

30 September 2014

Department of Environment and Primary Industries
By email: Point.Nepean@dse.vic.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Point Nepean Quarantine Station – appointment of Point Leisure Group

Bushwalking Victoria (BWV) thanks you for the extension of time of up until 1 October 2014 for organisations to make submissions regarding the appointment of Point Leisure Group PL as the preferred proponent for the long-term management, investment in and lease of Point Nepean Quarantine Station.

BWV represents the common interests of over 70 Victorian bushwalking clubs, with in excess of 8,000 members. BWV also aims to proactively represent the interests of all recreational walkers in Victoria as well as walkers visiting from interstate and overseas.

Bushwalking Victoria is not opposed to all commercial activities in protected areas. We believe any protected area in which a commercial activity is proposed needs to have an agreed management plan which will not be compromised by the activity.

The proposed “extraordinary geothermal hot spring facility” far exceeds any suggested facilities in either the “Point Nepean National Park and Quarantine Station Management Plan 2009” or the “Point Nepean National Park Master Plan 2013”. We think it is unreasonable to amend the 2009 Management Plan and to rezone part of the area to accommodate the proposal.

The proposal is inconsistent with the Park Management Plan: Appropriate Use Principles on several counts, but in particular the principle that “uses and developments should be related to and sympathetic with the features and characteristics of Point Nepean”.

We maintain that facilities that do not need to be in a protected area should be outside it. There is already a commercial “hot springs” facility at Rye on the Peninsula, so we see no need for another within the National Park.

Commercial users of protected areas must not diminish or remove the access rights and facilities of other users, including the walking community and general public. We are concerned

that this proposal is pitched at paying guests to use resort type facilities, rather than public users of a National Park.

We believe that any commercial activity that is approved 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. We think that a 99-year lease is tantamount to a sale and we see no evidence that there will be a process to monitor the ongoing operation of the private investor to ensure that the National Park retains its unique conservation and cultural identity.

We have no wish to comment on the re-use of the existing heritage buildings.

We trust that you will consider our views as part of the extended consultation process.

Yours faithfully

Charles Ablitt
Vice President