



NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk

**Proposal to grant a lease under section 151 of
the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974***



Acknowledgement of Country

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

This resource may contain images or names of deceased persons in photographs or historical content.

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Overview

The Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk will be an iconic walking experience that showcases the unique natural and cultural highlights of the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area, Gardens of Stone National Park and Wollemi National Park.

The multi-day walk will be a major drawcard for visitors to the NSW Central West, establishing a signature visitor experience of international standing to establish Lithgow as a premier walking destination.

The Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk forms part of the Wollemi Great Walk, a 100+ km track alignment that connects regional communities from Lithgow to the Widden Valley. The walk supports visitor dispersal and provides new opportunities for regional tourism development in New South Wales.

The Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk has been developed in response to a growing demand for nature-based experiences that evoke a sense of discovery and connection to natural values. It will provide an immersive walking experience that is unique to the region, showcasing abundant wildlife, history, geology, culture and landscapes of international significance. The walk has been developed to cater for independent walkers as well as supported, guided walkers.

The Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk has been established by experts in walking track design to deliver a moderate-grade walking experience set among remote landscapes. Fully accessible to the public, the track features panoramic views of Carne Creek and captures the varied terrain of the area, ranging from clifftop views, rainforest-lined gullies and complex stone pagoda formations.

The newly established track will improve access to existing visitor facilities at the popular Glow Worm Tunnel precinct and complement a diverse offering of visitor experiences within the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area, including cycling, short walks, camping and 4-wheel drive (4WD) and motorcycle touring.

Highlights include:

- Immersive visitor experience that provides a sense of safety and confidence for visitors new to overnight bushwalking
- Varied terrain and touchpoints, including open heathland, sandstone escarpments, forested gullies, canyons and pagoda country
- Seamless connections to Lithgow via shared-use trail network
- Remote public campgrounds and facilities suitable for independent, self-guided walkers
- Bush camps and facilities for supported, guided walkers
- Connections to Glow Worm Tunnel visitor precinct and facilities
- Direct economic benefits for Lithgow with additional visitation, overnight stays and visitor spending

Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk lease proposal

The Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk and Wollemi Great Walk form part of the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area visitor infrastructure program – a landmark \$49.5 million NSW Government commitment to strengthen protection of the park while delivering meaningful economic and community outcomes for Lithgow.

The program marks one of the most significant visitor infrastructure packages in New South Wales. It is an example of conservation in action, delivering iconic experiences while protecting the park's natural and cultural values.

Vision and objectives

The Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk is recognised as a key visitor experience in the NSW Great Walks program, which seeks to deliver a network of multi-day walks across the state to drive regional economic growth and build a legacy of support for conservation.

Released by National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) in 2023, the NSW Great Walks program seeks to establish New South Wales as an internationally recognised walking destination with low-impact facilities that facilitate memorable walking experiences for the burgeoning visitor market.

The NSW Great Walks program presents a unique opportunity to establish strategic partnerships to combine NPWS's track record in walking track design and construction while leveraging experience in product development and destination marketing.

Partnering with tourism leaders will enable NPWS to continue delivering world-class infrastructure, while inviting investment and expertise from partners with a successful track record in tourism development, cultural and community awareness programs, employment programs and local business partnerships.

The Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk proposal will deliver a range of environmental, social and economic benefits for the NSW Central West region, including ongoing protection of natural and cultural heritage, new opportunities for visitors to explore and connect with nature, economic stimulus for the local region, and improved wellbeing for visitors and local communities.

Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area

The establishment of the Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk coincides with the gazettal of the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area, located on the doorstep of Lithgow, linking the Wollemi, Blue Mountains and Gardens of Stone national parks in the Central West.

Located approximately 5 km north of Lithgow and 140 km west of Sydney, the park is comprised of 3 former state forests, including Newnes State Forest and parts of Ben Bullen and Wolgan state forests. It also contains the headwaters of the Wolgan, Coxs and Wollangambe rivers.

The park was formally gazetted in May 2022 as part of a \$49.5 million commitment from the NSW Government to strengthen protection of the iconic landscape within the Greater Blue Mountains.

The investment marks one of the most significant visitor infrastructure packages in New South Wales, strengthening the Lithgow visitor economy while delivering important conservation outcomes for the park. The establishment also coincided with new additions to the Gardens of Stone National Park (308 ha) and Wollemi National Park (2,257 ha) as part of a longstanding commitment to protect and conserve areas of outstanding natural and cultural significance.

These additions to the national park estate represent a significant achievement, protecting more than 30,000 ha of rich eucalypt forests, important cultural heritage, iconic landscapes and an array of threatened species and ecological communities.

A number of existing access tracks, lookouts and camping areas are currently in use within the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area, with limited or restricted access only. The Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area infrastructure package builds on the area's natural strengths with low-impact visitor facilities that improve access and amenity, protect and conserve natural values, and foster learning and awareness of the environment.

The NSW Government commitment will establish Lithgow as an iconic visitor destination and provide seamless linkages to regional communities while supporting economic outcomes with increased day trips, visitor spend, overnight stays and repeat visitation.

An extensive infrastructure program has been established to meet the needs of today's visitors and create new opportunities to encourage increased visitation.

Major infrastructure developments include:

- Wollemi Great Walk – 100+ km walking track with cycling connections
- 35 km mountain bike network
- Shared-use cycling and walking track connections
- Lookouts and day use areas
- Short walks and walking connections
- Family campground
- 4WD and motorcycle touring network
- Access for rock climbing and canyoning

Multi-day walk visitor experience

The Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk is a 4-day, 3-night walk that forms part of the Wollemi Great Walk, connecting the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area to the Wollemi National Park. See Figure 1.

Commencing from a visitor precinct located 2 hours' drive from Sydney and 10 minutes from Lithgow, the multi-day walk showcases woody eucalypt forest, ancient ferned gullies, complex pagoda formations and panoramic views of Carne Creek.

Visitors can commence their journey from Forest Camp, a family campground within the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area, or stay with local accommodation providers in Lithgow before embarking on the walk. Connected to short walks and shared-use trails within the park, visitors can also combine the multi-day walk with cycle touring options, mountain biking trails, day walks and camping experiences.

The Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk has been developed to cater for independent walkers and supported, guided walkers, as outlined below.

Visitor experience overview, self-guided walk

Day 1

- Commences at the junction of the old Wolgan Railway and Glow Worm Tunnel Road
- Highlights include:
 - eucalypt forests and woodlands, rugged landscapes and panoramic views of Carne Creek
 - Broad Swamp interpretive walk

Day 2

- Traverses rocky creek crossings and fern-lined gullies
- Navigates complex pagoda formations and open heathland
- Highlights include:
 - Birds Rock lookout
 - unrivalled views of Carne Creek
 - dry canyons and sandstone gullies

Day 3

- Finishes with a challenging ascent to exit to Carne Creek and connect with Glow Worm Tunnel Road
- Highlights include:
 - Cathedral Cave, an exceptional sandstone formation surrounded by ancient ferns
 - complex rocky gullies to gain vantage points towards the Wolgan Valley

Day 4

- Moderate grade track to connect with Glow Worm Tunnel and Newnes campground
- Highlights include:

Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk lease proposal

- Wolgan View Canyon
- Glow Worm Tunnel walking track
- views of Wolgan Valley and Donkey Mountain
- Newnes Industrial Ruins walk

Note: The current route alignment is conceptual and subject to change pending further environmental and cultural surveys.

Visitor experience overview, supported multi-day walk

Day 1

- Commences at the junction of the old Wolgan Railway and Glow Worm Tunnel Road
- Highlights include:
 - eucalypt forests and woodlands, rugged landscapes and panoramic views of Carne Creek
 - Broad Swamp interpretive walk

Day 2

- Traverses rocky creek crossings and fern-lined gullies
- Navigates complex pagoda formations and open heathland
- Highlights include:
 - unrivalled views of Carne Creek and Birds Rock
 - dry canyons and sandstone gullies

Day 3

- Highlights include:
 - complex rocky gullies to gain vantage points towards the Wolgan Valley
 - Cathedral Cave, an exceptional sandstone formation surrounded by ancient ferns
 - dry canyons and rugged landscapes with moderate elevation

Day 4

- Challenging final ascent to exit to Glow Worm Tunnel Road
- Highlights include:
 - Carne Creek crossing, navigating rocky gullies and complex landscapes
 - towering views of sandstone cliffs from Carne Creek

Note: The current route alignment is conceptual and subject to change pending further environmental and cultural surveys.

Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk lease proposal



Figure 1 Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk

Infrastructure program

Public use and access

Independent walkers can access the Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk and NPWS public campgrounds, with all bookings to be managed via the NPWS website. Commercial tour operators registered with the NPWS Parks Eco Pass program will be able to guide small groups with access to NPWS public campgrounds.

The Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk will also cater for an independent tour operator to establish and manage low-impact bush camps for supported, guided walking experiences.

New track alignment

The proposed new walking track linking the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area to the Glow Worm Tunnel has been developed in collaboration with leaders in remote walking track establishment.

The track alignment has been thoughtfully considered to minimise environmental impacts, leverage natural assets and support sustainable ongoing maintenance. Best practice remote area facility principles will ensure that tracks, camps and lookouts have minimal impact on natural and cultural values.

A number of factors have been considered in establishing and refining the current alignment, including:

- incorporating points of interest, including lookouts, rock formations, rainforests, waterfalls, gullies and unique features where possible
- avoiding roads and operational mining infrastructure
- capturing a sense of remoteness
- ensuring the distances between camps can be walked comfortably in one day
- providing critical links to complementary visitor infrastructure and experiences, while supporting economic outcomes for regional towns and communities.

All track developments are subject to rigorous environmental approvals. Final track alignments are subject to change pending environmental, historic heritage and Aboriginal cultural heritage assessments.

Walking track standards

The NPWS has a proven track record of excellence in walking track design and construction.

Following the Australian Walking Track Grading System, the track standard will be a combination of Grade 3 and Grade 4 to provide a sense of remoteness while balancing the needs of key user groups, including those new to overnight bushwalking.

Track width will vary between 600 mm and 900 mm with primary use of timber steps, carved steps, sandstone steps and drains, with safety barriers as required.

Public facilities

The walking track will be open to the public, with NPWS campgrounds along the multi-day walk featuring basic facilities, including elevated camping platforms, shelters and basic toilets. See Figure 1 and Figure 2.

Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk lease proposal

Campground locations have been carefully considered to capture unique features, including panoramic views, pagoda fields, dry canyons, eucalypt forests, ferned gullies and creek crossings. Distances between campgrounds will be within a comfortable day's walk. Bookings for campsites will be managed by NPWS to ensure sustainable visitation to the area.



Figure 2 Similar infrastructure to proposed NPWS campsites on the Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk. Top left – Acacia Flat campground, Blue Mountains National Park. Top right and bottom images – Oaky Beach Campground, Murrumurung National Park. John Spencer/DCCEEW

Proposed leased facilities

In addition to the public NPWS campgrounds, low-impact bush camps are proposed under a lease at 3 locations within the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area to support a guided multi-day walking experience. Locations of these facilities are identified in the *Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area plan of management*. Further information on the proposed lease is set out in the 'Leasing proposal' section below.

No new leased facilities will be established in the Gardens of Stone National Park or Wollemi National Park.

Stakeholder engagement

NPWS is leading the establishment of the Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk and the Wollemi Great Walk in collaboration with local businesses, Traditional Owners, targeted stakeholders, tour operators, accommodation providers, community groups and local councils.

State, regional and local tourism bodies are actively involved in product development as part of a coordinated and strategic approach to align with established and emerging trends and leverage strategic product positioning and partnerships.

Leasing proposal

Expressions of interest process

NPWS issued an expressions of interest (EOI) in 2022 for an experienced operator to invest in, co-design, develop and manage low-impact, high-quality visitor accommodation and associated facilities to support a guided multi-day walking experience within the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area.

This guided walking experience will complement the publicly accessible Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk.

The EOI was designed to obtain investment from experienced leaders in sustainable tourism, encourage diversified visitation, and establish bespoke guided walking experiences without compromising public use or impacting protected areas. It was also designed to enable NPWS to focus on delivering high-quality assets for public use, elevating the profile of the region, and enhancing community outcomes with more local jobs and opportunities for local businesses.

The EOI for the supported multi-day walk was run in conjunction with a separate EOI for the Lost City Adventure Experience, including establishing a zipline and *via ferrata* experience. After a detailed review and public consultation process, it was determined the Lost City Adventure Experience will not proceed.

Proposed lessee

As a result of the EOI process, the Minister administering the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* proposes to grant a lease to Wild Bush Luxury Experience Pty Ltd ACN 648 431 734 (Wild Bush Luxury) to develop and operate low-impact bush camps to support a guided multi-day walk on the Garden of Stone Multi-Day Walk. The lease is proposed to be granted under section 151 of the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

Wild Bush Luxury is wholly owned by Experience Co Limited ACN 167 320 470, a New South Wales-based, ASX-listed company that operates 'mild to wild' adventures across several tourist destinations in Australia and New Zealand. Founded in 1999, Experience Co has extensive experience in delivering tourism experiences across 37 locations in Australia and New Zealand to more than one million visitors annually.

Wild Bush Luxury operates a suite of premium wilderness walks and multi-day adventures in a number of Australian states:

- Tasmania – The Maria Island Walk in a historically significant national park location off Tasmania's east coast
- Northern Territory – Bamarru Plains in the Top End
- South Australia – The Arkaba Walk and Arkaba Homestead and Conservancy in the Flinders Ranges.

Wild Bush Luxury's ethos is 'to provoke, inspire and reconnect guests to the bush through experiences that are ... quintessentially Australian'.

In addition to operating premium walks, Wild Bush Luxury has experience co-designing and constructing low-impact bush camps in rugged Australian landscapes. This is demonstrated by Wild Bush Luxury's The Maria Island guided walk, located within a national park off the east coast of Tasmania.

Wild Bush Luxury also has a demonstrated track record in sustainable bush camp construction and operations, incorporating the use of solar power, rainwater collection, onsite grey-water treatment and composting toilets.

Proposed lease arrangements

The proposed lease arrangements involve an agreement for lease and, if all the conditions under the agreement for lease are satisfied, a grant of lease.

The agreement for lease provides the framework for undertaking environmental impact and sustainability assessments (refer to 'Environmental impacts and sustainability assessments' section below), determining actual lease areas (refer to 'Lease area' section below) and undertaking the agreed works.

If the conditions under the agreement for lease are satisfied, Wild Bush Luxury will then be granted a lease to operate bush camps to support multi-day guided walking for an initial term of 10 years plus two 5-year options (total potential term of 20 years).

Lease area

Five potential locations for low-impact bush camps were identified in the *Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area plan of management*, which was adopted in November 2022. The plan of management referred to these locations as 'accommodation nodes' and they were selected based on a number of factors, including scenic amenity, accessibility to canyons and waterways, appropriate gradient and profile for development, and 4WD access. Water and power are not available at any sites.

The proposed grant of lease to Wild Bush Luxury for low-impact bush camps is for areas located at 3 of the accommodation nodes identified in the plan of management, which are referred to here as 'bush camp zones' and are listed in Table 1 and shown in Figure 3.

Table 1 Proposed bush camp zones location references

Bush camp zone	Approximate grid reference	Plan of management node reference
1	-33.308794, 150.185194	Node #3
2	-33.323920, 150.224360	Node #4
3	-33.349915, 150.215234	Node #5

Each of the 3 bush camps will be located within the identified bush camp zones, with the exact location of the bush camps to be finalised based on detailed environmental impact and sustainability assessments. Each bush camp will consist of structures totalling no more than 300 square metres (m²), plus connecting timber or fibreglass reinforced panel (FRP) boardwalks.

The lease area will be based on the actual location of the bush camps and will be finalised during the agreement for lease period and prior to the grant of lease. Detailed information about the bush camp zones, configurations and site structures is provided in Appendix A.

The proposed lease does not provide helicopter access for operational requirements, nor will it extend to other national parks. Helicopter access may be used during the construction phase and for emergency access.

Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk lease proposal

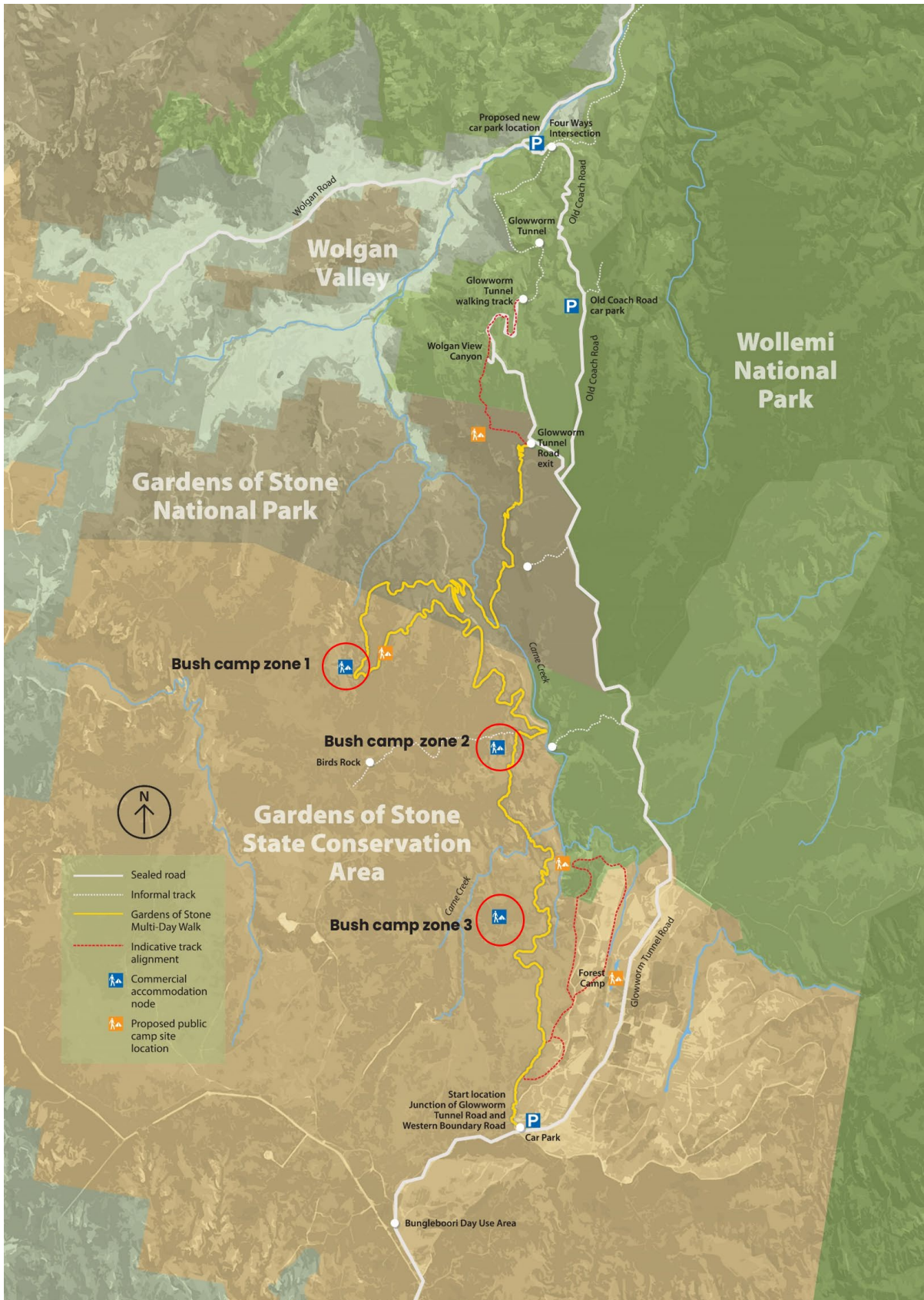


Figure 3 Location of bush camp zones

Bush camps

The bush camps will cater for small groups, limited to 10 guests and 2 guides per departure.

The footprint of site structures at each bush camp will total no more than 300 m² per camp (excluding connecting boardwalks), with bush camp configurations designed to respond to the natural values of each site, minimise environmental impacts, support sustainable ongoing maintenance and seamlessly blend in with the surroundings. The footprint of connecting timber/FRP boardwalks between site structures will be site-specific and will be determined following detailed site surveys and environmental assessments.

Each bush camp will consist of the following structures:

- six 2-person enclosed cabins, with an approximate footprint of 3 m × 5 m (including entry deck)
- one communal covered common area, with an approximate footprint of 5 m × 12 m for the covered area
- one ablutions facility containing 3 showers and 3 composting toilets, with an approximate footprint of 8 m × 3 m and adjacent 20,000 L rainwater tank
- all systems and facilities required for a quiet, 'light-touch', self-sufficient camp, including rainwater tank, solar photovoltaic (PV) electricity supply, and grey-water and black-water treatment
- timber or FRP boardwalks connecting the cabins, communal common area and ablutions facility
- connections to ground (that is, footings) designed to be fully removable with minimal impacts.

The proposed lessee will also establish 'adjoining' walking tracks from the public walking track to the bush camps.

All bush camps and on-park infrastructure are subject to rigorous environmental assessments (refer to the 'Environmental impacts and sustainability assessments' section below).

Design

Bush camp configurations have been designed to blend into the natural surroundings. Modular cabin configurations will be sited at each bush camp to integrate with natural vegetation and encourage patrons to interact and engage with the environment.

Exact locations of cabin configurations within the bush camp zones (see Appendix A) will be determined pending detailed surveys and assessments, with the final layout to consider the natural values of the site to minimise environmental impacts and support sustainable ongoing maintenance. Cabin locations will also best leverage the aspect and vantage points of each site to harness passive design principles while blending into the landscape.

Bush camp designs will incorporate the use of natural materials with minimal points of contact to the ground. Boardwalks between structures will also rest on the landscape rather than being anchored to the ground, allowing rapid regeneration of the site if structures and associated infrastructure are removed. All footings have been designed to be fully removed upon decommissioning.

Seasonal removal of bush camp structures is not proposed due to increased environmental impacts which compromises regeneration of the site.

Concept designs have been prepared by local architects (see Appendix A), with detailed designs to meet building and safety guidelines, including any National Construction Code

Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk lease proposal

requirements. Ongoing maintenance has been considered in the early design phase to ensure structures are fit-for-purpose and meet best practice guidelines in sustainable design.

The proposed lessee will engage specialist consultants to complete flora and fauna surveys and assessments to protect natural values and preserve existing vegetation at each site. Visual impact studies will also be prepared to ensure cabin configurations are appropriately sited along ridgelines to minimise impacts on the surrounding viewscape.

Bush camps will be entirely self-contained, leaving little to no lasting impact through off-grid design. This includes incorporating the use of solar power, rainwater collection, onsite grey-water treatment and composting toilets.

Bush camp design features

The following features have been considered in the design proposal:

- **Sleeping huts** – 2 beds per sleeping hut to protect patrons from weather, with cantilevered structures to minimise the need for footings
- **Communal hut** – shelter for a long table for communal cooking and eating
- **Ablutions hut** – semi-detached from communal areas to provide privacy, obscured by vegetation where possible
- **Services** – all camps to be self-sufficient, including 20,000 L rainwater tank, solar PV electricity supply, composting toilets and grey-water treatment positioned discreetly below deck where possible
- **Timber boardwalks** – all huts to be connected by a series of timber (or FRP) boardwalks which are positioned above ground without footings where possible. Supply lines for solar power and water to be positioned beneath walkways.

The use of natural materials has been captured in the design, with the use of canvas and timber where possible to reflect themes of the natural environment. Colour palettes with neutral tones have been developed to balance themes of rugged landscapes, sandstone escarpments and bushfire regeneration.

The proposed lessee intends to work with local suppliers, craftspeople and makers where possible. Opportunities will also be explored to establish collaborative partnerships with Traditional Owners, local sawmills and textile artists as part of the proposed lessee's ethos of 'contributive tourism'. Native landscaping will be considered to further minimise visual impacts on the landscape, which would be subject to specialist advice and rigorous environmental approvals.

Bush camp management

Bush camp management and ongoing maintenance will be managed by the proposed lessee in collaboration with NPWS to monitor and evaluate long-term impacts at each site.

Vehicle access will be managed and maintained for each site to support construction and ongoing maintenance programs. Vehicle access trails will be reserved for maintenance purposes only to limit environmental impacts, with limited access required for ongoing site maintenance. Helicopters will not be permitted or required for ongoing servicing or maintenance.

The proposed lessee employs a minimum waste ethos, which will be considered and applied in its operation of the Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk. This includes eliminating single-use

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plastics and using bucket showers with limited water supply, solar power, rainwater collection, onsite composting toilets, and grey-water treatment.

The proposed lessee will measure site recovery and regeneration with ongoing annual studies of key environmental indicators and species.

If decommissioning of site structures is required, the proposed lessee will complete remediation measures to mitigate and/or manage impacts on soil erosion, unplanned trampling, nutrient level changes, weed management and visual impacts. All remediation works will be completed with input from NPWS in accordance with environmental requirements and provisions outlined in the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

Environmental impacts and sustainability assessments

All works associated with the bush camps and on-park infrastructure will be subject to environmental impact assessments to ensure compliance with the National Parks and Wildlife Act, *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act), the EP&A Act's regulations and environmental planning instruments (such as the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021*), and other applicable legislation.

The development and maintenance of bush camps and adjoining walking tracks are 'an activity' for the purposes of the EP&A Act. They will be subject to environmental assessment under Part 5 of the EP&A Act, likely via a review of environmental factors (REF).

A REF examines the significance of likely environmental impacts and details measures required to mitigate adverse impacts to the environment (inclusive of natural and cultural heritage values and the park's social and recreational values). A REF assists with the:

- determination of whether an activity should be approved, taking into account, 'to the fullest extent possible', all matters affecting or likely to affect the environment
- identification of appropriate conditions, should approval be granted
- determination of whether the activity is likely to have a significant effect on the environment or significantly affect threatened species, populations, ecological communities or their habitats, in which case an environmental impact statement and/or species impact statement or biodiversity development assessment report will need to be prepared and considered before approval may be granted.

A REF's preparation involves flora and fauna surveys and consultation with the Aboriginal community. It may also involve archaeological investigations and specialist geotechnical, arborist and visual impact assessments.

The proposed lease will also need to meet the sustainability assessment criteria adopted under section 151B(3) of the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

Under the agreement for lease, the proposed lessee will prepare the REF for all bush camps and adjoining tracks (that is, tracks from the multi-day walking track to the bush camps) as well as the sustainability assessment. The assessments will be submitted at the same time to ensure that all information is available to the relevant decision maker, and the full consideration of cumulative impacts is possible.

Further information is provided in NPWS's *Guidelines for preparing a Review of Environmental Factors* and *Sustainability assessment criteria for visitor use and tourism*.

Recognising Wiradjuri perspectives

The proposed lessee is continuing to engage with Traditional Owners to establish its operation of the Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk, including potential partnership opportunities and employment pathways.

Wild Bush Luxury's parent company, Experience Co, is committed to acknowledging and recognising cultural difference, as demonstrated by its Dreamtime Dive and Snorkel experience, which celebrates Australia's First Nations people and their connection to Sea Country. The visitor experience seeks to share authentic cultural understandings through storytelling, onboard demonstrations and spiritual connections, while providing opportunities and sustainable careers for Aboriginal people.

Wild Bush Luxury seeks to establish partnerships and education programs that are specific to the Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk to facilitate job placements and relationships that will support positive change in the lives of Aboriginal people.

NPWS is also continuing to engage with Traditional Owners on the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area visitor infrastructure program, including site surveys with community representatives. Aboriginal cultural heritage assessments have been completed at all bush camp sites, including site surveys with key representatives from Traditional Owner groups.

Community benefit

Cultural and environmental values will be at the forefront of the Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk experience, with visitor interpretations to be established to capture the rich stories of nature, culture and community.

The proposed lessee seeks to elevate the visitor experience by harnessing the power of local guides with a strong connection to the area and delivering training and employment opportunities for the local community.

The proposed lessee has a strong commitment to contributive tourism, with a focus on supporting local businesses with partnerships and programs that deliver meaningful outcomes. Food and beverages for the guided walk will be locally sourced where possible, local guides will be guided through a targeted training program to increase their knowledge of the land, and strategic partnerships will deliver economic benefits to local businesses and accommodation providers.

The proposed lessee has also engaged with local wildlife and conservation groups with the hope of building lasting partnerships to support wildlife conservation in the area.

Have your say

To comment on the proposal to grant a lease to Wild Bush Luxury, visit www.environment.nsw.gov.au/gardens-of-stone-lease or email your submission to commercial.enquiries@environment.nsw.gov.au

Written submissions can be posted to:

Property and Lease Management Unit
Locked Bag 5022
Parramatta NSW 2124

Opportunities to comment close **31 May 2024**.

Appendix A: Proposed lease zones, configurations and site structures

Proposed bush camp zones

Bush camp zone 1

Wild Bush Luxury proposal

Approximate grid reference: -33.308794, 150.185194

Plan of management node: #3

Lease area:

The lease area will be situated within the bush camp zone (which is 4,000 m²). The lease area will consist of structures totalling no greater than 300 m² plus connecting timber boardwalks.

The exact placement of the bush camps within the bush camp zones will be determined after detailed environment assessments, studies and surveys.



Figure 4 Bush camp zone 1

Bush camp zone 2

Wild Bush Luxury proposal

Approximate grid reference: -33.323920, 150.224360

Plan of management node: #4

Lease area:

The lease area will be situated within the bush camp zone (which is 7,000 m²). The lease area will consist of structures totalling no greater than 300 m² plus connecting timber boardwalks.

The exact placement of the bush camps within the bush camp zones will be determined after detailed environment assessments, studies and surveys.



Figure 5 Bush camp zone 2

Bush camp zone 3

Wild Bush Luxury proposal

Approximate grid reference: -33.349915, 150.215234

Plan of management node: #5

Lease area:

The lease area will be situated within the bush camp zone (which is 7,000 m²). The lease area will consist of structures totalling no greater than 300 m² plus connecting timber boardwalks.

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The exact placement of the bush camps within the bush camp zones will be determined after detailed environment assessments, studies and surveys.



Figure 6 Bush camp zone 3

Indicative bush camp layout

Site structures footprint:

- six 2-person enclosed cabins (3 m × 5 m)
- one communal covered common area (5 m × 12 m)
- one ablutions facility (8 m × 3 m plus rainwater tank)
- timber or FRP connecting boardwalks
- connections to ground fully removeable
- footprint for building structures limited to 300 m² for individual bush camps
- bush camp configurations and footprints for connecting boardwalks to be finalised pending detailed site surveys and ecological assessments.

The following figures illustrate the indicative layout only. Bush camp configurations are to be determined pending site surveys and ground conditions.

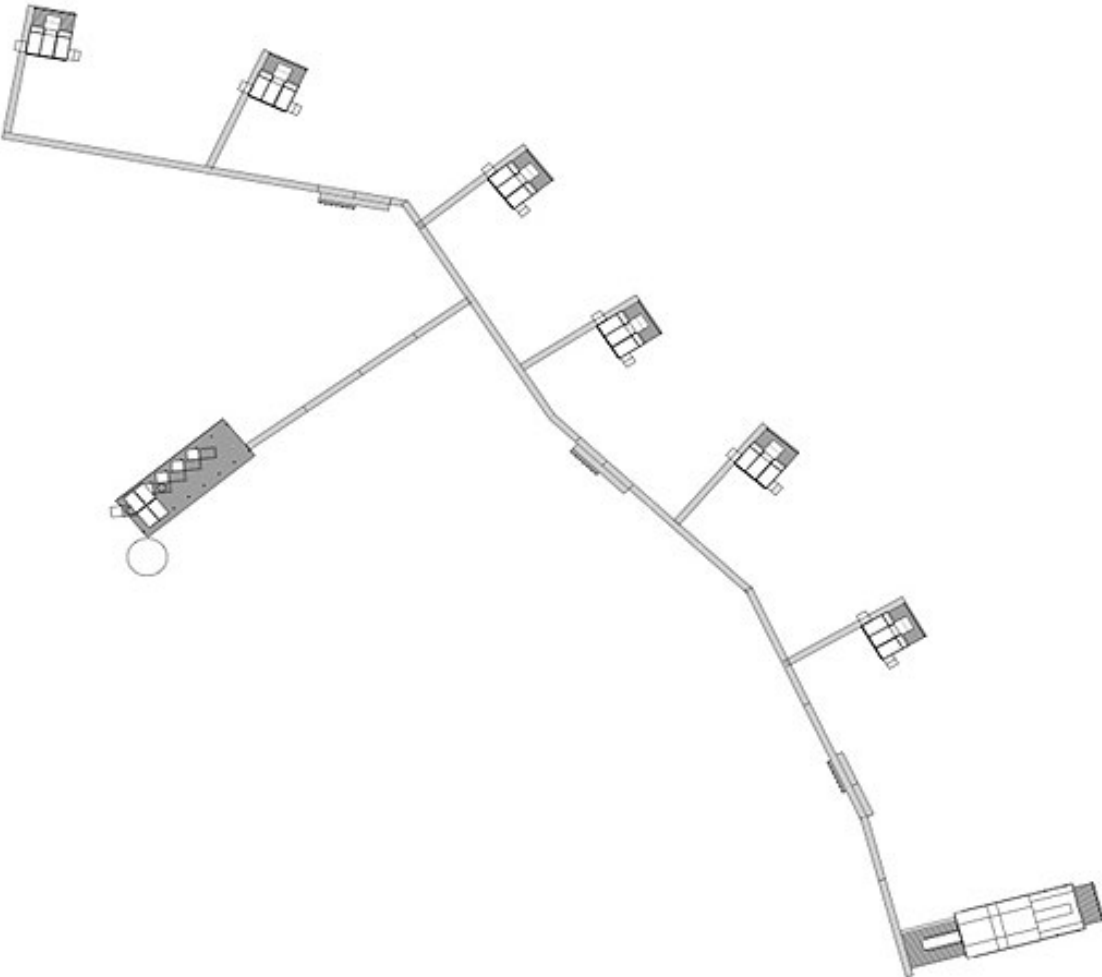


Figure 7 Indicative bush camp layout plan view

Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk lease proposal

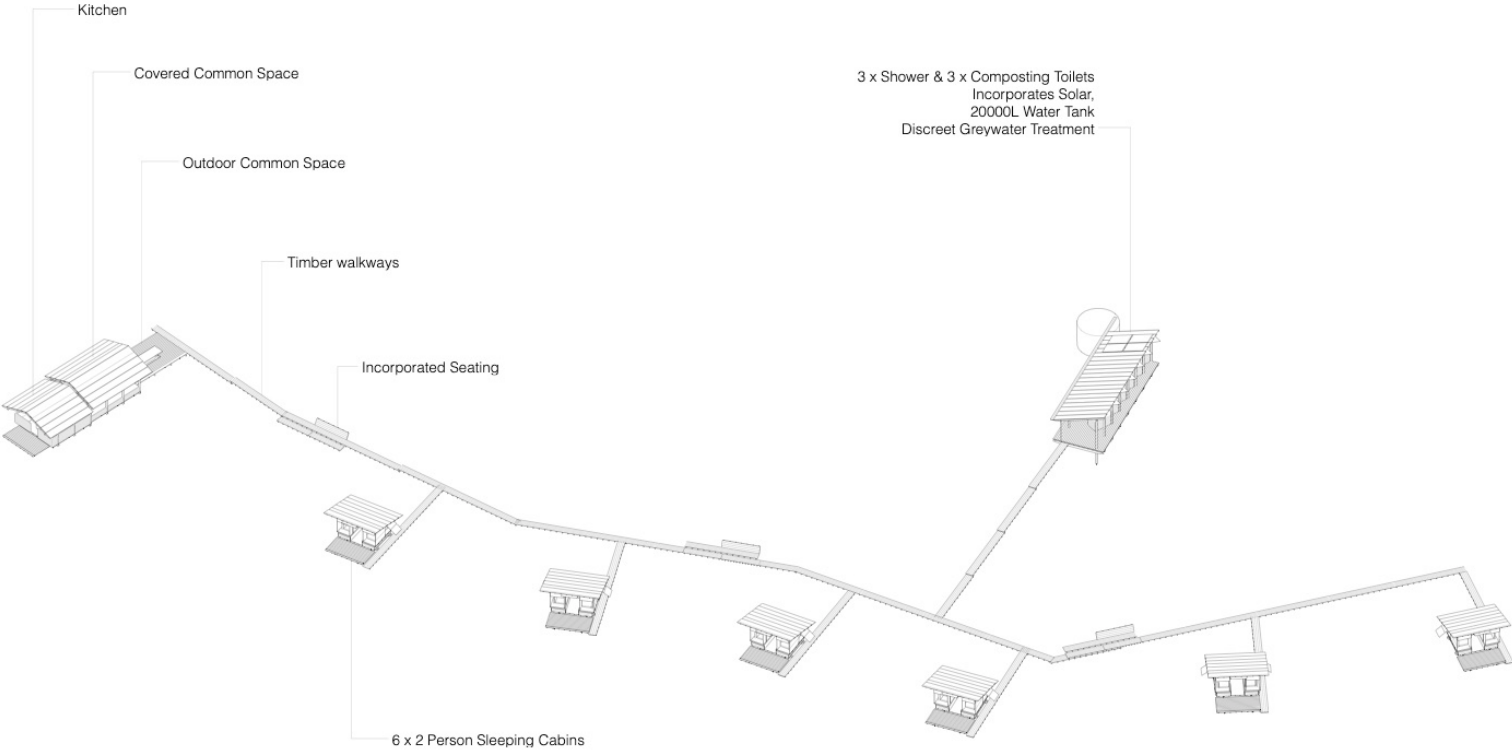


Figure 8 Indicative bush camp layout showing cabins, ablutions facility, communal huts and connecting boardwalks

Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk lease proposal

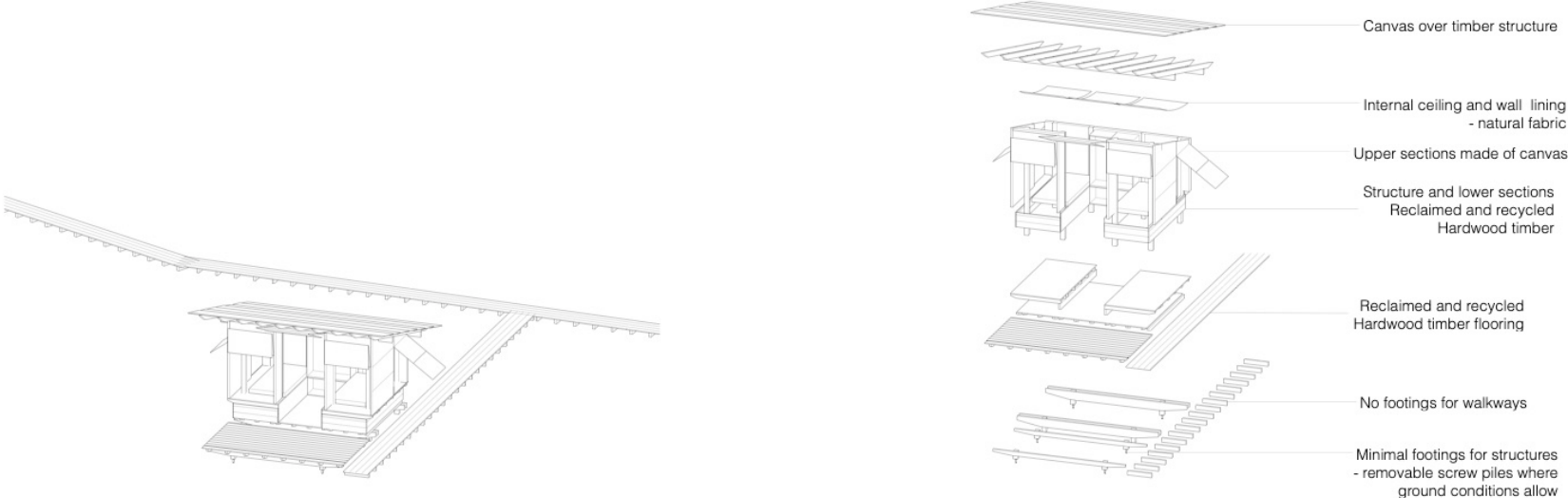


Figure 9 Indicative cabin design and construction

Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk lease proposal

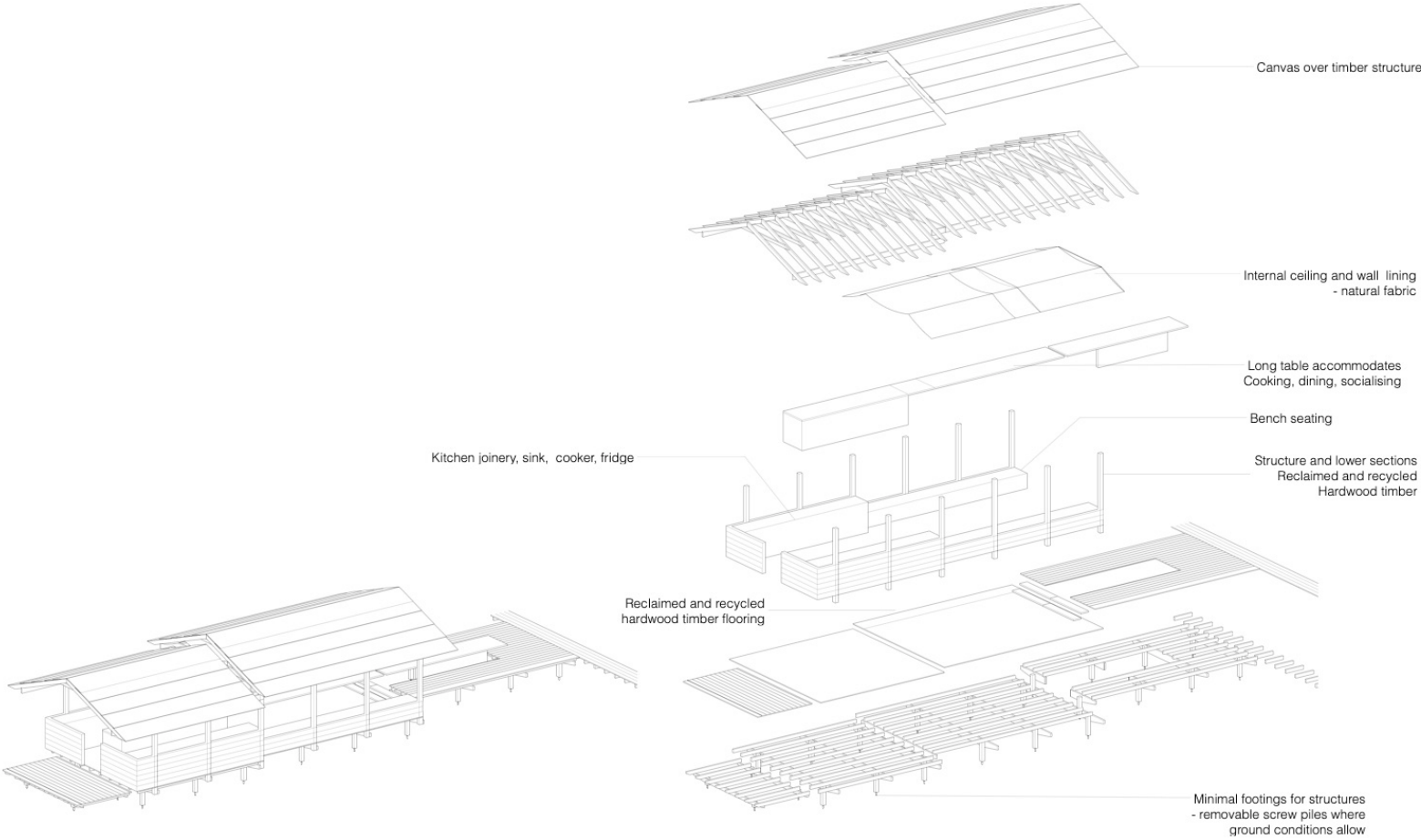


Figure 10 Indicative communal covered area design and construction

Gardens of Stone Multi-Day Walk lease proposal

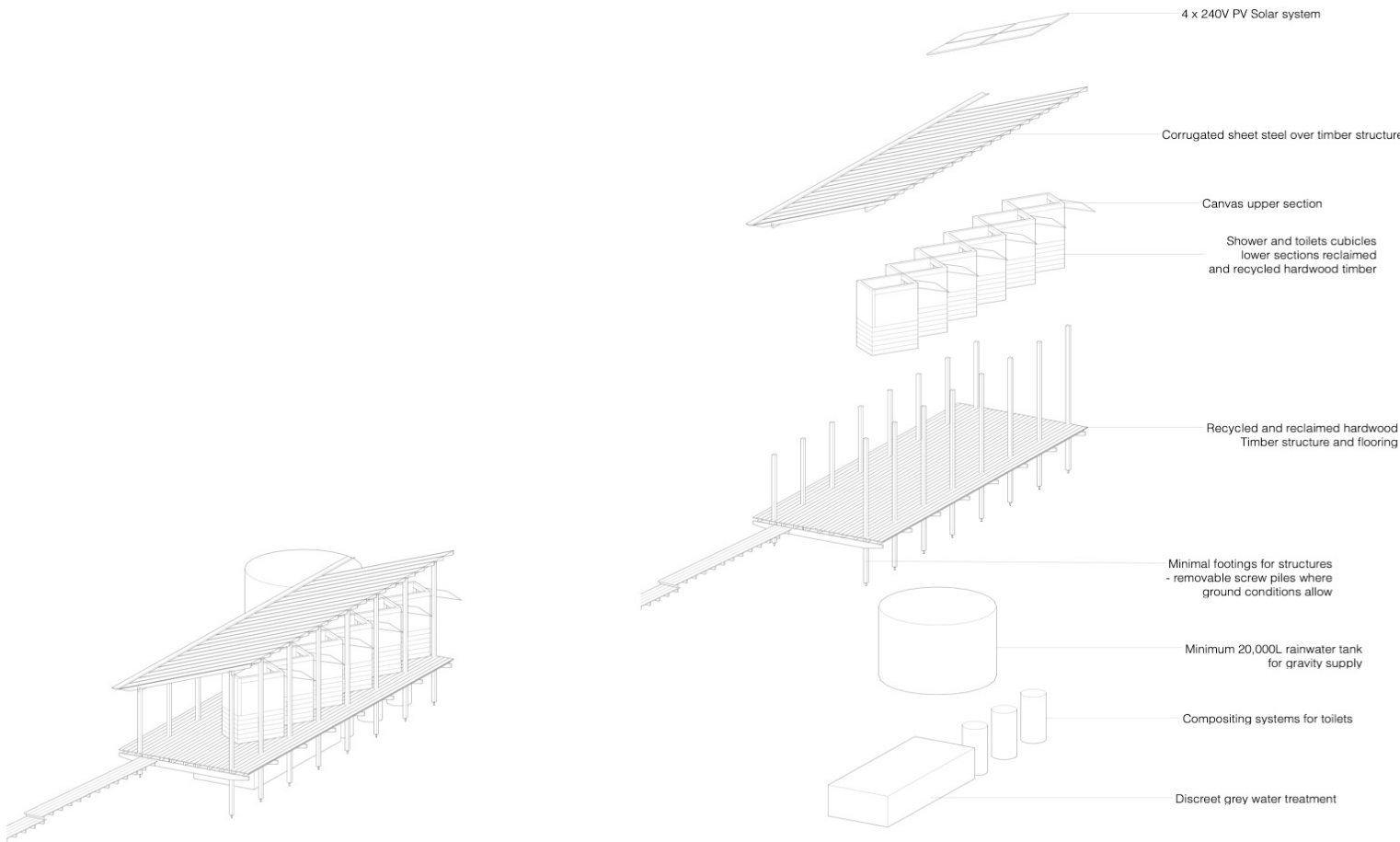


Figure 11 Indicative ablutions facility design and construction



Figure 12 Artistic impression of proposed indicative bush camp facilities

Conceptual imagery only. Some materials and design elements may be subject to change.

References

NPWS (National Parks and Wildlife Service) (2022) *Guidelines for Preparing a Review of Environmental Factors*

NPWS (National Parks and Wildlife Service) (2011) *Sustainability assessment criteria for visitor use and tourism*