

Bushwalking NSW

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Bushwalking NSW Inc
PO Box 3008
Uki NSW 2484

1 December 2020

The Hon. Matt Kean MP
Minister for Energy and Environment
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001

NSW – the Leading Australian Destination for Outdoor Adventure

Dear Minister,

Bushwalking NSW is committed to ensuring bushwalking and related outdoor activities are a recreation available to as many people as possible irrespective of their income levels. Bushwalking ranges from activities such as guided day walks to multi-day walks in remote areas by people who are self-reliant and independent.

Bushwalking NSW represents over 11,000 individuals from over 70 different clubs across NSW. In addition, for every club member there are the equivalent of ten other individuals who bushwalk regularly, but are not members of a club (source: Bushwalking Australia Inc. 2020). Walkers are the largest group of recreational tourists in Australia. As such, supporting infrastructure for walking is critical for community health and wellbeing, and for the local economy.

We support the NSW Government's commitment to over \$150 million over four years to upgrading a number of the more iconic tracks and trails in national parks. We support track improvements, campground upgrades and the provision of enhanced facilities such as huts. While this expenditure is to be welcomed there is scope to take this much further and position NSW as the leading destination in Australia and beyond for outdoor adventure activities. We do not accept that NSW should be a State that people fly over to access wild and beautiful places in New Zealand or Western Australia.

We also note that NSW is uniquely placed to be the premier destination for outdoor recreation given that:

- It contains 7 million hectares of National Park compared to 3.4 million hectares in Tasmania and 2.8 million hectares in New Zealand.
- 54% of the alpine areas of Australia are in NSW.
- Sydney is unique as a global city surrounded by outstanding national parks.

What we propose

Bushwalking NSW considers that NSW should be the premier bushwalking and outdoor recreation destination of Australia. Our VISION is that NSW should be the State with the opportunity for outdoor adventure that amazes and excites.

This is intended to inspire governments, organisations, businesses and individuals to imagine, create and use facilities that enable all to experience, enjoy and conserve the natural environment.

We also consider that this vision will complement existing measures to assist communities, businesses and individuals through the various challenges presented by climate change, pandemics and other disruptors.

Our Goals

To achieve this Bushwalking NSW considers that the following goals are challenging yet realistic:

1. By 2030 more people experiencing more outdoor adventures in more natural areas.
2. 1000 kilometres of new walking tracks in 10 years.
3. By 2030 an iconic track is opened that is of similar length to the Heysen Trail in SA or the Bibbulmun Track in WA.
4. No loss of existing walking routes or tracks.

Line of sight with existing NSW Government Plans

Tourism is one of the state's most important industries. It is ahead of agriculture, mining, and education and training in terms of economic impact. Figures compiled by Outdoors NSW indicate that NSW adults participated in 53 million nature-based activities in 2016, contributing \$7.6 billion in spending and creating the equivalent of 77,000 full-time jobs. Much of this expenditure and job creation is in regional areas.

The NSW Government's Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan lists 43 actions to keep the state number one in the country for overnight visitors and accelerate growth to deliver maximum economic benefits through our visitor economy.

Our goals are consistent with NSW Health Strategic Priority 1: keep people healthy. Bushwalking and other outdoor recreation activities are undeniably healthy activities. Nature is also important to humans and exposure to the natural world supports cognitive function, physical health, and psychological well-being.

Our goals are also consistent with the following plans:

- Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan 2030: supports interest-based tourism. Tours and tracks are popular ways to package destinations and experiences. They can also help overcome geographic barriers for the visitor economy in more remote regions.
- State-wide Destination Management Plan 2019 promotes the concept of 'hero' destinations and experiences which are world-class, iconic and unique. Bushwalking NSW considers that NSW has unrivalled 'hero' destinations and experiences. Experiential travel is a key tourism trend and NSW national parks are well-placed to accommodate this.

Desired Outcome

We would like to work with the NSW Government and other stakeholders to develop a State-wide strategy and investment program for the creation of a world-class long-distance tracks and trails network in NSW. This would augment and inter-connect existing tracks and trails including the Australian Alps Walking Track, Hume and Hovell Track and the Great North Walk. Examples of iconic long-distance tracks that could be developed include:

- Extension of the Australian Alps Walking Track from Tharwa in the ACT to the Queensland border along the Great Dividing Range. This would rival the world-famous Appalachian Trail in the USA and could also extend into Queensland via the Scenic Rim track network.
- Sydney to Canberra (which would link to the Australian Alps Walking Track to Victoria and the Great North Walk to the Hunter Region).
- Tweed Heads to Mallacoota (Victoria) via the coast.
- Darling River to Tibooburra via the national parks network. As yet far western NSW sees little or no long-distance walking.
- Connecting the Australian Alps Walking Track to the Hume and Hovell Track.
- Track extensions and links along the Illawarra Escarpment to create a track to rival the Scenic Rim Track network on the NSW/Queensland border.

We would also like to see some former tracks reinstated including the Barrington Tops to Myall Lakes Track which has sadly fallen into disrepair.

This is not an exhaustive list but captures much of the different landscape and scenery of NSW. We also recognise that further work is needed on these route proposals to develop the business cases to support the necessary investment.

Bushwalking NSW recognises the essential need for Indigenous input into these track proposals and that Indigenous communities themselves are promoting tracks and trails such as the Bundian Way. We note that the Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan 2017-2020 is designed to provide NSW Indigenous tourism operators and the wider tourism industry with a practical guide to Destination NSW's vision to support the development of Indigenous tourism experiences and businesses in NSW. Our goals complement this.

Finally, we note the \$15million investment by Victoria on a new 'world class' 57km track in the Alps as part of their post-pandemic recovery, and aimed to expand its tourist base. NSW has vastly more natural resources on which to build similar projects to support the concepts proposed in this letter.

We hope the NSW Government shares much of what we believe can be achieved over the next decade and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Bill Boyd
President
Bushwalking NSW Inc

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