

I am President of the Federation of Tasmanian Bushwalking Clubs and President of the Hobart Walking Club.

I hope you can forward this to where necessary as I could be certain where to send this, sorry.

I hope the comments below are pertinent as I have been persuaded to send them after I had written much like this into our monthly Circular.

We have been concerned for some time at the shift in trackwork and other items away from the needs of locals towards tourism, especially short walks for car based tourism. While it is good to have infrastructure for that purpose we are losing our infrastructure. Tracks suffer vegetation falls and overgrowth or erosion, etc... Many have been closed or lost. We have been prepared to help keep some tracks open by doing some jobs while on a bushwalk.

We have a lot of pressure put on us to volunteer, but we most commonly find we are to be persuaded to work on tourist-like tracks. Most of us are pushed towards formal arrangements which do not suit the volunteer. The Volunteer is treated as if a paid employee. Red tape abounds. Volunteers often find they end up with added expenses like running around (added travel) for PWS tools, training which they do not need for the kind of work the person does, unimportant meetings for groups where overnight accommodation and travel are required. Volunteers need arrangements which suit them, not the public service. After all the volunteer is the one paying. Some regard the volunteer system, especially AdoptATrack, as more like a slave-master relationship rather than a genuine partnership. Flexibility and meaningful dialogue is required. For instance just want to work when they have the time and the weather suits and cannot afford extra out-of-pocket expenses.

What we are talking about are legal tracks, mostly only known to fairly keen bushwalkers and locals. Obviously when one lives in a place they need a selection of walks. Quite a few Rangers do not support our use of minor tracks due to their personal views, which are more preservation minded rather than conservation minded. Some of our parks came into being explicitly to cater for enjoyment and access (like that on the Tasman Peninsula), some were multipurpose, but most seems to be pushed towards preservation with a tourism fringe where it cannot be avoided. Without work, seen as antipreservation, by one means or another most tracks necessarily deteriorate (including overgrow and disappear). We have never been after 'fancy' tracks, but tracks where one does not have to be in thigh deep mud or forcing their way through entangling vegetation or cutting grass. There needs to be more effort to deal with erosion where it can be limited - but not by closing tracks without alternative.

Andrew Davey