

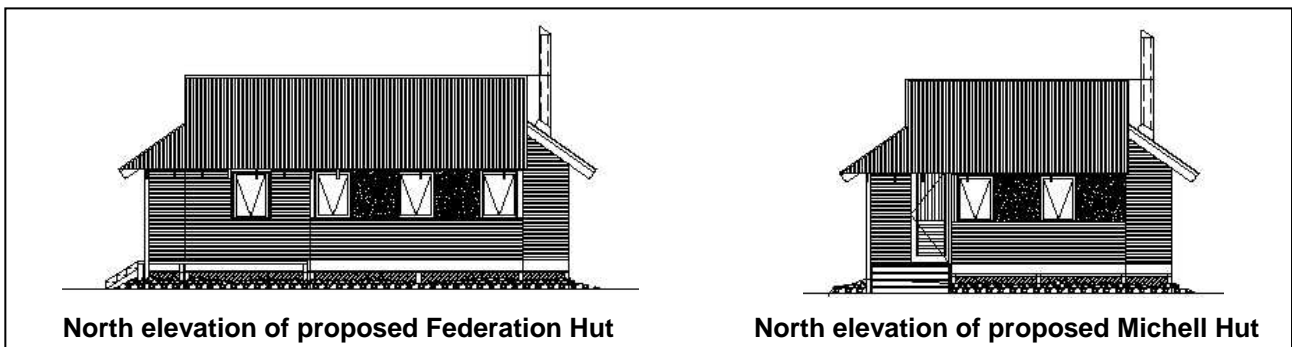
Rebuilding of Federation and Michell Huts

Many huts were damaged or destroyed in the 2003 bushfires. Of these, both Federation and Michell huts were completely destroyed. As these huts were assessed as having significant refuge value, they are being rebuilt by Parks Victoria under the Bushfire Recovery Program. Both huts are located above the snow line along popular walking routes. These sites experience heavy snow falls, strong winds and extremes in temperature, thus it was recommended that both huts be replaced for the primary purpose of refuge or emergency shelter.

As the huts were of various standards of construction, the replacement huts are not trying to replicate that which was destroyed but to provide shelter in a contemporary design. The huts are designed to provide improved refuge and safety to users in extreme weather conditions and times of emergency, excluding wild fire

The comprehensive process developed for hut replacement that is currently being followed is:

- **Risk assessment** - A detailed Hazardous Materials Risk Assessment of sites after the fire was completed. This was to identify the extent and location of asbestos materials, associated asbestos cement debris and other potentially hazardous fire damaged building materials.
- **Site clean up** - An appropriate decontamination and clean up was undertaken. With a clearance certificate issued, the sites are now considered suitable for members of the public and construction workers to enter.
- **Design** - Three conceptual designs for each of the two huts were developed.
- **Stakeholder consultation** - The following stakeholders were consulted regarding the hut rebuilding - Victorian High Country Huts Association, Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs, Mount Bogong Club, and other interested parties.
- **Design and contractor selection** - In consultation with stakeholders the final designs for the huts were agreed upon. Contemporary designs with a focus on public refuge were chosen (see below).



- **Prefabrication** - A contractor was selected to prefabricate huts off-site under the supervision of an architect to ensure all Australian Standards are being met. To date, all materials have been purchased and construction has begun. Recycled timbers are being used in construction. The buildings will be constructed off-site, inspected and then dismantled prior to transportation to the hut sites.
- **Construction on site** - Scheduled for transportation to hut sites by helicopter in December 2004 after the snow melts. Delivery and construction dates are subject to contractor and helicopter availability.

The New Federation and Michell Huts complete.

Federation Hut near Mt Feathertop and Michell Hut near Mt Bogong are now complete to ensure that people enjoying walking in the Alps over the summer walking period have the backup of adequate refuge in the event of an emergency or extreme weather.

The rebuilding has entailed a comprehensive assessment and design process that was detailed in the December 2004 edition of Echo from the Mountains. Following the completion of the design phase, Parks Victoria engaged via public tender, the accredited and experienced contractor Period Restoration Services located at Stanley, to prefabricate, transport and erect the huts.

Prior to the huts being flown to their mountain sites by helicopter, both huts were partially assembled off-site during November 2004 and inspected to ensure the prefabricated huts met project standards and guidelines. They were then dismantled again to await transportation.



Trial assemblies at Stanley of Federation Hut (left) and Michell Hut (right).

Photo: Parks Victoria

Transportation of the hut components to hut sites by helicopter had to wait until early December 2004, when the snow had melted and weather conditions were favourable. In an intense one-day operation, a helicopter was used to airlift the components to the remote hut sites.



Above: Helicopter at Mt Loch carpark with destination (Mt Feathertop) in background.
Photo: R. Skinner



Right: Helicopter loading up with Federation Hut components at Mt Loch carpark. Photo: R. Skinner

Following the delivery, skilled tradespersons from Period Restoration Services quickly began the work of assembling the transported components. Federation Hut was the first hut to be completely assembled on the former hut site on by 9th December 2004.



A final inspection followed the next week, by the project architect Ms Tonique Bolt (Underwood & Bolt Pty Ltd), local council building surveyor and Parks Victoria ranger Enzo Brotto. With Federation Hut complete to assist bushwalkers in times of need, the work focus switched to Michell Hut.

The newly completed Federation Hut December 2004.
Photo: Parks Victoria



Michell Hut is of a similar design to Federation but slightly smaller. Construction of Michell Hut began in late December 2004 and was completed by mid January 2005. The completion of Michell Hut sees the finalisation of this Parks Victoria Bushfire Recovery Project that was a major achievement in strategy implementation and stakeholder consultation. The project was managed by Parks Victoria's Major Projects Branch, headed by Bob McGrath.

The newly completed Michell Hut, January 2005.
Photo: Parks Victoria

Although the huts are now complete, please remember that their primary purpose is for refuge and emergency shelter. Visitors therefore, should always be self sufficient in the alpine environment and prepared for rapidly changing conditions.

Our thanks to Sue Williames, Bushfire Recovery Communications Officer, Parks Victoria for putting together this story for Echo from the Mountains. For further information contact Sue on 03 5172 2196.