

Commercial Activities Policy

July 2014

Purpose

This document sets out Bushwalking Victoria's policy with regard to commercial activities in protected areas.

Bushwalking Victoria policy documents aim to:

1. Inform our members, bushwalkers, media, government, decision makers and other users of protected areas of our position on the topics covered.
2. Ensure consistency in the actions, words and decision making of office bearers, board members, staff, convenors and other volunteers, both now and into the future.
3. Ensure that Bushwalking Victoria office bearers, staff, convenors and other delegated persons may act without the need to refer all decisions to the Bushwalking Victoria Board.

Should an unforeseen situation arise, including circumstances where it will be desirable for actions to be taken which directly or implicitly contradict any Bushwalking Victoria policy, the matter should be referred to the Bushwalking Victoria Board for resolution, or in urgent cases to the Bushwalking Victoria Executive.

Bushwalking Victoria's policies aim to be consistent with the corresponding policies of Bushwalking Australia.

Principles Underlying Policy Positions

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) defines a protected area as follows:

'A protected area is a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.'

For the purposes of this document therefore, 'protected area' includes National Parks, State Parks, Forest Reserves, Fauna and Flora Parks, Wilderness or Reference areas, and any other natural area protected by Victorian or Federal legislation.

We believe that the challenge to all managers and recreational users of protected areas is to balance the rights of public access, conservation, and the right to quiet enjoyment of natural areas. The appropriate balance between these three factors depends on the nature and characteristics of each area.

At one extreme, wilderness and reference areas are totally focussed on conservation and scientific study. At the other, local parks and gardens are almost totally focussed on wider public access and recreational activities. Protected areas such as national parks must strike a balance, which may be achieved by defining zones within individual parks with different emphases. Such zones must be clearly defined and delineated in the management plans for each park.

Bushwalking Victoria believes that bushwalkers should enjoy the natural environment in a way that inflicts minimum damage or degradation. The practical application of this is outlined in the 'Tread Softly' brochure, (Bushwalking Victoria, May 2003).

In addition, we would refer walkers to the 'Leave No Trace' web-site. www.lnt.org.au/

Leave No Trace Australia is a national non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting and inspiring responsible outdoor travel and recreation through education, research and partnerships.

Commercial Activities in Protected Areas Policy

Bushwalking Victoria is not opposed to all commercial activities in protected areas. We do believe that activities appropriate to the sensitivities and values of the individual park or natural area may be acceptable. We do however strongly believe that any commercial activities approved in these areas must be stringently regulated and monitored.

- Any use of a protected area for commercial purposes should not, as objectively determined by park management, impact adversely on the environmental integrity and natural state of the area.
- Any protected area in which a commercial activity is proposed needs to have a pre-existing (hence agreed) management plan which will not be compromised by the activity.
- Commercial activities and infrastructure developments must be compatible with the identified values and amenities of the protected area under consideration as documented in the relevant management plan. This may need to be supported by an activity management plan and commitments by the developer to a code of behaviour with sanctions for breaches.
- Commercial activities should have some connection with nature, the natural environment and facilitate the connection of people with nature.
- Facilities that do not need to be in a protected area should be outside it and planned and controlled in such a way that they do not degrade a protected area through any spill-over effect.
- Commercial uses of protected areas must not diminish or remove the access rights and facilities of other users, including the walking community and the general public
- Commercial uses of protected areas must, in addition to being commercially viable, be able to demonstrate a public social benefit.
- Commercial operators of activities or infrastructure must pay usage fees that are commensurate with the environmental impact they have and commercial benefit they receive.
- Any commercial activity or facility that is approved for establishment in any protected area should be subject to a defined period licence or lease agreement, the continuance of which requires an assessment, no less than annually, to

ensure agreed minimum standards are being met with respect to impact and public benefit

- Commercial activities must not diminish or interfere with the wilderness experience of other approved users including the walking community and the general public.

Alpine Resorts

- Bushwalking Victoria believes that Alpine Resorts should be managed for year-round use, and should be restricted to the areas currently designated.
- Alpine Resorts should be managed in such a manner as to minimise environmental impact of their activities, and should be held accountable for environmental degradation in resort environs. Ski trails and runs should be created and managed in a manner which will minimise impact on tree canopy, and should not cause erosion in spring and summer snow-melt periods.
- Mechanised activities such as over-snow transport should be minimised within resorts and should not extend beyond resort boundaries unless approved and supervised by the land manager.
- Snow grooming outside of resort boundaries should be restricted to established and approved cross-country trails.