



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **KEEP IT WILD – AUSTRALIA LAUNCH**

For immediate release – 15 September 2018

Australians have campaigned for decades to protect our remaining wild ecosystems. From the Franklin River to the Daintree, Arnhem Land to the Alps to south west WA, many hundreds of campaigns have seen the creation of an incredible conservation estate.

My name is Darren Edwards and I love the Aussie wilderness. I started exploring our stunning parks and remote areas to escape from the real world. To connect with nature, switch off from technology, escape the built environment and the hustle and bustle of life.

The further I explored, the more I could see that the world I was trying to disconnect from was increasingly invading these natural spaces. My concerns escalated in 2016 with the release of Parks Victoria's, Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing 2016 Draft Master Plan. A proposal to develop an extended walk and luxury accommodation in Victoria's High Country.

I became rapidly aware this proposal was the tip of the iceberg with many 'Great or Iconic Walks' planned not only in Victoria, but right across our great country. I was heartbroken.

Many of these projects fly under the radar without any public awareness until decisions have been made and it's too late to act.

So, in September 2018, I started **Keep It Wild** to bring wide-spread attention to inappropriate private developments in our parks in the hope that those who care about permanently preserving and protecting these wonderful places we unite and make a difference.

As the saying goes, the price of freedom is eternal vigilance. We must be ready to defend these wild places, which once seemed safely preserved, from a new range of threats. The obvious one is climate change. But there is also a more localised and immediate threat: the attraction of tourist dollars for land managers means that many National Parks in Australia are now the focus of economic benefits rather than conservation of these important and often fragile ecosystems.

National Parks are being viewed by Government, Land Managers, and Tourism bodies as self-funding assets, meaning they are expected to generate serious revenue to support park operations, and to contribute to local economic development, major infrastructure development, local employment, and tourism.

Australia's land managers are under increasing pressure from tourism and economic bodies to seek private sector funding to develop commercial infrastructure projects within National Parks. State and federal governments are not just accepting applications, they are actively seeking them through Expressions of Interest.

A National strategy is emerging that prioritises direct investment programs that require reduced regulatory barriers to facilitate development of luxury accommodation in natural environments.



Something needs to be done to protect our Wilderness areas and National Parks for future generations to enjoy. We need to come together under one united NATIONAL voice to stop commercial developments in OUR Parks once and for all.

It is my hope that Keep It Wild will help ignite the passion and vigilance that is needed.

I for one, do not wish to destroy our wild places by allowing luxury accommodation to be built in National Parks to accommodate those who are unlikely to care about the long-term impact they have had by visiting nature for a fleeting moment in their life.

In the wise words of Jane Goodall, *"You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of a difference you want to make."*

#keepitwild #keepitwildaustralia #keepitwildaust

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