

# World Heritage walking: A new direction

## The Bushwalking and Track Review : Stage Two

Implementing a Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) based approach to developing socially, environmentally and economically acceptable solutions to problems of environmental degradation in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.



**Parks and Wildlife Service**

Dept. of Tourism, Parks, Heritage *and* The Arts

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## Background

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The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (WHA) is internationally renowned for its natural, cultural values and the opportunities it provides for world class bushwalking experiences. As a long established use, bushwalking is an important part of many Tasmanians' lifestyles and heritage and is an important component of the presentation of the WHA. As managers of the WHA, the Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) is charged with balancing recreation with its obligation to identify, protect, conserve and rehabilitate the WHA's natural, cultural and other values.

Concerns over the sustainability of bushwalking in the WHA emerged over a decade ago. The impact of bushwalking in a small proportion of the WHA, particularly at high altitudes, has negatively affected some of the area's internationally significant values, such as aesthetic naturalness and vegetation of Gondwanan origin.

The need to manage the impacts of bushwalking led to the development of the Walking Track Management Strategy, by the PWS. The Strategy has been successful in delivering on-ground works (track work, erosion control, campsite stabilisation, etc) and establishing a track monitoring program. The Strategy also recommended the introduction of a WHA-wide permit system to monitor and, where necessary, regulate use. This mechanism was opposed by Tasmanian walking organisations and many others due to concerns over its cost, effectiveness and the imposition it posed on walkers' traditional freedom to walk in the WHA.

To address these concerns, the Tasmanian Minister responsible for the WHA, Mr David Llewellyn, established the Track Assessment Group (TAG). The group was given the task of developing a solution to the environmental impact problem that was workable, cost effective, environmentally effective and was supported by walkers. Following public comment, TAG developed a Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) planning approach.

In January 2001, TAG delivered their final report, *A way through the wilderness – An approach for a socially, environmentally and economically acceptable solution to problems of environmental degradation in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area*. The report makes an important contribution to the future management of bushwalking and walking track management within the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (WHA).

TAG's final report provides the foundation for the commencement of the next phase; the implementation of a LAC-based Bushwalking and Track Review (BATR). The remainder of this paper provides a brief outline of the goals of the process, the priority areas for review, an explanation of the LAC concept, and a step by step insight into Stage Two of the BATR process.

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## Goals

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The goals of the BATR are:

- To maintain or increase the diversity and quality of walking experiences
- To protect Tasmania's bushwalker values and maintain local access
- To maintain or improve the natural and cultural values of the WHA
- To ensure tourism prospers and is ecologically sustainable
- Cost effective solutions

## Schedule of priority areas to be examined

TAG's final report outlines a number of priority areas to be assessed via the BATR process. Areas to be assessed have been prioritised into two categories. Priority One areas are to be addressed first, with the Western Arthurs and the Franklands to be run through the review process as pilots.

### Priority One

- Western Arthurs (pilot area)
- Franklands (pilot area)
- Eastern Arthurs
- Labyrinth and Du Cane Range
- Mt Anne area

### Priority Two

- Walls of Jerusalem (Central)
- Denisons-Spires
- Olympus
- South Coast
- Snowy Range
- Southwest Cape
- Southern Ranges

**Note:**  
The priority order and areas proposed for review are open to change during the BATR process.

## Recreation, impacts and the limits of acceptable change concept

The limits of acceptable change concept developed from the realisation that all recreation use has some impact on the environment in which it takes place. Even low levels of recreation cause some impact. The core question facing the PWS and stakeholders then, is not what level of recreation is appropriate, but rather what amount of impact is to be accepted.

The objective of the BATR process is to determine at what point deterioration of social and environmental conditions becomes unacceptable (LAC standards), and to identify what steps will be taken to maintain conditions within acceptable limits.

Fundamental to the planning approach is a collaborative process in which the outcomes reflect the input of stakeholders (PWS and the public). Therefore, the standards, and the management actions and strategies, represent the integrated views and values of the stakeholders.

## The BATR Panel and stakeholder involvement

A partnership has been developed between the BATR Panel and the PWS to undertake the Bushwalking and Track Review. The Panel is made up of representatives of key stakeholder groups. Members of the Panel are volunteers who were appointed following a public call for nominations.

### BATR Panel: Volunteer stakeholder representative positions

- 2 Federation of Tasmanian Bushwalking Clubs (FTBC)
- 2 Independent walkers
- 1 Angler
- 1 Aboriginal Community
- 1 Conservation
- 1 Tourism
- 1 Natural science
- 1 World Heritage Area Consultative Committee (WHACC) member

**Stakeholder involvement is vital** to ensuring an open and transparent process. Walkers and other stakeholders are encouraged to participate by submitting comment

during Public Comment Periods, and or by sending comments and questions to the BATR Panel.

### **Stage Two of the LAC-based Bushwalking and Track Review (BATR) process**

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Stage Two of the BATR process will examine specific priority tracks/areas by following the steps outlined below.

STEP	TASK
<b>Step 1</b>	<b>Process initiation: Nomination of areas for consideration</b>
	Work through priority areas (set by TAG and approved by the Minister, TAG 2001) unless nomination received from any person and/or organisation is agreed to override these priorities.
<b>Step 2</b>	<b>Priority assessment and determination</b>
	<b>PWS</b> Undertaken jointly by the PWS and the BATR Panel. Areas are assessed according to criteria that have been described in part in the TAG final report (2001, p.13). If an area is not considered a priority it does not proceed through the assessment process.
<b>Step 3</b>	<b>Options papers: production and review</b>
	<b>PWS Panel</b> In collaboration with the BATR Panel, social researchers and other PWS staff will produce Options papers for areas under review. This will be a cooperative process seeking input and feedback from the BATR Panel throughout the production of Options papers. These papers will need to be based on information that is currently available in order to meet required timelines.  The BATR Panel is to review Options papers ensuring that all the available information has been considered.
<b>Step 4</b>	<b>Dissemination of Options papers for public comment</b>
	<b>PWS</b> Dissemination of the options papers for public comment. PWS to survey interested people/parties (focusing on users of the area under review) as to their views.
<b>Step 5</b>	<b>Feedback on Options papers outlined in a Public Comment Report</b>
	<b>PWS Panel</b> Feedback gathered and circulated to the BATR Panel and relevant PWS staff. Major and significant issues identified and outlined in a Public Comment Report (as a supplement to the Options paper. Any inclination (if it exists) toward a particular management option/direction should be identified.
<b>Step 6</b>	<b>Assessment of public comment and development of Final Report</b>
	<b>PWS Panel</b> The BATR Panel, in partnership with the PWS, will review the public comment submissions.  Having considered the contents of the Public Comment Report (and any additional advice sought) the BATR Panel will be required to strive for and gauge the degree of consensus on the best management approach for the area. The BATR Panel to develop Final Report and make recommendations for the future management direction for the Western Arthur Range.  The report is to include: 1. Brief background and definition of problem areas and/or conflicts 2. The preferred management option and a rationale for why it was chosen 3. The indicators and the limits of acceptable change for the area 4. The agreed management actions, and those that will apply if/when the limits are exceeded
<b>Step 7</b>	<b>Final Report</b>
	<b>PWS</b> Final Report assessed by the PWS, decision to implement, move to Step 8. If PWS disagrees with the findings the areas of difference will be discussed with the BATR Panel, and if required referred to the World Heritage Area Consultative Committee for their opinion. However, the PWS will make the final management decision on what is to be implemented.

<b>Step 8 Implementation</b>	
<b>PWS</b>	PWS will implement the recommendations of the Final Report.
<b>Step 9 Publicity of the outcome</b>	
<b>PWS</b>	PWS is to make the results of the assessment process known to all people/parties involved or interested in the process. This is to be done via the internet, a newsletter, walker track notes, etc.
<b>Step 10 Monitoring</b>	
<b>PWS</b>	PWS is responsible for undertaking the monitoring program. Data is to be available to all interested people/parties.

### Further information

Further information can be obtained from the Bushwalking and Track Review **website** at [www.parks.tas.gov.au](http://www.parks.tas.gov.au) and follow the links to 'Services and Management'/'Bushwalking and Track Review (BATR)'. Or, you can email Mark Poll, at [batr@parks.tas.gov.au](mailto:batr@parks.tas.gov.au), or phone (03) 6233 2548 (Mon-Fri).