



KEEP the
Capes Wild

Looking towards Cape Hauy, with the iconic 'Totem Pole', 'Candlestick' and 'Lanterns' at its edge.

Photo: Ted Mead

Tasman National Park: getting it back on track

The Tasmanian National Parks Association (TNPA) believes there is an alternative to the Government's present Three Capes Track proposal which is more appropriate for the management of the Tasman National Park and will provide greater support and economic benefits to tourism operators and the community.

This alternative, which we call the Great Tasman Coastal Experience, is based on a tourism strategy which integrates the existing network of day and overnight walks on the Tasman Peninsula with a range of other tourism and hospitality related services available in the region.

Central to this experience will be the four-day Tasman Coastal Trail taking in the spectacular coastal scenery on the eastern Tasman Peninsula including both Cape Hauy and Cape Pillar.

This is the model behind the Great Ocean Walk in Victoria which is presently attracting around 45,000 visitors per annum.

To construct and market a new walking track where economic benefits will largely flow to a few commercial operators, when an alternate Great Tasman Coastal Trail already exists, does not make sense.

Upgrading the existing network of trails, as suggested in the TNPA's Great Tasman Coastal Experience proposal, and undertaking an integrated marketing campaign with other attractions and



Inland the Tasman National Park includes wet and dry eucalypt forest.

Photo: Ted Mead

experiences in the region, will bring greater and more widespread benefits to the entire Tasmanian community.

The advantages of this proposal are outlined in detail in the next section "On the Right Track" but in summary are:

1. Consistent with Tasman Peninsula Tourism Strategy which promotes year round tourism, incorporating a range of activities.
2. Maintains the conservation values of the Tasman National Park.
3. Allows greater freedom for visitors to undertake a range of overnight and day walks.
4. Includes the spectacular section

of track between Pirates Bay and Fortescue Bay which is left out of the proposed Three Capes Track.

5. Would provide overnight camping at Fortescue Bay and improved use of beaches in the region.
6. Allow easier integration with available accommodation and other tourist related options in the area.
7. Avoid the cumbersome and costly (and possibly dangerous) boat trip across the Port Arthur Inlet.
8. Allow a greater opportunity to integrate other tourist related activities in the region such as sea kayaking and other marine options.

On the right track

The Great Tasman Coastal Experience proposal builds on a number of distinct advantages the Tasman Peninsula has as a tourism destination. These include:

- One of Australia's greatest cultural icons – the Port Arthur Historic Site – attracting around 250,000 visitors in 2006/07.
- Some of Australia's most magnificent coastal scenery which is already accessible through more than 30 day-walks and several multi-day walks, including the Tasman Coastal Trail (one of the five Great Bushwalks marketed on the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service website).
- A diverse range of other tourist opportunities provided through a host of existing tourism operators, including outdoor land and sea adventures and other hospitality experiences.

While there are already a large number of visitors to Port Arthur, the question that needs to be asked is why these visitors are not extending their stay and making use of other experiences presently on offer in the region? And will building another walking track change this when a diverse range of walking experiences already exist?

The TNPA believes that what is presently missing is not another track, but an integrated tourism strategy for the Tasman Peninsula, based on upgrading existing day and multi-day walks and combining them with cultural (eg Port Arthur, Eaglehawk Neck and Lime Bay State Reserve), outdoor adventures (cruises, kayaking, fishing) and other hospitality experiences offered by the region, with guests utilising existing hotels and bed-and-breakfasts.



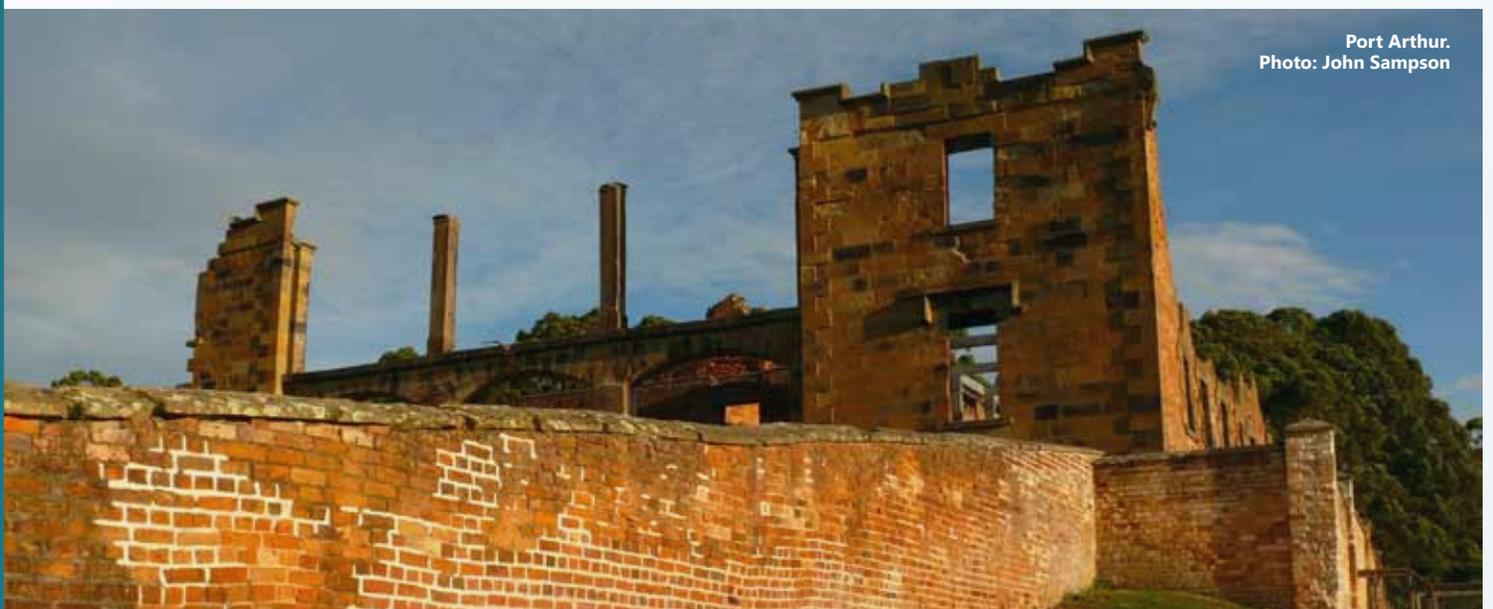
As mentioned above, the TNPA believes the concept behind the Great Ocean Walk in Victoria offers such a tourism model but seems to have been ignored by supporters of the Three Cape Track.

The Great Ocean Walk model is based on a partnership between existing tourism operators, and offers freedom of choice for tourists in options such as guided versus self-guided walks, number of days, type of accommodation, and price. There are currently around 20 official partners offering a range of walker services while 22 official partners offer accommodation. Only camping facilities are offered on the track, and off-track accommodation

includes a range of options such as caravan parks, self-contained units, bed-and-breakfasts, and lodge accommodation – most within five to ten kilometres of the walk.

The 'walk it your way', with step-on/step off, camping, and accommodation options, provides significant interaction between tourism operators on service provision (accommodation and transport to or from the trail heads each day) which adds to client convenience by not having to separately organise components of the experience.

A wide range of extra hospitality services such as gourmet meals, massages



Port Arthur.
Photo: John Sampson



Fortescue Bay is a favourite beachside spot for picnickers, bushwalkers, campers and recreational fishers.

Photo: Ted Mead

and interpretative wildlife and cultural tours are also offered by partners, and provides a key source of product diversification and innovation to the market. These components, along with the freedom of choice mentioned earlier, are instrumental in personalising the experience for many visitors.

While each partner has an individual website, there is also a separate coordinating Great Ocean Walk website. We recommend you visit www.greatoceanwalk.com.au to find out more.

The Great Ocean Walk model is about partnerships and suits situations such as that found on the Tasman Peninsula, where there exists a diverse range of visitor options, accommodation infrastructure and reasonable road access for transport and drop-off. This is the type of tourism product that experience overseas and elsewhere in Australia shows people greatly prefer.

Having people spend all their time on a single walk and stay in privately owned huts within the park, as is presently proposed, offers a limited product and will not spread the economic benefits around as is desired.

Ideally a mutually beneficial relationship between tourism operators should be nurtured rather than a competitive one.

The TNPA believes all the components necessary to build a Great Tasman Coastal Experience already exist on the Tasman Peninsula.

While details would ideally be based on consultation between all interested stakeholders, such a walk could centre on the existing four-day Tasman Coastal Trail starting from Pirates Bay and proceeding south along the cliff tops to Fortescue Bay, taking in Cape Hauy and Cape Pillar before returning via Snake Hill to Fortescue Bay (or in reverse).

As the Tasman Coastal Trail already exists it would be less costly to upgrade and avoid some of the cumbersome and expensive options of the present

Government proposal. It would also preserve existing pristine parts of the Tasman National Park. Furthermore, it would take better advantage of a number of attributes found on the Tasman Peninsula, including:

- The magnificent section of track between Fortescue Bay and Pirates Bay (climbing over Tatnell's Hill) which has been left out of the present Three Capes Track proposal.
- Allow sections of the track to finish near towns (Eaglehawk Neck) or near road heads (Fortescue Bay) so walkers can make use of services offered by existing accommodation and tourism providers in the region.
- Allow sections of the track to finish near beaches (Fortescue Bay and Eaglehawk Neck) so walkers can enjoy the benefits of beachside camping.
- Support the outcomes of the walker survey undertaken by the Scoping Study which indicate most commercial walkers want a three-four day walk – ie many popular walks such as the Milford Track in New Zealand are four-day walks.
- Allow visitors more time to enjoy and make use of a range of other walks and tourist experiences offered in the region (day walks, sea-kayaking, visiting Port Arthur and other regions of historical and geological interest).

This walk could also be complemented by upgrading some of the 30 existing day-walks in the region, thus allowing a range of walker experiences from day-walks, to overnight and multi-night walks. Such a diversity of walk options integrated with the range of other experiences on offer across the region would attract a greater number and diversity of visitors.

Properly marketed, the TNPA believes a walk such as the Great Tasman Coastal Experience, combined with a range of other walk experiences, would increase the demand for tourist based services, including overnight accommodation and meals, and bring greater economic

benefit across a range of existing tourism operators in the region. This is in contrast to the Government proposal which is targeted at a more limited range of visitors (those wanting to do a five-six day walk) and will limit benefits to a few.

The TNPA believes a holistic marketing strategy is missing, integrating the range of walking and sea-based experiences in the region with existing hospitality opportunities, and as such, enticing visitors to extend their stay beyond a visit to Port Arthur.

It is of deep concern that the government has committed so much time and money to this proposal, and a de facto decision has already been made, even though the anticipated benefits from this proposal cannot be guaranteed and the public has had little opportunity to comment. It is also likely that local support for the present Three Capes Track concept is being influenced, not by an informed debate about the design of the project and its inherent benefits or flaws, but to a large extent simply because an "enormous amount of money" has been allocated to this project (though much of this money will not be spent in the region).

To construct and market a new walking track where the economic benefits will largely flow to only a few commercial operators, when an alternative Great Tasman Coastal Experience already exists, does not make sense.

Upgrading the existing walk as suggested by the TNPA, and undertaking an integrated marketing campaign with other attractions and experiences in the region, will bring greater and more widespread benefits to the entire Tasmanian community. A unique advantage of the Tasman Peninsula is a community living in juxtaposition with the Tasman National Park and ideally a mutually beneficial relationship between tourism operators should be nurtured rather than a competitive one.

On the wrong track

The Three Capes Track, as presently proposed, is envisaged to be a six-day/five-night walk that will follow the southern coast of the Tasman Peninsula for a total of 68 kilometres.

The track is to begin at White Beach, near Nubeena, and finish at Fortescue Bay, visiting Cape Raoul, Cape Pillar and Cape Hauy.

A five-day/four-night guided walk with a private tour operator will also be offered beginning near the start of the Cape Raoul track.

The track will include a boat trip across the Port Arthur Inlet between Safety Cove and Denmans Cove in order to bypass the town of Carnarvon, the Port Arthur historic site and avoid other parts of the coastal strip outside the Tasman Park.

It is anticipated that when fully operational, 10,000 people per year will walk the Three Capes Track (with up to 60 departures a day).

Walkers undertaking the Three Capes Track will pay a fee for use of the huts, in addition to park entry fees. The feasibility study proposed a fee of \$200 (\$40 per night).

The present Three Capes Track proposal will involve the construction of the following infrastructure:

- Construction of about 30 km of new walking track, major upgrading of about 25 km of existing track and minor upgrading of about 13 km of existing track.
- New viewing/resting areas, interpretation, entry/exit signs and track signs.
- Five overnight hut-based accommodation nodes, incorporating both a public hut with basic facilities, a commercial hut for guided trips with higher level facilities, and track ranger accommodation.
- Gateway facilities including walker registration, signage, shelter and other services are likely to be located at White Beach and Pirates Bay.

The total investment required to complete the track has been estimated to be approximately \$33 million. The Tasmanian Government has committed \$12.8 million to the project, the Australian Government has committed \$12.5 million, while a further \$8 million is to be provided by the private sector, though these private operators are yet to be identified.

It is anticipated it will take three years to complete the necessary planning tasks



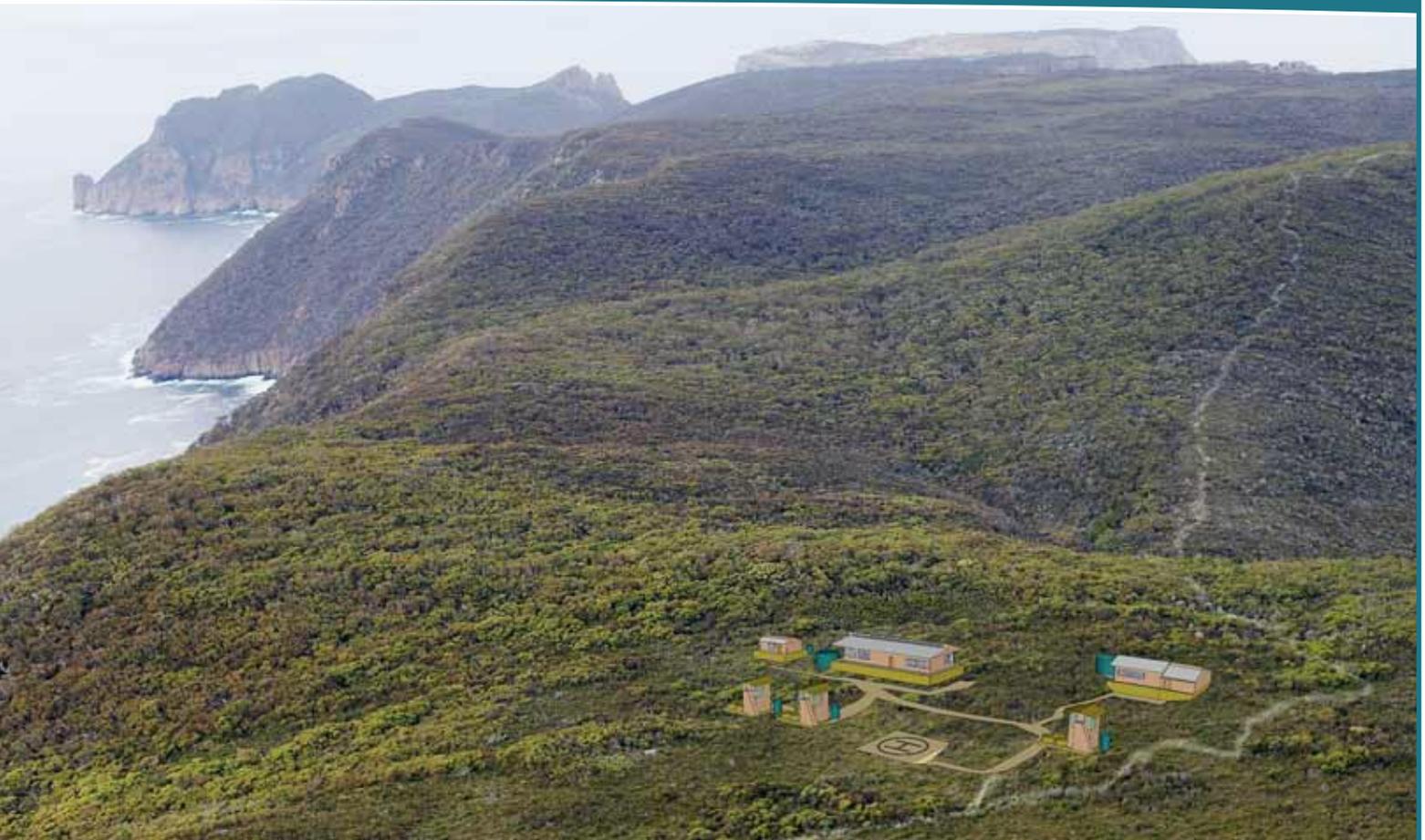
and construction of facilities for the Three Capes Track. However, upgrading of the existing Great Short Walk at Cape Hauy will be undertaken during the second half of 2011.

There will be a formal public comment period when the Development Plan and Environmental Management Plan (DEMP) is finalised and released (expected late 2011).

Inappropriate development

The Tasmanian National Parks Association believes the current Three Capes Track proposal is the wrong track for the following reasons.

- **The huge scale of proposed development** (incorporating the construction of five accommodation nodes) is totally inappropriate for a national park and conflicts with conservation objectives of a national park as laid out in the Nature Conservation Act 2002
- **A spectacular cliff-top walk** from Waterfall Bay to Fortescue Bay, taking in Cape Hauy and Cape Pillar, is already in existence (known as the Tasman Coastal Trail). This walk, currently listed on the Parks and Wildlife website as one of Tasmania's Great Walks, would be less costly to upgrade, whereas the Government proposal to incorporate Cape Raoul will involve considerable expense and difficulty, including dependence on provision of water transport across Port Arthur Inlet.
- **The use of hut-based accommodation in lieu of tents** goes against the results of the survey of walker attitudes provided in the Master Concept Plan which indicated only 19 per cent of the 537 people surveyed wanted huts.
- **The proposal assumes most walkers want a five-six day walk rather than a three-four day walk.** While the survey of walker attitudes indicated a strong preference among independent walkers for a five-six day walk (42 per cent), the majority of commercial walkers stated a preference for a three-four day walk (51 per cent). As the latter group is being targeted by the proposal, the TNPA believes a three-four day walk is the preferred and better option. (This is backed up by experience elsewhere in the state where three-four day walks such as Frenchman's Cap, Mount Anne, are preferred over longer walks. Experience also indicates many people walk the Overland Track in four or five days, not the recommended five-six days). Experience overseas, such as Milford Track in New Zealand, also indicates a preference for three-four day walks.
- **The incorporation of a boat trip halfway along the track is cumbersome and expensive.** Furthermore, large storm swells which occur within the Port Arthur Inlet would make the crossing dangerous (or impossible) on occasions. It will also be costly to build a jetty which can withstand these damaging



Indicative modelling illustrating the highly intrusive nature of an overnight accommodation node to be built near Retakuna Creek within the Tasman National Park associated with the proposed Three Cape Track. Prepared by Chris Bell, Bob Brown and Peter Whyte for the TNPA.

swells in what is now a pristine part of the coast. Furthermore, as demonstrated by the inability in recent years to maintain an economically viable ferry service to Maria Island, the ability to maintain a ferry service in relation to the Three Capes Track must also be questioned.

- **There are potential conflicts with other walks in the region** and may deny walkers who wish to have a tent-based experience access to camping sites in the Tasman National Park.
- **The proposed high cost to do this walk (\$200 per person)** may deter walkers from this region who will opt instead to do other walks in the state for which no fee is charged. Indeed, data published by the Parks and Wildlife Service indicates that compared to 2004-05 visitor numbers to the Cradle Mountain region actually decreased by around seven per cent the following year when fees were first charged for the Overland Track, and by 2007-08 visitor numbers were still down by four per cent.
- **While the Tasman Peninsula offers some spectacular coastal scenery**, it does not offer the wilderness values associated with many of the other overnight walks in Tasmania and as such may be less attractive

as a walker destination.

- **As the Tasman Peninsula is significantly drier than the central highlands** where the Overland Track is located, water availability would be a significant issue. As the proposal anticipates up to 10,000 walkers a year it is questionable whether or not the water needs of all these people can be met. There is also a real threat posed by bush fires with limited options of escape due to the predominance of seaside cliffs.
- **There are significant potential environmental impacts.** For example, there is a significant risk of the spread of the phytophthora cinnamomi root rot and disturbance to sea-eagle nests.
- **Both the construction and maintenance of this project would be heavily dependent on the use of helicopters.** These are very expensive to operate and the operational costs will continue to go up. They are noisy and incompatible with the aim of providing a peaceful and remote experience within a national park.
- **Accommodating tourists inside the national park (up to 50,000 bed nights per annum)** will directly compete with tourism initiatives in the Tasman community.
- **The economic benefits cannot be guaranteed and are likely to be small.**

A 5-6 day walk leaves little extra time for visitors to spend on other activities in the region and the results of a KPMG study indicated annual benefits to the Tasman region from the track may be as low as \$1.4 million. This does not seem to be a good return on an investment of \$33 million.

- **The claim by the Tourism Industry Council Tasmania** that the annual benefits from the Three Capes Track alone amount to \$190 million per year is also seen to be false when considered against the economic benefits of the entire Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area which have been estimated to be \$190 million per year (see media release by Hon Peter Garrett – A World of Value in Heritage).
- **Finally, as indicated by the huge cost overruns incurred on the recent upgrading of the Wineglass Bay Lookout track**, the TNPA believes the costs of constructing the Three Capes Track has also been significantly underestimated and that large costs associated with this development would be an unacceptably extravagant use of public funds when the State Government is cutting services and the Parks and Wildlife Service requires additional funds to effectively maintain the existing values throughout the Tasmanian reserve system.

Tracking the 3 capes development

2006

March

Tasmanian Great Bushwalk Scoping Study (Planning for People, 2006) completed for Government (not publicly released).

2007

January

Tasmanian National Parks Association (TNPA) learn of the proposed Three Capes Track development.

February

TNPA writes to the Minister expressing concerns about key elements of the proposal – recommending instead an alternative Two Capes Walk using the existing Tasman Coastal Trail.

May

Three Capes Track Feasibility Study released (as per the original proposal) – this is the first public information about the concept – no call for public comment.

Mid-late 2007

TNPA reviews the Feasibility Study and writes to the Government to express concerns with the proposal. Meet with Scott Gadd, then Secretary of the Department – no response to the TNPA's concerns.

TNPA works with the Peninsula Environmental Network to raise awareness of the issues with the Three Capes Track proposal – produces Two Cape Iconic Walk proposal and pamphlet.

2008

February

The Draft Tasman National Park and Reserves Management Plan 2008 is released for public comment. The Draft Plan contains numerous changes which allow for the proposed Three Capes Track (3CT).

March

The TNPA and 248 others provide submissions on the Draft Tasman National Park and Reserves Management Plan 2008 to the Resource Planning and Development Commission (RPDC). Only eight submissions give unqualified support for the proposal, while 209 submissions are opposed to the 3CT and to changing the Tasman National Park Management Plan to allow 3CT to proceed. But in Jan 2009 the RPDC does not recommend against the 3CT.

April

Economic Impact Analysis for Three Capes Track (Syneca 2008) completed for Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS). (Not publicly released).

TNPA obtain a copy and have concerns about some of the assumptions the findings rest on.

2009

January

PWS release a pamphlet summarising the Three Capes Track proposed development – still no more detail than the May 2007 Feasibility Study (but walkers will now walk east, not west).

March

TNPA launch their Keep the Capes Wild postcard campaign and start an information campaign through Salamanca Stalls and a

series of meetings with State Government, local Government, politicians and tourism operators. TNPA works with the Tasmanian Conservation Trust and Environment Tasmania on this issue.

Early-mid 2009

PWS take interested local council members on a helicopter flight from Lake St Clair to Windy Ridge Hut [the one there have been so many complaints about] to look at the type of hut to be built on the 3CT.

June

The Greens and Liberals ask Michelle O'Byrne some tough questions about the 3CT proposal and costs in the budget estimates hearings. Government admits the cost of the proposal is now about \$30 million, not the \$15-18 million originally envisaged – vindicating TNPA's alternative costing of at least \$25 million.

Mid-late 2009

PWS announce they will spend \$200,000 on commercial expressions of interest for the Three Capes Track development in 2009-10 (while existing PWS infrastructure is closed due to a lack of funds for repair).

2010

Early 2010

TNPA lobbies all major parties for a Two Capes alternative with boosted day-walk opportunities in the lead up to the election.

March

The Tasmanian 2010 Election – only days before the election the Federal Government announce they will partly fund the 3CT. At the same time the Greens environment spokesperson announces the Greens support the proposal 'in principle' (later found not to be the case – but the comment caused considerable damage to getting alternatives looked at).

April

TNPA continue the Keep the Capes Wild postcard campaign and continue meetings with new parliamentarians (ongoing)

December

The Three Capes Track proposal is still on the table with no more detail than in the 2007 Feasibility study – there is no finalised revised Management Plan that allows for the Three Capes Track there is still no business plan (although two thirds of the funds have been secured), no Environmental Impact Assessment and no actual detail of the proposed development there is a Three Capes Track Project Manager employed by the PWS, and as at Jan 2011, a position for a Track Construction Supervisor had been advertised.

2011

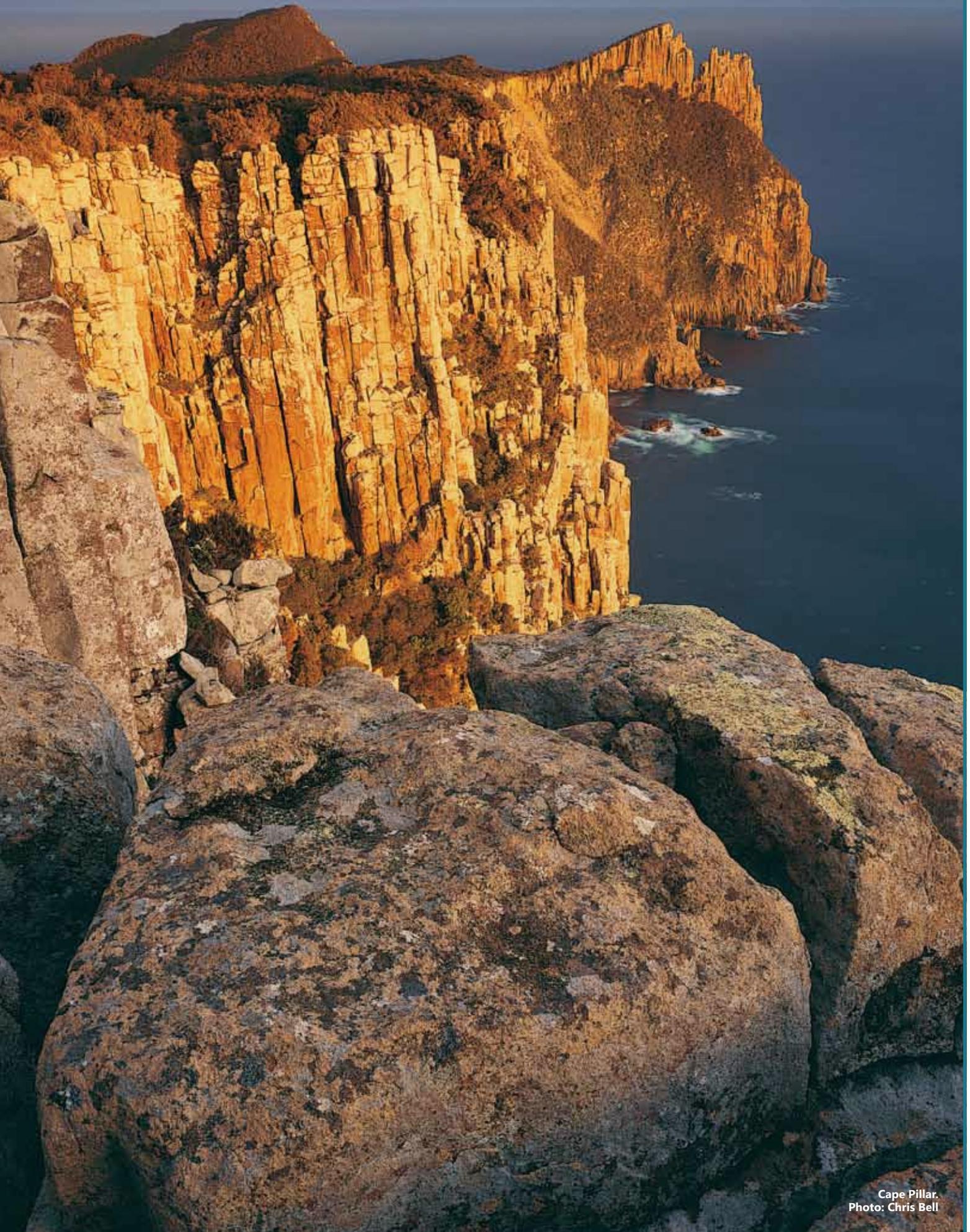
Mid-2011

Upgrade to Cape Hauy track commences using funding provided by the Federal Government

Late 2011 or early 2012

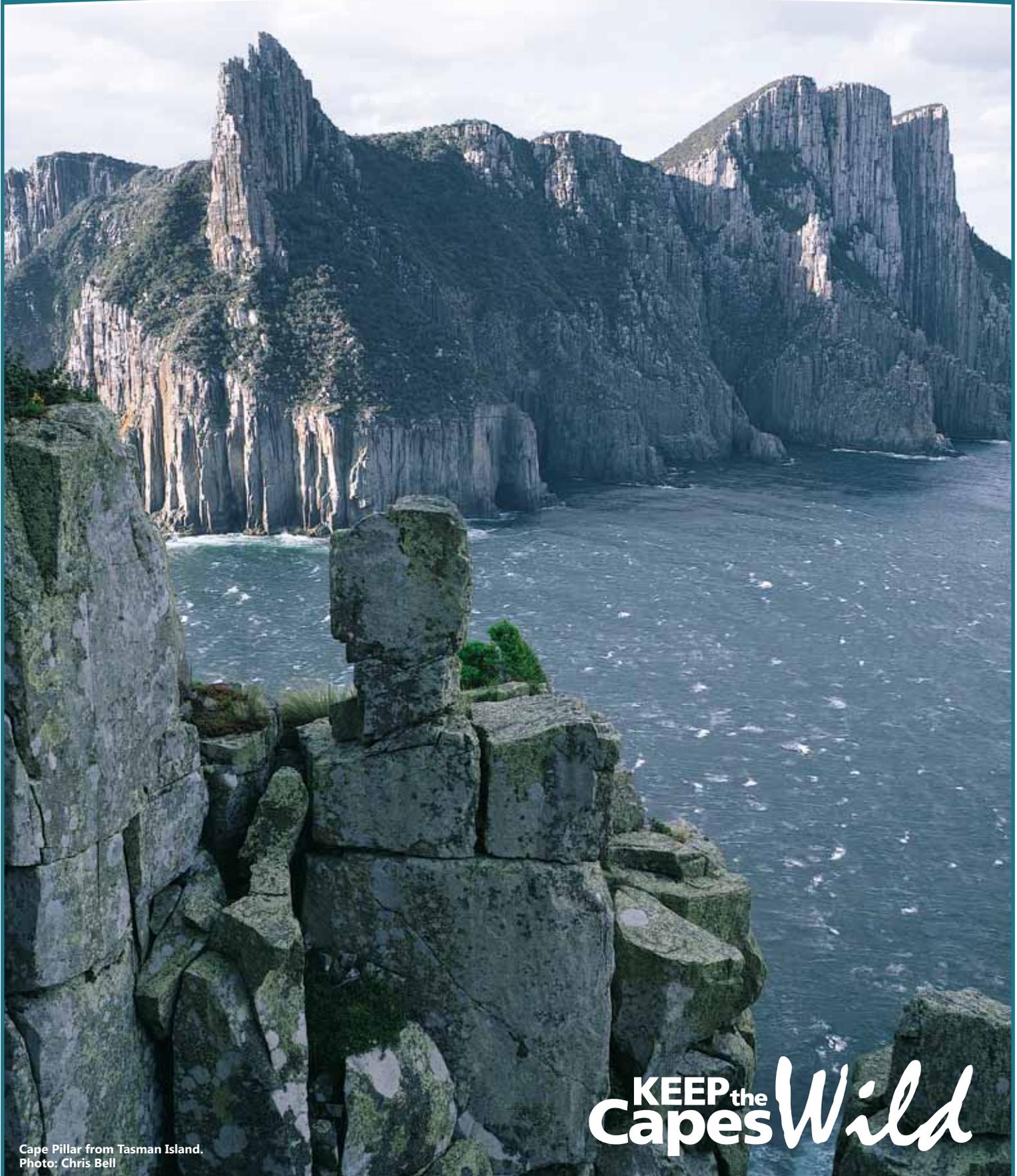
Development and Environmental Management Plan (DEMP) to be released for public comment.

Note – Over this time period there have been four ministers for Parks – Paula Wriedt, Michelle O'Byrne, David O'Byrne and now Brian Wightman. And there has been one major departmental reconfiguration.



Cape Pillar.
Photo: Chris Bell

GREAT TASMAN COASTAL EXPERIENCE



Cape Pillar from Tasman Island.
Photo: Chris Bell

KEEP the
Capes Wild

Contact us

This report was prepared by the Tasmanian National Parks Association. For more information please visit the Keep the Capes Wild website, www.keepthecapeswild.org.au.

For more information about the TNPA please visit www.tnpa.asn.au.

Published August 2011.

