

AUSTRALIAN ALPS WALKING TRACK

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STRATEGIC PLAN & OPERATIONAL PLAN

2021-2025



Prepared by the Australian Alps Walking Track Management Group on behalf of the Australian Alps Liaison Committee

Executive summary

The Australian Alps Walking Track (AAWT) is one of Australia's premier long-distance walking tracks for seasoned and self-sufficient walkers seeking remote experiences; and also offers a range of shorter-walk opportunities for less experienced and less-skilled walkers to appreciate the beauty of the Australian Alps.

This document clarifies the purpose of the Australian Alps Walking Track and provides details of how it is to be managed for a range of visitor experiences. This document is in two parts – The Strategic Plan and the Operational Plan.

The **Strategic Plan**:

- supports jurisdictions co-operatively in managing and promoting the route of the AAWT as a continuous entity with a range of walking opportunities;
- identifies opportunities and initiatives to further improve the track and its promotion.

It also outlines the long-term directions for the management and promotion of the AAWT and seeks:

- consistent presentation of the AAWT across tenures and management jurisdictions,
- promotion consistent with the park management objectives,
- management consistent with the expectations of both long-distance walkers, and in popular sections with the expectations of those with less skills or experience,
- marketing to domestic and international experience seekers, and
- partnerships to optimise use and management of the AAWT.

The **Operational Plan** specifies medium-term on-ground actions for maintenance and presentation of the AAWT. It is an important document for ensuring consistency of presentation of the track and for communication and information sharing. It specifies standards and operational arrangements for:

- administration and oversight
- managers' responsibilities
- the approved route for the AAWT
- track standards
- signage and marking
- facilities
- accommodation and camping
- application of a Minimal Impact Code
- Permits and conditions
- Promotion and community education
- information and publications
- stakeholders and volunteers
- Aboriginal community consultation

Within the Operational Plan is an **Action Plan**, which highlights significant actions on the AAWT which will be formulated biennially and endorsed by the AAWT Management Group.

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1. History of the Australian Alps Walking Track

In the mid 1930's, conservationists dreamt and advocated for creation of a continuous protected area of national parks to cover the Victorian high country. This interest became even stronger with the dedication of the Kosciuszko National Park in New South Wales and its proximity to the mountain areas in Victoria.

In the early 1970's, bushwalkers began establishing a long-distance walking track from near Melbourne to the New South Wales border at Tom Groggin. This long-distance walking track soon became known as the Alpine Walking Track (AWT).

The AWT followed logging roads and existing walking routes to link many of the highest ridges and mountain peaks in the Victorian Alps, and was marked with a variety of markers, but predominantly a yellow diamond bearing an illustration of a pair of walking legs and the words "Alpine Track".



The formation of the Australian Alps Co-operative Program in 1986 (cross-border co-operative management program between the national parks managers within Victoria, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and the Federal Government) saw interest develop in finding a symbol of the unification of the mountain protected areas.

Agreement was reached on a route for the Australian Alps Walking Track to divert and extend the Alpine Walking Track through the new links of the Alpine National Park, into and through Kosciuszko National Park and subsequently through Namadgi National Park in the ACT.

The track was uniformly marked according to guidelines drafted by all the land managers along the route from Walhalla in the south to the Namadgi Visitor Centre in the ACT.

In 1989, a month-long trek through the Australian Alps National Parks closely followed the Australian Alps Walking Track and celebrated the dedication of Victoria's Alpine National Park and the unification of a contiguous protected area from near Canberra to Mt MacDonald in Victoria.

2. The Current Route

The route of the Australian Alps Walking Track is mostly contained within the Namadgi, Kosciuszko, Alpine and Baw Baw National Parks but also crosses State Forest land between near Mt Skene and the Baw Baw National Park and again from the Baw Baw National Park to Walhalla; and passes through a range of other reserves including Historic Areas (e.g. Mt Murphy, Mt Wills) and Natural Features & Scenic Reserves (e.g. Mt Skene).

In 1989, the Upper Yarra Track also provided a link from the AAWT to public transport access at Lilydale on the outskirts of Melbourne; this route has subsequently disappeared under bushfire regrowth however there are proposals to re-establish a 4 day walk based around this route that could link to the AAWT.

The area around the Main Range and ski resorts within Kosciuszko National Park (KNP) receives some discussion due to the routing of the AAWT away from some areas of the spectacular Main Range and Rolling Grounds for a lower elevation route along some sealed roads and through winter ski resort areas. The KNP Plan of Management (2006) describes the official route thus:

"Retain the route of the Australian Alps Walking Track (AAWT) along the Dead Horse Gap Track, Kosciuszko Walk and Summit Walk from Rawson Pass to Charlotte Pass. In order to protect the outstanding values of the area and retain the current range of alpine walking experiences, the AAWT will not be re-routed to traverse any other part of the Main Range (Section 8.6)".

There are current proposals to possibly update the official route of the AAWT between Rawson Pass and Guthega to now follow the Main Range Track from Rawson Pass to Blue Lake following track improvements reducing environmental impacts and then to follow sections of the recently constructed (2020/21) 'Snowies Iconic Walk' between Charlotte Pass and Guthega Village via Illawong.

The track covers a total of 650km of south-eastern Australia's mountain country including spectacular tracts of alpine and sub-alpine scenery, iconic rivers such as the Murrumbidgee, and 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.

The marking along the AAWT has been standardised in line with the Australian Standard for marking walking tracks and has led to the replacement of the yellow diamond and walking legs with a standardised isosceles triangle shape consistent with the Australian Standard. Colours used for these triangles ranged from a pale blue in 1989 to a more visible yellow (reflective and non-reflective) by the early 2001.

The AAWT route was significantly impacted by both the 2002/03 and the 2019/20 bushfires that impacted large areas of the Australian Alps. Some major sections of the track were closed for extended periods to ensure public safety while important risk assessment and hazard treatment works were undertaken such as treating hazardous trees, clearing sections of the track and repairing infrastructure. Alternate routes and detours of closed sections were described and publicised by land managers where possible such as using the Bicentennial National Trail (BNT) sections where relevant to allow the continuation of through walkers.

3. Users of the Australian Alps Walking Track

Current users of the AAWT are diverse and the range includes:

- short trip walkers who use part of the AAWT as a section or loop as part of a more localised walk;
- day walkers who venture onto a popular section of the AAWT as part of a visit to a local feature or short walk
- walkers supported by commercial tour operators and/or standing camps in several short sections of the AAWT
- track runners carrying light loads who attempt to complete the full 650 km distance in the shortest possible time, sometimes as short as two weeks; and
- end-to-end walkers who either:
 - plan food caches and rest stops along the entire walk and then proceed from one end to the other over 6-10 weeks; or
 - individuals and groups who attempt a section of the track each year, progressively completing the entire distance;

Walkers can start the track at either Walhalla or Tharwa (near Canberra) or many points in between. The entire walk can take anywhere from four to ten weeks in total but many people choose to walk sections, particularly in the Brindabella, Jagungal, Mt Kosciuszko, Bogong High Plains or Baw Baw areas.

There are also several commercial guides who can assist walkers to enjoy short sections of the Track.

4. Target Audience for the Australian Alps Walking Track

In its entirety, the Australian Alps Walking Track has been developed only to a level suitable for persons with extensive overnight bushwalking experience and the skills to navigate and be self-sufficient either by themselves or in their walking group.

Navigational aids along the length of the AAWT are neither meant to provide a regular marker system nor are they maintained to a consistent level. There are sections of the AAWT that pass through wilderness or untracked areas that have few if any markers to guide the walker along the correct route.

Map-reading skills and up-to-date detailed maps are considered essential for completing most sections of the Australian Alps Walking Track. Being in a mountain environment, weather conditions can change rapidly and low cloud and snow can seriously affect navigation and progress.

Never-the-less, there are some sections of the Australian Alps Walking Track that are very well marked and maintained and where extensive navigation or bushwalking experience is neither required nor expected. Land managers maintain these sections of the Australian Alps Walking Track as popular walking tracks to local features and for short loop walks.

Commercial operators also provide additional short-duration supported walks using existing or purpose-built accommodation where this is feasible.

In high use and popular sections of the Australian Alps Walking Track, regular interactions with other walkers and other modes of recreation can be expected and facilities will be common to assist and inform less experienced walkers to allow them to have a safe and enjoyable walking experience.

The Strategic Plan

5.1 Vision for the Australian Alps Walking Track

For people to experience the uniqueness of a remote Australian alpine environment through the provision of outstanding walking opportunities.

5.2 Strategic Management Directions

5.2.1 To achieve this Vision, the Australian Alps Walking Track will be maintained both

- as a premier long-distance walking track for self-sufficient walkers seeking remote experiences;
- to provide a range of shorter-walk opportunities for less experienced and less-skilled walkers to experience the uniqueness of the Australian Alps.

5.2.2 The AAWT will have a consistent presentation in similarly-zoned park environments in the Australian Alps regardless of tenure by:

- maintaining marking and management standards as detailed in the Operational Plan;
- regular contact between land managers responsible for sections of the AAWT;
- promoting sections of the AAWT in a manner consistent with the management objectives of park zones, including wilderness areas.

5.2.3 The entire length of the AAWT will be managed for those seeking remote walking opportunities by:

- generally maintaining a relatively low level of facilities and marking;
- promoting self-sufficiency (e.g. navigation, overnight accommodation);
- promoting minimal impact philosophies;
- where feasible minimising interactions with vehicular traffic.

5.2.4 Short, high-profile or popular sections of the AAWT will be managed and promoted for those who seek to experience a small portion of one of Australia's iconic long distance walks, but who generally lack the time, skills, equipment or experience to be self-sufficient by:

- encouraging skilled tour operators to develop short walk opportunities;
- identifying and well-marking short sections of the AAWT that link popular features or destinations;
- investigating partnerships to develop sustainable accommodation (following national park Management Plan regulations for 'in Park') for 2-5 day walks on the AAWT with commercially-guided opportunities.

5.2.5 The AAWT is available to everyone and will be marketed to domestic and international visitors as one of the best opportunities for the *Experience Seeker* to immerse themselves into the natural and cultural features of the Australian Alps (refer Tourism Australia National Landscapes program).

5.2.6 New partnerships will be encouraged to optimise use and management of the AAWT and its promotion, including with volunteers, commercial interests and nearby tourism operations (e.g. resorts).

6. The Operational Plan

On ground management of the AAWT is the responsibility of the respective states and territory as a part of their overall visitor asset infrastructure and maintenance programs.

The coordination of AAWT management across the respective jurisdictions is facilitated through members of the AAWT Management Group which reports through the Australian Alps national parks Connecting People Reference Group. The AAWT Management Group is made up of park and forest managers with responsibility for sections of the AAWT.

The AAWT Management Group is guided by input from the AAWT Stakeholders Group, which includes peak conservation and bushwalking bodies and commercial guiding and marketing interests.

For the majority of the AAWT, land managers will strive to keep the AAWT open and marked for self-sufficient and experienced walkers to the extent that navigation is only occasionally a significant challenge and that travel along the track is not continuously reduced below a slow walking pace as a result of fallen vegetation and regrowth.

6.1 Administration and Oversight

Individual State and Territory land managers have the ultimate responsibility for the location and management of their sections of the Australian Alps Walking Track.

6.1.1 AAWT Management Group

Through the *AAWT Management Group*, they will be offered assistance and support to manage their section(s) of the Australian Alps Walking Track in a manner consistent with the overall strategic directions (see above) and in co-operation with adjacent land managers with responsibility for the AAWT.

The AAWT Management Group will regularly convene to discuss common management issues, initiatives and directions and promote a spirit of co-operation to manage the AAWT in as consistent a manner as is possible.

The AAWT Management Group will comprise all local land managers with responsibility for a section of the AAWT. The Management Group will also include members of the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, which is responsible for approximately 94 kilometres of AAWT in Victorian State Forests.

The Management Group will discuss common issues and approaches annually if possible. The Management Group will be responsible for also ensuring that proposed projects for inclusion in the biennial AAWT works program are put forward for funding and implementation via the annual call for Project Proposals in the Australian Alps national parks co-operative program (see further information about this program at <https://theaustralianalps.wordpress.com/the-alps-partnership/publications-and-research/australian-alps-program/>) .

Terms of Reference of AAWT Management Group

- promote management of the AAWT consistent with the *Strategic Plan for the Australian Alps national parks Co-operative Management Program, The Strategic and Operational Plan for the AAWT* and individual Agency policies,
- provide a co-operative forum to discuss management techniques and support on-ground management of the AAWT
- co-ordinate and implement joint projects to raise awareness of and sustainable management of the AAWT
- ensure AAWT management issues beyond the capacity of the Management Group are referred to the Australian Alps Liaison Committee for consideration

6.1.2 AAWT Stakeholder Group

An AAWT Stakeholder Group will support the AAWT Management Group and include representatives with an interest in:

- conservation of the Alps national parks (i.e. National Park Associations)
- walking in mountain environments (i.e. peak walking organisations/ volunteer huts associations) , and
- commercial support of walkers in mountain environments (i.e. information, accommodation and guiding).

The Stakeholder Group will meet every two years. The membership of the Stakeholder Group will *not* be restricted to any person meeting one or more of the above criteria. The principle is, however, that each stakeholder group or organisation would only need to be represented by one person at meetings (or by negotiation with the AAWT Management Group). Other stakeholders may join the group, at the discretion of the AAWT Management Group and the Australian Alps Liaison Committee. The logistics and organisation of meetings and administration of the Stakeholder Group will be undertaken by the AAWT Management Group.

Terms of Reference of AAWT Stakeholder Group

- to provide advice and support to land managers in their management of the AAWT;
- to regularly review the Strategy and Operations Plan for the AAWT and recommend changes;
- assist in the development of a biennial works and promotion program which the management agencies will seek to implement;
- as appropriate, promote and support the AAWT to external bodies including conservation, tourism and recreation interests.

The Australian Alps Liaison Committee will provide financial and administrative support to both the Management Group and the Stakeholder Group to allow them to fulfil their respective Terms of Reference and will consider funding projects brought forward by the groups through the Visitor Experiences Reference Group on a competitive basis with project bids from other Reference Groups, as the AANP Program budget allows.

6.2 Land Managers' Responsibilities

Land managers will:

- maintain the AAWT to the desired classification / standard for each section;
- make available up to date information about conditions along the track;
- install agreed signs to a consistent standard;
- ensure markers and signs are sufficiently maintained or replaced if necessary;
- promote appropriate use through programs such as “leave no trace” and minimal impact ethics;
- with the agreement of Aboriginal communities, recognise and interpret Aboriginal connection to the Alps including any traditional pathways which are coincident with the AAWT; and
- raise the profile of the AAWT through appropriate information and opportunities.

6.3 Endorsed Route

The endorsed route of the AAWT will be defined (and may periodically be changed) by the respective management agencies in line with their park management zoning, operational and safety requirements. Endorsement will be via the Australian Alps Liaison Committee.

The current endorsed route is described in the guidebook *The Australian Alps Walking Track* (Siseman/Chapman 2009). This guidebook may also indicate alternative routes which will not be managed or marked as part of the Australian Alps Walking track by the respective land managers, but may provide interesting alternatives to the official route.

The AAWT serves as the 'backbone' for many other possible routes and loops. Both short and long alternative walks may join and use part of the Australian Alps Walking Track. In addition, popular feeder routes to reach the AAWT from easily accessed locations may also be described.

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 management agency. These tracks will not be signed or branded with AAWT markers.

6.4 Track Standards

There is a national standard that describes the style of construction and maintenance of different walking tracks (Australian Standard AS:2156.1 2001). This Australian Standard was developed with input and support of all Australian managers of walking tracks in natural areas and organisations representing walking throughout Australia. Australian Standard AS 2156.2 provides guidance for the construction of infrastructure (e.g. boardwalks, steps, railings) along different walking tracks. The Standard identifies six different levels for track design construction and maintenance to provide for access by people with a wide range of skills, physical capabilities and motivations (See Appendix 1)

The AAWT 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). Information about the standard of the AAWT will be provided via brochures, website, and land managers.

6.5 Signage and Marking

Track signage and marking is designed to provide assistance to walkers and to instil a relationship between the walker and the AAWT. It is not intended that the AAWT be marked at set intervals; nor is it intended to be followed without map, compass, GPS or the necessary pre-trip planning. Signage should also conform to Park Management policies, procedures and guidelines.

6.5.1 AAWT Totem Markers

All intersections along the length of the AAWT will be marked with approved intersection and confirmation totem markers (except as wilderness area management zones may otherwise dictate). These markers are designed to confirm the walker's direction of travel at otherwise unsigned intersections. These markers are also a means of branding the track along its route. (See Appendix 4)

Intersection totems will have an AANP logo and two AAWT yellow triangles; and confirmation totems will bear only one AAWT yellow triangle.

Other products may be used as posts, such as metal or recycled plastic, to achieve consistency with agency standards. However, variations to the AAWT post size should be avoided where possible. Yellow markers may also be placed on trees, where appropriate. Managers are encouraged to pursue sustainable products, such as these, in line with their own Agency standards.

6.5.2 AAWT track head and key access signs

AAWT trackhead and key access signs are designed to provide an overview of the location of the whole of the AAWT and to raise awareness amongst casual visitors to trackheads or at key access points.

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

6.5.3 Wilderness Areas Entry Signs

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.

Where other signs are used in wilderness areas (e.g. naming vehicle track) AAWT markers may be used on these signs to clarify the direction of the AAWT (particularly at intersections).

6.6 Facilities

It is not intended to develop the Australian Alps Walking Track into an 'Overland' or 'Milford' style of 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.

Never-the-less, with international marketing of the Australian Alps landscape, more tour operators are expected to offer short guided walks between existing accommodation centres and resorts.

Only basic facilities will be provided by Agencies for AAWT walkers such as:

- Basic marking and sign posting as described above (signage and marking)
- A track developed to the agency specified classification/standard.
- Camping areas, carparks and picnic areas at some major intersections or track head areas of the AAWT which are provided as part of the overall park infrastructure.
- Existing or replaced huts where they are consistent with the policies of the Agency.
- Discrete water collection points, or water tanks in regularly dry areas.

6.7 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 are expected to be self-sufficient, carry camping equipment and should, like other users, not be reliant upon huts for accommodation or shelter. There are also sites along the track that require bookings, such as the Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing platforms at Cope hut and Dibbins Hut.

Walkers often choose to make use of commercial accommodation at resort areas or nearby settlements along the AAWT, as lay-over or rest-and-replenish stops along the route or as the start and finish of short walks that incorporate part of the AAWT.

6.8 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
- Trackhead signs
- Visitor centres

6.9 Permits and Conditions

It is not intended to introduce permits or special conditions specific to walkers using the Australian Alps Walking Track in the foreseeable future. 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.

Commercial operators using the AAWT for part of their business must hold a current licence from the relevant land manager.

6.10 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. This principle will align closely with the international marketing of the Australian Alps as one of Australia’s National Landscapes.

Accurate promotion of the AAWT should aim to emphasise:

- appropriate minimal impact behaviour,
- self-sufficiency for independent travellers with food, camping and first aid equipment,
- need for a high level of navigational and bushwalking skills and leadership (use of PLB’s etc),
- remote and rugged nature of the terrain,
- extreme climate of the Alps, and
- the variety of walking opportunities and track conditions from highly formed vehicle tracks, to areas with no marking or track that require cross-country navigation skills and experience.

With the development of Australia’s international tourism marketing focus on visits by *Experience Seekers* to extensive natural landscapes, the AAWT promotion to international visitors is expected to increase.

Managers may encourage partnerships and opportunities for less experienced visitors to safely enjoy sections of the AAWT through commercial guided tours and programs from resorts and other nearby accommodation where these options are consistent with the management plans governing that section of the Australian Alps Walking Track.

6.11 Information and Publications

Information on the Australian Alps Walking Track is variously available from:

- the AAWT section of the Australian Alps National Parks web-page (basic introduction, planning and safety info only);
- the guidebook *The Australian Alps Walking Track* (Siseman and Chapman, 2009);
- track notes from individuals and clubs;
- internet-based bushwalker forums such as www.bushwalking.com and the AAWT Facebook Page.

The route of the AAWT is well-documented and described in track notes in the publication “*Australian Alps Walking Track*”, *Walhalla to Canberra*” by John Siseman/ J&M Chapman. This publication was first released in 1988 and has seen revisions and subsequent editions in 1993, 1998 and 2009. 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. There are other guidebooks also available.

A series of sketch Maps of the AAWT is available on the Australian Alps website, these sketch maps reference the the relevant Topographic maps required for each section of the AAWT. A number of free to the public and commercially available GPS track logs, electronic map Apps and waypoints of the Australian Alps Walking Track route are available. Some of these include:

Guthook Guides: <https://atlasguides.com/australia-new-zealand-hiker-map/>

Open Street Map: <https://www.openstreetmap.org/relation/1644959#map=10/-37.6882/146.2651>

Land management agencies responsible for sections of the track and the Australian Alps National Parks Co-operative Management Program can’t guarantee the accuracy or currency of the information contained in these electronic

resources. It is strongly advised that users and visitors to the AAWT should not rely solely on an electronic device such as a GPS or smartphone for navigation and route finding, and those walking difficult and challenging sections of the track should be proficient in the use of topographic map and compass for navigation for the AAWT.

The AALC will continue to provide and update a general information brochure on the AAWT, and this will be attached to the Australian Alps National Parks webpage AAWT section. As the track is over 650kms in length and sections of the Australian Alps Walking Track traverse remote wilderness locations, track conditions are constantly changing. Park staff and volunteers work hard to maintain sections of the track and whilst general current track conditions and status are listed on the Australian Alps National Parks and Park agencies websites for updates on the most up to date and detailed current status and conditions. Due to the 2019/20 bushfires that impacted and affected many areas of the Australian Alps national parks including the AAWT Walkers, general safety warnings have been included on the Australian Alps National Parks website for campers and visitors to the Australian Alps National Parks, AAWT and any bushfire affected areas should be aware that there will be residual tree fall and slope/rock instability risks in many of these areas for years to come even after they are officially opened.

Key to minimising these risks is to:

- avoid recently burnt forested areas if at all possible and in particular during any windy or wet weather, when tree/limb fall and slope/rock instability risks are likely to be higher.
- do not stop for any rest breaks or camp within forested areas where tree structural integrity may have been compromised by either recent bushfire or forest die back.
- constantly check and be looking up for any 'widow makers', particularly if stopping for a rest break or making camp in any forested area, which is good practice regardless.
- be aware that periods of heavy rain or storms may cause slope/rock instability risks or flash flooding in drainage lines within bushfire affected areas.

Relevant mapping authorities and publishers will continue to be advised of changes to 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.

6.12 Stakeholders and Volunteers

Bushwalking clubs, conservation groups and other organised groups in each state have a close affinity with the AAWT or with respective sections of the track. 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. Information and feedback will be encouraged from individuals and groups to provide updated information on the condition of the AAWT.

The use of volunteer groups to assist with information about track conditions and potential care-taking and/or maintenance programs will be encouraged through the respective agencies at a local office level. The Australian Alps Program will endeavour to increase the opportunities for volunteers by developing formal agreements with volunteer groups to assist in the maintenance of particular sections of track.

Those with a commercial interest in the Australian Alps Walking Track (e.g. guidebook producers, commercial guiding companies) may also be members of the AAWT Stakeholder Group.

Appendix 5 identifies representatives of the AAWT Management and Stakeholder Group and can be contacted through the Management Group Convenor or Australian Alps Program Manager.

6.13 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 (e.g. Kabaila, P. (2005) *High Country Footprints: Aboriginal Pathways and Movement in the High Country of South-eastern Australia – Recognising the Ancient Paths Beside Modern Highways*).

Engagement with the Aboriginal community with respect to any major changes to the AAWT or information highlighting Aboriginal connection to the land around the AAWT will be conducted by the relevant partner agency in line with their policies.

6.14 Action Plan for 2021 – 2025

Task	Specific detail	Priority/Year
AAWT Strategy	Update strategy and Action Plan.	High, Feb 2021
Web-based information	Ensure public information, particularly web based information is regularly checked and updated by Managers.	High, Jan 2021
AAWT Management Group meeting	Conduct a regular meeting of the AAWT Management Group in conjunction with Stakeholder Group. Aim for biennial meetings.	Medium, Feb 2021
AAWT Stakeholder Group meeting	Conduct a stakeholder meeting in conjunction with Management group.	Medium, Feb 2021
AAWT Symbols	Check stocks and purchase AAWT symbols and directional arrows if required. Restocked in March 2020	Low , Jan 2025
Volunteer Track program	Develop spreadsheet of works required, to be synthesized with volunteer group management in assisting in track maintenance and repair.	Medium June 2021
Feedback and numbers	Gather and report on visitor feedback, and numbers walking the track (at Walhalla and Namadgi VS).	Ongoing

	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 1 AAWT – Track Classification System

Note that this is used in conjunction with the ‘Australian Walking Track Grading System’

Appendix 2 AAWT – Major Signage inventory management

Trackhead Information boards will be maintained at Walhalla and Namadgi Visitor Centre. Additional signs and information may be installed at key access points along the AAWT.

Location	Sign style*	Status & Actions	Date
Victoria			
Walhalla	T		
Mt Erica Carpark	K		
Mt Skene	K		
Mt Loch Carpark	K		
Cope Hut	K		
Taylors Crossing	K		
New South Wales			
Dead Horse Gap	I		
Charlotte Pass	I		
Guthega Power Station	I		
Kiandra	K		
Boundary Creek			
ACT			
Orroral Valley	I		
Namadgi Visitor Centre	T		

- * T = Trackhead sign – Major stand-alone sign/shelter primarily highlighting AAWT
 K = Key access sign – low profile sign at popular sites to highlight access to AAWT
 I = Interpretation sign – AAWT information integrated into interpretation signage at site

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, Mount Feathertop, Vallejo Gantner Hut surrounds and Mt Howitt
- Fire ban restrictions apply
- Fires in fireplaces only
- Camping Platforms located at Cope Hut and Dibbins Hut require booking, and a fee is payable.

Kosciuszko National Park

- Fuel stoves only above and near the tree line
- No camping in the following areas:
 - the glacial lakes catchment areas
 - the ski resort areas (the AAWT passes through Charlotte Pass, Thredbo and Perisher ski villages)
 - within 200 metres of the road from Charlotte Pass to Guthega Power Station
 - within 200m of the track from Thredbo Top Station to Mt Kosciuszko (including Mt Kosciuszko and Rawson Pass)
- Fire ban restrictions apply.
- Kosciuszko NP Plan of Management recommends all groups register their trip – maximum group size of 8 in Wilderness Areas & 20 elsewhere.

Namadgi National Park

- Permit is required to camp in the Cotter catchment. Conditions include:
 - Fishing prohibited
 - Maximum group size is 6
 - Maximum 24 in the Catchment at any one time.
- Camping not permitted within:
 - 1 km of Corin Dam,
 - 100m of the Cotter River,
 - 500m of Cotter Hut
- 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 introduce new permits, conditions and regulations to all park visitors along popular or particularly sensitive sections of track corresponding to the AAWT.

Appendix 4 Track sign & marking standards

AAWT Totems

- **Intersection totems** - 0.5 – 1.0 m high, square section approx 125mm X 125mm square totem displaying the AANP's logo and 2x AAWT arrows 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** – 0.5 – 1.0 m high, 125 – 200 mm X 50mm 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 Markers (yellow triangular markers 105-110 mm base to apex)

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

Only the minimum number of markers required to identify the route will to be used:

- i. in forested areas where only a faint foot pad exists markers should be placed on an 'as needs' basis, indicating the direction as required.
- ii. in forested untracked areas markers should be placed within line of sight.
- iii. in areas with multiple and confusing animal pads, markers may need to be placed quite frequently

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.
- Where other safety signage exists (e.g. road naming signs) AAWT signs may be attached to these signs to confirm the direction of the AAWT.
- 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

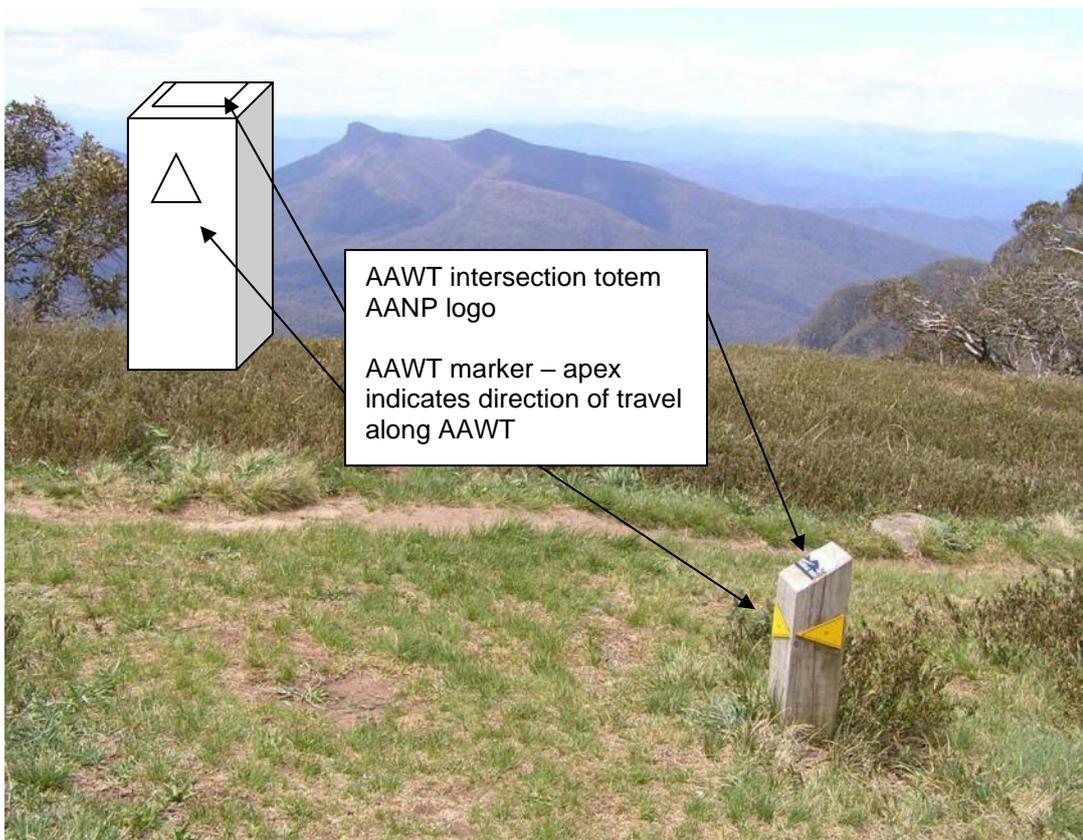
Agencies are responsible for ordering and installation of AAWT signs and markers except where specifically provided under the Australian Alps national parks co-operative management program.

- 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 isolated sections of the former Alpine Walking Track route may retain the non standard yellow diamond markers. These markers will be removed where they create confusion from the current route or with exact direction of the track. Otherwise they may be retained in areas away from the official AAWT as part of an historic record.

Standard AAWT yellow marker will be used 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.
- more frequently where confusion exists due to a multiplicity of animal tracks.



Appendix 5 AAWT Management & Stakeholder Group contact details

Australian Alps Walking Track – Management Group		
Organisation	Primary Rep	Secondary Rep
AALC – Program Manager	Rob Gibbs	
Parks Victoria – Bogong Unit	Kevin Cosgriff	
Parks Vic - East Alps Unit	Jarrold Bowd	
Parks Vic – Baw Baw Unit	Adam Van Baalen	
Parks Vic - Ovens	Julien Atherstone	
Parks Victoria (Mansfield)	Nigel Watts	
DELWP Victoria	David Vaskess	Richard Wadsworth / Mark Simons
ACT Parks	John McRae (Convenor)	Wade Young
NSW Parks & Wildlife (KNP North)	Steve Cathcart	
NSW Parks & Wildlife (KNP Central)	Andrew Miller	
NSW Parks & Wildlife (KNP Central)	Tim Greville	
NSW Parks & Wildlife (KNP South)	Campbell Young	
Australian Alps Walking Track – Stakeholder Group		
Author/walker – AAWT Guidebook	John Chapman	Monica Chapman
Guthook Guides	Angela Mosley	Robert Mosley
Star Hotel Walhalla (Baw Baw Council)	Michael Leaney	
Bushwalking Victoria	Joe Van Beek	John Green
Bushwalking NSW		
Canberra Bushwalkers	Diana Terry	Jonathan Miller
NSW National Parks Association	Dianne Thompson	
Victorian National Parks Association	Phil Ingamells	
ACT National Parks Association	Rosemary Hollow	
Kosciuszko Huts Association	Tony Hunter	Stefan DeMontis
Victorian High Country Huts Association	Allen Skilton	