



Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water  
and Environment



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Ms Catharine Errey  
President  
Tasmanian National Parks Association  
GPO Box 2188  
HOBART TAS 7001

Dear Ms Errey

### **FRENCHMANS CAP PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT**

Thank you for your letter of 12 June 2016 outlining matters of concern to your Association in respect of the management of Frenchmans Cap.

As you have identified, it was our intention to release a draft Recreation Zone Plan for Frenchmans Cap in 2015; however, this process was placed on hold until the new *Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan* is finalised and released. This is expected later this year and we will then make any adjustments necessary to the Zone Plan and release it for comment. The delay in release of the Zone Plan is regrettable, but prudent in the circumstances.

Meanwhile, we have continued to address issues with the walking track, in accordance with the Track Management Plan that was prepared in 2008, funded jointly through the philanthropy of Dick Smith and the Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS). The arrangement with Dick Smith provides \$100,000 per annum over 10 years and has two more seasons to run.

I can confirm that it is our intention to replace the Tahune Hut this summer given the existing hut has reached the end of its useful life. The new hut will have a slightly larger footprint and be designed to meet the needs of walkers, with the emphasis on energy efficiency. We will also replace the toilet as part of the project. A Development Application for the new hut has been lodged with the West Coast Council and this is expected to be advertised for public comment on 2 July 2016. We would welcome any feedback through this process.

I can also advise that we have undertaken a feasibility assessment and are proposing a mini-hydro system to generate a 12 volt power supply for heating and lighting. The installation will have minimal environmental impact and offers a much more sustainable approach to heating than fossil fuel systems.

As originally planned, the funding provided by Dick Smith will continue to be used on works associated with the track. Next season, new tent platforms will be constructed at Lake Vera and Tahune, and track work will occur on Rumney Moor. Dick Smith has expressed interest and enthusiasm for the replacement of the hut, and may make an additional contribution in support of this, but at this stage it will be funded through the Tourism Infrastructure Funding Program and PWS internal funding.

Frenchmans Cap is one of Tasmania's most popular bushwalks and, prior to 2013, attracted around 800 walkers per annum. The environmental issues associated with this use were only too evident, with the section through the Lodden Plains being the most problematic. In order to manage the environmental impacts of walking, it is necessary to harden tracks, which obviously constitutes improvement. There is no question the work done to date has improved the experience for walkers and made access easier, but, over time, this work will ensure that environmental impacts are appropriately managed and contained as popularity of the area increases.

The standard adopted for the track is T2 Class which we believe is appropriate given likely future demand. As you point out, since the re-route around the Lodden Plains has been open, the number of bushwalkers visiting Frenchmans Cap has significantly increased and, in 2013/14, was estimated at 1,600. But, this is not the only factor at play. Tasmania is experiencing a tourism surge and this has a flow-on effect to all our parks and experiences. Visitation has increased at all of our sites over the last three years, with some sites experiencing considerable growth. Last season the Overland Track had an 18% increase in the number of walkers despite the stunning success of the Three Capes Track.

I note your concern in respect of the effect improvements can have on the setting and the experience of walkers, and your interest in systems that could manage demand. We will continue to monitor use and the experience of visitors and will consider options to regulate numbers if circumstances warrant. Any consideration to this would be subject to a thorough and open consultation process with stakeholders and the public.

Finally, in respect of the Expression of Interest process, I can confirm that a project has been submitted for Frenchmans Cap. Details of the proposal are provided on the website for the Office of the Coordinator General (OCG) at:

[http://cg.tas.gov.au/home/investment\\_attraction/tourism\\_eio/eoi\\_project](http://cg.tas.gov.au/home/investment_attraction/tourism_eio/eoi_project)

Discussions have occurred with both the OCG and the PWS prior to the proponent lodging a more detailed proposal for assessment. This proposal will be assessed in accordance with the Reserve Activity Assessment process and legislative requirements.

I look forward to your continued interest in these matters.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Roberts  
**A/GENERAL MANAGER  
PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

29 June 2016

The General Manager  
West Coast Council  
PO Box 63  
Queenstown  
TASMANIA 7467



11 July 2016

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re application number DA 2016/00031; Replacement of existing hut and toilet at Lake Tahune, Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park**

The Tasmanian National Parks Association (TNPA) has long-standing concerns about inappropriate development at Frenchmans Cap (and elsewhere in Tasmania's national park estate). The proposed replacement hut at Lake Tahune is merely one component of a creeping upgrade of facilities at Frenchmans Cap being undertaken to date without any meaningful consultation with stakeholders.

While we don't doubt that the current hut at Lake Tahune is probably near the end of its useful life and so in need of replacement, we have concerns about the potential size and nature of its proposed replacement. While the application (DA 2016/00031) is for the "replacement" of existing infrastructure, and the proposed structure is on the site of the existing hut, the new hut's footprint will be considerably larger. This alone is a significant concern at this aesthetically and environmentally sensitive site within a World Heritage national park. Furthermore, we feel facilities like electric lighting and heating are inappropriate in a backcountry setting like Frenchmans Cap, and that use of a mini-hydro generator to supply such power is inviting higher than necessary ongoing maintenance costs.

We presume the Parks and Wildlife Service is undertaking a Reserve Activity Assessment (RAA) for the proposed new hut. Given the scale and site of the proposed structure we hope that the level of this RAA has been deemed such that public input will be sought. We intend writing to the Parks and Wildlife Service General Manager on this point. Until such a consultative RAA has been completed development approval for the construction of the proposed new hut at Lake Tahune should not be given by the West Coast Council.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Errey', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Catharine Errey  
President  
Tasmanian National Parks Association