

Draft 3

Historic Huts in Namadgi affected by Bushfire

Executive Summary

Demanding Hut and Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut are included in the ACT Heritage Register. Prior to the bushfires of 2019-20, the huts were of heritage significance. The damage to the huts has reduced some heritage values although other values remain. There would appear to be strong community and family attachments to the huts, perhaps even heightened because of the damage.

The recommendations for the future of the huts are summarised below.

- Recommendation A: The two huts be fully restored/reconstructed, re-using as much of the original material as possible (eg. corrugated iron). This should be undertaken after the careful recording, deconstruction and salvage of the hut sites, possibly with the assistance of an historical archaeologist.
- Recommendation B: The design of the restoration/reconstruction should also have an overarching objective to seek to achieve a resilient solution to avoid or mitigate threats such as bushfire, consistent with heritage conservation.
- Recommendation C: A check should be made as soon as possible for any hazardous materials which might exist at the hut sites (eg. in the case of the refrigerator at Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut).
- Recommendation D: A number of other urgent tasks should be undertaken: a formal survey the hut sites; probably the removal and safe storage of any important portable items that may be lost; and to otherwise secure the sites (eg. to prevent loose iron sheets blowing away). This might involve careful deconstruction of the collapsed iron sheet elements, securing the sheeting in a pile tethered to the ground or otherwise weighed down, and erecting a temporary fence and signage. This work is especially important as it may take some time for decisions to be taken and recommended conservation works to be completed.
- Recommendation E: Consideration should be given to improved signage at the hut sites, even while they are in ruins, to stress the continuing heritage values of the places and encourage appropriate visitor behaviour.
- Recommendation F: In the case of Demanding Hut, and possibly also Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut, consideration could be given to the creative use of surviving materials which cannot be re-used (eg. the massive charred timber columns from Demanding Hut) to commemorate the original hut/s and the impact of bushfire. Any such installation should be sympathetically located if placed near the restored/reconstructed huts.

- Recommendation G: The active involvement of the Kosciuszko Huts Association should be positively considered in any restoration/reconstruction project, and further consultations undertaken with stakeholders including those with family connections.
- Recommendation H: ACT Heritage should be consulted about the options for the future of the huts, consistent with the Namadgi *Plan of Management*.
- Recommendation I: Clarification should be sought from ACT Heritage regarding the interpretation of the specific requirements contained within the ACT Heritage Register citation, and the apparent contradiction between ii) a) and ii) b).

Background

This task involved a site inspection of two bushfire damaged huts in order to generally assess their condition and inform the development of options for their future. These huts, Demanding Hut and Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut, are included in the ACT Heritage Register, maintained under the *Heritage Act 2004* (ACT). They are part of the place, *Stockmen's Huts in Namadgi National Park*. A copy of the citation for this place is provided at Appendix XXX.1.

Specific requirements included in the ACT Heritage Register citation include,

- 'ii) Demolition**
- a) Subject to (ii)(b), demolition shall not be permitted, other than in exceptional circumstances, including circumstances in which the structures are structurally unsound and beyond economic repair, or where there are significant public health and safety reasons to warrant demolition. All prudent and feasible alternatives to demolition will need to have been explored before demolition is considered.
 - b) The demolition of original building fabric may only be permitted in the context of permissible alteration of, and/or additions to the existing building.' (ACT Heritage Council 1999)

On the one hand, paragraph a) above could be considered applicable in the case of the two huts – the exceptional circumstances required for demolition being the structural failure and substantial collapse of the huts due to bushfire damage. However, the issue of prudent and feasible alternatives would still need to be addressed. On the other hand, the link made between a) and b), that the former is subject to the later, appears contradictory. It undermines the provisions regarding exceptional circumstances. It is suspected this is a mistake, and clarification could be sought from ACT Heritage. For the discussions below, paragraph a) is referenced without the link to b).

The management of these huts is also guided by the *Namadgi National Park Plan of Management* (ACT Parks Conservation and Lands 2010). This plan provides a range of policies and actions relevant to the conservation, protection, management, interpretation, community attachments and community involvement. Key general conservation policies relate to compliance with the *Heritage Act 2004* and the *Burra Charter*.

Of special note is the following policy from the plan.

'Where a culturally significant building or a group of buildings is severely damaged or destroyed,

decisions on whether to restore, reconstruct or replace (either on the existing site or on another site) will be made on a case-by-case basis following the Burra Charter guidelines and advice from the ACT Heritage Council and the Heritage Unit and taking into account:

- the nature and extent of damage
- the heritage values of the buildings including architectural and aesthetic qualities, historical associations and context and social significance
- the strength of community attachment
- the importance of the buildings for safety, shelter and survival
- the recreational value of the buildings
- the role of the buildings in advancing wider management objectives such as concentrating impacts or drawing visitors away from environmentally sensitive areas
- the value of the buildings in providing opportunities for the interpretation of natural and cultural values.’ (ACT Parks Conservation and Lands 2010, p. 93)

A potentially useful reference in this process is the huts conservation strategy prepared for Kosciuszko National Park (GML 2005). A figure portraying the decision-making steps in relation to destroyed huts is provided at Appendix XXX.2.

In summary, issues to be considered regarding options for the future of the huts are (in no priority order):

- the cultural significance of the hut, mindful of the impact of the bushfire, and the broader issue of cumulative hut losses over time in the National Park;
- management requirements such as those arising from the ACT Heritage Council registration and the Namadgi *Plan of Management*;
- stakeholder views;
- whether there is hazardous material present;
- the potential for loose materials to become an environmental hazard; and
- the resources, capacity and priorities of the ACT Parks and Conservation Service.

The following section provides information about the two huts: a very brief summary of their history and cultural significance, current condition and options for the huts. With regard to options, the following definitions from the *Burra Charter* apply.

Restoration means returning a *place* to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing elements without the introduction of new material.

Reconstruction means returning a *place* to a known earlier state and is distinguished from *restoration* by the introduction of new material. (Australia ICOMOS 2013)

Conclusions and recommendations are made at the end of the section.

The assistance of a number of people is gratefully acknowledged:



Philip Leeson
Brett McNamara



Kosciuszko Huts Association/heritage architect
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Demandering Hut

Summary of History and Cultural Significance

The Kosciuszko Huts Association summarises the history of the hut as follows.

‘Curtis was built about 1945 by Bill Cotter and Jack Simpson, and named after the Cotter family property, Demandering. After the sale of land in 1956, it became an outstation hut to the Mt Clear Station, owned by the Curtis family.

Since becoming part of the National Park, it has become better known as Curtis Hut, but the Curtis's called it the Mt Clear Hut.’ (KHA 2020a)

An extract from the ACT Heritage Register citation for the *Stockmen's Huts in Namadgi National Park* relevant to the significance of Demandering Hut is as follows.

‘These stockmen's huts are directly associated with pastoralism in the ACT high country, an industry which no longer exists there. The huts show the graziers' shelter needs on holdings away from the home property and are a significant cultural resource to the community.

Demandering Hut is linked to the Cotter family...

Demandering [Hut along with other huts are]... good examples of their type, displaying a number of characteristics of these generally rudimentary structures...’ (ACT Heritage Council 1999)

A conservation study of the hut summarises the significance as follows.

‘With its small size, straightforward construction and resourceful mixture of new and used materials, Demandering is a good example of a stockman's hut, reflecting the main characteristics of the simple form of structure.

Demandering reflects well some of the traditional bush building techniques used by stockmen for their huts. Further, it is of considerable interest for being the only hut in Namadgi where it is known that bullocks were used in the construction process. The bullock team employed here was the last in the district.

The hut is significant for its association with pastoralism, grazing having been Namadgi area's main industry prior to the establishment of the national park. The significance is heightened owing to the huts direct link with snow lease grazing in Kosciuszko National Park. As part of a group of stockman's huts in Namadgi, Demandering illustrates the periodic shelter needs of pastoralists working on holdings away from the home property.

Demandering has a direct association with the Cotter family, one of the earliest European families in the ACT region and a family after which one of Namadgi's major rivers is named. It also has an association with the Curtis family who since the 1930s played a significant role in the grazing history of Namadgi.’ (Higgins and Scott 1994, pp. 21-2)

This study contains considerable information about the history and description of the hut at the time.

The damage to the hut has impacted its heritage values. The evidential value is diminished – a collapsed hut with fire damaged/destroyed timbers presents less evidence of a stockman's hut. However, this value is not entirely lost. On the other hand, the historic associations remain.

Conservation Policy

The 1994 conservation study included the following conservation policy,

‘should the hut been damaged or destroyed, then the hut site should be reclassified as a ruin and conserved as such. ACTPCS would then assess the requirements for a shelter hut in the area, dependent upon usage pressures at that time. At the current time, it is unlikely that a new hut would be necessary.’ (Higgins and Scott 1994, p. 32)

Current Condition

At the time of the fire, building works were being undertaken to the hut to address substantial termite problems.

The hut has substantially collapsed. There are modern circular concrete footings, the concrete collar for a former timber post, circular stump footings, the charred remnants of collapsed massive sawn timber posts (more in the character of bridge timbers), some bush pole timber framing, collapsed corrugated galvanised iron walls and roof, a stone and concrete fireplace and chimney, a corrugated metal rainwater tank, now burst at the base, set on a modern timber stand which is part burnt and collapsed.

A very good and detailed description of the intact hut in 2018, well prior to the bushfire, is provided in a statement of heritage effects report prepared for the ACT Parks and Conservation Service (Philip Leeson Architects 2018).





Stakeholder Views

The views of the Kosciuszko Huts Association (KHA) were sought about the future of both the Demanding Hut and Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut. Responses were provided from a range of office bearers and involved and knowledgeable members.

There are a range of views about the huts, related to both their heritage and amenity values. The huts are viewed by some as providing amenity over a long period, they are anchor points within the park for a range of activities, and there is a desire to retain that amenity into the future. This would mean replacing the huts, although for some, this did not necessarily mean a heritage reconstruction. ([redacted] personal communication, 23 June 2020)

Another view stressed the huts were part of a network, and they should be considered as a network rather than just individually. It is the overall network which portrays the overall story. There was also a recognition that the huts were not just structures in isolation, but rather existed in a landscape. Mindful of the three models of reconstruction adopted in NSW, it was suggested that reconstruction which was more in the spirit of the huts should be sought. KHA appreciated being consulted and were keen to be involved throughout the process to replace the huts. ([redacted] personal communication, 23 June 2020)

One source of information about KHA and wider community views arises from responses to posts uploaded to the KHA Facebook page. One recent post about Demanding Hut reached 4,500 online users, more than double the average for such posts, including a large number of 'non-fans', meaning those beyond regular fans of KHA posts. In the case of Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut, another recent post for this reached 2,900 users, again well in excess of the

average and also attracting a large number of ‘non-fans’. In addition,

‘The adult daughter and grandson of the Curtis family have contacted KHA after viewing the FB [Facebook] post and have expressed an enduring connection with the [Demanding] Hut and site. They are keen to be involved in the reconstruction, and have a deep emotional connection [to] the Hut and site.’ (Email from [REDACTED] 4 July 2020)

The full details about these Facebook responses can be found at Appendix XXX.3.

The KHA huts maintenance officer, [REDACTED] noted,

‘For me the hut is part of our history, it tells the story of the people who worked and used the hut when they were mustering sheep from Kelly’s Plain. The construction of the hut is unique as it used bullocks to transport materials. I believe the family descendants would like the hut rebuilt as I would. If the hut is rebuilt, I would like it to have a proper fire break, it was destined to be rebuilt before the fire. I can understand if we had rebuilt the hut and then it was destroyed and the powers... [to] be said no, but that was not the case. The hut means a lot to a lot of people and its history should live on.’ ([REDACTED], email, 26 June 2020, reproduced in full at Appendix XXX.3)

One small detail, [REDACTED] was also keen to re-use the old door hinges in any reconstruction.

[REDACTED], a KHA member and heritage architect was also consulted. [REDACTED] had previously visited Demanding Hut, and was also involved as a consultant in developing the *Kosciuszko National Park Huts Conservation Strategy* (GML 2005). He recommended consideration of the decision-making steps in relation to destroyed huts from the strategy, reproduced at Appendix XXX.2.

[REDACTED] was concerned about the cumulative loss of huts over the years, and highlighted the values relate not just to the huts but also other features such as the landscape, and community and personal associations. While referencing the *Kosciuszko National Park Huts Conservation Strategy*, [REDACTED] views tended to favour reconstruction. ([REDACTED] personal communication, 29 June 2020)

Options for the Hut

There are a range of options for the future of the hut. Even in its damaged state, there are remnant heritage values associated with the hut, and it would seem highly desirable to respect these in some way. The previous loss of such huts over time increases the relative value of surviving huts.

In addition, much depends on the resources, capacity and priorities of the ACT Parks and Conservation Service.

Options are presented below. As argued in detail in the Conclusions and Recommendations section, it is recommended Option 9 – full restoration/reconstruction be undertaken.

1. Install signage for the hut site to explain its significance, to encourage protection (ie. do not disturb), and explain whatever management action has been taken (eg. removal, stabilisation, etc).
2. Record the site as it is, including the involvement of an historical archaeologist.
3. Do nothing – leave the site as it is.

4. Remove the hut fabric apart from the fireplace, concrete foundations and timber stumps. Possibly also leaving all or some of the large charred timber members as fallen elements, the rainwater tank and timber stand.
5. Stabilise the collapsed hut as it is. This could be done by wire mesh fencing (say 90-120 cm high) around the hut site, or installing a mesh cage over the ruins. The latter might be warranted if there is concern that loose building materials could blow away and create a nuisance.
6. Partial stabilisation/reconstruction Option A – stabilise/reconstruct the partly standing corner corrugated iron and charred post, to get a small sense of the form of the hut. Other collapsed materials could remain. Possibly fence the site as with Option 5.
7. Partial restoration/reconstruction Option B – there are many other degrees of restoration/reconstruction possible, perhaps one example being to reconstruct the main timber framing to give a sense of the hut form using timber members to match previous members, and gathering sheet iron and burnt timbers into the centre of hut. Possibly fence the site also.
8. As part of several above options, there could also be a creative response to the loss of the hut, in the same way that the former Mount Franklin Chalet was commemorated through an artistic approach.
9. Full restoration/reconstruction, re-using as much material as possible (eg. corrugated iron).

Options 1 and 2 might be implemented irrespective of other options, and it then becomes a choice from Options 3 to 9. Given the fire damage to the hut and other potential threats (eg. termite damage), an overarching objective should be to seek to achieve a resilient solution consistent with heritage conservation. For example, this might involve fire resistant timbers, detailing to avoid embers entering the hut, or site measures to suppress bushfires.

With regard to the specific requirements included in the ACT Heritage Register citation, the bushfire damage would appear to satisfy the exceptional circumstances needed for demolition. However, it is less clear that no prudent and feasible alternatives exist to demolition. It would appear feasible not to demolish the hut as there is no technical impediment to the collapsed hut remaining as is, or to undertake some degree of restoration/reconstruction.

The issue of prudence relates to whether there is funding available to implement options apart from demolition, noting that Option 3 involves no expenditure. All other options involve some degree of expenditure, including demolition (Option 4), with perhaps Option 9 being the most expensive.

The following table provides comments in relation to the policy guidance contained in the Namadgi *Plan of Management*.

Issues to be considered according to the Plan of Management	Comments
The nature and extent of damage	This has been considered in the comments above.
The heritage values of the buildings including architectural and aesthetic qualities, historical associations and context and social significance	This has been considered in the comments above.
The strength of community attachment	There would still seem to be a strong level of community attachment to the hut, expressed through the Kosciuszko Huts Association, even in its

Issues to be considered according to the Plan of Management	Comments
	<p>damaged state. Indeed, this attachment might have been heightened because of the fire damage.</p> <p>In addition, family attachments to the hut are also strong.</p>
The importance of the buildings for safety, shelter and survival	The former hut is not perceived to be important for these reasons by the ACT Parks and Conservation Service. However, the KHA regards the huts as important for shelter, at least.
The recreational value of the buildings	The former hut had some recreational value for day walkers and other users.
The role of the buildings in advancing wider management objectives such as concentrating impacts or drawing visitors away from environmentally sensitive areas	Not applicable.
The value of the buildings in providing opportunities for the interpretation of natural and cultural values	The former hut provided an opportunity for interpreting cultural heritage values. Indeed, it provided an excellent opportunity to interpret the grazing history of the area.

Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut

Summary of History and Cultural Significance

The Kosciuszko Huts Association summarises the history of the hut as follows.

'The original Banks Hut was used by Ted Oldfield before the First World War, but only a few stones of the chimney remain. "Max and Berts" hut was built by Max and Bert Oldfield in the early 1967, using a few stones from the first hut. It was used to support cattle grazing on the Booth Range lease (Block 6) after the site for The Bog Hut was found to be too wet and cold for much of the year.

Earlier holders of the lease included the De Salis family of Cuppacumbalong and Mr Massy of Gundaroo. The first were probably the builders of the original hut, but this is not known definitively.

From about 1955 to 1991, the hut was not visited, and was "re-discovered" as a result of the oral history project and interviews undertaken by Matthew Higgins in 1990.

When first revisited about 1998, the hut contained all the furniture and items used by cattlemen in the 50's, including a foldout chair or bed, cooking utensils, lanterns, alarm clock etc, all of which have been carefully documented and most removed for safe keeping.' (KHA 2020b)

It is apparent from the KHA website that substantial repairs were undertaken on the hut at some previous time.

An extract from the ACT Heritage Register citation for the *Stockmen's Huts in Namadgi National Park* relevant to the significance of Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut is as follows.

'These stockmen's huts are directly associated with pastoralism in the ACT high country, an industry which no longer exists there. The huts show the graziers' shelter needs on holdings away from the home property and are a significant cultural resource to the community.

...Max and Bert Oldfield's Huts are linked to the Oldfield family (resident in the area since the 1830's)...

Max and Bert Oldfield's [Hut along with other huts are]... are good examples of their type, displaying a number of characteristics of these generally rudimentary structures...' (ACT Heritage Council 1999)

In addition, the hut had particular value for its association with grazing activities in the Booth Range.

A conservation study of the hut summarises the significance as follows.

'With its basic construction and materials, Max and Bert Oldfield's hut is a good example of the simpler type of stockman's hut, reflecting the main characteristics of this rudimentary type of structure.

The hut has retained a level of intactness (especially as far as its wide variety of internal items are concerned) that is higher than that of other Namadgi Huts, and it thus is significant for providing insights into the lifestyle of people working on Namadgi's grazing leases.

The history of the materials used in the hut is a matter of considerable interest and reflects the fact that even quite simple structures can have intriguing histories.

Although used for only a relatively short period as a stockman's hut, Max and Bert's is significant for its association with pastoralism, grazing having been the areas main industry prior to establishment of the Park. As part of a group of such huts in Namadgi, the structure illustrates the shelter needs of pastoralists working on holdings away from the home property. Further, the hut, built on the side of the rugged

Booth Range, is important for helping to show that grazing was not confined to the large, cleared valley floors of the Namadgi area. The hut, in being the third stockman's hut to be built on the lease, helps to show the progression of the grazing development of this part of the Booth Range.

Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut has a direct association with the Oldfield family, a family that for a lengthy period played a very significant role throughout large parts of Namadgi and nearby areas.' (Higgins and Scott 1992, pp. 20-1)

This study contains considerable information about the history and description of the hut at the time.

The damage to the hut has impacted its heritage values. The evidential value is diminished – a collapsed hut with fire damaged/destroyed timbers presents less evidence of a stockman's hut. However, this value is not entirely lost. On the other hand, the historic associations remain.

Conservation Policy

The 1992 conservation study included the following conservation policy,

'should the hut been destroyed, then the hut site should be reclassified as a ruin and conserved as such. ACTPCS would then assess the requirements for a shelter hut in the area, dependent upon usage pressures at that time. At the current time, it is unlikely that a new hut would be necessary.' (Higgins and Scott 1992, p. 33)

Current Condition

The hut has substantially collapsed. This was a timber framed and corrugated galvanised iron wall and roof structure. The remnant timber members are charred and no sound timbers appear to survive, along with the collapsed corrugated iron wall and roof sheeting. Fixings are wire, nails and modern power driven screws. Part of the corrugated iron fireplace surround remains standing. The fireplace stones remain largely in place. Features on site include a former fridge, a rainwater drum with downpipe, remnant metal bed and chairs.

The former fridge door, at least, contains an insulation material which, given the age of the fridge, may contain asbestos. The insulation is visible. The potential for hazardous material should be formally assessed.



Stakeholder Views

A range of stakeholder comments were sought about the future for the hut.

Max Oldfield's comments, conveyed through [REDACTED] were that,

'[Max was] fine with whatever is decided, however if anything is to be done, he expressed a firm preference for something which actually provided overnight shelter for people, especially as the nights can get pretty cold up there.

It doesn't have to be a perfect replica. Probably better if it were made a tad more comfortable.' (Email from [REDACTED], 10 March 2020)

The general comments of the Kosciuszko Huts Association provided above in the section on Demanding Hut also apply to Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut. The previous section also provides some specific information about the latter hut, arising from responses to posts uploaded to the KHA Facebook page.

The Kosciuszko Huts Association caretaker for the hut, [REDACTED] view is,

'that building a copy of the original Max and Berts hut in another location doesn't really cut it as the context of the original Max and Bert's hut was specific to its location. ACT National Parks have put up small monuments to previous fire destroyed huts – I'm not opposed to that idea as long as a version of the original hut is rebuilt on the original site.' (Email from [REDACTED] 24 June 2020)

[REDACTED] also noted that a sympathetic monument to the original hut could also be installed at the Namadgi Visitor Centre, but the hut should be reconstructed ([REDACTED] personal communication, 1 July 2020).

Two knowledgeable and experience bushwalkers in Namadgi held the view that,

'We would advocate a replacement at the same site, the essence of its design being a simple hut with a fire-place. Additional improvements could be: wood floor, slightly larger, outside water-tank and a suitably located toilet.' (Email from [REDACTED] 25 June 2020)

Options for the Hut

There are a range of options for the future of the hut. Even in its damaged state, there are remnant heritage values associated with the hut, and it would seem highly desirable to respect these in some way. The previous loss of such huts over time increases the relative value of surviving huts.

In addition, much depends on the resources, capacity and priorities of the ACT Parks and Conservation Service.

Options are presented below. As argued in detail in the Conclusions and Recommendations section, it is recommended Option 9 – full restoration/reconstruction be undertaken.

1. Install signage for the hut site to explain its significance, to encourage protection (ie. do not disturb), and explain whatever management action has been taken (eg. removal,

- stabilisation, etc).
2. Record the site as it is, including the involvement of an historical archaeologist.
 3. Do nothing – leave the site as it is.
 4. Remove the hut fabric apart from the fireplace stones.
 5. Stabilise the collapsed hut as it is. This could be done by wire mesh fencing (say 90-120 cm high) around the hut site, or installing a mesh cage over the ruins. The latter might be warranted if there is concern that loose building materials could blow away and create a nuisance.
 6. Partial restoration/reconstruction Option A – restore fireplace stones, stabilise standing fireplace walls, possibly including re-rolling corrugated iron, and using timber members to match previous members. Could also retain collapsed materials on site. Possibly fence the site as with Option 5.
 7. Partial restoration/reconstruction Option B – restore/reconstruct walls only, using timber members to match previous members, gather roofing iron and burnt timbers into the centre of hut. Possibly fence the site.
 8. As part of several above options, there could also be a creative response to the loss of the hut, in the same way that the former Mount Franklin Chalet was commemorated through an artistic approach.
 9. Full restoration/reconstruction, re-using as much material as possible (eg. corrugated iron).

Options 1 and 2 might be implemented irrespective of other options, and it then becomes a choice from Options 3 to 9. Given the fire damage to the hut and other potential threats (eg. termite damage), an overarching objective should be to seek to achieve a resilient solution consistent with heritage conservation. For example, this might involve fire resistant timbers, detailing to avoid embers entering the hut, or site measures to suppress bushfires.

As noted with the previous hut, with regard to the specific requirements included in the ACT Heritage Register citation, the bushfire damage would appear to satisfy the exceptional circumstances needed for demolition. However, it is less clear that no prudent and feasible alternatives exist to demolition. It would appear feasible not to demolish the hut as there is no technical impediment to the collapsed hut remaining as is, or to undertake some degree of restoration/reconstruction.

The issue of prudence relates to whether there is funding available to implement options apart from demolition, noting that Option 3 involves no expenditure. All other options involve some degree of expenditure, including demolition (Option 4), with perhaps Option 9 being the most expensive.

The following table provides comments in relation to the policy guidance contained in the Namadgi *Plan of Management*.

Issues to be considered according to the Plan of Management	Comments
The nature and extent of damage	This has been considered in the comments above.
The heritage values of the buildings including architectural and aesthetic qualities, historical associations and context and social significance	This has been considered in the comments above.
The strength of community attachment	There would still seem to be a strong level of community attachment to the hut, expressed through the Kosciuszko Huts Association, even in its

Issues to be considered according to the Plan of Management	Comments
	<p>damaged state. Indeed, this attachment might have been heightened because of the fire damage.</p> <p>In addition, family attachments to the hut are also strong.</p>
The importance of the buildings for safety, shelter and survival	The former hut is not perceived to be important for these reasons by the ACT Parks and Conservation Service. However, the KHA regards the huts as important for shelter, at least.
The recreational value of the buildings	Given its remoteness, the former hut had limited recreational value for day walkers and other users. None the less, such value exists.
The role of the buildings in advancing wider management objectives such as concentrating impacts or drawing visitors away from environmentally sensitive areas	Given the remoteness of the hut and that it is little visited, it would not seem to play any role in such objectives.
The value of the buildings in providing opportunities for the interpretation of natural and cultural values	The hut provided a limited opportunity for interpretation given its remoteness. However, it provided an opportunity to interpret the grazing history of the area.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The two huts, Demanding Hut and Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut, are included in the ACT Heritage Register. Prior to the bushfires of 2019-20, the huts were of heritage significance.

The damage to the huts has impacted their heritage values. The evidential value is diminished – a collapsed hut with fire damaged/destroyed timbers presents less evidence of a stockman's hut. However, this value is not entirely lost. On the other hand, the historic associations remain.

A broader issue is the long term survival of such historic huts, especially in the face of future seasonal bushfires. These two huts were part of a collection of seven included in the ACT Heritage Register. If two are lost this year and not restored/reconstructed, that would leave five surviving huts. Future bushfires will almost certainly threaten the remaining huts. The issue is whether to accept cumulative losses, potentially leading to no huts surviving in the long term. Alternately, the small collection of huts could be viewed as the minimum representation of certain values and an aspect of history which should be conserved for the long term.

This issue should also be considered at a regional scale. The bushfires from last season also damaged high-country historic sites in New South Wales, such as those at Kiandra. This followed the major bushfires in 2003 which also impacted historic huts in the Kosciusko National Park. Bushfires are an enduring threat to such sites, and they are substantially and inexorably eroding the remaining population of sites.

There would appear to be strong community and family attachments to the huts, perhaps even heightened because of the damage. Such attachments arise in the case of members of the Kosciuszko Huts Association, other community members interested in the huts, as well as family members related to the history of the huts. These attachments relate to both heritage values and the amenity provided by the former huts.

The formal provisions of the ACT Heritage Register citation and *Namadgi National Park Plan of Management* must also be taken into account.

Given this context, and noting the discussion of options presented in the previous sections, ***it is recommended the two huts be fully restored/reconstructed, re-using as much of the original material as possible*** (eg. corrugated iron). This should be undertaken after the careful recording, deconstruction and salvage of the hut sites, possibly with the assistance of an historical archaeologist.

The design of the restoration/reconstruction should also have an overarching objective to seek to achieve a resilient solution to avoid or mitigate threats such as bushfire, consistent with heritage conservation. For example, this might involve fire resistant timbers, detailing to avoid embers entering the hut, or site measures to suppress bushfires.

The hut sites might also benefit from improved signage.

In the case of Demanding Hut, and possibly also Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut, consideration could be given to the creative use of surviving materials which cannot be re-used (eg. the massive charred timber columns from Demanding Hut) to commemorate the

original hut/s and the impact of bushfire. Any such installation should be sympathetically located if placed near the restored/reconstructed huts.

The active involvement of the Kosciuszko Huts Association should be positively considered in any restoration/reconstruction project, and further consultations undertaken with stakeholders including those with family connections.

In addition, a number of issues should be addressed:

- a check should be made as soon as possible for any hazardous materials which might exist on the hut sites (eg. in the case of the refrigerator at Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut);
- there is also an urgent need to formally survey the hut sites, probably to remove and safely store any important portable items that may be lost, and to otherwise secure the sites (eg. to prevent loose iron sheets blowing away). This might involve careful deconstruction of the collapsed iron sheet elements, securing the sheeting in a pile tethered to the ground or otherwise weighed down, and erecting a temporary fence and signage. This work is especially important as it may take some time for decisions to be taken and recommended conservation works to be completed;
- clarification should be sought from ACT Heritage regarding the interpretation of the specific requirements contained within the ACT Heritage Register citation, and the apparent contradiction between ii) a) and ii) b); and
- consistent with the Namadgi *Plan of Management*, ACT Heritage should be consulted about the options for the future of the huts.

References

ACT Heritage Council 1999, *Stockmen's Huts in Namadgi National Park*, ACT Heritage Register citation.

ACT Parks Conservation and Lands 2010, *Namadgi National Park Plan of Management*, Department of Territory and Municipal Services.

Godden Mackay Logan [GML] 2005, *Kosciuszko National Park Huts Conservation Strategy*, prepared for the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Higgins, M and D Scott 1992, *Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut conservation study*, Namadgi National Park, prepared for the Kosciuszko Huts Association.

Higgins, M and D Scott 1994, *Demanding Hut conservation study*, Namadgi National Park, prepared for the Kosciuszko Huts Association.

Kosciuszko Huts Association [KHA] 2020a, *Demanding Hut*, <https://khuts.org/index.php/the-huts/namadgi-national-park-huts/43-demanding-hut>, accessed 2 June 2020.

Kosciuszko Huts Association 2020b, *Max and Bert Oldfields Hut*, <https://khuts.org/index.php/the-huts/namadgi-national-park-huts/31-max-and-bert-oldfields-hut>, accessed 2 June 2020.

Philip Leeson Architects 2018, *Statement of heritage effect for Demanding Hut*, report prepared for the ACT Parks and Conservation Service.

Appendix XXX.1 ACT Heritage Register citation – *Stockmen’s Huts in Namadgi National Park*

Appendix XXX.2 Extract from Kosciuszko National Park Huts Conservation Strategy

Godden Mackay Logan

Kosciuszko National Park Hut Rebuilding Decision Making Process

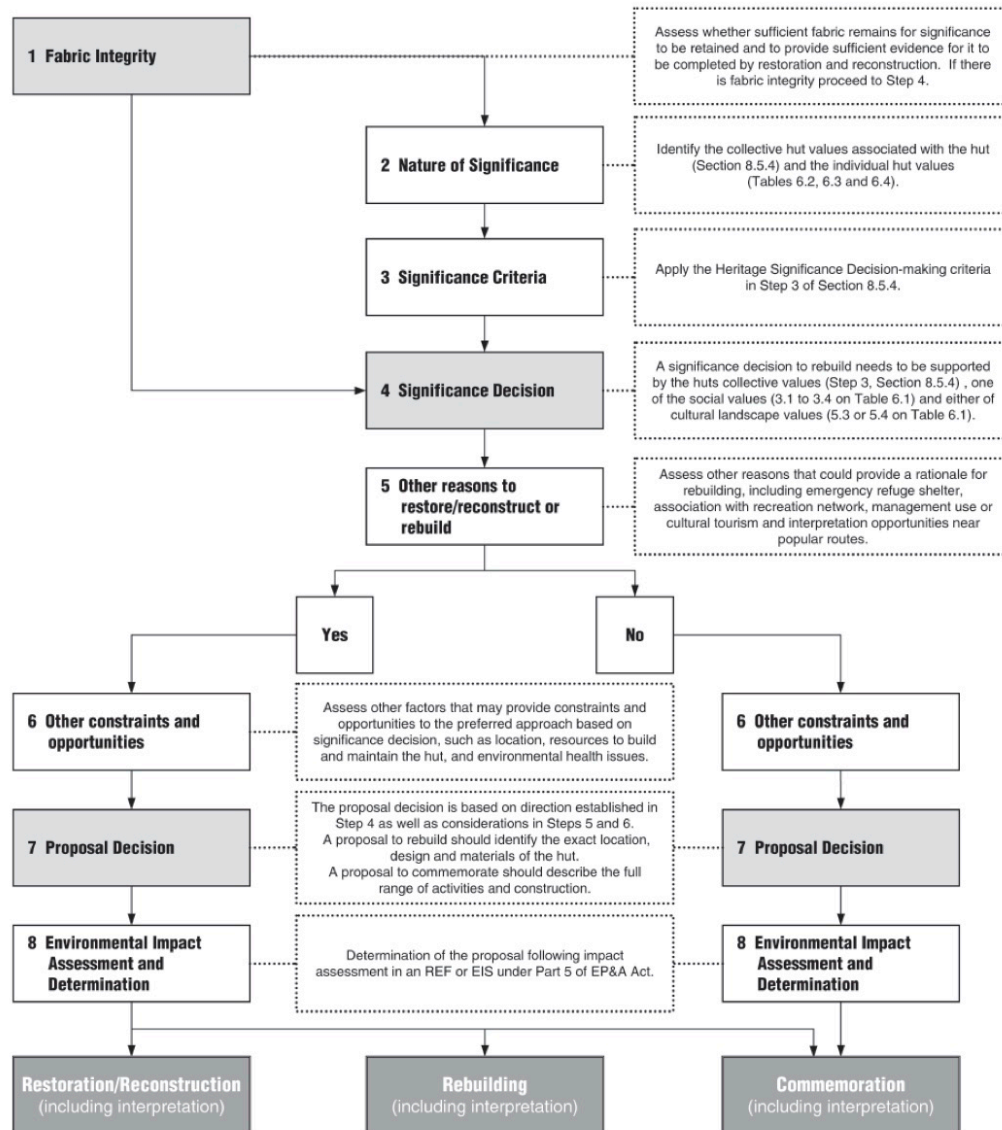


Figure 8.1 Decision making steps in relation to huts damaged or destroyed in Kosciuszko National Park.

Appendix XXX.3 Stakeholder Comments

Email from [REDACTED] Huts Maintenance Officer Namadgi, Kosciuszko Huts Association, 26 June 2020

Duncan

I have been the caretaker of Demanding for nearly 8 years and during that time I have been committed to preserving the heritage of the building. I usually travel from Campbelltown up to 10 times a year to check on all my huts. These include Horse Gully and Brandy Hut as well as maintaining the Glendale depot. Since taking on the hut, I have tried to maintain within the restrictions of National Parks a clear entrance to the hut and keep the surrounding area free of bush litter and dead wood. I have not been allowed to widen the entrance pathway or remove any saplings or trees that impact close to the hut.

We have had three work parties at the hut. The first being to replace the tank stand which I had identified had deteriorated and re-align the existing guttering after it had been cleaned which paid off with a full tank most of the time. The next work party was to replace some of the stumps on the western side of the building as after inspection I found they had deteriorated. Due to the massive rock plate that extends from the back of the chimney down under the building we were only able to dig so far and as water was constantly running under the building despite all the diversions I had installed, we had to use concrete as the base as water would have eroded the new stumps. After replacing the two layered fireproof netting nothing could be seen from the outside. Prior to the third work party I had performed another full inspection and found the main corner posts both on the western side had no bases under the ground. These had rotten away, one from white ants but nil present then, the other from constant water run off. The hut originally had 16 stump posts under neath and all were slowly degrading. There were three stumps that had been concreted around the bases by parks years before I took over. When we were working on replacing one of the main stumps we found white ants had eaten through one of the floor joists when we were trying to align the building up. We had to stop work. The hut was left in a precarious position, we had two sets of cribbing supporting the building from the north, the fire protection netting had been removed, the floor boards had been stacked up under the building, furniture had been left under my tarp to the east of the hut.

A meeting with NP and heritage was organised onsite within weeks of the shut down by NP due to safety and we discussed how we were going to repair/rebuild the hut. [REDACTED] put together a comprehensive CMP for Demanding and after 18 months we were informed the hut was going to be rebuilt with [REDACTED] overseeing the process. However, due to staff shortage and other requirements by NP, the rebuild was delayed, however, it was on the agenda for this to happen in 2020. Unfortunately, the fires took hold and I feel we left the hut in a situation where the fire could take hold from underneath and with no fire break, no fire protection as we had removed the fire netting whilst waiting for the rebuild.

Throughout the time since I took over the care of the hut, I replaced the steps leading into the hut, fixed and painted the door with the paint noted in original photos, built a wood box, repaired the original table from Clear Hill homestead, repaired the existing cupboard, installed a bush close line, temporary repaired the chimney until I could get permission to replace it. This had been discussed with NP. Each visit cleared the entrance pathway of bush material and mowed and raked around the hut where I could. A fire break was not permitted. I added reading material such as newsletters, a first aid book, candles, shovel, rake, axe and bow saw which I paid for.

I am fully aware that the hut is not for overnight visitation, but I do believe if someone is caught out in a storm, a place that can provide warmth or just a shelter that could provide safety is paramount. For me the hut is part of our history, it tells the story of the people who worked and used the hut when they were mustering sheep from Kelly's Plain. The construction of the hut is unique as it used bullocks to transport materials. I believe the family descendants would like the hut rebuilt as I would. If the hut is rebuilt, I would like it to have a proper fire break, it was destined to be rebuilt before the fire. I can understand if we had rebuilt the hut and then it was destroyed and the powers of be said no, but that was not the case. The hut means a lot to a lot of people and its history should live on. I look forward to hearing what the outcomes for the hut will be. I have not been allowed to see the devastation as yet but hopefully, I will soon. As the new HMO for Namadgi the devastation of the park, both environmentally and the loss of wildlife affected me greatly. The loss of two huts and another one that had minor damage just added to our grief.

[REDACTED] HMO Namadgi, KHA

Email from [REDACTED] Vice President, Kosciuszko Huts Association, 4 July 2020

Dear Duncan,

I manage the KHA FB page and generally post something every two or three days. The following statistics are for the last 3 months 17/03/20 to 30/06/20.

The KHA Facebook posts for Demanding and, Max and Berts Huts have been attracting significantly more attention than the average post.

On average a hut post will reach between 1,500 and 2,000 online users.

Any Hut post that reaches over 2,500 online users is notable as only 25% of hut posts reach this many people.

Only 4 Hut posts in this period have reached more than 3,000 online users.

The Demanding Hut post from 15/06/20 Reached 4,500 online users (2518 fans and 1942 non-fans), and was only exceeded by Wheelers Hut, one of the most picturesque and significant huts in Kosciuszko. The large volume of "non-fans" who viewed the posts also indicates that this Hut and site resonates with the wider community, beyond the regular KHA fans. The adult daughter and grandson of the Curtis family have contacted KHA after viewing the FB post and have expressed an enduring connection with the Hut and site. They are keen to be involved in the reconstruction, and have a deep emotional connection to the Hut and site.

That Demanding Hut has attracted so much interest from the public may be attributable to its link with the family of Garret Cotter, the non-Indigenous pioneer of Namadgi and namesake of the Cotter River. Garrets' role in the history of the region, from convict labourer to respected landowner, and his friendship with Oonyong, an Indigenous Chief, who led him to water and pastures before and after he was banished "beyond the area of location.." across the Murrumbidgee for 4 years..", define the convict roots of Canberra and indeed Australia. The Demanding Hut is the last vestige of built heritage related to the Cotter family, and represents the evolution of the cultural form of a Shepherds Hut. These simple outstation structures were often built on sites where Indigenous shelters previously existed.

The Max and Berts Hut post from 3/06/20 Reached 2,900 online users (2055 fans – 878 non-fans) making it the 5th highest rating Hut post of the 48 Hut posts in the 3 month period. This post also attracted attention from a higher than usual amount of non-fans.

Both Demanding and, Max and Berts Huts were burnt in the fire that was started in the Orroral Valley from a helicopter. The huts are close to an existing fire trail so that access to build and inspect the huts was quite good. The families' enduring connection to their ancestors' role in the history of the area, and the wide community interest in these two iconic Huts and sites are significant factors in the decision to rebuild them. The historic provision of shelter in the area, means that the community have an expectation that emergency shelter can be found at the sites. When combined with the fact that significant materials from the huts were present on the sites after the fires, the case for the rebuilding of the Demanding and, Max and Berts' huts is exceptionally strong. To lose the last physical link to the family of Garrett Cotter, on the historic Cotter family property, would be a travesty.

Yours Sincerely

[REDACTED]
Vice President KHA



ACT Heritage Council

HERITAGE ADVICE

Under Part 13 of the *Heritage Act 2004*

Heritage Reference: Mt Clear-B40
Booth-B6
Contact Officer: MR
Received by Council: 15 September 2020

TO: ACT Parks and Conservation Service
Peter Cotsell
Peter.cotsell@act.gov.au

Block:	District:	Heritage Place:
40	Mount Clear	Demanding Hut
6	Booth	Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut

Status of Place: Registered Heritage Place
Report Details: “*Historic Huts in Namadgi affected by Bushfire*”
(Duncan Marshall, 2020)
Council Advice provided by: Chair / Heritage Council

Background:

On 15 September 2020, the ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) submitted “*Historic Huts in Namadgi affected by Bushfire*” by Duncan Marshall (the Report) to the ACT Heritage Council (the Council), for advice on the appropriate management of Demanding Hut and Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut.

Both huts are registered on the ACT Heritage Register as part of the ‘Stockman's Huts in Namadgi National Park’ registration, and are significant for their association with ACT high country pastoralism.

Both huts are also part of a collection of six registered huts – also including Horse Gully Hut, Hospital Creek Hut, Rowley's Rendezvous Creek Hut and Waterhole Hut – which are significant as good examples of the type of rudimentary 20th century huts built to provide shelter to graziers while away from their home properties.

As registered heritage places, *Heritage Act 2004* provisions require that all registered Stockman's Huts be conserved and managed in a way appropriate to their heritage significance.

Following the 2020 Orroral Valley bushfire, fire damage to Demanding Hut and Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut was identified, and the Report has since been prepared to document condition of the registered huts and inform a submission to the Council for advice.

The Report sets out that both huts are now substantially collapsed as a result of the bushfire, although the following significant fabric remains on site, albeit in a damaged condition:

- Demanding Hut: a stone and concrete fireplace and chimney; a corrugated metal rainwater tank set on a modern timber stand; collapsed corrugated galvanised iron walls and roof; charred remnants of collapsed massive sawn timber posts; circular

stump footings; concrete collar for a former timber post; and modern circular concrete footings; and

- Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut: part of the corrugated iron fireplace surround; fireplace stones; remnant timber members; collapsed corrugated iron wall and roof sheeting; metal fixings; and moveable fabric including a former fridge, a rainwater drum with downpipe and remnant metal bed and chairs.

The Report identifies that, even in this damaged state, remnant heritage values are associated with both huts and it is highly desirable to respect these values in some way. On this basis, a range of management options are presented, including:

- Installation of signage to interpret heritage significance values;
- Record the site as is, including archaeological expertise;
- Do nothing;
- Remove damaged fabric, leaving only core elements;
- Stabilise the collapsed huts and fence them for protection and public safety;
- Partial reconstruction, following stabilisation of key elements;
- Full reconstruction, using as much original fabric as possible; and
- Commemorating the sites through an artistic approach.

Additionally, the Report recommends that both huts be fully reconstructed, given the strong community and family attachments to the huts, and the desire for continued use of huts for contemporary shelter; as identified by consultation with Kosciuszko Huts Association (KHA) members.

The Report also recommends a number of urgent tasks be undertaken, being:

- A formal survey the hut sites, by a historical archaeologist;
- The removal and safe storage of any important portable items that may be lost, and to otherwise secure loose items; and
- Erection of a temporary fence and signage.

Council Assessment:

The Council is saddened by bushfire impacts to Demanding Hut and Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut, and the knowledge that their condition does not allow restoration – as defined by the *Burra Charter* (Australia ICOMOS 2013) – given the extent of fire damage and the loss of significant fabric.

In the context, a reconstruction outcome would essentially be construction of replica huts at each location.

Following review of the Report, and consideration of the broader heritage management context, the Council does not consider this approach to be a good conservation outcome, as:

- While Demanding Hut and Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut were good examples of their type, four other examples of this type remain in Namadgi National Park, and these huts continue to demonstrate this aspect of the ACT's pastoral history;
- Replica constructions can distort and confuse the historical understanding and heritage significance of a place, and new buildings that are clearly distinguishable from historic buildings can be a better conservation outcome;
- Replica constructions could further damage remaining significant fabric and features at each site, including archaeological features and deposits within and adjacent to original hut sites;
- While both huts have been damaged, *in situ* conservation of remaining original fabric, when combined with heritage interpretation, would continue to express the significant association of both places with ACT high country pastoralism; and
- Conservation of the remaining original Stockman's Huts should be a higher priority than construction of replica huts, especially in the management context of Namadgi National Park, where there is limited funding for heritage conservation works.

In making this assessment, the Council notes that no Conservation Management Plan (CMP) is in place for the Stockman's Huts, and that earlier conservation studies prepared in the 1990s are outdated and no longer suitable for managing these significant buildings.

Further, Council records indicate that physical conservation works at other Stockman's Huts have been limited; on which basis, conservation works are likely to be needed at this stage to ensure their continued survival.

For example, a 2019 Demanding Hut submission to the Council identified that the building was in very poor condition due to termite damage, natural decay of timber framing, storm water damage, and loose wall cladding. These condition issues developed over several decades, and as a result, the only remaining management option was to dismantle and rebuild the hut using some new materials; although this did not occur prior to the 2020 Orroral Valley fire.

The Council also considers that conservation works to improve the fire resilience of the Stockman's Huts is a priority, especially given climate change predictions for more frequent and intense fire events in the future.

Advice:

In this context, the Council recommends the following heritage conservation outcomes in response to 2020 bushfire impacts to Demanding Hut and Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut:

1. Management of damaged huts as ruins, with appropriate heritage interpretation outcomes.

As restoration of Demanding Hut and Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut is not possible, both hut sites should instead be managed as ruins in accordance with the principles of '*Ruins. A guide to conservation and management*' by the Australian Heritage Council (2013).

This approach would require stabilisation of hut sites, to make them safe for public access, and would allow for '*in situ*' conservation of remaining significant fabric and

features. This approach would also allow for the hut sites, albeit in modified form, to continue to be the focus of intangible heritage values associated with each place.

Heritage interpretation should also form part of this outcome, to actively promote the history of each hut and its heritage significance to the public. Opportunities to use remnant significant fabric in these outcomes should be considered, with the aim of providing creative, respectful and high-quality interpretation outcomes.

To achieve these outcomes, further submissions should be made for Council advice on appropriate management, including a detailed work plan for the physical site and details of proposed heritage interpretation outcomes.

2. Preparation of a CMP for the remaining Stockman's Huts.

This CMP should be prepared as a priority, to ensure continued conservation and responsible management of the remaining Stockman's Huts, and be submitted to the Council within the next 6-12 months.

The CMP should be prepared by a heritage specialist with expertise in vernacular architecture, and informed by advice from other experts as required, including a historical archaeologist and bushfire consultant. The CMP should also be prepared in accordance with the Council's 2015 *Conservation Management Plan. Guiding Principles* policy; and also be informed by a detailed condition assessment of each hut.

Once prepared, the CMP must be submitted to the Council for approval under Section 61J of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

3. Undertake active conservation works on the remaining Stockman's Huts.

Informed by the approved CMP, a program of regular maintenance and conservation works should be implemented for the remaining Stockman's Huts.

In the event that condition assessments identify the need for urgent conservation works prior to completion and approval of the CMP, a Scope of Works for these activities is to be submitted to the Council for approval as soon as practicable.

A Statement of Heritage Effect application may also be required under Section 61G of the *Heritage Act 2004*, for any works that require damage to significant fabric or would result in heritage significance values being diminished.

Additionally, the Council advises that the following management actions are required:

4. If not yet installed, temporary fencing must be erected around both hut sites as a matter of urgency prior to the reopening of these areas within Namadgi National Park; noting this fencing was recommended by the Rapid Risk Assessment Team in February 2020 and by Duncan Marshall in September 2020.
5. Preparation of an inventory of all portable historic items from both hut sites, and a list of their current locations, if removed from site for security reasons.
6. Inspection of both sites by a qualified archaeologist with experience in historic huts should be undertaken, to document any archaeological features and deposits present.

The outcomes of the inventory and archaeological inspection described above should also subsequently inform: the preparation of the Stockman's Huts CMP; the development of a detailed work plan for both huts; and the development of proposed heritage interpretation outcomes.

In providing this advice, the Council notes that a *Heritage Act 2004* approval would be required to construct replica huts at the original locations of Demanding Hut and Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut; and for reasons set out above, the Council is unlikely to provide a statutory approval for this outcome.

Note:

In providing this advice, the Council notes the strong community and family attachments to Demanding Hut and Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut, and the desire for continued use of huts for shelter, as identified by KHA members during preparation of the Report.

As land manager, I am aware that PCS would independently consider any requests to build new structures to provide contemporary shelter within Namadgi National Park.

To inform any proposal for new shelters at or near Demanding Hut and Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut, the Council also advises:

- These structures should be sited to avoid impacts to remaining significant features of each hut site, and any Aboriginal places or objects that may also occur in the area. Council advice on new structure locations should be sought, and inspection may also be required by a qualified archaeologist and Representative Aboriginal Organisations;
- For reasons set out above, the architectural form of any new structures should be clearly distinguishable from the historic huts; and
- Structures which are resilient to future fire events are recommended, to minimise impacts to original hut sites and surrounds.

The Council welcomes further discussion with PCS on this matter, and requests for further advice or meetings can be made by contacting the Secretariat at heritage@act.gov.au.

The Council also notes that community organisations are eligible to apply for ACT Heritage Grant funding for heritage conservation and interpretation projects at Demanding Hut and Max and Bert Oldfield's Hut, if made in partnership with PCS. The Council encourages consideration of this opportunity in upcoming discussions with the KHA and other community stakeholders.



Dr Ken Heffernan
**Chair (as delegate for),
ACT Heritage Council**

8 April 2021