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Minister for Regional NSW, Small Business and Skills

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Minister for the Environment, Heritage

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MEDIA RELEASE

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MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR BOOST FOR KOSCIUSZKO

Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional NSW and Member for Monaro John Barilaro, and Minister for the Environment Gabrielle Upton today announced a multi-million dollar funding boost for the Kosciuszko National Park, which will create one of Australia's, if not the world's, best multi-day walking tracks.

Mr Barilaro said the \$27 million in funding, secured through the NSW Government's *Regional Growth Environment and Tourism Fund*, will be spent developing walking and mountain biking trails in the picturesque National Park.

Mr Barilaro said the project will totally transform summer tourism in the region.

"The development of these hiking and biking trails will ensure the region is vibrant and busy all year-round," Mr Barilaro said.

"It means people won't just have jobs three months of winter, they'll have work for 12 months of the year, thanks to a steady stream of visitors, mountain bikers and walkers.

"The economic benefits, let alone the social, environmental and health benefits of a project like this, can't be overstated.

"The work on the trails is expected to create a combined 139 full-time jobs in the region over the course of their construction.

"Once delivered, the upgraded National Park is expected to support an additional 190 full-time positions," he said.

Ms Upton said the projects will no doubt put the wider Snowy Region firmly on the domestic and international tourism map.

"The natural beauty of the Kosciuszko National Park is something so many Australians have already had the pleasure to enjoy, but we hope this project encourages even more people to make the most of what the wider Snowy Region has to offer," Ms Upton said.

"The Park and these trails will have something for everyone to enjoy – whether it be taking in the mountain peaks, biking along the scenic Thredbo River, or enjoying the hospitality of the area's world-class accommodation and dining facilities."

The funding will go towards two separate projects.

Mick Pettitt, Director of the Southern Ranges Branch of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, said more than \$17 million will be invested in the *Kosciuszko Snowies Iconic Walk* – to develop a new 25 kilometre section of track - which will ultimately link up with other tracks to create a world-class 44 kilometre multi-day walk.

"When complete this iconic walk will allow visitors to hike all the way from Thredbo, via Charlotte Pass, Guthega, and Perisher, to Lake Crackenback," Mr Pettitt said.

"The new section of track from Charlotte Pass to Lake Crackenback will link existing trails across the alpine 'roof of Australia', with visitors able to stay in luxury resorts or backcountry camping facilities along the way," he said.

A further \$9.8 million will see the popular *Thredbo Valley Track* extended by 21 kilometres, and it will be constructed using International Mountain Bike Association Guidelines.

“Once complete, the Thredbo Valley Track will be more than 61 kilometres long, allowing for hiking and mountain biking all the way from Dead Horse Gap to Jindabyne,” Mr Pettitt said.

The first stage of the Thredbo Valley Track extension will connect Lake Crackenback to trails in and around Jindabyne. The second stage will connect Thredbo to the Dead Horse Gap area, and the existing trail network that continues on into the Pilot Wilderness.

Mr Barilaro said the connection of the trails opens up many more opportunities – not just for visitors, but for local businesses.

“By linking all these trails, the Kosciuszko National Park will for the first time be able to host long-distance mountain biking tournaments, and will maximize the opportunities for the region to tap into the growing summer mountain biking market,” Mr Barilaro said.

Work on the Thredbo Valley Track project is expected to commence by October 2018 with work on the Snowies Iconic Walk expected to commence in early 2019.

With no work able to take place during winter, the first stage of the Thredbo Valley Track Extension is expected to open in 2019, with the final stage to be completed in 2020. The Snowies Iconic Walk will be delivered in stages over a four-year period with final completion in 2022.

The concepts will undergo further detailed design and assessment to ensure relevant compliance with the Environment Planning and Assessment Act and the Kosciuszko National Park plan of management.

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