

9 October 2019

Dr Susan Close MP
State Labor Member for Port Adelaide
Unit 1, 111 Lipson St,
PORT ADELAIDE SA 5015

By Email: ptadelaide@parliament.sa.gov.au

Dear Susan,

I write in relation to your recent commentary regarding Australian Walking Company's proposal for Flinders Chase National Park on Kangaroo Island. We would welcome an opportunity to meet and inform you of the facts as they relate to our proposal. Your commentary indicates that to date you have received only prejudicial information. Excerpts as follows for your perusal:

On 4 October 2019, you posted on your Facebook page:

"Here are two maps put together by concerned KI locals... The blue circles are roughly where the department assessed the accommodation could be appropriate - near to existing tracks. The green is where the two sites now have approval..."

and

"...The locations of the accommodation areas are on cliffs close to beaches, both of which have hooded plovers nesting..."

and

"...This clearance of several kilometres of track and the location of accommodation on cliff tops appears to me to be contrary to the park management plan..."

In your Facebook video you state:

"This proposal is not what had originally been planned. The department had gone to some extent to find locations where accommodation would be suitable."

I would like to provide you with some of the facts around our initial proposal and how they relate to our current plans. This is with a view to stopping the misinformation that is being shared by groups such as Eco Action and Friends of Parks.

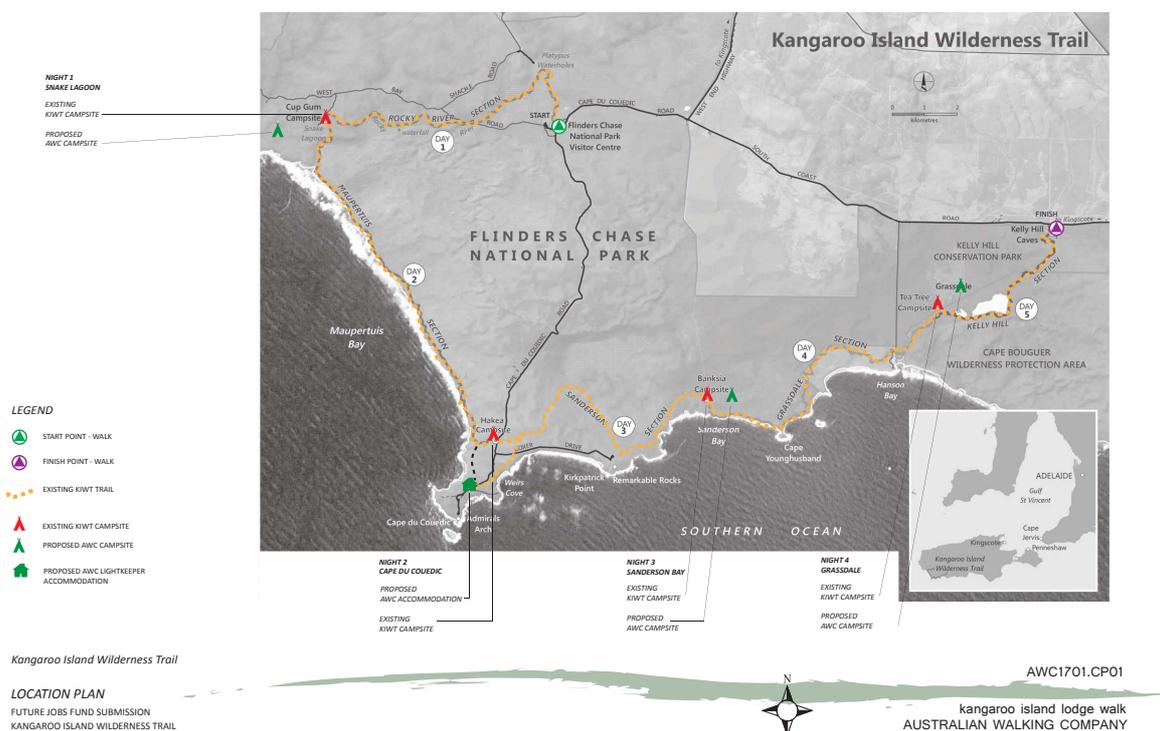
In 2013, the recommendation in the Kangaroo Island Futures Authority Report was for a commercial tour operator to construct accommodation on four nodes within the park requiring an additional 6.5km in tracks and trails.



In November 2015 AWC submitted an EOI to your Government and at a press conference in February 2018, former Ministers Ian Hunter and Leon Bignell announced that we had been selected as the successful proponent.

In 2017, we were awarded a Future Job Funds grant of \$832,889. The submission for the grant was personally approved by Leon Bignell’s department and included extensive details of the proposal including a site map. The map you posted on your Facebook page differs from our submission and is misleading and incorrect.

Map as follows for your perusal:



Following your Government’s departure, AWC continued to evolve the proposal working extensively with five local referral bodies to obtain the necessary approvals.

The following changes have since been made to the original submissions:

- Accommodation will be built on only two of the four sites available under the Park Management Plan.
- The sleeping pods are 30% smaller and the communal space is 20% smaller.
- The sites are hidden from visibility from the Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail and positioned within the landscape’s topography.
- No road vehicles will access the camps. Rather, access is by narrow wheelbase vehicles using mulched tracks to avoid importing material. Tracks are generally mapped out by wallaby trails.



- Tracks and trails have been reduced by 45% which brings the overall length below the 2013 Kangaroo Island Futures Authority Report recommendation for a commercial operator.
- There will be no vegetation clearance around the structures other than the fire refuge which is located where minimal clearing is required to achieve a 50% veg reduction.
- Local revegetation contractors have been engaged to collect seeds from the site for regeneration during pod placement if required and after the structures are removed at the end of the lease.
- Over 20 public and private consultations have been conducted despite there being no formal requirement to do so.

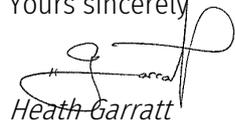
AWC also engaged three independent environmental consultants to undertake a complete study of the national and state threatened fauna species' that occur or may occur within the proposed site areas and to state the potential impacts on the identified threatened species. The established territory of the Hooded Plover is outside the disturbance footprint of the accommodation site and the Coastal Protection Board (CPB) has noted that it is currently accessible to unregulated independent walkers. As part of the South Australian Recovery Plan for the Hooded Plover, there is regular monitoring undertaken through the CPB Scientific Officers and Natural Resources Kangaroo Island. The CPB has also noted that Natural Resources Kangaroo Island cordons off nesting areas and erects signage, as required, and particularly during breeding season.

Further, it should also be noted that the Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail is significantly under-utilised with current walker numbers representing less than 20% of the capacity set by the Department of Environment. Our guided walking experience will add significant benefit to Kangaroo Island and meet the demand for premium tourism experiences which interstate parks already boast. Our plans to enhance the product offering at Kangaroo Island are further supported by the 2017/18 Visitors Exit Survey where the results presented unacceptable indicators. Significantly, less than 50% of visitors were very satisfied by the range, quality and availability of activities and the quality of tourism infrastructure.

Australian Walking Company has over 30 years experiences in multi day guided walks and we pride ourselves on earned reputation and our environmental credentials. Our guides are passionate wilderness educators and by sharing their knowledge and understanding of the area's flora, fauna, geology and human stories this will ultimately conserve and protect national parks such as Flinders Chase.

We would appreciate the removal of the incorrect information you have posted and for the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the project.

Yours sincerely



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