

Kosciuszko Huts Association (KHA) Submission on Snowy Hydro 2.0

Submitted on behalf of the KHA committee
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The Kosciuszko Huts Association (KHA) is a volunteer association formed in 1971 to provide volunteer support to the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) – ref: Heritage Assessment and Statement of Heritage Impact Appendix P.2 Section 5.2.3. – p.59)

The Association assists the NPWS with the conservation of settlement and development era vernacular architecture of the northern Australian Alps. These structures are known as ‘mountain huts’. The Association has a body of caretakers and caretaker groups. These groups conduct maintenance, preservation, restoration, and reconstruction activities on the huts. Work is conducted in accordance with the relevant heritage action statements (HAS’s) or conservation management plans (CMP’s). Operations occur from early October to late June every year. Caretakers come from across the state (and other jurisdictions) and will often travel relatively long distances to perform work. Whilst all work is conducted with NPWS approval, most work is done without having to have NPWS staff present. Work is often pre-approved without a specific date

KHA has the following concerns about the conduct of Snowy Hydro 2.0.

Closure (facilitated access) of Tantangara Road. The closure of Tantangara Road will negatively impact hut conservation by both preventing conservation of a number of huts and increasing the use of other huts.

Impact on the ability to conserve structures. Ongoing maintenance of the “mountain huts” in the Tantangara area is dependent on access. The current access provides for annual inspections and planned maintenance. The past 50 years has seen changing environmental practices to maintain the heritage value of these huts. Current practice is informed by the *The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, The Burra Charter, 2013*. Combined with the associated series of Practice Notes best practice standards for managing cultural heritage places in Australia is provided. The practices identified in the Charter require access to ensure a consistent and minimalist approach to the conservation of the huts.

Either reconstructed or maintained the huts have and continue to provide emergency shelter, day shelter and an opportunity for Parks visitors to appreciate the heritage of the Snowy Mountain regions.

There are about 10 huts which are most appropriately accessed via Tantangara Road. The current proposal would significantly hinder access to these huts over the summer months and executing the work is likely to see volunteers and NPWS staff suspend work over the duration of the 7 years. This will likely see a significant degradation in

the structure of the huts resulting in the loss of fabric and potentially loss of these culturally significant assets.

- **Increase usage of other sites.** The prevention of public access to these same huts will also mean that the public will look to other huts in the northern part of KNP as alternatives for their recreation activities. Usage of huts accessible from Long Plain Road is already at levels well beyond what the structures were designed for. The closure of Tantangara road will exacerbate this and in so doing will also cause degradation to the immediately surrounding area of the heavily used huts.
- The KHA strongly appeals that the Tantangara Road remain a key public access route – essential to the regular maintenance of the heritage mountain huts in the immediate area.