



The Hon Nick Duigan MP
Minister for Parks
Parliament House
HOBART TAS 7001
via email: nick.duigan@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Minister

Re: New Parks Online Booking System – need for equitable, accessible and non-digital booking pathways

COTA Tasmania writes regarding the Tasmanian Government’s announcement of 26 March 2026 that a contract has been awarded for a new Parks Online Booking System.

We understand the case for improving fragmented and outdated booking arrangements. A simpler system could be a positive reform if it genuinely improves access for the full range of park users.

However, we are concerned that the public announcement seems to frame the reform as a digital transition to a single contemporary, mobile-friendly platform, with no clear statement about what provision will remain for people who cannot readily use a digital-first system.

A system can be technically modern and still be exclusionary.

The reality is that, for many Tasmanians, changes such as this are not minor design issues but rather go directly to whether access to a public service is fair in practice. Many people face barriers such as low digital confidence, unreliable internet access, limited device access, disabilities, cognitive load, payment difficulties, or a need for human assistance when navigating bookings.

COTA Tasmania notes that the most recent Australian Digital Inclusion Index places Tasmania last nationally for digital inclusion, with particular challenges across access, affordability and digital ability. That context makes it especially important that public services in Tasmania retain simple, visible and effective non-digital pathways rather than assuming online access will work equally well for everyone.

That is why COTA Tasmania seeks firm assurance that the new booking model will not leave behind people who are less digitally connected or less digitally confident.

At present, Parks and Wildlife Service arrangements include direct contact points, visitor centres, and other assisted channels. Parks pass information also already recognises the need for contact with PWS where people are not simply self-serving online. If those pathways are reduced, obscured, or treated as secondary exceptions under the new system, the result will be a real and foreseeable access barrier for some older people and others at risk of digital exclusion.

COTA Tasmania’s position is straightforward: modernisation must not mean digital-only by stealth.

Tasmania’s national parks are a public asset. Access to them should not depend on a person’s level of digital literacy, the quality of their internet connection, or their comfort with app-based and online transactional systems.

Public-facing reform should be guided by a “no wrong door” principle: people should be able to book, enquire and pay through whichever channel is workable for them, whether online, by phone, or through in-person assistance.

Patron

*Her Excellency the Honourable Barbara Baker AC,
Governor of Tasmania*

We therefore ask that you provide explicit assurance that the new system will include, from day one and on an ongoing basis:

1. a staffed telephone booking and enquiry pathway, not merely a troubleshooting line,
2. an in-person assisted pathway through Service Tasmania, visitor centres, or other accessible service points,
3. clear non-digital payment and booking options for people with low digital access or confidence,
4. plain-English guidance materials, including step-by-step instructions in accessible formats,
5. practical accessibility testing with older Tasmanians and other users at risk of exclusion, not only technical compliance testing, and
6. a public commitment that no existing assisted or offline pathway will be removed until replacement arrangements are demonstrably equitable, visible and working well.

We also ask what formal consideration has been given, within the procurement and design process, to:

- digital exclusion risks for older Tasmanians,
- users in regional areas with poor connectivity,
- people requiring support to complete bookings or transactions,
- the role of Service Tasmania and visitor centres as trusted and promoted assisted-access points, and
- monitoring and reporting on user experience for those cohorts after rollout.

While technical web accessibility matters, it is only part of the picture.

A service can meet formal accessibility standards and still fail people if it is overly complex, difficult to navigate, or assumes a level of confidence and digital familiarity that many users do not have. Tasmania Government guidance makes clear that accessibility is a core expectation in public communications and digital service design. In this case, the test should be whether an older person with barriers to (delete – limited) digital ability, access, and affordability can still complete a booking simply, confidently, and with dignity.

Given the relevance of this issue to both parks access and ageing policy, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and relevant departmental officers to discuss how equitable access protections will be embedded in the new arrangements before rollout begins.

This reform presents a real opportunity to show that better digital systems and inclusive public services can go together. But that will only happen if non-digital and assisted pathways are treated as core service channels, not as afterthoughts.

We would appreciate your early response outlining the protections that will be put in place to ensure the new booking system is equitable, user-friendly and genuinely accessible to all Tasmanians and visitors, including those with low digital literacy or limited digital access.

Yours sincerely



Brigid Wilkinson

Chief Executive Officer

26th March 2026

cc Hon Bridget Archer, Minister for Ageing