

Bushwalking NSW

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24 August 2019

Manager Planning Evaluation and Assessment
PO Box 95
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Dear Sir/Madam

Draft Light to Light Walk Strategy – Ben Boyd National Park

Bushwalking NSW Incorporated is the peak body for bushwalkers in NSW and the ACT. It represents the interests of over 11,000 bushwalkers from 68 bushwalking clubs throughout the State, and provides a united voice to local, state and federal government agencies and other bodies on issues affecting bushwalkers.

Our mission is to support safe, active and inclusive bushwalking and related outdoor activities in wisely managed natural areas. In particular, we see bushwalking as a recreation that should be available to as many people as possible, irrespective of their income level or capacity to pay.

The expenditure proposed by NPWS is welcome and we have no objection to improved visitor facilities where these do not impede the capacity of others to enjoy the Light to Light Walk. However, we do have concerns that the draft Strategy may limit options for the independent, 'do it yourself' bushwalker who wishes to enjoy the Light to Light Walk at low or minimal cost.

To this end we have the following comments on the draft.

- **Track re-alignment**

This is supported as proposed as it would enhance the visitor experience and reduce impacts.

- **Pack camping**

Pack camping and other informal camping, i.e. camping at sites where there are no facilities, will no longer be permitted on the Light to Light Walk. This includes pack camping at Leather Jacket Bay, Mowarry Point and Hegartys Bay.

Pack camping is often the preference for the more independent walker and it is disappointing that this type of camping will be banned completely. It is accepted that pack camping should not occur in areas of environmental or cultural sensitivity. However, to ban it completely seems a heavy-handed management response. NPWS should consider using some of the proposed expenditure to install fire rings and composting toilets to reduce impacts and to enable walkers to still enjoy the pleasures of pack camping.

Recommendation

That the proposal to ban pack camping at sites where there are no facilities be reviewed and that pack camping is permitted along sections of the track where impacts on environmental and cultural values can be avoided.

- **Saltwater and Bittangabee Campgrounds**

Independent walkers intending on self-managed camping will be able to book in tent-only campsites at the existing Saltwater and Bittangabee campgrounds, where there is access to toilets and other facilities. Camping fees will apply when booking sites.

Camping fees should be modest given that NPWS is proposing to eliminate free camping along the track.

Recommendation

The setting of camping fees for tent-only sites should be mindful of the need to provide low-cost options for independent bushwalkers.

- **New campsites at Mowarry Point and Hegartys Bay**

Two new sites comprising hut and/or tented accommodation, communal kitchen/dining/seating area, toilets and hut officer accommodation, work area and storage.

Putting in huts, toilets and other facilities will degrade the environment at these places. In addition, the roads into these places will need upgrading if NPWS staff are staying at the huts and for servicing the facilities.

Given that the proposed huts are only a kilometre or two from the existing car camps at Saltwater and Bittangabee, it seems the impact of developing new hut sites could be reduced by building the huts at Saltwater and Bittangabee. This would seem to be a lower impact option than developing new campgrounds at Mowarry Point and Hegartys Bay.

Recommendation

That the proposal to develop huts, toilets and other facilities be withdrawn and that these facilities are instead constructed at the existing campsites at Saltwater and Bittangabee. Adoption of this option should also allow continued tent-based camping at Saltwater and Bittangabee.

We hope that our recommendations are considered and we look forward to the NPWS response.

Yours sincerely,



David Bell

Conservation Officer

Bushwalking NSW Inc. - The peak body for bushwalkers in NSW & ACT
Keep exploring, be amazed!