

# Bushwalking NSW

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Manager, Property and Lease Management Unit  
Locked Bag 5022  
Parramatta NSW 2124

Dear Manager,

## PROPOSED LEASES – GARDENS OF STONE CONSERVATION AREA

### Introduction

Bushwalking NSW Incorporated is the peak body for bushwalkers in NSW and the ACT. It represents the interests of over 11,000 bushwalkers from 70 bushwalking clubs throughout NSW and the ACT, and provides a united voice to local, state and federal government agencies and other bodies on issues affecting bushwalkers.

The Gardens of Stone has been a premier bushwalking destination for many years and individual bushwalkers have been instrumental in raising awareness of the importance of the Gardens of Stone as an important conservation precinct and in lobbying government for its protection.

### Timing of Public Notice of Proposed Leases

Bushwalking NSW is dismayed that the NPWS chose to release the Notice of Intention to coincide with the Christmas/New Year period. We consider that the timing of this Notice is inconsistent with the State Government's own Charter for Public Participation which was released by the Information and Privacy Commission in 2018.

The period for public comment should be extended into early February at least in order to give the public a better opportunity to comment.

### Legality of the Proposed Lease

Section 151F 2(a) of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 requires that a notice under subsection (1) must contain sufficient information to identify the land concerned. As the route of the multi-day walk has not been finalised or published for public comment, then it is difficult to see how a lease for the accommodation nodes could be legally issued.

### Putting the 'Cart before the Horse'

Bushwalking NSW is perplexed as to why the NPWS intends to enter a lease before the details of the proposed multi-day walk and the adventure tourism facilities are released. The map provided for the Notice of Intention is too broad and the Master Plan only provides general information about the proposals.

Bushwalking NSW considers that a detailed route plan of the proposed walk (including the locations of proposed accommodation) should have been released first before entering into commercial arrangements. As mentioned above, the proposed lease may also be in breach of Section 151F 2(a) of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974.

## **Bushwalking NSW Inc.**

We also remain concerned about the potential for this walk to traverse Wollemi National Park. NPWS should be forthcoming about any intention to extend the walk (including built accommodation) into Wollemi National Park.

The NPWS should undertake appropriate assessments of environmental, cultural and social impacts of the proposed developments and release these for public review and comment. This should occur before development and commercial leases are considered.

### **Private Tourist Developments in National Park Estate**

As was indicated in our submissions to the draft Plan of Management and draft Master Plan, Bushwalking NSW is opposed to private tourist developments in the Gardens of Stone Conservation Area. If accommodation is constructed to service the proposed multi-day walk, then this should be owned and maintained by the NPWS. We have no objection to private tour companies utilising the accommodation (along with other members of the public). This is the approach NPWS is taking in relation to the Great Southern Walk in The Royal National Park.

However, we oppose private monopolies operating such facilities in national parks.

### **Zip Lines and Via Ferrata**

We oppose the development of Zip Lines and Via Ferrata in the Lost City area. Members of Bushwalking NSW have re-visited this area since our Master Plan submission and note that the rock formations are magnificent as they are. We are concerned that all climbing of the rock faces should be prohibited in order to preserve the character and formation of the pagodas. These formations would not be the same if all the protruding ironstone were broken off through climbing.

We are therefore opposed to the granting of a lease for ziplines, via ferrata and suspension bridges within the Conservation Area.

Yours faithfully,



David Bell  
President, Bushwalking NSW Inc.  
18 January, 2023