



OFFICE OF THE LORD MAYOR
HOBART TOWN HALL

The Hon Eric Abetz MP
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Dear Minister

SUBMISSION TOWARDS THE STRATEGIC REVIEW OF KUNANYI/MOUNT WELLINGTON AND WELLINGTON PARK - 'OUR MOUNTAIN'S FUTURE'

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission towards the strategic review of kunanyi/Mount Wellington and the broader Wellington Park titled 'Our Mountain's Future' ('the Review'). The following submission was endorsed by the Council at its meeting on 9 December 2024.

Firstly, the City of Hobart welcomes the strategic review and further notes it is a significant step forward to future proofing this iconic natural asset.

Background Context

The ownership and management of kunanyi/Mount Wellington ('the mountain') and the Wellington Park is currently delivered through a combination of the Wellington Park Management Trust, City of Hobart, City of Glenorchy, State Government, TasWater and some private landowners. The City is of the view that having this many organisations and stakeholders involved in the ownership and management of the site, has created at times, a rather confusing and sometimes disjointed management approach.

It has been well documented that the mountain is the most visited natural attraction in Tasmania receiving over 400,000 visitors annually, however, it is perhaps less well understood that local visitation (i.e. City of Hobart ratepayers) only comprise around 10 per cent of the annual visitation numbers to the mountain.

Despite this, the City of Hobart has a long history and strong commitment to the management of the mountain, providing operational expenditure of approximately \$3M annually to maintain its land, together with an average of \$2M in capital expenditure per annum.

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In fact, the Council owns and maintains assets worth over \$84M within Wellington Park, including:

- Bushland (fire trails, tracks, bridges etc) - \$18.8M
- Buildings (public conveniences, sheds and huts) - \$5.6M
- Roads and Stormwater - \$60M
- Information Technology (communications and IT systems) - \$100K

Based on asset management plans, the Council is forecasting that it will be required to spend nearly \$36M over the next 10 years for asset renewals, new developments and upgrades, which will continue to place strain on the Council's financial resources, noting that the mountain is clearly a natural asset of both State and national significance. This figure is not reflective of the anticipated increase in visitor numbers, and the subsequent demand on infrastructure which will lead to more frequent renewals and upgrades.

The Council's submission will focus on responding to the three (3) themes outlined in the Discussion Paper which aim to inform the mountain's vision and values management, specifically, the ways in which people value the Park. It should be noted however, that the Council's comments in respect to theme three (3) are brief in nature, as the Review documents indicate that discussion around this theme will occur in the second stage of the Review.

Theme 1: We want to understand what the community most values about the park. This theme considers how best to protect, educate, and celebrate cultural and environmental values.

The mountain is distinctive and is considered to be a natural playground for the people of Hobart, further, serving as an integral part of the Hobart landscape. For some in our community, it is a place of cultural and spiritual significance which commands a profound sense of place.

The Council values the uninterrupted views of the mountain, especially its natural significance through its geological features, including organ pipes, which is why the Council's work on planning controls to manage building heights in the city has reinforced the importance of maintaining views to the mountain from across the city. The organ pipes are considered to be the face of Hobart. Their preservation is crucial for cultural, ecological, geological and recreational reasons.

The Council advocates for a stronger cultural connection with, and understanding of, the aboriginal communities' values in respect to the mountain and feel that this is a major element towards its future management. This should extend to improved cultural story-telling on the mountain.

The Council believe that there is not enough interpretation on the mountain and would like to see this improved. For instance, key features such as the heritage huts are currently not well known and there is a need for more contemporary interpretation and learning opportunities such as a place to play videos and other audio-visual media. The mountain's sporting culture also needs to be recognised and celebrated.

The Council believes that the mountain's cultural values are phenomenal and would like to see national heritage listing for the face of the mountain along with better protection of its values through planning scheme controls. Having said that, the Council does not want to see the mountain 'frozen in time' and would like to see a greater balance with low touch type development and use being supported.

The community has told us for generations that they do not want to see much development on the mountain and there has always been push back to development that has occurred, such as Pinnacle Road being fondly known as 'Ogilvie's Scar' and the viewing platform being called 'Dune's Dungeon' in the past. Indeed there is a desire from the Council to see the towers removed from the pinnacle in the future, which reinforces the balance it wishes to see on the mountain.

The Council feels that the geological relevance of the mountain is significant and needs to be better understood and interpreted with a view to celebrate the environmental values it holds as well as its natural history. Additionally, the alpine area needs to be protected and interpreted, with the impacts of climate change needing to be better understood and managed, particularly in respect to the impact on flora, but also on the omnipresent risk of fire that exists, which will only be exacerbated by the ongoing impacts of climate change.

Theme 2: User experience is about how the community accesses and interacts with the park. This theme considers how best to provide for recreation, access, tourism and other uses.

The Council believes that it is important to maximise the accessibility of the mountain and transport options are an important element to achieving this, particularly considering the ever-increasing tourism demand for people wanting to visit the mountain. The Council holds safety concerns in respect to the current transport options and believes that transport is the biggest problem to be solved by far. There are constraints at the Springs and the Pinnacle for vehicle parking, while the long snakes of cars that regularly occur on Pinnacle Road are a fire hazard.

The Council has long identified the potential for the Halls Saddle site to be a part of a sustainable transport option for the mountain and in parallel with the Review, has recently made an application under Stream 1 of the Federal Government's Urban Precinct and Partnerships Program (uPPP), for funding towards the Halls Saddle Mountain Gateway Precinct. The funding would enable the planning and design of a Halls Saddle Mountain Gateway Precinct, which would be carried out over an 18-month process, to ensure all cohorts of the community are engaged and proper

CITY OF HOBART

planning and associated design works are fulfilled.

-4-

It is intended that this process will integrate with the Review and hopefully enable the review outcomes to quickly proceed. The concept of an alternative 'visitor access' site at Halls Saddle, has been a priority of the Council since 2019.

The Council acknowledges that modern park managers don't invest in single points of access and that multiple access points will always be required to enable people to go to a range of sites. Dispersal to different points/attractions on the mountain is very important, however, there needs to be suitable transport options to provide users with the transport that they want (i.e. to the snow etc).

The Council values a model of sustainable tourism for the mountain and acknowledges that a more controlled (moderated) visitor experience may be needed and that this may extend to having more controls on the number of visitors (like the Overland Track for example). It is noted that people enjoy using Pinnacle Road for recreation on occasions that it is closed to cars as it enables them to ride or walk safely.

The Council believes that the focus for the mountain should be on recreation activities that are immersive rather than adventurous. Attractions such as mountain biking, trail running etc are preferred along with other opportunities for passive recreation that place the health benefits of being in nature at the forefront. People want to feel like they have had an adventure, however, permanent adventure tourism is problematic. For instance, we should be encouraging the tavern to offer more while there are opportunities for things like electric bike hire that could be considered. Further walking and mountain bike trails would be supported along with an overnight walk experience. The Council is of the view that decisions should not be made to waste existing infrastructure and it is only when infrastructure is exhausted or at its end life, that we should look to provide new infrastructure.

It should also be acknowledged, in general, people only really know the 18 per cent of the park which includes the Springs and Pinnacle etc and that the Wellington Park is actually very vast. In recognising this, the Council appreciates that there are existing problems with 4WD and motorbike use which will continue to be a threat to the park's natural values which must be better resourced and managed into the future.

Theme 3: The model of administration is a key consideration as we develop a plan for Our Mountain's Future. This theme considers land management, ownership, planning and funding.

While the Council has not considered this theme in any detail at this stage, it has identified that one of the major constraints on the existing governance model is a lack of funding for the operation and development of the mountain.

A future governance model should be aiming to be delivered on a cost recovery basis and the Council has an open mind to the range of different models for governance that will be considered and discussed further, as part of the next phase of the Review.

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In closing, it is our collective responsibility to ensure kunanyi/Mount Wellington is preserved and we look forward to working collaboratively with the Tasmanian Government and in partnership with the Wellington Park Management Trust and the community on this important strategic review.

Once again, thank you for providing the Council with an opportunity to make a submission into this important Review and please don't hesitate to reach out if you would like to discuss any of aspects of the Council's submission.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Dr Zelinda Sherlock
ACTING LORD MAYOR

Tuesday, 10 December 2024