



**Canberra Region Tourism
Operators Association**

The people who know the region best

Submission by the Canberra Region Tourism Operators Association to the Inquiry into the Role of the National Capital Authority

Formed in 1984, the Canberra Region Tourism Operators Association (CRTOA) is an association for tourism industry small business owner/operators. Members' activities include hot air ballooning, regional produce and wine tours, eco wilderness and nature tours, city sightseeing and shopping tours, transport and guiding tours and boutique B&B accommodation.

Pertinent to this enquiry are members who operate within the parliamentary zone such as lake cruises, bicycle hire, walking tours and general tourism for domestic and international clients.

Dealing with the National Capital Authority (NCA) is problematic with delays or no response from the NCA to members' letters. Media broadcasts are often the way our members are informed of lake closures, changes in operating hours of NCA facilities and updates about activities in the zone.

CRTOA has good relationships with TAMS and Canberra Tourism; is a member of the Tourism Industry Council; is an affiliate of the National Capital Attractions Association and the Canberra Convention Bureau, many of which are regularly represented at CRTOA meetings. Indeed NCA CEO Ms Pegrum is aware of CRTOA, members' diverse activities and accepted an invitation extended by CRTOA to address a meeting to inform members about changes in the Parliamentary zone. An open invitation stands for all organisations to attend CRTOA meetings.

- **Captain Cook Memorial Jet**

As tourists are keen to capture a photo of the Jet in operation, tour operators plan itineraries to include the Jet, however since the new operating schedule was introduced the level of outages, for which there is no advice or explanation, continues to occur.

- **National Capital Exhibition**

John Williams, operator of the Explorer Bus, left 20 passengers at the Exhibition only to be told when he returned to collect them that the Exhibition is closed on public holidays. Neither CRTOA nor any of its members had received any advice of the closures on public holidays.

- **Lakeside Kiosks**

Protracted negotiations controlled by the NCA have overshoot predicted deadlines, significantly affecting members' opportunity to work with high profile events such as Floriade. The introduction of the much vaunted Kiosks at Commonwealth Place has been a long and drawn out process, which has shown no regard for the impact that the delays and uncertainty cause for potential lessees.

- **Lake cruise operators**

For a period of time following the formation of the Lake Users Group the operators were kept advised of lake closures and notified of exclusion zones for special occasions. Recently while the NCA seems to be obsessed with blue-green algae alerts there were no notification of the exclusion zones for the Navy Day celebrations or Skyfire. The NCA also has a habit of not even acknowledging receipt of correspondence in relation to lake matters.

- **Bicycle Hire**

For a number of years one of our members has held temporary trading permits to conduct a bicycle hire business in the parliamentary zone. The construction of the Kiosks resulted in the refusal to renew the permit in spite of the fact that he had always complied with requests by the NCA even though they sometimes infringed on his right to trade. Now because of an unsubstantiated allegation against our member the NCA are apparently reviewing that trader's suitability as a preferred applicant for one of the kiosks.

- **Signage**

Lack of a signage within the Parliamentary zone and designated areas has been a CRTOA and Canberra Tourism agenda item for many years, however in the Manuka area 7 signs point to Calthorpes' House. Our members and others in the industry have been involved in extensive surveys, which resulted in proposals that usually result in nothing happening.

- **Blundells' Cottage**

The decision to open Blundells' Cottage on Saturdays only is creating a distinctly negative impression in the mind of both local and overseas visitors alike. The people who make decisions such as those relating to the hours that Blundells' Cottage is to open don't have to deal with the disappointment and occasional anger that our members encounter when the visitors learn of such changes. The visitors are most irate when they have a brochure in their hand telling of the cottage being open several days a week.

- **Carillon**

The operating hours of the Carillon have been substantially reduced and we have had no formal notification of the changes. Those of our members who have made an effort to find out just when the recitals will be have been given conflicting or inaccurate information. The Carillon is one of those features of the city that visitors enjoy hearing and to go away without even hearing the chimes,

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which are frequently switched off, helps to create a very negative image of Canberra in the minds of the visitor.

The negative perceptions mentioned above are distinctly opposed to the roll of the National Capital Authority, as we understand it.

Our members have expressed a wish that we appear before the committee.

John Williams
President

Jim Paterson
Secretary