

AUSTRALIAN ALPS WALKING TRACK (AAWT) MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2005 - 2008



Executive summary

The Australian Alps Walking Track (AAWT) traverses the Great Dividing Range from the doorsteps of Canberra to the forested country east of Melbourne (or visa versa). The track passes through Namadgi, Kosciuszko, Alpine and Baw Baw National Parks as it crosses state boundaries between the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales and Victoria.

The track covers a total of 650km of south-astern Australia's mountain country including spectacular tracts of alpine and sub alpine scenery, iconic rivers such as the Murrumbidgee, the headwaters of the Snowy, the Murray and the Mitta Mitta. It crosses large expansive wilderness areas and takes in the highest mountains of Australia. It links a landscape of not only natural beauty but of human occupation, exploration, hardship, nation building and endeavour through the legacy of aboriginal routes, stockmen's huts, fences, old towns, ruins and former sites of mining and hydro electric endeavours.

Walkers can start the track at either Walhalla or Tharwa or any point in between. The entire walk can take anywhere from six to ten weeks in total but many people choose to walk sections, particularly in the Brindabella, Jagungal, Bogong High Plains or Baw Baw areas. It is not a continuous formed walking track but a connection of linked tracks, trails, informal routes and unmarked areas where good navigation skills are required.

The track is the defining physical link of the Australian Alps National Parks cooperative management program between the states, territory and Commonwealth. It is a tangible example of the "one park" concept of consistent and integrated management across the state boundaries *.

This strategy is designed to ensure that states and territory work cooperatively to manage and promote the route of the AAWT as a continuous entity.

It builds heavily on the initial strategy developed in 1997 that had a focus of establishing and branding the track. This has largely been achieved as well as the development of a map guide and track notes.

The focus of the current strategy # will be:

- to co-ordinate post 2003 fire repairs;
- to foster and develop links with relevant Aboriginal communities in order to better understand and interpret the routes or pathways of the mountains;
- to deliver appropriate information on the track primarily through the AANP web site including interactive feedback from web site users.

* AANP Strategic Plan 2004 – 2007 priority issues 1
#(AANP strategic Plan 2004 –2007: Visitor Recreation and Facilities key result area, strategy 2 page 21)

Introduction – The AAWT steering committee

On ground management of the AAWT is the responsibility of the respective states and territory as a part of their overall park asset infrastructure and maintenance. This strategy merely aims to provide for a consistent presentation of the AAWT as a linked route through the Australian Alps and to provide appropriate promotion. It is not a management plan for the AAWT per say but is an important vehicle for ensuring consistency of presentation of the track and for communication and information sharing.

The coordination of the track across the respective jurisdictions is facilitated through a sub group of the AALC Visitor, Recreation and Facilities working group, known as the AAWT steering committee. This group is made up of respective park managers and key stakeholder groups. The group meets at least once every two year.

The AAWT steering committee will ensure that;

- Markers and signs are sufficiently maintained or replaced if necessary,
- Proposed sign postings (ie. Trailhead and promotional signs) are installed,
- The track is maintained to the desired classification/standard.

Aims

The aims of this strategy are to provide a framework for consistent management of the AAWT by the various agencies and to foster greater appreciation of the Australian Alps National Parks through the AAWT.

These aims will be met by ensuring that the AAWT:

- showcases the outstanding natural landscapes of the Alps;
- provides remoteness
- use existing tracks, trails and routes to avoid high construction costs and additional future maintenance requirements;

and that the AANP's:

- promotes appropriate use through programs such as “leave no trace” and minimal impact ethics.
- provides up to date information resources about the track
- recognises and interprets Aboriginal connection to the Alps along traditional pathways which are now part of the AAWT.

Approved Route -Track Notes - Track Standards

The approved and certified route of the AAWT is described in the AAWT Map Guide.

The AAWT serves as the ‘backbone’ for many other possible routes and loops and other alternatives may be walked in preference to the ‘approved route’.

The opportunities are endless given a map, compass and a little imagination. The official route is the only one that will be signed and branded with the AAWT markers

(see signage and Marking). Signage of any feeder routes, offshoots or alternatives will be at the discretion of the respective agency. These tracks will not be signed or branded with AAWT markers.

Following the 2003 fires sections of the AAWT were closed in each state and were progressively re-opened throughout 2003-2004. In the ACT the fires have provided an opportunity to undertake some re-routing of the track from the Tharwa Visitor Centre to Booroomba Rocks. Work to re-open the track has included safety inspections, replacement of fire damaged signs and totems, re-routing and minor clearing works.

A key action for this strategy will be to review and update the map guide and track notes including descriptions of the new (re-routed) sections and classification of the various sections of the track according to the Australian Standards (AS2156.1-2001)

Signage and Marking

Track signage and marking is designed to provide walkers assistance and to instil a relationship between the walker and the AAWT. It is not intended that the AAWT be marked at set intervals or followed without map and compass and the necessary pre trip planning.

Appendix 4 defines standards for all AAWT signs and markers.

AAWT trackhead signs

An inventory of existing major and minor trailhead signs is shown in appendix 2. These signs are designed to provide general park visitors, as well as AAWT users basic information about the AAWT. They are not intended to be used as directional signs or for pre-trip planning.

A priority for this strategy will be to update elements of these key signs and to install new signs.

AAWT Totem Markers

All intersections along the length of the AAWT will be marked with approved totems and confirmation markers. These markers are not specifically designed as directional signs but they may serve the purpose of confirming walkers direction of travel. These markers are a means of branding the track along its route.

Totems will have AANP logos and AAWT yellow triangles.

There will be a stockpile of totems, logos, arrows and markers at the Bright Parks Victoria Office that can be distributed as needed.

Wilderness Areas

The AAWT passes through, the Razor/Viking, Cobberas, Pilot, Jagungal and Bimberi Wilderness Areas. In all wilderness areas the AAWT will generally be unmarked. Markers will only be used in exceptional circumstances and kept to an absolute minimum (see Appendix 4). Agencies will be encouraged to erect wilderness entry

signs close to wilderness boundaries along the AAWT, advising walkers the track is generally unmarked through these areas.

Facilities

It is not intended to develop the Australian Alps Walking Track into an 'Overland' or 'Milford' track where huts and other facilities are provided along the way. Some sections will continue to be developed and suitable for short day walks, however the bulk of the walk will continue to be a 'remote – natural' experience. Walkers will continue to be required to be independent, fully self sufficient, capable of remote area navigation and have carried out proper pre-trip planning.

The only facilities for AAWT walkers will be as follows:

- Basic marking and sign posting as described above (signage and marking)
- A track developed to the agency specified classification/standard.
- Camping areas, car parks and picnic areas are found at some major intersections and trailhead areas of the AAWT which are not provided as part of the AAWT experience but as part of overall park infrastructure.

Track standards and classification

The track across its entire length varies from a highly constructed purpose built walking track to a remote cross-country ramble. In reviewing the map guide and track notes the track will be classified according to the Australian Standard for walking tracks (AS2156.1 – 2001) (appendix 1).

Accommodation and Camping

Accommodation is not specifically provided for AAWT users. There are huts along the track that may provide emergency shelter, however track users must be self sufficient, carry camping equipment and should like all other users not be reliant upon huts for accommodation or shelter.

Walkers often choose to make use of commercial accommodation that is available at resort areas along the route as lay over or rest and replenish stops along the route.

Minimal Impact Code

All information and promotion of the AAWT will include references to the AANP Minimal Impact code and the hut code.

The agencies will promote minimal impact codes and practices through;

- Publications relating to the AAWT
- AANP and agency web sites
- Permit system where applicable
- Trailhead signs
- Visitor centres

Management of AAWT outside MOU national parks

There are approximately 94 kilometres of AAWT outside the MOU parks in Victorian State Forests. The AAWT steering committee will aim to establish a working relationship with the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) to ensure the AAWT is managed appropriately.

Permits and conditions

It is not intended to introduce permits or special conditions specific to walkers using the Australian Alps Walking Track. Walkers however must comply with “local” requirements for permits, park regulations and other specific conditions along sections of the track as detailed in appendix 3.

Promotion and Community Education

The underlying principle of promoting the AAWT is to make the community aware of the Australian Alps as an entity – a vast, fragile and unique region that transcends State and regional boundaries.

Promotion of the AAWT should at every opportunity encourage and emphasise:

- appropriate minimal impact behaviour,
- self sufficiency with food, camping and first aid equipment,
- need for a high level of navigational and bushwalking skills,
- remote and rugged nature of the terrain,
- extreme climate of the Alps,
- variable track conditions from highly formed vehicles tracks to areas with no marking or track which requires cross-country navigation experience.,

A key focus of this strategy will be to improve delivery of track information on the AANP web site and to investigate the possibility of having an interactive page on the web site where track users can ask questions, register their trip intentions, add trip notes and photographs etc.

Publications

The AANP will continue to provide and update a general information brochure on the AAWT.

The AANP will also continue to provide and update the map guide and track notes as a key pre-planning tool for prospective walkers of the entire track. This publication will be reviewed and updated by the sub group in 2005-2006.

The author and publishers of ‘The Australian Alps Walking Track’, will be kept up to date with changes to the ‘approved route’ and any other relevant issues.

Topographic maps are available showing the AAWT.

The relevant mapping authorities and publishers will be provided with the ‘Map Guide’ showing the ‘approved route’ to ensure that the correct route is shown when they review and reprint their maps. The mapping authorities should be contacted on a regular basis as a reminder that the additions/changes are required.

Stakeholders and Volunteers

Bushwalking clubs and other organised groups in each state have a close affinity with the AAWT or with respective sections of the track. The use of volunteer groups to assist with information about track conditions and potential caretaking and/or maintenance programs will be encouraged through the respective agencies at a local office level.

Often these groups have a greater or more up to date knowledge of track condition and issues than the responsible park agency. Access to this information would be of assistance in managing the AAWT. As already mentioned a focus of this strategy will be to update the AANP web site to provide an interactive tool that has up to date information on the AAWT from land managers and users alike.

Appendix 5 contains the current membership of the AAWT sub-group and their contact details.

Aboriginal community consultation

Much is already known about the routes and pathways into and through the mountains that Aboriginal people traditionally used for ceremony, food and social interactions. A focus of this strategy will be to research and interpret these pathways and their history as they relate to the AAWT.

Action plan for 2005 - 2008

2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete re-route Tharwa to Booroomba Rocks• Complete totem/marker replacement post fire• Conduct annual steering group/stakeholder meeting (April, Tharwa)• Install new/upgraded trailhead signage
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Update map guide and track notes• Classify track to Australian Standards• Conduct annual steering group/stakeholder meeting• Upgrade AANP web site to include AAWT page and interactive feedback
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Undertake study of Aboriginal pathways that mirror the AAWT (joint project with cultural heritage working group)• Conduct annual steering group/stakeholder meeting
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review strategy• Conduct annual steering group/stakeholder meeting

	General description	Key track characteristics
 All access path (Class 1)	<p>Opportunity for large numbers of visitors, including those with reduced mobility, to undertake walks which are provided with a high level of interpretation and facilities.</p> <p>Users can expect abundant opportunities to learn about the natural environment through interpretive signs or brochures. Users can expect frequent encounters with others.</p>	<p>Generally a broad, hard surfaced track suitable for wheelchair use. Steps allowed only with alternate ramp access.</p> <p>Width: 1200 mm or more. Well maintained with minimal intrusions.</p> <p>Facilities along the track may include lookout platforms, seats and barrier rails.</p> <p>Users need no previous experience and are expected to exercise normal care regarding their personal safety.</p>
 Graded path (Class 2)	<p>Opportunity for moderate numbers of visitors to walk easily in natural environments which are provided with a moderate to high level of interpretation and facilities.</p> <p>Users can expect to learn about the natural environment with moderate to abundant opportunities to learn through interpretive signs or brochures. Users can expect frequent encounters with others.</p>	<p>Generally a modified or hardened surface.</p> <p>Width: 900 mm or more. Well maintained with minimal intrusions.</p> <p>Facilities along the track may include lookout platforms, seats and barrier rails.</p> <p>Users need no previous experience and are expected to exercise normal care regarding their personal safety.</p>
 Walking track (Class 3)	<p>Opportunity for visitors to walk in slightly modified natural environments requiring a moderate level of fitness and where the provision of interpretation and facilities is not common.</p> <p>Users can expect opportunities to observe and appreciate the natural environment with limited provision of interpretive signage. Users can expect occasional encounters with others.</p>	<p>Generally a modified surface, sections may be hardened.</p> <p>Width: variable and generally less than 1200 mm. Kept mostly clear of intrusions and obstacles.</p> <p>Facilities generally not provided except for specific safety and environmental considerations.</p> <p>Users need no bushwalking experience and a minimum level of specialised skills. Users may encounter natural hazards such as steep slopes, unstable surfaces and minor water crossings. They are responsible for their own safety.</p>
 Hiking track (Class 4)	<p>Opportunity for visitors to explore and discover relatively undisturbed natural environments along defined and distinct tracks with minimal (if any) facilities.</p> <p>Users can expect opportunities to observe and appreciate the natural environment without provision of interpretive signage.</p> <p>Users can expect opportunities for solitude with few encounters with others.</p>	<p>Generally distinct without major modification to the ground. Encounters with fallen debris and other obstacles are likely.</p> <p>Facilities generally not provided except for specific safety and environmental considerations.</p> <p>Users require a moderate level of specialised skills such as navigation skills. Users may require maps and navigation equipment to successfully complete the track. Users need to be self-reliant, particularly in regard to emergency first aid and possible weather hazards.</p>
 Marked route (Class 5)	<p>Opportunity for visitors with advanced outdoor knowledge and skills to find their own way along often indistinct tracks in remote locations.</p> <p>Users can expect frequent opportunities for solitude with few encounters with others.</p>	<p>Limited modification to natural surfaces and track alignment may be indistinct in places. Minimal cleaning and debris along the track. May include steep sections of unmodified surfaces.</p> <p>Facilities generally not provided except for specific safety and environmental considerations.</p> <p>Users require a high degree of specialised skills such as navigation skills. Users need to be self-reliant, particularly in regard to emergency first aid and possible weather hazards.</p>
 Unmarked route (Class 6)	<p>Opportunity for highly experienced walkers to explore remote and challenging natural areas without reliance on managed tracks.</p> <p>Users can expect extended periods of solitude with few encounters with others.</p>	<p>No modification of the natural environment.</p> <p>May include steep sections of unmodified surfaces.</p> <p>Facilities generally not provided.</p> <p>Users require previous experience in the outdoors and a high level of specialised skills such as navigation skills.</p> <p>Users need to be self-reliant, particularly in regard to emergency first aid and possible weather hazards.</p>

Note - The Australian Standard for walking tracks (AS2156.1-2001) has been used as the basis for the tracks classification system. Refer to this Standard for complete details on each class of track. The names and symbols given to each class of track have been applied for ease of use and comprehension and are not derived from the Standard.

Appendix 2**AAWT – Singage inventory**

Initially proposed (1997)	Installed	Present (Dec, 2003)	Comments/ Recommendations
Walhalla	Yes	Yes	Possible upgrade of panel required
Mt Erica Carpark	Yes	No	Stolen
Mt Skene	Yes	No	Stolen
Mt Loch Carpark	Yes	No	Removed for maintenance
Cope Hut	Yes	Yes	Currently out of date
Taylors Crossing	Yes	No	Burnt; Midway recognition necessary
Dead Horse Gap	Yes	Yes	Part of NPWS interps display
Charlotte Pass	Yes	Yes	Part of NPWS interps display
Guthega Power Station	Yes	Yes	Part of NPWS interps display
Kiandra	Yes	Yes	Tailor to suit day users
Boundary Creek	Yes	No	New stand for reinstallation
Orroral Valley	Yes	No, but AAWT incorporated into existing interpretation	Removed for maintenance – aggressive area; out of date
Namadgi Visitor Centre	Yes	Yes	

Appendix 3 Permits and conditions

Baw Baw National Park

- Fire ban restrictions apply.
- Fuel stoves only on the Baw Baw Plateau and above 1200 metres (above Mt Erica carpark)
- Fires in fire places only.
- Limit of 12 people per group on Baw Baw plateau (management plan recommendation).

Thompson River Water Supply Catchment

- Camping permitted only at three locations
- Camping permitted for 3 consecutive nights only in the Catchment
- Fire regulations under the Forest Act
- Fire ban restrictions apply.

Alpine National Park

- Fuel stoves only on the Mount Bogong Massif and Mount Feathertop and approaches
- Fire ban restrictions apply
- Fires in fireplaces only.

Kosciuszko National Park

Fuel stoves only above and near the tree line

No camping in the glacial lakes catchment

Fire ban restrictions apply.

Namadgi National Park

- Permit is required to camp in the Corin sub-catchment.
- Conditions: Camping not permitted within 1km of Corin Dam, camping not permitted within 100m of the Cotter River, camping not permitted within 500m of Cotter House
 - Fishing prohibited
 - Maximum group size is 6
 - Maximum 24 in the Catchment at any one time.
- Permit to Burn required for campfires.
- Fire ban restrictions apply.

Though it is not intended to introduce permits or special conditions to use the Australian Alps Walking Track, the relevant management authorities may possibly introduce new permits, conditions and regulations to all park visitors along popular or particularly sensitive sections of track.

Appendix 4 Track marking standards

AAWT Totems

- **Intersection totems** - 0.5m high, square section 125mm X 125mm treated pine totem displaying the AANP's logo and AAWT arrow is to be placed at all intersections along the AAWT. The arrows on the totem will face the walker and indicate both directions of travel.
- **Confirmation totems** – 0.5m high, 125mm X 50mm treated pine totem displaying one AAWT arrow will be placed 50m either side of the intersection as confirmation of AAWT direction.

Along vehicle tracks open to the public (i.e. 4WD) totems are to be installed at intersections so they are obvious to people on foot but, if possible, not in vehicles. This should reduce the level of vandalism and removal of logo for souvenirs.

AAWT Navigational Aid Signs

- Wilderness Entry/Boundary Signs (see Wilderness)
 - Razor Viking Wilderness
 - Cobberas and Pilot Wilderness
 - Jagungal Wilderness
 - Bimberi Wilderness
- Discrete signs, similar to the Wilderness Entry signs, may be necessary to describe routes through untracked or difficult navigation areas.
 - navigational signs will be maintained on the Murrumbidgee River and Port Phillip Trail either end of the Dairyman's Creek untracked section (KNP)
 - untracked areas where navigational signs are installed will be monitored to make sure unwanted tracks do not appear as a result of the signs.

AAWT Promotional/Educational Signs

- Trail Head Information boards will be maintained at Walhalla and Namadgi Visitor Centre.
- Additional Trail Head Information Panels will be maintained at the following locations:-
 - Mt Erica Carpark
 - Mt Skene
 - Mt Loch Carpark
 - Cope Hut
 - Taylors Crossing
 - Dead Horse Gap
 - Charlotte Pass (incorporated into existing signage)
 - Guthega Power Station
 - Kiandra
 - Boundary Creek
 - Orroral Valley

AAWT Markers (yellow triangular markers)

AAWT track markers are intended to improve direction identification in areas of poor track definition within Victoria and other areas where necessary .

- Where the Track is following a well defined vehicle (i.e. Barry Mountains Road) or walking track (i.e. Baw Baw Plateau, Bogong High Plains), *only* AAWT intersection and confirming totems will be required.
- Additional marking will be necessary if the Track is;
 - following a faint foot pad in a forested area;
 - in untracked forested areas, or;
 - as confirmation of the Australian Alps Walking Track, maximum of 2-3 per kilometre.

Fixing of Markers

- Markers are not to be attached to signs.
- Markers to be placed at right angles to the track or line of sight, be clearly visible and with the apex pointing toward the direction to be followed.
- *In Victoria*, yellow markers may be attached to trees, 2m above ground level. In these cases, a 20mm gap should be left between the marker and the outer bark of the tree during attachment.
- Markers to be attached using *two*, 75mm galvanised nails, one above the other (i.e. using vertical holes only), to reduce the likelihood of the marker being deformed by lateral tree growth.

Frequency of Markers

- a) Only the minimum number of markers required to identify the route are to be used.
- b) in forested areas where only a faint foot pad exists markers should be placed on an 'as needs' basis, indicating the direction as required.
- c) in forested untracked areas markers should be placed within line of sight.

Wilderness Areas

The AAWT passes through 5 Wilderness Areas, the Razor/Viking, Cobberas, Pilot, Jagungal and Bimberi.

- In wilderness areas the AAWT will generally be unmarked. Markers will only be used in exceptional circumstances (eg. where significant confusion in route might otherwise occur and safety is an issue), and will be kept to a minimum.
- Wilderness entry signs will be located close to wilderness boundaries to explain that the AAWT is unmarked through these areas.
- Wilderness entry signs may also be required where other walking or vehicle tracks intersect or abut the wilderness area, for example the Speculation Road and the Razor-Viking Wilderness.

Maintenance of AAWT Signs & Markers

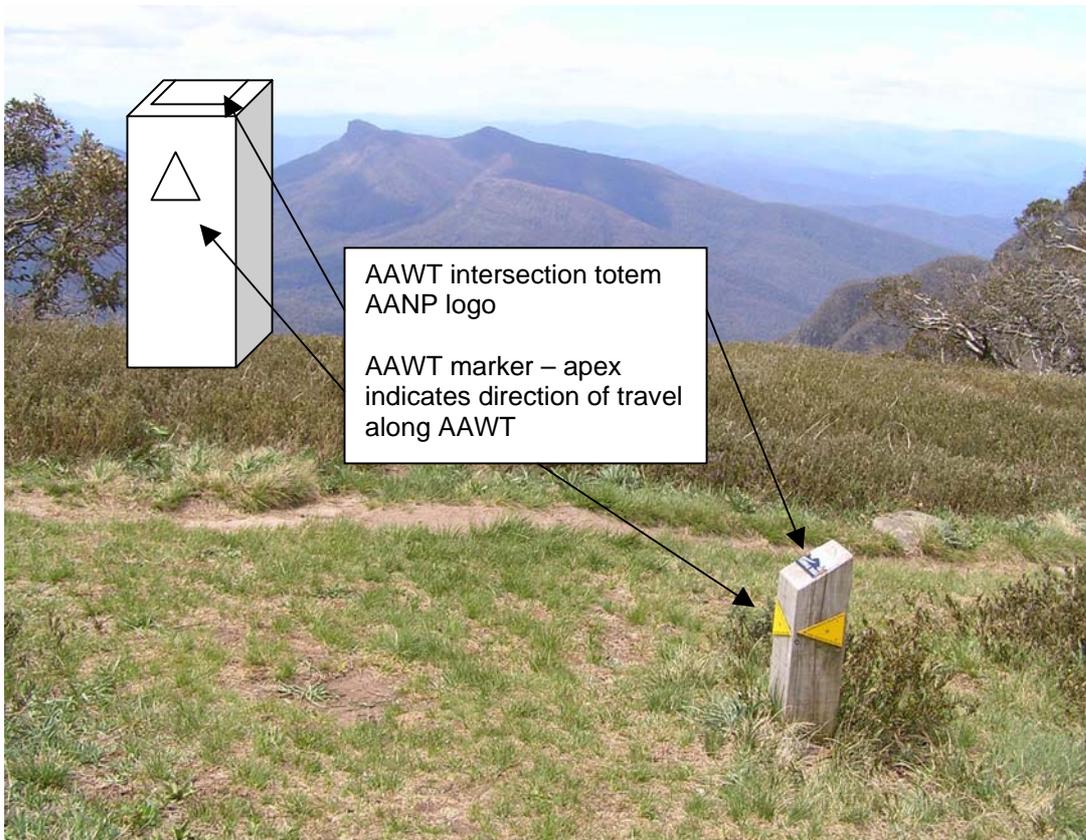
There will be logos and markers at the Bright Parks Victoria Office that can be distributed as needed. Totems should be kept at the relevant park depots.

- It will be the responsibility of the relevant park staff to maintain the totems and signs in their area.

- Totems and signs will be maintained according to these Guidelines.

In Victoria some sections of the former Alpine Walking Track retain the non standard yellow diamond markers.

- These markers will not be removed, however as the old diamond markers fall off or are grown over they will be replaced with the standard AAWT yellow marker in accordance with the guidelines:
- in forested areas where there is only a faint foot pad
- in forested untracked areas
- in tracked areas, maximum 2-3 markers per kilometre.



Appendix 5

AAWT sub group contact details

				Email
1	Gill Andersen	AALC	03 5755 0011	ganderso@parks.vic.gov.au
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4	Jen Lightfoot	Parks Vic - East Alps Unit	03 5159 0602	jlightfo@parks.vic.gov.au
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