Next Iconic Walk

Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works

20 January 2026

Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania
Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service

Tasmanian Government

Contents

Introduction

Project Background

The Next Iconic Walk (NIW / the Proposal) is a $40 million Tasmanian Government commitment to develop a new multi-day hut-based walking experience in Tasmania. The NIW aims to build on the success of the Overland Track and Three Capes Track, enabling Tasmania to meet the demand for similar walking experiences and providing the natural next step for visitors and Tasmanians to get out in our great outdoors, challenge themselves, and experience our beautiful reserves firsthand. For further background information, including a video overview, see the NIW project website:<www.parks.tas.gov.au/be-involved/projects-and-programs/next-iconic-walk>.

A location assessment identified the spectacular landscape of the Tyndall Range on the West Coast of Tasmania as the preferred location, having been selected from 35 possible locations (including 24 public submissions - with two including the Tyndall Range), because of its extraordinary and dramatic landscape, Aboriginal heritage of the area, and European heritage with links to both hydropower generation and geological exploration. For further information see *Tasmania's Next Iconic Walk Location Assessment Report*: <www.parks.tas.gov.au/be-involved/projects-and-programs/next-iconic-walk/project-updates>.

The feasibility study, completed in 2021, identified that the preferred option of a three-day, two-night hut-based walk between Lake Plimsoll and Lake Margaret was feasible, iconic and would produce the greatest economic returns for the West Coast and Tasmania generally. For further information see *Tasmania's Next Iconic Walk Feasibility Study*: <www.parks.tas.gov.au/be-involved/projects-and-programs/next-iconic-walk/project-updates>.

A key objective of the Proposal is to generate socio-economic benefits for the west coast region and Tasmania. The Proposal aims to attract visitors and enhance Tasmania's reputation as a leading travel destination for nature-based walking experiences. The NIW will be a significant addition to the West Coast and Tasmania, stimulating the economy by providing more diverse activities, jobs and reasons to visit the region.

The NIW will be unapologetic in celebrating all things that make up the 'West Coast' including mining and hydropower generation that are so intertwined with the European history and current life on the West Coast. The NIW will provide a unique opportunity to interpret the story of hydroelectricity generation in Tasmania, finishing at the heritage listed and oldest operating power station in Australia (Lake Margaret).

The Proposal is the outcome of extensive consultation, stakeholder and user engagement and surveys, and technical investigations undertaken over approximately six years. The Proposal has gone through a number of changes to minimise potential impacts, enhance visitor experience, and facilitate efficient and sustainable construction, maintenance and operation.

The Proposal includes an approximately 31 km walking track, to be experienced over three days and two nights. The walking track will commence from the Lake Spicer Gateway (trailhead) and conclude at the Lake Margaret Power Station. The daily distances and duration of the walk have been designed with consideration of the relative remoteness and climate of the west coast region and the likely experience and expectations of the target market of walkers. Three shelters will be provided along the walking track (one for each day of the walk) to provide for rest and emergency shelter.

Two accommodation nodes will be provided, one each near Lake Huntley and Lake Mary. To cater to a range of preferences, the accommodation nodes include options to stay in communal bunkrooms, stand-alone pods, or tents on dedicated camping platforms. Visitor numbers are capped at 44 at each node to ensure the sustainable operation of the Proposal and to allow visitors to experience a sense of solitude. The accommodation has been designed to provide comfort and safety in all weather conditions.

The Proposal has been developed to minimise potential impacts to environmental, cultural, and heritage values. Overall, the Proposal is compatible with the conservation of the natural and cultural values of the reserves, including conserving and preserving natural biological diversity, geological diversity, surface water quality, and sites and areas of cultural significance. The Proposal will not prevent any existing recreational use in the area. Rather, by providing a new walking experience, the Proposal will increase tourism to the region and enhance recreational use and enjoyment of the reserves. The Proposal is therefore considered to meet and further the objectives of the *National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002* (NPRM Act).

Figure 1: View of Glacier Valley looking towards Mt Murchison in the distance (Day 1).

Need for Works

Demand for Overnight Walking Opportunities

Research by Tourism Tasmania confirms that walking is, and always has been, one of the most popular recreational activities undertaken by visitors to Tasmania. Multi-day walks epitomise Tasmania's unique brand and visitors recognise this and travel to experience it and this commitment will enhance our reputation as one of the great walking destinations in Australia, if not the world. A new multi-day walk will complement and expand the offer of walking experiences, providing more reasons to visit Tasmania.

- The Tasmanian Visitor Survey (TVS) conducted by Tourism Tasmania (for the financial year to June 2025) notes that 47 per cent of all visitors to Tasmania (approximately 623,000 visitors) went bushwalking during their visit and 39 per cent visited at least one national park in Tasmania during their stay.

- There is already a high demand for multi-day walking, with the Three Capes and Overland Tracks consistently heavily booked:

    - for the period from July 2015 – June 2025 (inclusive), bookings for the Three Capes Track were at 91 per cent of total capacity for the peak period from October to March; and

    - for the period from July 2022 – June 2025 (inclusive) the Overland Track was at 86 per cent of total capacity for the peak period from October to March and 95 per cent from November to March.

- Approximately 93 per cent of Three Capes Track walkers surveyed would walk a new track of the same standard elsewhere in Tasmania (2018 Three Capes Track Walker Survey).

- In a survey of the general Australian population conducted by Instinct and Reason in October 2024, among those open to overnight walking, over a quarter (26 per cent) indicated they would choose the NIW compared to the Overland Track (22 per cent) and Three Capes Track (43 per cent). Amongst recent walkers of the Three Capes or Overland Tracks this demand increased to 34 per cent choosing the NIW before the Overland Track (30 per cent) or Three Capes Track (26 per cent).

- Walker surveys show that the sustainable management of the Overland Track and the Three Capes Track has contributed to exceptionally high satisfaction. Over 90 per cent of walkers on both tracks rate their walk as "one of the best things they've done in their lives", or "one of the best things they've done in the past 12 months".

- The market research undertaken by Instinct and Reason in October 2024 also identified that 68 per cent of the Australian population are open to multi-day walking in Tasmania and 62 per cent are willing to pay for the experience. Looking at people aged between 18-70 years, this corresponds to a potential market of 9,300,000 people willing to consider paid overnight walking in Tasmania. When shown the NIW proposal, approximately 21 per cent (or 1,953,000 people) said they would choose to do the walk in the next 12 months.

The NIW is not attempting to emulate Three Capes Track or Overland Track. The PWS and design team has considered lessons learned from the Three Capes Track, Overland Track and other walks around Tasmania, interstate and overseas. The NIW location has the potential to be something completely different, and the combination of natural beauty and spectacular landscapes intertwined with a rich mining, exploration and hydropower heritage will create a unique offering.

The aim is to develop an experience that will appeal to people who are motivated and inspired by walking in outstanding natural environments and the notion of exploration, whether they are Tasmanians, or interstate or international visitors.

Proposal Benefits

One of the key objectives of the Proposal is to create and retain jobs in, and grow, Tasmania's regional economy. The NIW will deliver economic and social benefits to both the west coast region and the state of Tasmania, by creating a new walking experience that attracts visitors and encourages them to stay longer and spend more. The NIW will be a game-changer for the West Coast, adding to the growing suite of great tourism products and experiences available and under development, including mountain bike riding in Queenstown and Zeehan, the wilderness railway and cruises on the Gordon River.

Local Impact

The vast majority of visitors to Tasmania who walked the Three Capes Track – 91 per cent – stayed in Tasmania for additional nights before or after their walk. Typically, visitors who remained longer in Tasmania stayed for a median of two additional nights in Tasmania before their walk, and an extra two nights after their walk. Furthermore, 31 per cent of survey respondents said they stayed at least one extra night on the Tasman Peninsula (2018 Three Capes Track Walker Survey). It is therefore reasonably assumed that similar local benefits will be derived from the NIW for the West Coast.

Economic Impact and Capacity

The feasibility study identified the preferred route to be a three-day, two-night experience that delivers a positive benefit cost ratio (BCR) of 1.13 for Tasmania and 12.71 for the West Coast. Therefore, investment in this Proposal will be a massive boost to the West Coast economy. The BCR indicates viability of the walk is achieved with 5,450 visitors over a six-month walking season.

The NIW has been designed to accommodate a maximum capacity of around 12,000 visitors per year over the spring, summer and autumn seasons (with a maximum capacity year-round approximately 16,000 visitors). To keep the experience wild and sustainable, daily departures will be capped at 44 people per day (22 in shared bunkrooms, 12 in stand-alone pods and 10 camping in tent-based accommodation).

Employment and Business Opportunities

The feasibility study predicted that the NIW has the potential to generate approximately 139 jobs on the West Coast during construction, and a further 40 jobs ongoing once the walk is operational in fields such as tourism, hospitality, support services and transport operations. In addition to the jobs created directly through the design, planning, construction and operation of the NIW, employment and business opportunities will be created through a need for additional housing and accommodation, increased activity for surrounding visitor experiences and tours, statewide access needs (connecting to airport and other attractions) and through the increased visitor numbers eating and staying in Queenstown and surrounding locations for local businesses.

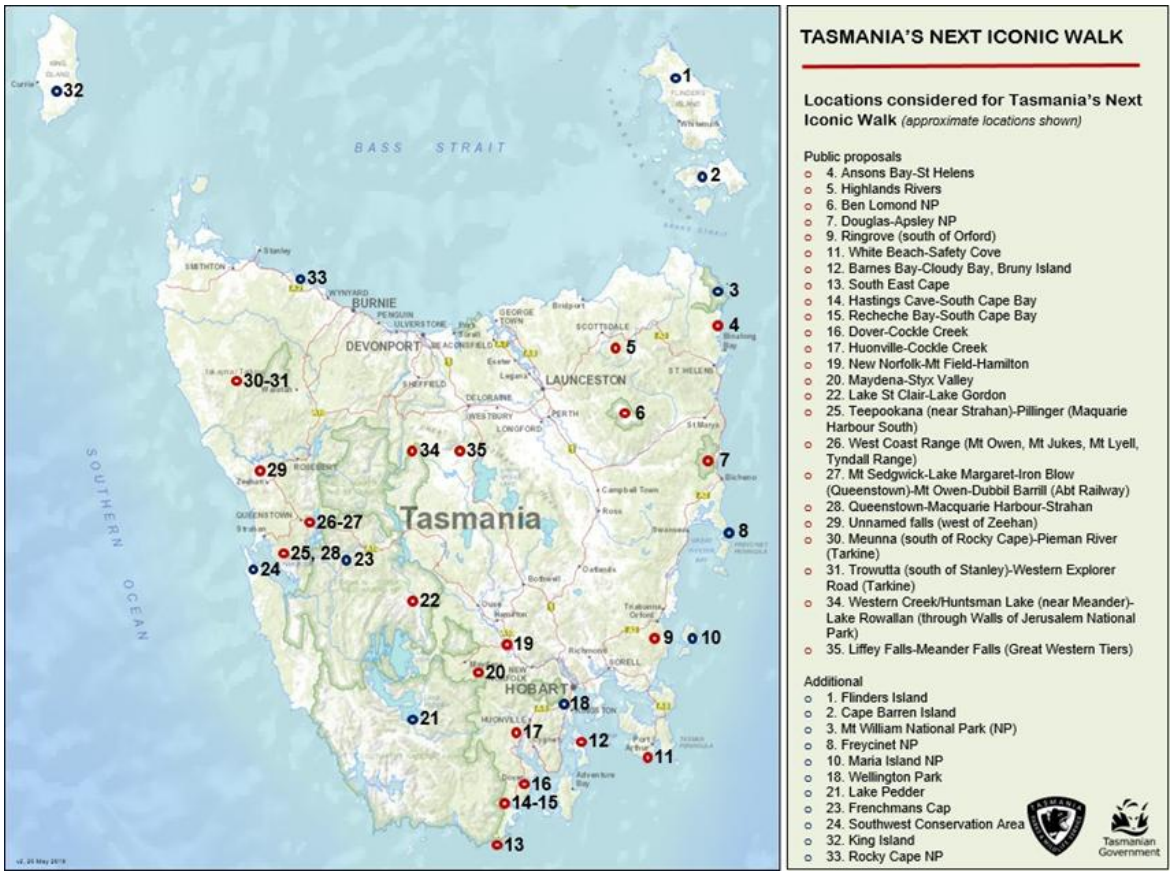
Revenue from the NIW will pay the costs of employing up to nine full time staff to deliver a high standard of service and safety, along with staff tasked to maintain the track and associated infrastructure.

The Site

Site Selection

The Tyndall Range on Tasmania's West Coast was selected as the preferred location for Tasmania's Next Iconic Walk after carefully considering 35 proposals, including 24 from the public and those identified from existing research and known proposals (see Map 1). The assessment of proposed locations for the NIW included:

- undertaking site visits in the State's south, west and northwest, to confirm that what is being proposed makes sense on the ground;
- considering visitor, environmental, economic, community and operational issues; and
- identifying for each location, the potential of the location/proposal and any impediments.



Map 1: Locations assessed for Tasmania's Next Iconic Walk.

The Tyndall Range was chosen as the location for the NIW because of its extraordinary and spectacular landscapes and links to both hydropower and geological exploration heritage.

Route Options

A feasibility study, looking at whether the recommended walk and location was feasible, explored and tested over 50 track route options around the Tyndall Range with the recommended option being a three-day, two-night hut-based through-walk experience between Lake Plimsoll in the north, and Lake Margaret in the south. The feasibility study, released in September 2021, confirmed the economic, environmental and social viability of this location and likely success of the walk. During the feasibility stage it was agreed that the Tyndall Range is an 'iconic' and compelling landscape, rich in history and geological significance and an appealing location to base the walk.

Site Location

The Proposal area is approximately 31 km long and sits between Lake Plimsoll in the north and Lake Margaret Village in the south. The Proposal area is located to the east of the Tyndall Range of mountains, which forms part of the larger West Coast Range. The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) is approximately 11 km east of Anthony Road (at the Lake Spicer Track junction), approximately 5.6 km from the eastern-most point of the track alignment and over 6 km from the nearest hut site (see Map 2).

The Tyndall Range is a compact, dramatic, and rugged landscape that feels wild and remote (see Figures 3-5). The area is well serviced from nearby towns, with the start point for the Proposal located approximately 19 km directly south of Tullah, or approximately 29 km when driving via Anthony Road (from Tullah) and approximately 37 km when driving via the Zeehan Highway and Anthony Road (from Queenstown). The end point for the walk is approximately 8.5 km directly north of Queenstown, or approximately 13 km when driving via the Zeehan Highway and Lake Margaret Road.

The elevation of the walk varies from approximately 320 m a.s.l (above sea level) in the Lake Margaret Power Station area to approximately 950 m a.s.l. (at the Chin Lookout), with most of the study area located between approximately 700-900 m a.s.l. (see Figure 2).

The area offers many options to develop and operate a sustainable and exciting visitor experience that is different to Tasmania's existing multiday walks. There are complementary local tourism products in the region which will encourage visitors to extend their stay on the West Coast. The Proposal offers the potential to leverage off other destinations and attractions including the West Coast Wilderness Railway, cruises on the Gordon River and Macquarie Harbour and mountain biking offerings in Queenstown, Zeehan and surrounds.

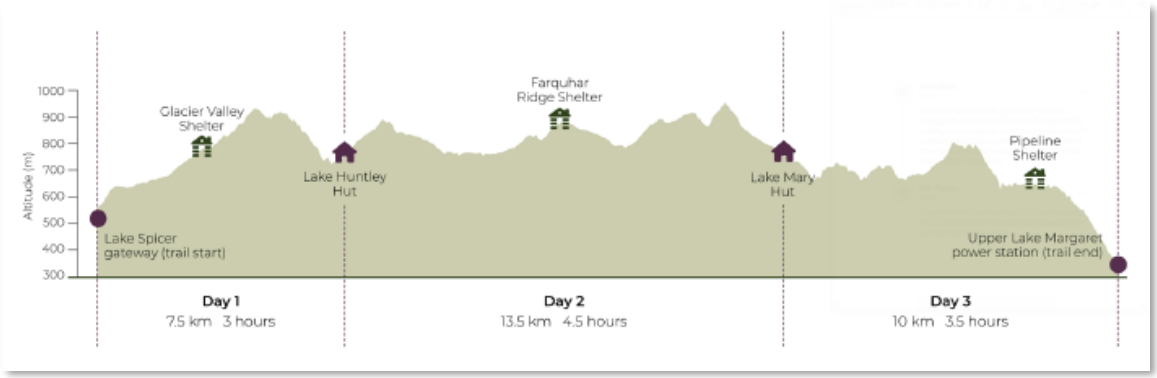
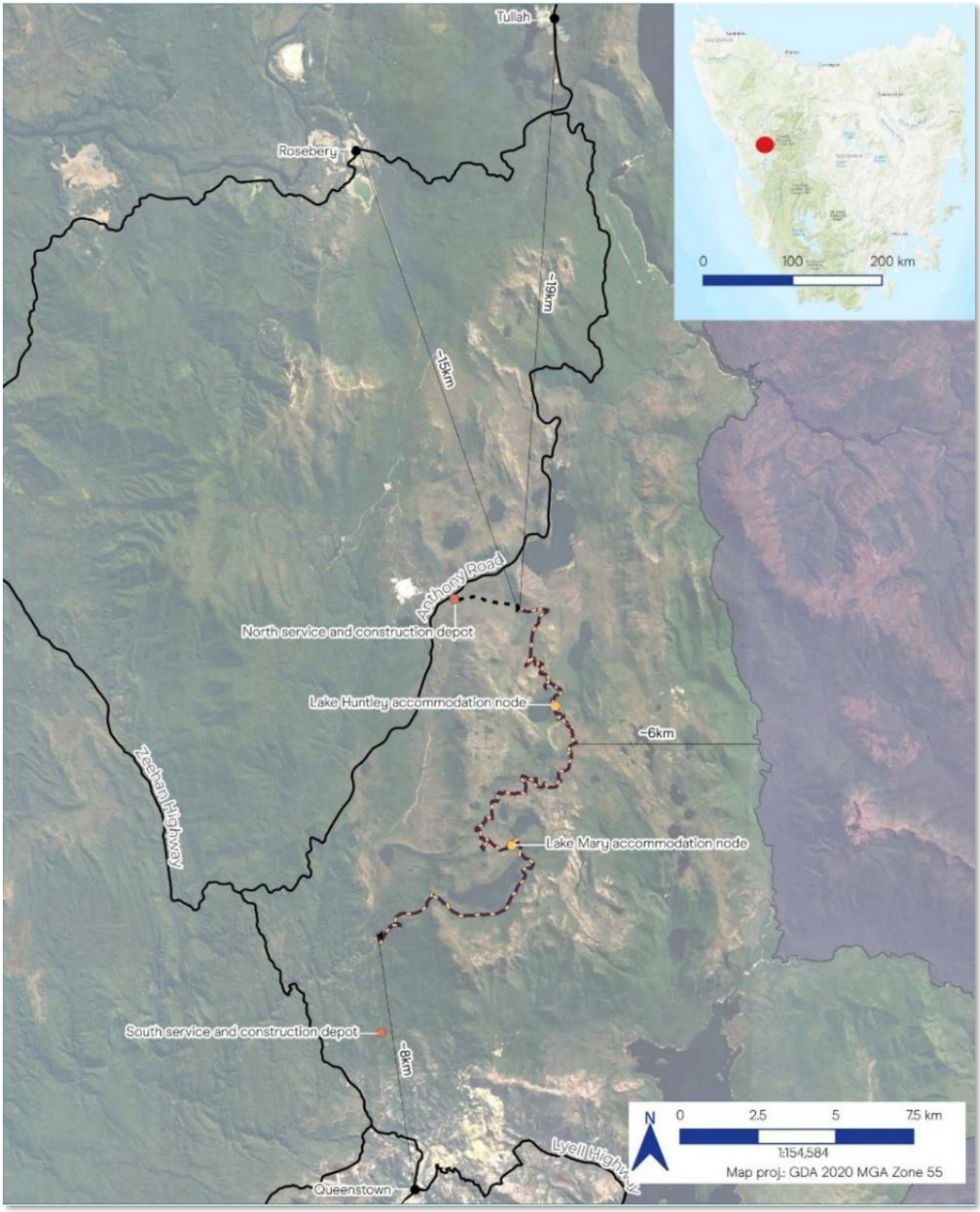


Figure 2: NIW track elevation profile and hut locations (note vertical exaggeration approximately 6:1).



Map 2: Location map showing proximity of the Proposal to nearby towns and the TWWHA (shaded purple).

Figure 3: View of Saddle Lake and Valentines Peak in the distance (Day 1).

Figure 4: View of glacial erratic boulders with Mt Sedgewick and Eldon Peak in the distance (Day 2).

Figure 5: View from Dam Lookout overlooking Lake Margaret and dam wall (Day 3).

Proposed Works

Infrastructure Outputs Overview

The final track alignment of the NIW is approximately 31 km long and starts at the existing Lake Spicer 4WD Track and finishes near the Lake Margaret Power Station and includes two overnight nodes, three day shelters and various lookouts and points of interest along the route (see Map 3).

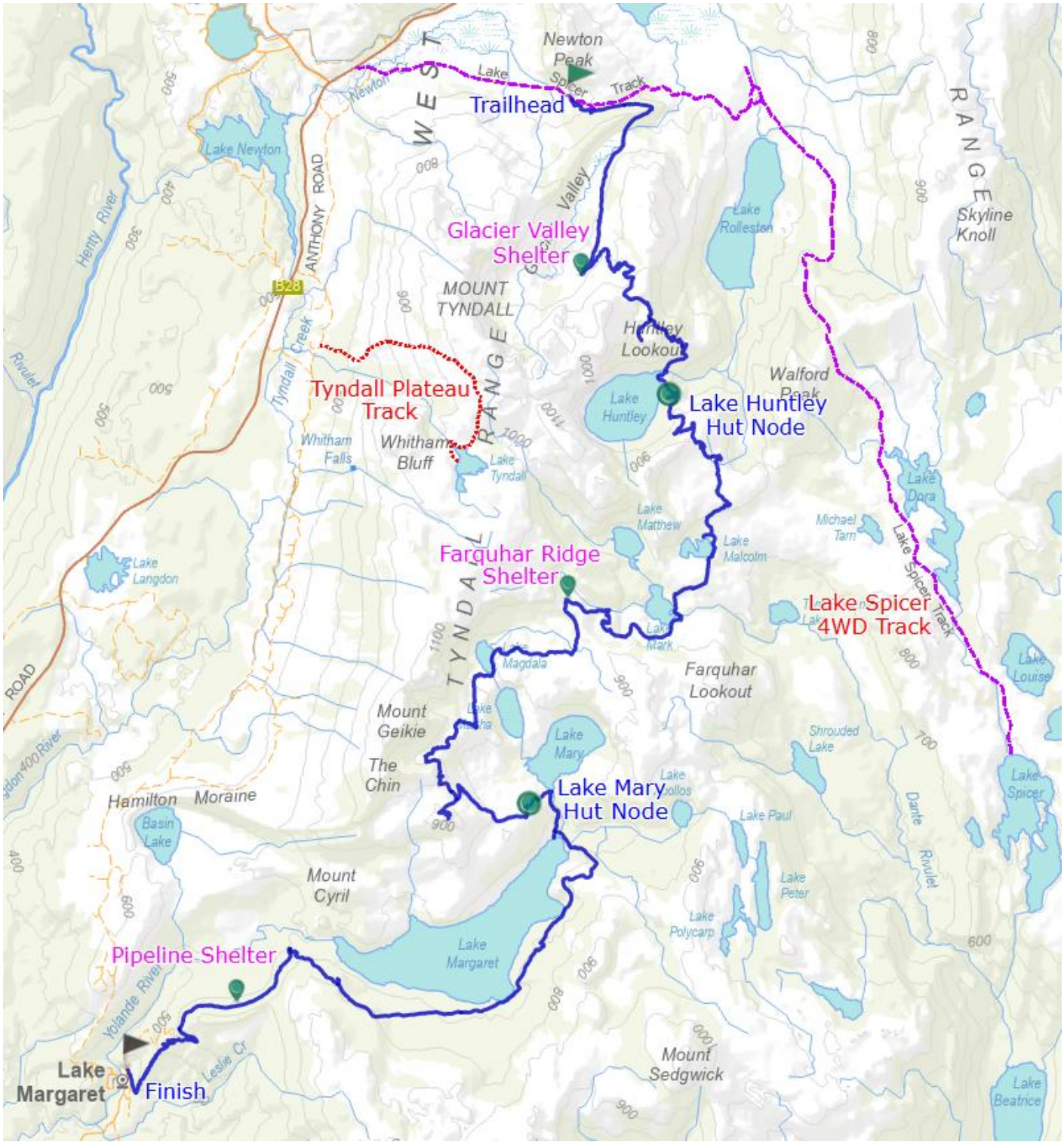
There will be two accommodation nodes along the track, one each at Lake Huntley and Lake Mary (see Map 3). The two hut sites will have buildings and amenities to accommodate 44 walkers and up to three PWS staff or contractors, including six stand-alone pods, bunkrooms, tent platforms, lounge, dining and kitchen facilities, a separate toilet building, helipad, host ranger housing and services building (see Figures 6-14). Water tanks, a micro-hydro system and raised greywater absorption beds will also be installed to enable the site to be largely self-sufficient in its remote location, other than requiring emptying of toilet pods via helicopters.

Figure 6: Artistic impression of entry to Lake Mary hut (Day 2).

Two service depots at either ends of the track will service the walk. These areas will include storage space and a heli-pad for use both during construction of the NIW and once it becomes operational (for storage and servicing of toilet pods). At the conclusion of the track, near Lake Margaret Power Station, a shelter with toilet will be installed for walkers as they wait to be picked up and returned to Queenstown (see Appendix 1).

The track is expected to be constructed to a similar standard to the Overland Track (Class 3 Aus Standard or T1-T2 PWS track classification) and range in width from 500 mm – 750 mm on average. There will be on track shelters to provide shelter from the weather and improve walker comfort and safety. Ancillary infrastructure including seating, lookouts and markers will be installed along the track as required to enhance the user experience and safety for walkers. Physical signage will be kept to a minimum on track to maintain the remote and natural feel of the walk.

A range of images are included below showing artistic impressions of what the infrastructure at the overnight nodes will look like in the landscape. For more information on the designs and infrastructure proposed for the NIW (see Appendix 1).



Map 3: Track alignment showing overnight nodes, shelters and existing walking and 4WD tracks.

Figure 7: Artistic impression of Lake Huntley kitchen / dining area (Day 1).

Figure 8: Artistic impression of Lake Huntley entry (Day 1).

Figure 9: Artistic impression of Lake Mary Bunkroom (Day 2).

Figure 10: Artistic impression of Lake Mary outdoor kitchen / deck (Day 2).

Figure 11: Artistic impression of Lake Mary lounge (Day 2).

Figure 12: Artistic impression of Lake Mary pods (Day 2).

Figure 13: Artistic impression of Lake Huntley pods (Day 1).

Figure 14: Artistic impression of Lake Huntley campsite (Day 1).

Interpretation

Charlie Bravo Design, together with Milangkani Projects for Aboriginal Heritage, have developed the interpretation themes and identity for the Proposal that will guide physical installations and interpretative material presented as part of the NIW through a range of mediums and technology. This work will incorporate the $80,000 Tasmanian Government Art Scheme allowance.

The West Coast human, industrial and natural heritage has great cachet. The NIW gains in appeal by being part of a fascinating region. The guiding principles of the development of the NIW's identity and interpretation work are:

- Faithfully represent the West Coast community in everything we do.
- Emulate the ingenious West Coast approach in the infrastructure we develop.
- Make use of local artisans / tradespeople to create components of infrastructure.
- Encourage the concept of being present on the walk and loosening attachment to phones, social media and the minutiae of everyday life.
- "Every journey is on the inside as well as the outside".
- Reflection, let go, be present, discover, restore, new beginning.
- Don't crowd the walking track with interpretation. Allow the natural splendour to largely speak for itself on-track.
- Structures will employ local materials, textures and colours through considered detailing and construction that celebrates what makes this place un-ordinary.
- Acknowledge West Coast Aboriginal culture and the traditional owners and ongoing custodians of Lutruwita / Tasmania (and provide an opportunity for Tasmanian Aboriginal led interpretation).

Figure 15: Artistic impression of Pipeline Shelter (Day 3) that has been designed to replicate heritage buildings in the area, utilising reclaimed and recycled materials.

The infrastructure on the track intends to embrace the interpretation themes and sub-themes of the NIW, including:

Key Themes

- *Elements*
- *Natural Splendour*
- *Solitude and Isolation*
- *West Coast Spirit*
- *Ingenuity*

Sub-Themes:

- *Aboriginal Heritage*
- *Local Materials*
- *Contemporary Culture*
- *Industrial Heritage (Hydro and Mining Activity)*
- *Settler Heritage*

The NIW's interpretative themes and elements will continue to be developed throughout the Proposal's design and development phases, including consultation with key stakeholders, such as Hydro Tasmania, the Tasmanian Aboriginal community and West Coast locals. A historic heritage interpretation plan will be prepared for the operation of the Proposal.

In August 2024 the PWS contracted Palawa consultant Jenname to further engage with the Aboriginal community in relation to the Proposal, which included some consideration of Aboriginal interpretation opportunities. Jenname and Milangkani Projects will undertake additional consultation with the Aboriginal community as interpretation outputs and concept designs are developed by Milangkani Projects.

Figure 16: View of The Chin and Mt Geikie over Solo Tarn (Day 2).

Key Design Principles

In addition to the overall Proposal objectives, the NIW has distinct design objectives, outlined below, that have guided the decision-making design development approach for the Proposal.

Self-reliant

- Accommodation sites to be designed around walkers being independent and prepared for an achievable multi-day walk. Many walkers will be new or relatively inexperienced in overnight walking and looking for a challenging but comfortable experience.

Visitor Experience

- Walkers are immersed in a truly 'West Coast' experience with the huts reflecting the diverse interpretation themes and identity of the walk. One of the key themes in the hut design is to utilise local materials and materials that link to the history of the area including the hydroelectricity and mining heritage.
- The hut sites, including co-located campgrounds are designed to be comfortable in all seasons and all-weather conditions noting the different length of time visitors might stay inside or outside in good and poor weather.
- The hut sites, including co-located campgrounds have been carefully sited in incredible locations which are to be celebrated and highlighted wherever possible and in consideration of seasonality.
- Look for opportunities to enhance amenity inside and outside the hut for both walkers and staff/host rangers.
- Highlight the stunning landscape and environment within which the infrastructure is to be located.

Environmental Protection

- Huts designed with a footprint that reduces the overall disturbed area at overnight nodes (maximise hut capacity within the smallest footprint).
- Where possible, huts to be prefabricated off-site and assembled on-site to minimise the need to cut, drill or manipulate materials (and generate waste) on-site (and at the same time minimise the required construction window on-site).
- Built infrastructure will respond to the various assessments undertaken of the sites natural values including constraints of flora and fauna and opportunities for sustainable power source generation, such as strategic positioning for solar gain and hydropower.

Visual Impact

- Huts designed to blend in with the natural environment and minimise the visual impact particularly from other walks or areas accessible outside the main track, through form (height, footprint, mass, shape), overall site layout and configuration, location and materials (texture, reflectivity, colours). Accommodation intended to 'feel' connected to and complementary to the natural environment / landscape.
- The hut sites or other infrastructure should not be visible from the key visitor nodes / vantage points from within the TWWHA.

Functional, Simple and Cost-Effective Design

- The huts are designed to be adaptable to changing seasons and changing visitor numbers.
- Room / building configurations aim to be flexible and able to expand and contract with peaks and troughs in visitor numbers / seasons and most efficiently manage heating / cooling and any associated power or resource consumption.
- Design, materials and construction sequence are unified and achievable in a short timeframe, at a remote location where weather will impact both the ability for helicopters to

deliver materials, workers and other resources and the ability for workers to perform in difficult conditions.

- Design, materials and construction methodology should plan for the most efficient use of helicopters (least number of flights) to deliver and install materials on site.
- Where possible temporary accommodation, or other infrastructure to support the construction phase (e.g. helipads, toilets, tracks) should be located and sequenced with the aim to use the footprint of permanent features to minimise the construction footprint, impact on the environment and reduce the number of flights during demobilisation.
- The NIW is intended be unique and unlike other overnight walks and huts managed by the PWS. The huts intend to embrace the West Coast spirit and ingenuity and align with both the Tasmanian and West Coast brands.

Sustainable and Low Maintenance

- Design and material choices respond to the harsh environment of the West Coast and aim to minimise the need for regular ongoing maintenance and extend the replacement life.
- Where possible, power sources and services look to minimise the long-term servicing requirements, carbon footprint, ongoing costs and environmental impacts.
- Opportunities to reuse and repurpose materials and items in the design of buildings (particularly locally sources materials and items) to be consistent with the interpretative themes will be explored.
- Design with a focus on sustainability, thermal performance, energy efficiency and building health.
- Locally sourced materials, designs, makers and interpretation references.
- Micro-hydro and solar, power - Power will be provided to the accommodation nodes through a hybrid renewable energy system of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems, micro-hydro and battery storage. Water for the micro-hydro systems will be extracted from Lake Huntley and Lake Mary outflows, with no discernible impact on the aquatic environment expected.
- The development of the accommodation nodes will include hazard management areas (HMAs) and additional mitigation measures for potential bushfire risk.
- Materials for construction will be salvaged where suitable including possibly gravel for track construction from Lake Margaret and locally sourced King Billy Pine that was used to construct a previous Hydro water pipeline.
- Value management, cost savings and areas for innovation.

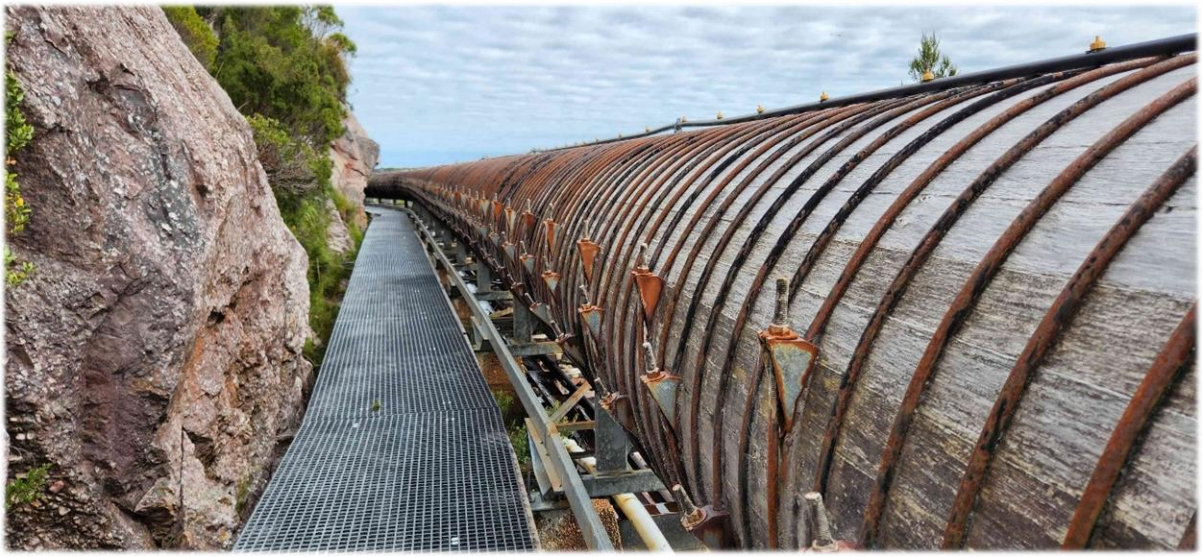


Figure 17: The NIW will draw inspiration from and interpret the existing cultural and historic heritage, including the Hydro woodstave pipeline shown here (Day 3).

Accessibility, Operations and Management

Ongoing Access to the Reserve

The PWS will not be locking people out of the area; the Proposal will be a new walk built from scratch and not exclude any existing opportunities in the area. If people want to walk for free, they can continue to walk in the area as they do now. However, that is usually in the alpine areas, which the Proposal deliberately avoids, so this walk will not exclude existing users. The existing walk to the Tyndall Range alpine area (Tyndall Plateau), from the western side of the Range, will continue to be available and for free (visitors do not need a Parks Pass) (see Map 3). This remote area is visited by more experienced walkers. The NIW will commence from the Lake Spicer Track, a track currently used by 4WD enthusiasts and fishers who access the area via a locked boom gate with the key provided by PWS (see Map 3). Access to the 4WD track will remain available to users via the existing locked boom gate managed by PWS.

Operating Model

The NIW is being developed as a Government-owned and managed walk. There are no plans to provide an alternate experience in privately owned and run huts. There is a possibility that low impact locally led commercial opportunities utilising the public huts may be considered in the future (e.g. in winter or shoulder seasons).

Operational Management

Walkers will make their way to Queenstown where they will be provided with a briefing from PWS staff that will include relevant safety information and gear checks. Discussions remain ongoing between the PWS and local Queenstown stakeholders, including the West Coast Council (WCC), to finalise facilities for the check-in for the walk to take place, including parking and storage areas while walkers are on track. A public tender will be held to engage a commercial tourism operator to provide the transport that will connect walkers to the start and end of the track from Queenstown. This may include a combination of standard shuttle bus vehicles and smaller 4WD vehicles, or 4WD buses for the whole journey, as the last 2.5 km to the trailhead will be on the existing Lake Spicer 4WD track. Lake Margaret is accessible by 2WD vehicles.

Host rangers will be on-site fulltime at both hut sites and roaming between the two to manage walkers and ongoing operations at the hut sites and on track. The rangers will be supported through radio and satellite communications equipment that will help manage bookings, obtain weather updates and assist in emergency responses. The NIW will receive routine safety and engineering inspections and be maintained using funds from the revenue of the NIW.

Cost Recovery Model

The operating model will be designed to achieve cost recovery for ongoing, annual operational management of the walk and visitor experience by the Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service. Revenue from walker fees will recover expenses including track and building maintenance, servicing, marketing and staffing. While no final decision has been made about walker fees and differential pricing for the pod; hut and camping experiences, the principle of visitors contributing to the cost of operating and maintaining the facilities they use and contributing to protecting our natural areas is well accepted as best practice stewardship. The current designs provide three different accommodation options; each will have their own price point ranging from the high-end stand-alone pod-based accommodation through to standard shared bunkroom accommodation and at the lower end a significantly cheaper camping / tent-based option. While cost may be a barrier to some locals, it is worth noting that Tasmanians comprise around 17 per cent of Three Capes Track walkers and 12 per cent on the Overland Track walkers (during the booking season).

Further work is being undertaken to confirm the operating costs along with anticipated revenue generation, however based on the current design and conservative estimates of walker numbers, it is anticipated that the annual costs of operating the walk will be recovered in full through walker fees.

Development Approvals and Timing

To date the PWS has undertaken on-site surveys and assessments to assess site values, determine site constraints and identify a suitable track alignment, key points of interest along the track and the best overnight node locations (see Map 3). Surveys and site investigations to assess the natural, cultural and heritage values of the area and determine any design constraints are now complete, and the track alignment has been finalised following ground truthing and assessment by various specialists. Throughout this process the PWS has undertaken numerous stakeholder consultation activities to assist in the development of concept designs for the track, hut sites and associated infrastructure to support the walk.

RAA

The Proposal is primarily located within reserved land owned by the Crown and managed by PWS under the *National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002* (Tas) (NPRM Act). The components of the Proposal located on reserved land are subject to the Reserve Activity Assessment (RAA) process, undertaken by PWS. The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) provides an assessment of those elements of the Proposal located within reserved land to ensure they are consistent with the conservation of the natural and cultural values of the reserves. The draft EIS was released for public comment on 11 October 2025 for a six week 'Have Your Say' period. The detailed plans showing the track route and hut designs, that were finalised following feedback received during public information sessions and market research in the second half of 2024, were presented in the draft EIS.

Hydro Tasmania

PWS is working with Hydro Tasmania on the aspects of the Proposal on Hydro Tasmania managed land, including the progression of design development of planned infrastructure. Agreements between the two parties will be put in place for both the development of the Proposal during construction, and long-term use of land once the walk becomes operational. Hydro Tasmania has formally endorsed the Proposal on several occasions and recognises the exciting opportunity the NIW provides to interpret the story of hydropower generation in Tasmania (see Appendix 2).

EPBC Act

PWS has referred the Proposal to the Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) for assessment under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) due to proximity to the TWWHA. The NIW referral was lodged in January 2026, with the DCCEEW period for public comments to follow.

Council Approvals

The Proposal requires assessment against the Tasmanian Planning Scheme – West Coast pursuant to the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*. Following the finalisation of the RAA, a Development Application (DA) will be lodged with the West Coast Council (WCC). The application process provides further opportunity for the public to review and comment on the plans for the Proposal. The NIW project team is aiming to have all approvals in place by mid-2026, with the procurement of contractors and construction to commence shortly after.

Timelines

Current timelines forecast construction to be complete and the walk open to visitors in 2029. The Defects Liability Period is expected to be 12 months following practical completion of construction contracts, along with the necessary operational readiness and commissioning for infrastructure.

Once the designs are finalised, approvals are in place, construction contracts awarded, construction commences and the influence of the West Coast weather and local site conditions are better defined, a more accurate timeline for construction completion will be established.

Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

Stakeholder consultation and engagement activities have been undertaken during the feasibility study phase along with the concept and design development stages of the NIW Proposal.

Feasibility Study

In 2019, Tasmanians were invited to provide their ideas about where and in what form a new iconic walk could be developed. A total of 24 proposals were submitted by members of the public, including two that identified the Tyndall Range. Following the identification of the walk location, more than 1,900 individuals and many Tasmanian businesses contributed their ideas, thoughts and expert advice about a new multi-day walk on the West Coast during the feasibility study phase. Following this, various surveys, focus groups and market testing was undertaken by several specialist consultants.

Aboriginal Community Engagement

Cultural Heritage Management Australia (CHMA) undertook Aboriginal community consultation on behalf of the PWS, following its site assessment to communicate findings. Recently Jenname has undertaken further engagement with community on general details of the Proposal with Milangkani Projects consulting on proposed Aboriginal interpretation for the Proposal.

Figure 18: An archaeologist and Aboriginal Heritage Officer from CHMA inspecting a rock overhang for evidence of Aboriginal cultural heritage.

During 2021 – 2025 PWS continued consultation with internal and external stakeholders representing the tourism sector, West Coast industry and community, PWS staff and specialists in multi-day walk development. This included design workshops, presentations, site inspections, meetings and various other methods.

Industry Workshops

The PWS convened eight workshops / forums over three years between 2021-2024, involving a combined total of over 100 internal and external stakeholders representing the tourism industry, West Coast businesses and community / development organisations and specialists in multiday walk development attending across these sessions. Several organisations involved in these workshops over a number of years have provided letters of support for the Proposal (see Appendices 3-6).

Presentations

Fourteen presentations were delivered to different stakeholder groups by PWS across 2023 and 2024 providing a range of briefings and updates on the Proposal at the given point in time, feedback was sought and questions answered.

Public Information Sessions

During August and September 2024, the NIW project team hosted public information sessions for those interested in the Proposal to hear about the progress of the Proposal, view hut concept designs, maps and photos along the track route and see the early interpretation themes for the NIW. Over 200 people attended across 8 sessions.

Figure 19: Public information session held in Hobart September 2024.

Market Research

In October 2024, Instinct and Reason conducted a survey of 2,210 Australians, including 1,387 people who recently completed the Overland Track or Three Capes Track, to test the NIW Proposal including those aspects that had changed since the feasibility study stage. The findings from this research and surveys during the feasibility study, mentioned in a previous section of this submission, reaffirm there is a strong demand for overnight hiking and this specific Proposal on the West Coast of Tasmania. Further details on the findings of these consultations are available in the February 2025 project update *'Consultations and Market Research'* on the PWS NIW website: <www.parks.tas.gov.au/be-involved/projects-and-programs/next-iconic-walk/project-updates>.

Have Your Say

As part of the PWS RAA process, members of the public were invited to provide feedback on the project through the 'Have Your Say' consultation period that ran for six weeks across October and November 2025. The feedback received informed subsequent updates to the designs, business model and EIS. The documents that were available for download at the time feedback was sought remain available on the 'Have Your Say' page related to the NIW project, see: <https://parks.tas.gov.au/be-involved/have-your-say/next-iconic-walk-project>

Mining Industry

The Proposal sits in an area of rich geological and mining history spanning a period of over 150 years. The co-existence of mineral exploration and nature will be a deliberate story that will be told on the NIW. Past mining and current industrial enterprises blend with stunning landscapes, shaped by millennia of glacial and geomorphological activity. Future exploration of this area will not be affected by the NIW, nor will the NIW be affected by exploration. This landscape is an important area of mineral significance, and we believe that the two can co-exist as they have in the past.

The mining industry is aware of the significance of the NIW to the West Coast and Tasmania generally and discussions to date have indicated a willingness to work with the PWS to ensure both activities can co-exist without significantly impacting each other. As mentioned previously, this co-existence will be a major drawcard of the NIW.

The PWS has held productive discussions and inspected the proposed site with the Director of Mines and staff from Mineral Resources Tasmania (MRT) within the Department of State Growth (DSG). Representatives of the Tasmanian Minerals, Manufacturing and Energy Council (TMEC) and mineral exploration licence holders have also been briefed on the Proposal and are supportive on the condition that the Proposal does not negatively impact on the sovereign rights for mineral prospectivity in that zone, and that the NIW tells the stories of mining and mineral exploration history in the region (see Appendix 6). The location of current mining leases and licenses has been a factor when determining the final track alignment.

Hydro Tasmania

Directly linked to the mining history in the area, the area is also well known for hydroelectricity power generation. The last part of the track alignment passes through Hydro Tasmania managed land, where the final day of the walk will provide a unique opportunity for walkers to experience the heritage listed Hydro Tasmania infrastructure with the track passing beside the historic woodstave pipeline and ending at the Lake Margaret Power Station the oldest operating power station in Australia (see figure 17 and 20). The power station was built in 1914 by the Mt Lyell Mining and Railway Company to power the Mt Lyell mine in Queenstown until 1985 when it was taken over by the Hydro Electric Commission (now Hydro Tasmania).

Figure 20: Artistic impression of proposed end of walk shelter near Lake Margaret Power Station.

Project Updates

PWS has released a number of Project Updates, including a summary of the draft EIS, information on hut and campground designs, findings from various consultations and market research along with natural and heritage values of the area and potential impacts, all of which are available on the PWS website. These updates will continue to be released throughout the development of the Proposal to inform the public on progress and other relevant information (see:<www.parks.tas.gov.au/be-involved/projects-and-programs/next-iconic-walk/project-updates>).

Future Public Consultation Opportunities

Following the referral of the Proposal to the Australian Government for assessment under the EPBC Act, the public will have an opportunity for comment through the 'EPBC Act Public Portal' and process managed by DCCEEW. Similarly, when the DA is lodged with the WCC it will be advertised for public comment through the WCC website 'Advertised Development Applications'.

These opportunities are in addition to the period of public comment for the Public Works Committee approvals process, and the six week 'Have Your Say' period previously completed as part of the PWS RAA assessment.

It is expected that these periods of public comment will occur from late 2025 into early 2026. Design development will continue based on consultation feedback and assessed impact to the site, surrounding community and its stakeholders.

Improvements and Refinements

Various refinements and improvements to the Proposal have been made as a result of community and stakeholder input, as well as onsite assessment by specialist consultants. Some of the key changes implemented include (but are not limited to):

- Changing the location for the start of the walk to improve visitor safety and the overall experience.
- Realigning much of the last day of the walking track to minimise impact on Hydro Tasmania operations. The re-route has increased the walking distance and duration on the last day to improve the visitor experience (i.e. different vegetation types and more shelter from weather) and timing of shuttle services.
- Reducing the size of shared bunkrooms (most only 4 bed bunkrooms) to improve privacy and the overall visitor experience whilst maximising thermal efficiency gains through passive heating of smaller spaces.
- Introducing renewable hydro and solar power allowing electric heating, cooking and mechanical ventilation - removing the need to fly in fuel for cooking or heating and reducing condensation issues facing many alpine huts.
- Altering the route of the walking track to avoid / minimise potential impacts to alpine vegetation communities located on the Tyndall Plateau, Aboriginal heritage sites, threatened flora species, existing mineral licence exploration areas, Hydro Tasmania infrastructure, and historic heritage. The route of the walking track has also been changed to improve visitor experience, safety and emergency management.
- Altering the number and locations of the accommodation nodes to minimise the footprint of the Proposal, facilitate construction and operation, minimise visual impacts (particularly from the TWWHA), enhance visitor experience and improve safety and emergency management.
- Relocating the second hut site closer to Lake Mary to ensure it is not visible from the TWWHA, is easier to service and maintain, and both safer and more comfortable for guests. The second night hut site was moved from a location higher in elevation, near Mount Geikie, down to a flatter site set back from Lake Mary. This move was intended to balance the visitor experience between those who prefer a more protected site and want access to the lake from

the hut site for swimming while still providing a lookout to take in the panoramic views in the original hut area. This move reduced several risks associated with operational management of the previous hut site, including servicing, emergency evacuation procedures, weather conditions and buildability (time, cost and quality).

- Removing the stand-alone campsite at Lake Malcolm and providing tent platforms at the two hut sites. Market research confirmed significantly more demand for camping near the huts with access to facilities over two nights. When combined with factors such as the safety, visitor experience, bushfire risk management, emergency management challenges, simplified servicing and maintenance and reduced development footprint it was a logical decision to co-locate the tent-based camping at the hut sites.
- Moving the location of the pods to accommodate the tent platforms and to minimise vegetation clearance for bushfire management purposes.
- Relocating the northern construction depot and reducing the level of upgrades to the 2.5km of Lake Spicer Track, to minimise the environmental footprint of the road upgrade works and increase the accessibility of the depot to construction and service vehicles.

Figure 21: Architects confirming designs with on-site conditions at Lake Mary.

Figure 22: NIW project team member assisting with the natural values assessment near Lake Huntley.

Project Management

Construction Methodology

As outlined in the design principles, the project team will explore construction efficiencies through the design development phase of the Proposal including exploring ways to maximise the use of prefabricated construction techniques, and reducing the amount of time required to build at the remote hut site locations, which will also limit the impact to these sites. Staging options will be explored to assist with producing the most efficient and fit for purpose delivery model for the scope of works, site and budget for construction, along with providing adequate opportunities for local contractors. Opportunities to use tent platforms or host ranger accommodation during the construction phase will also be explored to minimise the environmental footprint during construction.

Construction of the NIW track and buildings is expected to take approximately 3-4 years. This work will be a combination of onsite construction and off-site prefabrication that is then flown into the remote site for final installation. This is largely for efficiency and due to the West Coast of Tasmania's climate impacting the weather windows available on site, and dependence on helicopters to lift materials to site. Contractors are unlikely to be present on-site during winter months due to the limited available working hours with expected weather conditions and because of the difficulty of delivering personnel and materials to site due to limited available flying times. Attempting to work all year round would not increase cost or timing efficiency of the Proposal, it would likely do the opposite and would increase safety hazards and poor-quality control risks.

Helicopter operations will be essential for the construction and ongoing operation of the Proposal. Two service and construction depots are proposed, the first along the Lake Spicer Track near the trailhead (north service and construction depot), and a second along Lake Margaret Road (south service and construction depot). The proposed helicopter flight paths have been identified to minimise disturbance to the TWWHA and helicopter operations will comply with the relevant fly neighbourly advice.

Procurement Strategy

The delivery of the Proposal will require the procurement of specialist contractors to undertake construction and service activities. Procurement will be managed in accordance with the Tasmanian Government's "Buying for Government" guidelines and the Treasurer's Instructions, ensuring transparency, value for money, and compliance with relevant policies. A probity advisor will be engaged to support PWS through the procurement process and ensure all relevant policies, instructions and procedures are complied with.

At a minimum, the following contractors will need to be engaged to deliver the works:

- Earthworks / Civil Contractor - To establish the two service depot sites.
- Helicopter Operator - To provide sling-load transport of materials, equipment and labour from the service depots to the remote, on-track worksites.
- Walking Track Construction Contractor - Responsible for vegetation removal and construction of the track infrastructure including boardwalks, benched track, and steps.
- Builder - Responsible for constructing the hut buildings and infrastructure at the overnight nodes. Various sub-consultants may be engaged by the builder or directly by the PWS to fit out and install all specialist components and services associated with the on-track infrastructure (such as the micro-hydro systems or bridges at creek crossings).

Architects, engineers, building surveyors, bushfire engineers, and bushfire planners have already been engaged by the PWS during the design phase of the project. Each of these consultants may be engaged to certify and sign off on the final constructed buildings.

Prior to operation of the NIW, a commercial tour operator will be engaged to deliver the visitor check-in and shuttle components of the experience. A helicopter operator will also be engaged for the ongoing servicing of the toilets and any other servicing and maintenance requirements.

Risk Management

The following controls will be put in place to manage risks relating to the protection of natural and cultural values, public safety and the protection of new and existing assets.

Visitor Briefings and Staffing Presence

Visitor briefings will be delivered by staff to help to manage risk, improve walker safety and the overall visitor experience. They will take place at check-in facilities in Queenstown and each night at the two hut sites. Content will include safety, gear check, hut site activity, exclusion areas, emergency situations, local warnings and PWS 'leave no trace' principles. Host rangers will be always stationed at the hut sites, and they will be assisted by PWS staff with compliance and other matters as required, especially in the event of a bushfire or other emergency event. Pre-departure information will be provided to walkers at the time they make their booking to fully inform walkers of what to expect on the track, including what gear, what level of fitness, and what preparation will be required to complete the walk safely.

In the event of an injury or emergency, the PWS' host rangers will use their expertise and experience as first responders to assist walkers or, where required, liaise with emergency services for assistance.

Signage and Physical Elements

Installation of interpretation, maps, signage (safety, wayfinding etc), barriers, upgraded walkways, fencing, screens and locked gates will be installed for physical delineation and restriction of access to nominated areas, particularly around the existing Lake Margaret Power Station. Land use agreements between PWS and Hydro Tasmania will be put in place to manage the presence of the NIW on Hydro Tasmania managed land, including responsibilities of both parties. The Proposal will seek to limit the impacts to ongoing Hydro Tasmania operations both during construction and operation of the NIW.

PWS staff and contractors will complete regular assessment and routine maintenance on all NIW infrastructure. The construction works will be designed, assessed and signed off by qualified specialists and built to the relevant Australian standards.

The walk, including the maximum walker numbers per day, has been designed to consider its impact on existing site values and manage the reputational, operational and viability risks associated with developing an overnight walk Proposal. There will be shutdown periods during both construction and operation as required to manage weather associated safety risks. Fire Engineering Hazard Management Areas (HMAs), reviewed by TFS, will be installed and maintained around structures to reduce bushfire risk.

Communication

In addition to the visitor briefings, information will be supplied to walkers, contractors and other stakeholders through apps, website updates, emergency management plans, risk policies and safety procedures.

During construction and operation staff will use radios and other communication devices to remain connected. Helicopter operations impact and safety will be managed through strategic timing, flight paths and following the required safety checks and operational procedures.

Governance

Project time, quality, costs, reputational and stakeholder risks will be managed throughout the project by PWS staff, contractors, consultants, a probity advisor and contract superintendent. Thorough project documentation, specifications and contractual documents, safety, environmental and communication plans will clearly outline risks, mitigation strategies and responsibilities of all parties involved. Ongoing site meetings and Project Steering Committee meetings will further assist in managing these risks (see Figure 23).

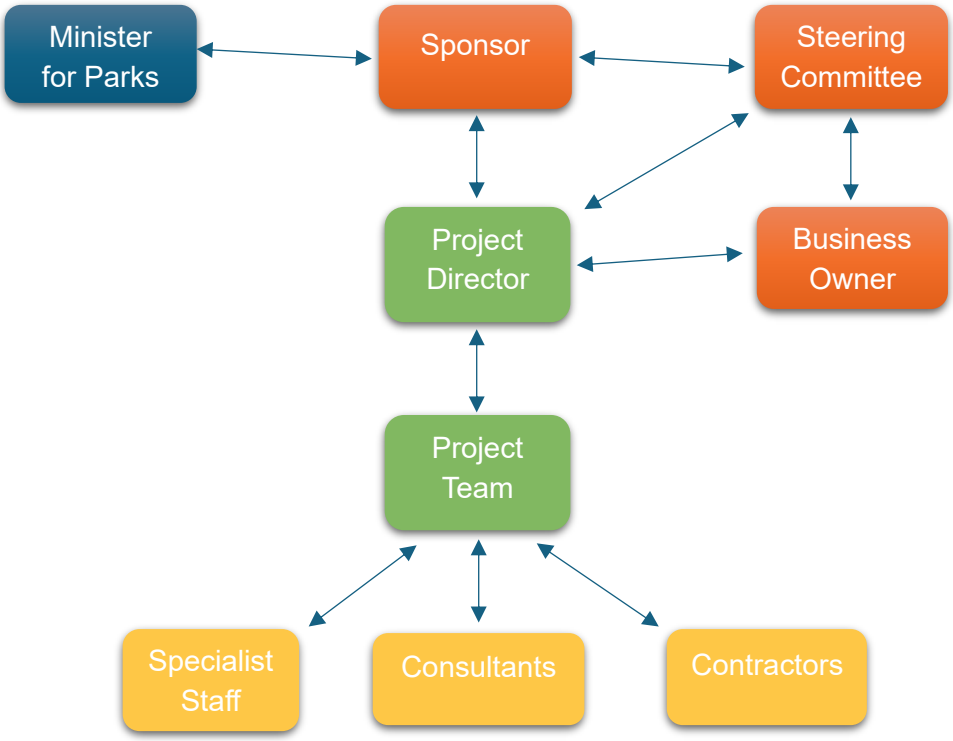


Figure 23: Project Governance structure that will manage changes and risks, including cost, timing, scope and reputational risks throughout the planning, design and construction phases of the project.

Planning

Protection of environmental values and threatened species has been managed throughout the planning, design and approvals stage of the Proposal, including engaging various specialist consultants, including ecologists and heritage experts. Management of potential impacts on environmental values will be through the Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and the Biosecurity Plan that will be finalised when successful contractors are engaged and construction methodologies confirmed.

Construction

Risks during construction will be managed through contractor work health safety, project, biosecurity and environmental management plans. Construction activities and helicopter operations will be undertaken by suitably qualified contractors, appropriately procured through the Tasmanian Government's "Buying for Government" guidelines and Treasurer's Instructions. Micro-siting, onsite inspections by specialists and the presence of onsite PWS works supervisors will assist with the progress of works and ongoing compliance with approval conditions and commitments. The PWS will implement further controls on the construction works from the RAA (and other assessment and approval) process recommendations.

Operation

An Operational Management Plan will be developed for the walk and incorporate an Emergency, Bushfire and Hazard Management Plan. A Visitor Hazard Register and Risk Control plan will also be developed. These plans will be developed in consultation with various stakeholders, including those involved with the Overland and Three Capes Tracks.

Funding and Development Costs

The Proposal is estimated to cost $40 million when completed. At the 2018 election, the Tasmanian Government committed $20 million to the project, and following the release of the feasibility study in 2021 (which included a more detailed estimate of likely construction costs) the Government doubled its commitment to $40 million to ensure the preferred option of a three-day, two-night hut-based walk could be realised. The funding allocation for the NIW has been included in Treasury budget papers and forward estimates since 2018.

The figures outlined in Table 1 include design, planning and project management costs to date (and forecast through construction) as well as estimates of construction costs that have been informed by Quantity Surveyor estimates (from Core Construction Management). The figures in Table 1 have also been informed by previous similar PWS remote track, hut, campground and toilet construction projects. The table below is a high-level summary of a more detailed estimate and similar cost components have been grouped to ensure that future tender processes are not influenced by the figures presented in the table. An updated pre-tender estimate will be developed by the Quantity Surveyor prior to tendering the construction works, which is planned to occur in mid-2026.

Item	Cost (excl. GST)
Consultants - Design, Planning and Approvals	$3,210,000
Track and On-Track Infrastructure (including helicopters and remote allowance)[1]	$23,580,000
Off-Track Infrastructure[2]	$2,710,000
Interpretation, Fit-out, Commissioning[3]	$1,430,000
Project Management	$4,070,000
Contingency and Escalation Allowance	$5,000,000
TOTAL COST	**40,000,000**

1. *Includes track, overnight nodes, day shelters, signage and track markers*
2. *Includes depots, visitor parking, check in facilities and end of walk shelter/ toilet at Lake Margaret*
3. *Includes $80K Government Art Scheme*

Table 1: NIW Cost Estimate Overview.

Conclusion

The *Public Works Committee Act 1914* requires all projects where costs are estimated to exceed $8 million to be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works (the Public Works Committee) for review and approval prior to the commencement of construction works.

The NIW project plans and proposed scope of works have been developed by the proponent, the PWS, in response to the Tasmanian Government's commitment to develop a new multi-day hut-based experience in Tasmania. The key benefits of the Proposal include:

- Expand on Tasmania's existing offering of walking experiences to meet ongoing demands and consolidate the state as one of the world's best travel destinations for nature-based walking experiences.
- Generate socioeconomic benefits for the west coast region and Tasmania, stimulating the economy by providing more diverse activities, jobs and reasons to visit the region.
- In addition to the jobs created through construction, once the walk becomes operational it will provide new and diverse jobs both directly linked to the walk (i.e. host rangers) and externally through both connection with associated tourism partners as well as increased visitation to the region. This will provide a boost to existing, local businesses in the area and introduce opportunities for new business and jobs to be created.
- The NIW will celebrate the West Coast, through the design of physical infrastructure and by educating users of the walk on the varied history of the area.
- Provide considered access to the Proposal site for a range of demographic user groups to connect with.
- Provide an experience that promotes a healthy and active lifestyle.

The Proposal aims to have all planning and building approvals in place by mid-2026 in preparation for the first construction work tenders to be released shortly after. Following this, construction is anticipated to commence in Spring 2026 and run until 2029 when the walk is planned to open.

The NIW has been planned and scoped to provide a fit for purpose, practical and economical solution to the Proposal's objectives and the demand for multi-day walking experiences. Approval from the Public Works Committee will be another step closer to reaching the intended NIW outcomes outlined in this document.

For further information on the Proposal, including background information, site details and design development see the NIW project website: www.parks.tas.gov.au/be-involved/projects-and-programs/next-iconic-walk or contact the NIW project team via niw@parks.tas.gov.au.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Design Drawings (JAWS Architects)

Appendix 2 – Hydro Tasmania Letters of Support

Appendix 3 – West Coast Council (WCC) Letter of Support

Appendix 4 – Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania (TICT) Letter of Support

Appendix 5 – West by North West (WxNW) Letter of Support

Appendix 6 – Tasmanian Minerals, Manufacturing and Energy Council (TMEC) Letter of Support