft Plan was shared with:

- Bushwalking Tasmania (BT) and affiliated groups,
- Tasmanian National Parks Association (TNPA), and
- National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council (NPWAC),

These groups regularly express an interest in developments on reserved land and NPWAC's terms of reference include providing advice on Management Plans.

Comments received from stakeholders were incorporated into the final Concept Plan. These included use of public facilities by non-OLT walkers, safety in remote areas and capacity in the overnight node. Other issues were raised regarding commercial use of the overnight node and further developments that were beyond the scope of the Concept Plan.

4.2 DPIPWE and Authorities

NCH (DPIPWE) completed the Natural Values Survey (NVS) of the site and contributed to the Kia Ora Site Concept Plan 2021. The NVS identified a nationally listed threatened vegetation community to be avoided. Geologically significant moraines were also identified on-site, although these are not listed as geo-conservation sites. The advice allowed the buildings to be sited with the least impact to natural values.

Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania (AHT) provided advice during site planning and development of the final EIS. The initial desktop assessment identified a registered site that may have been near the development site, and an Aboriginal Heritage Assessment Report (AHAR) was requested. AHT reviewed the AHAR and determined a permit was not required. AHT also provided advice on consideration of the Additional Assessment Criteria in the TWWHA Management Plan 2016 (Appendix 6 of the final EIS) and the MNES self-assessment for the EPBC Act (Appendix 7 of the final EIS).

The National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council (NPWAC) reviewed the draft EIS before it was released for public consultation. The Council 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. Additional questions were raised regarding eagle nest surveys and rehabilitation planning that have been addressed in the final EIS.

Meander Valley Council accepted the discretionary application and issued a Planning Permit under the new Tasmanian Planning Scheme - Meander Valley.

4.3 Public consultation of the EIS

The proposal received three public submissions during the consultation period. Appendix 2 of this report provides copies of these submissions. The key themes of the public submissions were scale and services of new huts; and general change to walker experiences.

5. Need for the proposal and alternatives

The Tasmanian and Federal Governments have committed to improving visitor accommodation and resolving the inconsistent hut capacity and building conditions on the OLT. The OLT attracts up to 10,000 walkers annually. The primary purpose of public facilities is to concentrate use on hard stands and protect environment values from expansive informal camping and toileting.

The Overland Track Hut Redevelopment Project has recently replaced the Waterfall Valley (WV) walkers hut. Approvals are also complete for the Windermere hut and toilet replacements. Kia Ora is the third hut and toilet proposal initiated by the Project.

Both the hut and toilet structures at Kia Ora are at the end of their functional lives for public use. The buildings do not meet contemporary building and environmental management standards. The proposed new public hut and toilet will improve amenity, increase capacity, and improve standards at the site.

The new facilities are proposed as the most suitable option to provide basic accommodation and sanitation while minimising impacts to natural and cultural values in the National Park and the Outstanding Universal Value of the TWWHA.

The alternatives considered are summarised in the EIS (section 1.3) and Table 3 below.

Table 3: Alternatives considered

Alternative	Description and comments
Eliminate the huts	OLT is a hut-based walk, and huts are part of the visitor experience and sustainable management of the track. Huts are environmental management tools to concentrate walkers on hard-stands and protect sites from overuse.
No change	<p>Existing hut is an aging building with insufficient capacity and poor building health. Recurring mould infestations are deteriorating the building fabric and are a potential risk to walker health. Current hut conditions are unpleasant, particularly during inclement weather when high moisture loads inside the hut from overcrowding condensate inside the building.</p> <p>The current toilet building is in a satisfactory condition although beginning to deteriorate with age and the waste management system poses an environmental risk and a WHS risk to staff.</p>
Upgrade existing hut	<p>An engineering assessment of the existing hut identified poor compliance with the health and safety requirements of the National Construction Code (NCC). The entire structure needs to be replaced for compliance with NCC for a Class 3 public building.</p> <p>The existing hut is constructed of pine and plywood timbers that are not easily salvaged or repurposed like hardwood timbers.</p> <p>The location of the existing hut would require substantial vegetation and tree clearing to establish a suitable bushfire hazard management area around the building of up to 20m radius, as well as replacing external</p>

New hut location	<p>cladding and substructures to comply with building standards in bushfire prone areas.</p> <p>The proposed new hut location can optimise energy efficiency and compliance with contemporary building regulations, while limiting environmental impacts and vegetation clearance.</p> <p>Kia Ora Site Concept Plan 2021 considered three possible hut sites – the existing hut site, and two sites east and west of the button grass near the helipad.</p> <p>The existing hut site was not suitable due to tree coverage and surrounding tarns limiting footprint increase and grey water management. The bushfire risk would require significant understory clearing and ongoing maintenance.</p> <p>The site adjacent the helipad and east of the button grass is located closer to Kia Ora Creek and localised tarns. This site was also not preferred by the Bushfire Practitioner and required significant clearing and potentially annual reduction of button grass fuels.</p> <p>The proposed site west of the button grass was the preferred site due to the reduced bushfire risk, distance from creeks and tarns, substrate and views of Cathedral Mountain.</p>
New hut design	<p>Kia Ora hut site is surrounded by mountains - Mount Ossa, Mount Massif, Falling Mountain and Cathedral Mountain and the beginning of Du Cane Range. To arrive at Kia Ora from either north or south is to descend into a natural ‘amphitheatre’. The vegetation screens some of these views but the strong impression remains. The hut design intends to maintain this sense of being nestled at the base of these great mountains.</p> <p>The design of the proposed Kia Ora hut is similar to WFV and Windermere huts including the concept of two main pavilions (communal and sleeping). For Kia Ora these pavilions will be under a single roof. Similar materials will be used inside and outside the three huts.</p> <p>The new Kia Ora hut design will maintain a difference between huts and sites that is part of the character of the OLT. WFV hut design referenced Barn Bluff and the historic old WFV hut with pitched roofs. The Windermere hut design responds to the sloping lie of the site and the wooded environment. The Kia Ora hut will be a more traditional square design to fit the small site. The hut design will feature an extended skillion roof to shelter the wrap around decks and provide a view of Cathedral Mountain.</p>
New toilet location	<p>The proposed new toilet needs to be located at a different site to the current toilet. The waste material in the batching system must be left in-situ to compost for 12 months before being extracted. 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 by helicopter.</p> <p>The proposed toilet site is preferred for its central location between high use features (hut and platforms), as well as having good solar access</p>

for panels. It is also located in slight depression that lessens the visual height of the building.

The Kia Ora overnight node is visually discrete from the main track and screened by surrounding woodland. The rear end of the toilet building that houses the runway and queued pods will be screened by building facia and surrounding scrub.

6. Evaluation of statutory requirements and policies

The Final EIS evaluates the statutory requirements and polices applicable to the proposal (Sections 3 and 5 and Appendix 6). The TWWHA Management Plan provides direction for assessing proposals in the TWWHA.

6.1 TWWHA Management Plan 2016

PWS is the managing authority of reserved land under the NPRM Act. The TWWHA Management Plan 2016 was prepared in accordance with this Act. The management functions listed in the NPRM Act requires PWS to manage land in accordance with the Management Plan.

The structure of the TWWHA Management Plan 2016 includes zones and overlays, management objectives, key desired outcomes (KDO) and management actions. The zones and overlays allow different activities or use in certain areas. The objectives, KDOs and actions are listed in a hierarchy, from aspirational objectives and KDOs, with some management actions to achieve these aspirations. These are applied to management of natural and cultural values, and types of presentation.

6.1.1 Use and Development Control

The Plan prescribes four management zones with the OLT located in the Recreation Zone. The Recreation Zone is characterised as a corridor providing access for a range of recreational activities in a natural setting. Typical infrastructure in the Recreation Zone is described as walking tracks, toilets, huts, camping areas and signs as well as trailhead facilities such as vehicle access and car parking. The proposed replacement buildings are consistent with facilities described in the Recreation Zone.

The Table of Use in the Plan (Section 3.2) lists the permitted uses in the Zones. The Recreation Zone permits the following developments:

- Existing public or historic huts and associated infrastructure.
- Visitor Accommodation (new) including huts.

The proposal to replace the public hut is a permitted use in the Recreation Zone.

The new toilet is not specified in the Table of Use, although considered 'associated infrastructure' to an existing hut. The toilet is also listed in the Zone description as a usual development.

No management overlays apply to the site.

As such, the proposal is permitted under the Management Plan.

6.1.2 Assessment and Approval Process

The Management Plan describes an example assessment process to be used for assessing proposals (Section 3.3.1). The Level 3 EIA process used for this proposal aligns with the recommended assessment process under the Management Plan.

The former PWS RAA process for large scale proposals has recently been reformed to include planning and impact assessment terms and procedures. For example, the RAA is now referred to as EIS and prepared in a traditional report format. The outcome of the assessment is a 'commitments list' rather than an 'activity plan'. The process has also changed to provide for public comment on the draft EIS, as well as public release of the

Final EIS and the PWS Environmental Assessment Report (EAR) with statement of reasons.

The Management Plan assessment process also prescribes additional assessment criteria that must be addressed when developing proposals in the TWWHA. The assessment criteria require proposals to be assessed for potential impacts to world heritage values, and to identify management actions and mitigation to prevent or avoid impacts. The impacts may be direct, indirect or cumulative.

Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), world heritage criteria and world heritage values are tiered statements of values and significance. The Management Plan contains a statement of values in Section 2 that includes cultural and natural values, as well as socio-economic values for visitors and the Tasmanian community. These values are the world heritage values referred to in section 3.3.1 additional assessment criteria, and these values can also be categorised under the higher order OUV and world heritage criteria.

The additional assessment criteria are addressed in Appendix 6 of the Final EIS. The OUV and associated world heritage area values are assessed separately and with consideration of the potential for direct, indirect or cumulative impacts. Where there is potential for impacts, management actions are listed with corresponding standard operating procedures and monitoring. The management, mitigation and monitoring actions are included in the commitment list of the final EIS (Section 6). Potential social and environmental benefits and outcomes are also summarised in Appendix 6.

The additional assessment criteria also require public consultation based on scale and nature of the proposal. This proposal was assessed as a Level 3 EIA, which is the high public consultation level of assessment under adopted EIA reforms. This required the draft EIS to be released for public consultation for a four-week period. This occurred in April 2021. The final EIS and EAR will also be publicly available on the PWS website.

The additional assessment criteria prescribed by the Management Plan are addressed by the EIA process applied and Final EIS documentation.

6.1.3 Key Desired Outcomes

KDOs are listed in Sections 4-9 of the Management Plan with assigned management actions and some evaluation measures. Proposals must be consistent with the relevant KDOs, to address the intent of the Management Plan. The Final EIS addresses the relevant KDO's in Appendix 6 and these are listed below.

- 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 proposal is considered consistent with these KDO's and intent of the Management Plan. The proposal supports quality recreational facilities and sustainable management of one of Tasmania's most popular walking tracks. Bushfire risk and walker safety are key considerations of the building design. The proposal furthers the intent of the Management Plan to provide quality recreational experiences that protect the wilderness aesthetic and significant values of the TWWHA.

6.2 Other Plans and Policies

6.2.1 Kia Ora Site Concept Plan 2021

The Kia Ora Site Concept Plan 2021 is a non-statutory plan that considers the whole overnight node. Kia Ora is one of five (5) main designated sites for overnight stays on the OLT. The Kia Ora Site Concept Plan is in accordance with the TWWHA Management Plan 2016 and consistent with other Site Plans for OLT nodes. The purpose of the Site Plan is to guide further developments in the node.

Overnight nodes include visitor and management facilities. Public facilities include a hut, toilet and camping platforms, and a group tent platform for commercial tour groups, community groups or school groups. Management infrastructure includes a helipad and ranger accommodation (huts, rooms in public huts or temporary pods). The current and future options for these facilities are identified in the Site Plan.

The proposed public hut and toilet replacements are consistent with the Site Plan.

6.2.2 Overland Track Usage Guidelines

The OLT Usage Guidelines are part of the sustainable management system of the OLT. The sustainable management of the OLT includes regulating departures, direction of travel (north to south) and fee for use. The Usage Guidelines describe how some walkers may use part of the OLT freely and in the spirit of the management system during the booked season.

The proposal is consistent with Usage Guidelines and will not change current use patterns.

7. Evaluation of environmental impacts

The evaluation of environmental impacts includes issues raised in public submissions and the proposal design generally. Details of this evaluation, including the commitments made by the proponent for implementing the proposal, are discussed. The key topics identified for evaluation are:

- flora and fauna; and
- scale and services of the hut.

This evaluation also considers how potential impacts maybe avoided or mitigated.

7.1. Flora and Fauna

Values and Potential Impacts
<p>Sphagnum bog</p> <p>The Natural Values Survey (NVS) identified an area of sphagnum bog which at this site may be considered part of the ecological community – Alpine Sphagnum bog and associated fen, which is a nationally threatened ecological community listed under the <i>EPBC Act</i>.</p> <p>In response to the NVS, the proposed hut was sited to avoid the vegetation community as described in the Kia Ora Site Concept Plan 2021 and Hut Plans released for public consultation with draft EIS.</p> <p>The location of the proposed bottomless sand filter (BSF) in the greywater system, was later identified by the Project Team as a potential risk to the sphagnum bog. The BSF location was proposed to the southeast of the hut and potentially within the sphagnum bog community. The vegetation community was mapped on-site to clarify the potential impact and options to avoid these impacts.</p>
<p>Potential wedge-tailed eagle nesting habitat</p> <p>Potential wedge-tailed eagle nesting habitat is present around the Kia Ora development site. Wedge-tailed eagles are a listed threatened fauna under the TSP Act. The construction works and on-going use of the hut could disturb a nesting pair of eagles and compromise the breeding success of a threatened species.</p> <p>Potential nesting habitat has key habitat features such as tall tree species and vegetation communities, aspect and sheltered sites (mid slope or gullies). Nest sites most at risk from disturbance are those within 500m or 1km line-of-sight.</p> <p>Several known nests have been identified in the area. These nests are located in the Mersey River valley to the east and south of the Kia Ora Creek convergence. Line of sight mapping has been completed for these nests to show these are highly unlikely to be impacted (final EIS, Appendix 9 and 9a).</p> <p>Potential nesting habitat within the risk range and without known nests was identified near Kia Ora; in <i>Eucalyptus delegatensis</i> forest on the lee side of Mount Pelion East.</p>

Modified native vegetation

A Bushfire Hazard Management Area (BHMA) is required around the hut to restrict the travel of fire to the hut. The BHMA is to protect the building as well as walkers that may be sheltering in the hut.

It is proposed to clear existing native vegetation species surrounding the hut and modify these to less flammable native species. The understory of the surrounding woodland needs to be modified as the canopy trees can be retained as an ember shield.

The existing native understory will be modified to a less flammable native vegetation type. A native grass and herb-field that will become a marsupial lawn is proposed to assist with fire management.

Management Measures proposed

Sphagnum bog

the management measure proposed in the draft and final EIS is to avoid:

- The hut site was relocated to avoid the vegetation community.
- The BSF has also been relocated to avoid the vegetation community

Potential wedge-tailed eagle nesting habitat

Draft EIS recommended eagle nest surveys for any potential nesting habitat with 500m and 1km line of sight.

Modified native vegetation

The Kia Ora Site Concept Plan 2021 identified the hut site, in part to reduce the BHMA and modification of native vegetation.

The Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) of the hut design also reduces the area of native vegetation that must be modified (building BAL 29, substructure BAL 40).

Rehabilitation plan recommended for modifying the native vegetation community, to be prepared in consultation with botanist and implemented by OLT works program.

Submissions

National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council (NPWAC) provided comment of the draft EIS before it was released for public consultation. The comments included:

- potential wedge-tailed eagle nesting habitat to be surveyed within 1km of work sites if not already done so, and
- rehabilitation plan to be prepared in consultation with a botanist to modify native vegetation.

No other submissions addressed flora and fauna impacts.

Evaluation

The location of the BSF has been moved to avoid the Sphagnum bog community. The BSF location identified in the draft EIS was visually discrete and maintained a

gravity feed through the system. The gravity feed can also be achieved closer to the hut and away from the sphagnum.

The BSF will be covered by a timber or colour bond structure to protect it from rainwater input. The structure will be consistent in appearance to the hut and deck materials, and less than 1 metre in height. The BSF will be visible but unlikely to be visually intrusive or unpleasant. It is likely to appear as part of the hut infrastructure and not detract from surrounding environment.

Potential wedge-tailed eagle nest habitat within 1km of the proposed hut site at Kia Ora was surveyed in April 2019. Nature Conservation Report 19/2, prepared by NCH, documents eagle nest surveys conducted in the TWWHA. The purpose of the surveys was to better understand the importance of the TWWHA for the conservation of threatened species. The survey identified 30 new nests sites within the TWWHA.

The survey areas were identified in consultation with PWS to include areas with ongoing activity or planned works, as such Kia Ora was included in the survey. The *Eucalyptus delegatensis* forest on the lee side of Mount Pelion East was included in the survey and no eagle nests were observed.

Conclusion

The preferred location of the BSF is closer to the hut as to avoid potential impacts to the nationally listed threatened vegetation community – Alpine Sphagnum bog and associated fen. Final EIS includes an updated location map in the Grey Water System Design (Appendix 4).

There are no wedge-tailed eagle nests within 1km radius of Kia Ora overnight node. The combined information of recent nest surveys and line of sight mapping of known nest sites is sufficient to conclude that the work at Kia Ora is little to nil likelihood of disturbing a breeding pair of wedge-tailed eagles.

Helicopter operations serving the work site must implement the fly neighbourly advice to avoid known nests and maintain minimum fly over distances.

A commitment in the final EIS is to prepare a Rehabilitation Plan, in consultation with a botanist, to modify the native vegetation in the BHMA to native grass and herb-field.

7.2. Services and experiences

Values and Potential Impacts

The proposal aims to achieve an acceptable balance of wilderness protection and compatible recreation. The proposed new hut at Kia Ora could impact walker experiences. The draft EIS noted in section 5.1.5 that social or intangible concepts of wilderness are difficult to quantify and assess as these are opinion based.

The draft EIS noted public consultation as a means to assess public perceptions of this balance. During public consultation three submissions were received and all considered the size and scale of hut to be a negative impact on their wilderness experiences.

Management Measures proposed

The TWWHA Management Plan 2016 does not describe a ‘wildness experience’ in the statement of values in Section 2. There are references to immersive, adventure, recreation or nature-based experiences.

KDO 6.4 of the Management plan is to provide a range of walking experiences with appropriate levels of corresponding track infrastructure.

The OLT is in the Recreation Zone. An aim of the zone is to provide a range of recreational experiences for suitably equipped and prepared people in moderately challenging and largely natural setting. The zone also aims to provide site appropriate infrastructure for public use.

The final EIS refers to 'wilderness experiences' in the project outcomes, environment values and potential impacts. The final EIS does not describe the wilderness experience. Potential impacts to wilderness experiences are considered in the final EIS with regard to the issues raised in the public submissions as well as feedback received from walkers regarding huts in the TWWHA (Appendix 6).

No change to the building designs are proposed.

Commitment added to investigate timers for lighting to minimise lighting impacts.

Submissions

Three (3) public submissions were received during the four (4) week public consultation period. All expressed concerns regarding a change to services and experiences. The submissions described the proposed hut at Kia Ora and other recently built/proposed huts in TWWHA to be:

- too comfortable,
- over embellished, and
- detracting from the wilderness experience or walk.

The respondents felt that the size, features and services in the huts (i.e. lighting, gas heating, triple glazing) to be changing their experiences and not meeting their expectations of a wilderness walk.

The respondents described themselves as experienced walkers with many years of walking history. The respondents described their hut expectations to include being for basic shelter only, and the addition of lighting, heating and views to be unnecessary.

Evaluation

The respondents expressed a negative impact to their wilderness experiences. The final EIS (and draft EIS) describe wilderness as an environmental value, and that wilderness values can be both physical and intangible. Intangible wilderness values vary between people, where some seek multi-day adventures and others are satisfied with experiencing wilderness in less adventurous ways.

Wilderness experiences on the OLT also vary among walkers. OLT walker survey results show that about 60% of walkers have limited overnight bushwalking experience (0-6 overnight walks). A similar percentage of walkers have no experience of Tasmanian bushwalks before walking the OLT. As such, most walker's wilderness experiences of the TWWHA and the OLT are their first, and not influenced by previous use.

The proposed hut is more than double the size of the existing hut. It will also accommodate more than double the number of walkers. The existing hut may feel cosy and convivial for a dozen walkers. However, the smaller huts on the OLT also feel overcrowded and uncomfortably humid when 30 or more walkers attempt to use them.

The existing hut at Kia Ora was built in the 1980's with little to no oversight by planning or building authorities. The existing hut is clad with treated pine, wrapped in plastic waterproofing (non-permeable membrane) and lined with plywood. The building may be fondly remembered by many walkers, however the condition of the building is now mouldy, unhealthy and non-compliant with the National Construction Code (NCC).

The NCC sets the building standards for public buildings, regardless of their remote location and recreational use. These include essential safety services such as exit lighting, smoke alarms and escape routes from all rooms. Minimum energy efficiency standards also apply to new buildings as well as bushfire hazard management. The proposed hut design has accounted for these additional requirements that were not considered in the design of more traditional huts.

Innovative building methods are required in alpine environments to maintain building health and structural integrity. The proposed hut design will allow moisture loads (i.e. cooking, wet clothes) to permeate out of the building, while insulation (including triple glazed windows) will retain passive heating sources in the building (i.e. body heat, cooking, solar input). Gas heating is provided for comfort as well as walker safety reasons (i.e. hypothermia prevention/treatment).

The proposed hut provides basic services and shelter for walkers, in a contemporary design and building specifications. The building design complies with NCC standards for long term building health and conditions. The proposed hut does **not** provide cooking equipment or gas stoves, potable water, hot water or showers, mattresses or hut hosts or guides. OLT walkers must be independent and prepared to meet natural hazards on their own terms. The proposed hut provides shelter and refuge from freezing conditions and bushfire.

Conclusion

The proposed hut at Kia Ora is a change to the traditional bushwalking huts on the OLT. It is difficult to build a simple structure for public use that complies with the NCC; bushfire hazard management, energy efficiency, safety and health standards.

The size of the proposed hut is larger than existing huts to accommodate the number of walkers that may book on the track each day. The size of the hut is consistent with Waterfall Valley, Pelion, Bert Nichols, and Windermere hut design all of which accommodate up to 34 walkers.

The OLT has been evolving as a bushwalk for over 100 years and its origins are linked to Tasmanian aboriginal travel routes. The huts built in the 1980's replaced those constructed by miners, trappers and other pioneering types.

It is acknowledged that the new huts are a change to the wilderness experiences for some walkers, particularly experienced Tasmanian walkers. However, the more traditional huts are also a negative impact to many other walkers' experiences, as noted in the EIS when describing the need for the new hut (Section 2.2).

Feedback on the new Waterfall Valley hut has been overwhelmingly positive suggesting most walkers are in support of better facilities.

No change to the hut design is recommended. Commitment to investigate timers on internal lighting (not including safety lighting) is recommended.

8. Statement of reasons

This assessment has been based on the information provided in the EIS and incorporates advice provided by DPIPWE specialists and PWS 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.

8.1 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 Appendix 6 describes 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 Kia Ora Site Concept Plan 2021 addresses the requirements of relevant policies and plans and the recommendations of stakeholder groups. The Site Concept Plan is a guide for 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;
- OLT Usage Guidelines 2012,
- Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service Overland Track Emergency Response Plan 2020, and
- Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service (Draft) Overland Track Recreation Zone Plan 2014 .

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

8.2 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 is not inconsistent with the conservation of natural and cultural values in the Cradle Mountain - Lake St Clair National Park whilst 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.

9. 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 matters raised in the public submissions have been addressed in the final Environmental Impact Statement, and section 7 and Appendix 2 of this Environmental Assessment Report
 - the proposal would provide safe accommodation for walkers in adverse weather conditions
 - the proposal supports the reserve management requirements of the TWWHA Management Plan 2016, and
 - the proposal is not inconsistent with the conservation of natural and cultural values in the Cradle Mountain Lake St Clair National Park whilst 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.



John King

ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY (TASMANIA PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE)

22 July 2021

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

Appendix 1: Commitments

Commitments

Number	Commitments	Phase
1	Avoid the Alpine Sphagnum bog and associated fen vegetation community	Planning Construction
2	Implement fly neighbourly advice for eagle nests.	Planning
3	Identify flight paths to avoid known nests, potential nesting habitat and eagle interactions.	Planning Construction
	Determine feasibility of timers for internal lights in final design of hut, in consideration of safety and walker comfort.	Planning Procurement
4	Standard weed planning and hygiene guidelines to be included in tender specifications during procurement for contractors to allow additional costs and time in their estimates.	Procurement
5	Rock materials to be sourced from recently certified phytosphthora and weed-free quarries and be of a similar parent material to the existing environment, to be included in CEMP and implemented by contractor.	Procurement Construction
6	All equipment, machinery, boots, temporary building pads and objects entering the works site must be washed down prior to use and arrive clean to the work site, the washdown controls must be included in the CEMP and implemented by contractor.	Procurement Construction
7	Retain all excavated soils and cleared vegetation on-site for use during rehabilitation.	Construction Rehabilitation
8	Comply with Unexpected Discovery Plan if aboriginal heritage is uncovered or suspected during works.	Planning Construction
9	Business Continuity Plan prepared by PWS to maintain services, assess any additional emergency response strategies, and minimise disruption to independent walkers and commercial operators.	Planning Construction

10	Bushfire risks and controls to be specified in procurement documents and the CEMP and implemented during works.	Procurement Construction
11	Obtain all relevant permits and approvals before works commence including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning, Building and Plumbing Permits, - Helicopter landing permits. 	Planning
12	Pilots comply with Fly Neighbourly advice.	Construction
13	Site Plan for construction site to be prepared as part of the CEMP and implemented by contractor.	Construction
14	Construction site boundary to be marked onsite to limit incremental growth of ground impacts during works.	Construction
15	All temporary buildings and storage areas are to be elevated where possible to limit ground disturbance and die-back of native vegetation. Duration of placement to be minimised.	Construction
16	Excavation, footings and flooring works completed quickly and in dry weather conditions, to minimise risk of sediment loss.	Construction
17	Erosion and sediment control for construction site included in the CEMP and implemented on-site by contractor.	Construction
18	Chemical storage, handling and spill management included in CEMP and implemented on-site by contractor.	Construction
19	Waste collection, storage, and transport of different waste types included in the CEMP and implemented on-site by contractor.	Construction
20	Procedures to limit hazards to walkers specified in procurement and CEMP documents, and implemented during works.	Procurement Construction

21	Vegetation clearing to be minimised to the extent necessary to comply with approved BHMP.	Construction
22	All temporary components of the construction site and construction waste removed at completion of works.	Rehabilitation
23	Stockpiled soils onsite to be used for rehabilitation works.	Rehabilitation
24	Re-establish natural surface levels using on-site soil, with some ripping of compacted areas to improve permeability and grips to improve drainage.	Rehabilitation
25	Prepare and implement a rehabilitation plan informed by advice from NCH botanists.	Rehabilitation
26	Fence rehabilitation areas from walkers and browsing animals while native vegetation regenerates.	Rehabilitation
27	Endemic species to be used for establishing a native grass and herbfield around the Hut and facilities.	Rehabilitation

Appendix 2: Public Consultation submissions

Table 4. Responses to submissions

Issue	EIS	Response
Hut colours	A.1	<p>NPWAC noted some confusion over the hut colours in the Visual Impact Assessment report (VIA).</p> <p>The VIA includes the hut plans. It was prepared before the hut renders were available. The renders present an image of the hut with a photograph background. The renders clarified the exterior colours of the proposed hut.</p> <p>The draft EIS was released for public consultation with hut renders and VIA (unchanged).</p>
On-site Surveys	2.3.2, 3.3.2, 3.3.4	<p>NPWAC requested clarification regarding desktop and on-site surveys.</p> <p>Draft EIS clarified on-site and desktop surveys in sections are 2.3.2 Public Hut, 3.3.2 Flora and Fauna, 3.3.4 Aboriginal Heritage.</p>
BHMA	5.3.2	<p>NPWAC recommended the description 'a native grass and herb-field that will become a marsupial lawn and assist with fire management'.</p> <p>This description was added to the draft EIS, about marsupial lawns in section 5.3.2 Building in bushfire prone areas.</p>
Eagle nest surveys	5.1.1	<p>NPWAC recommended eagle nest surveys within 1km line-of-sight of hut. The commitment was added to the draft EIS section 5.1.1 Biodiversity, flora and fauna.</p> <p>Recent eagle nest surveys in the TWWHA were identified when preparing the final EIS and EAR.</p> <p>The EAR evaluation concludes little to no likelihood of disturbing breeding pairs of eagles.</p>
Mulch	2.3.5	<p>Term 'slash' was removed from draft EIS before public consultation as it was misleading.</p> <p>Mulch in the draft EIS only refers to on-site vegetation being used, and no imported organic matters or tea tree is proposed.</p>
Rehabilitation Plan	5.5.2 5.5.3	<p>NPWAC recommended specialist advice to assist when modifying native vegetation in the BHMA.</p> <p>The draft EIS was changed prior to public consultation to include the commitment in section 5.5.2 Bare-ground and exposed soils - prepare Rehabilitation Plan with advice from a NCH ecologist, which is also likely to include annual monitoring</p>

		and plan review noted in Section 5.5.3 On-going works program.
Phytophthora	5.1.2	Changed phytophthora description to a 'water borne pathogen', in draft EIS before public consultation.
Cultural value	3.3.4	Added a description of the Big River Nation and trade routes with similarities to the OLT in section 3.3.4 Cultural, prior to draft EIS being released for public consultation.
Rangers quarter	2.3.1 2.3.5	<p>NPWAC raised concerns regarding Work Health and Safety (WHS) standards for Rangers in the existing hut.</p> <p>The existing Rangers quarters are suitable for single occupation. The accommodation unit includes gas stove and heating, bunk and solar power for radio/electrical equipment charging. Tracks Rangers are independent when working their regular shifts.</p> <p>The building health and condition of the public hut facility is deteriorating, mainly due to 34 walkers attempting to use a hut with capacity for 16 people.</p> <p>It is intended to refurbish the public hut for use by more than one staff member. The preferred Ranger Hut layout would accommodate up to four staff. The need for larger accommodation is for works crews, maintenance inspections, and to allow Track Rangers to cross paths on regular work patterns.</p>
Site Concept Plan	A.1	<p>NPWAC's concerns regarding commercial groups and future developments proposed were discussed when preparing the Site Concept Plan 2021.</p> <p>NPWAC also raised these concerns in their review of the draft EIS.</p> <p>The Site Concept Plans reiterates the TWWHA Management Plan 2016 assessment processes for commercial developments.</p> <p>It is beyond the scope of the Site Concept Plan and this EIA to predict or evaluate potential impacts future commercial proposals.</p> <p>PWS responsibility is to maintain public infrastructure.</p>
Lighting	2.3.2	<p>Public submissions noted lighting as an unnecessary feature and negatively impacts their experience.</p> <p>Internal lighting is proposed in the common area. The lights are low pendants to illuminate bench and table surfaces. The intent of the lights is to allow for use and cooking in the common area without the need of multiple head torches.</p> <p>The addition of timers on the lights is a useful suggestion and a commitment has been added to the final EIS – to investigate options for timers on lighting.</p>

Services and
Experience

3.3.1
5.1.5

The three public submissions described the change to their experiences. The submissions described the proposed hut at Kia Ora and other recently built/proposed huts in TWWHA to be:

- too comfortable,
- over embellished, and
- detracting from the wilderness experience or walk.

The respondents felt that the size, features and services in the huts (i.e. lighting, gas heating, triple glazing) to be changing their experiences and not meeting their expectations of a wilderness walk.

The proposal aims to achieve an acceptable balance of wilderness protection and compatible recreation. The draft EIS noted in section 5.1.5 that social or intangible concepts of wilderness are difficult to quantify and assess as these are opinion based. The draft EIS noted public consultation as a means to assess public perceptions of an acceptable balance.

The proposed hut at Kia Ora is a change to the traditional bushwalking huts on the OLT. It is difficult to build a simple structure for public use that complies the NCC; bushfire hazard management, energy efficiency, safety and health standards.

The size of the proposed hut is larger than existing huts to accommodate the number of walkers that may book on the track. The size of the hut is consistent with Waterfall Valley. Pelion accommodates 36 and the Windermere hut design also accommodates up to 34 walkers.

The OLT has been evolving as a bushwalk for over 100 years and its origins are linked to Tasmanian aboriginal travel routes. The huts built in the 1980's replaced those constructed by miners, trappers and other pioneering types.

It is acknowledged that the new huts are a change to the wilderness experiences for some walkers, particularly experienced Tasmanian walkers. However, the more traditional huts are also a negative impact to many walkers' experiences, as noted in the EIS when describing the need for the new hut in Section 2.2.

It should be noted that anecdotal feedback from walkers about the new Waterfall Valley Hut has been overwhelmingly positive suggesting the majority of walkers appreciate better facilities.

No change to the hut design is recommended.

NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE ADVISORY COUNCIL (NPWAC)

RAA3883 - Draft EIA - Kia Ora Hut and Toilet Replacement

NPWAC notes that the project is well-documented and the site concept plan appears to take a sympathetic approach to siting and environmental concerns while improving the quality of accommodation at this node. The proposed improvements to the long-standing problem of the greywater system to ameliorate environmental impacts and the repositioning of the development away from sphagnum bog communities is particularly welcome.

In particular, NPWAC supports the proposed re-use of disturbed areas for construction of new facilities and notes the visual separation of elements while maintaining the formal connection between them to minimise unplanned track formation.

NPWAC notes a number of issues that should be considered prior to the documentation being released for public comment. In the Draft EIS, in no particular order are:

- In the Visual Assessment, images of the building show some sections of the building rendered in colour. If it is proposed that these eventually weather, a process NPWAC supports, then the colour appears misleading.
- The documentation needs to make clear at all points that the site concept development was produced following both onsite visits and desktop survey.
- NPWAC is not sure how a “marsupial lawn” is sown? Perhaps developing “a native grass and herb-field that will become a marsupial lawn and assist with fire management” is a better way of describing what is proposed.
- There is a known patch of *E. delegatensis* close to the site. If not already assessed, its size and location in relation to the construction site should be determined. If it is within 500m or 1km line of sight and if there is potential for an eagle nest to exist, a search should be undertaken.
- It assumed that any helicopter use during construction will utilise a fly neighbourly advice approach, which considers the lowest risk approach to the site in relation to any nest and any eagles in the area (as is done effectively at other PWS sites).
- There is a potential conflict in using “slash” as mulch and promoting grasslands (ps. 1,15) e.g. using a ti-tree thicket as the slash material is likely to result in the re-establishment of ti-tree scrub.
- *Phytophthora cinnamomic* is not an aquatic disease (p. 25).
- NPWAC supports employing strict protection measures for the surrounding screening vegetation during the construction phase.
- In Appendix 6, p. 6, it is proposed that OLT Rangers will monitor establishment of the native grass/herb are and monitor weeds. Do they have the necessary expertise or is input from a botanist required? Also, on p. 4 the strategy of using mulch for rehabilitation is further mentioned.
- In Appendix 7, the 100 years of continuous recreational use of the OLT is acknowledged but the fact it was a traditional Aboriginal transit route is not (see McConnell et al).

In the Site Concept Plan, again in no particular order:

- Was the Site Plan prepared with the input of a zoologist or an ecologist (p. 19)?
- P. 22 implies that the existing hut does not meet the requirements of Workplace Health and Safety, yet it is being retained as a Rangers Hut with plans to upgrade later. NPWAC are concerned that the health and amenity of PWS staff may be threatened and believes that, at a minimum, the hut should be refurbished to meet those standards as part of this project.

Finally, an issue raised in the Site Concept Plan of particular concern to NPWAC is the discussion and proposals around the management of commercial groups, particularly the World Expedition proposal for semi-permanent puffer pods. This will clearly raise issues in the minds of existing users, including why commercial operators are permitted to keep the structures up between use and according to the current plan, the potential loss of one public platform, should the project proceed. A potential increase in the daily capacity of the OLT may also be implied.

NPWAC supports any commercial activity on the track being co-located with and making use of public infrastructure but yet again, this potential development is being raised in a policy vacuum of no approved Standing Camp or Hut policy for the TWWHA. NPWAC understands that the World Expeditions proposal is yet to progress beyond an EOI and believes that issues of the potential semipermanent nature of the puffer pods and who pays for any replacement public tent platforms are likely to be contentious subjects in the public consultation stage of this project.

Malcolm Wells
Chair

24 March 2021

Good morning.

My comments are not specifically target to the design of the building. Rather, I would like to add an observation I have made regarding the new Waterfall hut, and the new hut at Frenchman's Cap.

I think the addition of lighting has done nothing to enhance the hiking experience. In fact, instead of winding down when the sun goes down, hikers are staying up later, talking into the night, sometimes with music. I actually don't think the lighting is necessary, at all, and is in fact a negative feature.

The gas heating is also regularly abused.

I feel that the huts are now so comfortable that hikers are beginning to expect such features without a thought to how these facilities are provided (how the gas is transported in for example). Some hikers are disappointed and annoyed that there is no toilet paper in the toilets.

Bit of a rant, I know, but my point is ... don't make the huts so comfortable that it doesn't seem like you're on a wilderness walk at all. No lighting. Or at least lighting that cuts out at, say, 9pm.

Thank you.

regards,

Anne Machin

The Submission Coordinator
Kia Ora Hut Proposal
Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service
PO box 809, Ulverstone Tas. 7315

Dear Sir or Madame,

I am writing to provide some suggestions for the new Kia Ora Hut on the Overland Track. This has arisen from my concerns with regard to the recently constructed Waterfall Valley Hut.

From memories of mountain huts spanning the last fifty years' in Switzerland, Austria, Spain, Andorra, France, Italy, New Zealand, Australia and Mexico, these huts provided the walker or climber with a complimentary experience for rest and recuperation and social interaction. All these huts fulfilled this function without distracting from the wilderness experience. The in my view the over embellished new Waterfall Valley Hut distracts from the Wilderness experience.

This writer prefers that the proposed hut provides utility, economy, energy conservation via good insulation. Also a hut should provide the walker with a convivial atmosphere giving a sense of cosiness to promote social interaction. Building huts like churches with unnecessary ceiling heights as in the case of the Waterfall Valley Hut and Windy Ridge Hut means a hut is difficult to keep warm and goes against a sense of cosiness and conviviality. The more surface area the greater the heat loss and to the observer a sense that such a cathedral like structure is going to be difficult to keep oneself warm.

An Overland Track hut should not be a collimator towards some iconic geological feature. Unfortunately, with the Waterfall Valley hut this is the case with the view of Barn Bluff from the kitchen area. The walker or climber walking the Overland Track does not require a hut to act as a reminder for his or her objective. A hut is solely a staging point for a nights rest, shelter and an opportunity to commune with fellow walkers.

The new hut should merge with the surrounding scenery. Therefore the hut should be located as inconspicuously as practicable.

Yours Sincerely

Richard (Rick) Rolls

To the KiaOra hut submission coordinator.

For the last 50 years I have been bushwalking all over Tasmania. My favourite part is the Central Plateau and particularly the Cradle Mountain Lake St Claire National Park. For the last 8 years, my husband and I have volunteered as hut wardens at Waterfall Valley, the first night of the overland track walk. We have felt privileged to be able to do so, enjoyed meeting the people and helping them on their way. Bushwalking in National parks has been wonderful for me, both physically and mentally. The challenge of pushing myself, sometimes in adverse conditions, has given me a confidence that I can survive, which I could not get anywhere else. Being able to encourage people to gain the benefits that I have gained over the years is a way of giving back.

But this year during our stint at Waterfall Valley, it became obvious to us that the nature of bushwalking and the culture of the Parks service has changed and in my view – not for the better.

We knew that the hut was big because a friend who walked the Park last October could only talk about the new Waterfall Valley hut rather than the experience of the walk itself. When we arrived there to do our volunteering service we found it very overwhelming. No longer a simple basic cabin. A huge cathedral like construction with triple glazing. Do we really need that? No longer is it about the experience and challenge of walking and being in our wonderful natural environment. Now it is the experience of the hut rather than the walking and its associated benefits. The new hut at Waterfall Valley is very grand indeed and certainly well built. But do we need man made constructions like this? It is as if it is an attempt to overtake the wonder of our environment and the experience. Walkers asked us “Are all the huts as comfortable as this?” and we would reply “What makes a comfortable hut? – a flat place to put your bedding, dry and somewhere in shelter to cook your meal. Yes they are all as comfortable as this”. Having a spectacular view of the mountain is nice indeed but really, it doesn’t look any better than it does on the outside. And it is not as if we can see it any better if we are sheltering from bad weather. Walkers can be just as comfortable in a more discreet hut, one that does not take over from the wonderful scenery around us.

I understand that planning the new hut at Lake Windermere is well under way. I don’t know if any plans have been approved as yet but I hope that the hut is hidden in the rainforest and does not distract walkers from the actual experience.

I take this invitation for submissions on plans to replace the Kia Ora hut as an opportunity to express my concerns. If this trend of conspicuous and extravagant huts continues, something immeasurable will be lost for Tasmania and will be difficult, if not impossible, to recover. I hope that you consider them carefully.

Maria Rolls

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