

**INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR
ECOTOURISM RESEARCH**

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28 April 2006

Jacqueline Dewar
Secretary
Senate ECITA Standing Committee
S 1 57
Parliament House
Canberra
ACT 2600

Dear Jacqueline

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee at its hearing in Brisbane on 21 April.

In answering a question from Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson, I referred to three major problems associated with major private tourism infrastructure in public protected areas. I mentioned alienation of land and direct and indirect environmental impacts but omitted to list the third issue, which is social and economic:

- (i) Private businesses are there to make a profit. But if profits are to be made from park visitors, should not those profits go to parks agencies?
- (ii) Parks should be available equally to all. Private businesses charge what will maximise revenue. This excludes people who are less well-off.
- (iii) People – voters – simply do not want large-scale infrastructure, public or private. That is not what they think parks are for. The severely adverse public reaction to the proposed golf course in Wilpena Pound, 15 years ago, or more recently the proposed Parks Vic hotel at Wilson's Promontory, demonstrates this clearly.
- (iv) Perhaps most serious, once commercial property development interests have a foothold in a public park, they can place considerable political pressure on the park management agency – essentially, demanding the "right" to monopolise visitor services, charge fees, add further developments, etc in order to continue making a profit. This leads either (a) to public subsidy of private interests, or (b) to the imposition

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of expensive and/or inequitable requirements or restrictions on individual visitors to the park concerned. Once the development is there it is very difficult for the parks agency to remove it, and politically very difficult even to insist on original lease or contract conditions, if the private investor later finds them unpalatable. There are many such instances internationally, e.g. of ski resort developments in public forests in the USA, and several in Australia. The best known is one on Phillip Island where taxpayers ended up paying a private developer some \$56 million.

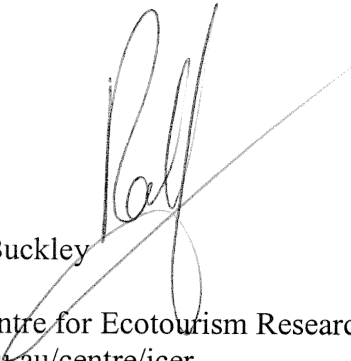
You also asked if I would be able to provide copies of two reports:

- (a) Buckley, 2004. *Innovative Funding Mechanisms for Visitor Infrastructure*.
- (b) Buckley, 2004. *Managing People in Australian Parks* (4 vols).

Hard copies of these reports are apparently no longer available. The former, however, is available for free download from www.ttf.org.au under Research. I have printed out a copy which I enclose.

The latter are available for purchase from the CRC Tourism bookshop at www.crctourism.com.au. Volume 1 covers entrance and camping fees, Vol 2 covers commercial tour operations, Vol 3 risk management and Vol 4 asset management. Chapter 7 in one of the books enclosed with my original submission, however, summarises these reports, including fees and charges. That chapter is pp. 51-59 of the book *Nature-Based Tourism, Environment and Land Management* and there are State-by-State summaries of vehicle entrance fees, camping fees, and commercial tour permit fees on pp. 54, 55 and 56 respectively. If you do still need the full reports and are unable to obtain them from CRC Tourism, I could probably find an electronic version of the text. The reports also contain appendices which are copies of each State's fee schedules and application forms. These, however, would by now be well out of date.

Yours sincerely



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