



Senate Inquiry into Australia's National Parks, Conservation Reserves and Marine Protected Areas

Joint submission by:

Department of Tourism, Arts and the Environment, Tasmania

ICS – Sustainable Tourism Systems

Introduction

Australia's unique landscapes make a major contribution to Australia's economic strength, social well-being and environmental responsibilities.

Our protected areas define the rest of the world's view of Australia and are a core element to our own culture and personality as a nation state.

The sustainable use and preservation of these protected areas is fundamental to Australia's future.

Key values and objectives of Australia's protected areas

Economic studies clearly show that our protected areas are a major source of revenue through their attractiveness to visitors. Here in Tasmania, the Tourism industry has just recorded its third consecutive financial year of tourism growth with a corresponding rise in visitor expenditure.¹ Tasmania is widely promoted as a wilderness island and many of our visitors are specifically attracted due to our parks and reserves. In addition, our community values and supports our protected areas very highly, purchasing annual passes and regularly visiting our parks.

Environmentally, we believe that Australia's protected areas make a significant contribution to the world's biodiversity and provide access to unique experiences for our community and visitors.

¹ Figures available from the [Tasmanian Visitor Survey](#) produced by Tourism Tasmania, part of the Department of Tourism, Arts and the Environment.

We consider our social well-being as a nation is bound to the health and accessibility of our protected areas - that our collective physical health and mental health is improved by the presence of our protected areas, either through our direct use of reserve facilities or through the pride and love we feel for our landscapes and country.

Opportunities for Australia

Australia is recognised as a leader in 'EcoTourism' with some of the world's best environmentally-responsible Tourism operators and facilities.²

As the world progresses towards a collection of developed nations, Australia stands at the forefront of knowledge in regards to managing the tension between protected area conservation and sustainable access/use. This topic is a challenge for all nations of the world and Australia's expertise represents an invaluable national intellectual asset which can be used to generate significant export benefits in addition to the other economic, social and environmental benefits of protected areas.

Managing our protected areas is a scientific, technical and people/resource management exercise. We need to strive towards becoming world leaders at this, for the good of our nation's well-being, socially, environmentally and economically.

Whilst we can always consider that funding is inadequate (there is always more that could be spent) it is clear that we must ensure all funding and resources deployed are used to their upmost value and our systems and processes are optimised for efficiency and effectiveness.

Tasmania's approach

Tasmania can be considered a 'microcosm' of this major challenge. Almost 40% of the land in our unique State is protected. Sustainable use, access and conservation are all key to our economy, our social well-being and the specialness of our environment.

In designing our systems and processes for management of our protected areas, we have focussed on designing re-usable intellectual property and web-based computer systems to support our processes directly. These systems represent the forefront of our thinking and practices. We have been demonstrating these systems to protected area managers around Australia and all parties have been

² As publicly stated and widely supported at the recent internationally-attended EcoTourism Conference held here in Hobart, Tasmania during 2005.

keenly interested and quick to support the value of an integrated, modular system which can provide all levels of the organisation with the rich information required to support triple bottom line management decisions.

We have focussed on tackling some of the fundamental issues facing all protected area managers, both in the management/preservation of assets and in managing the sustainable use by visitors, operators and other economic activity in protected areas.

We believe we have captured some of the core thinking that Tasmania and Australia has developed in protected area management and sustainable use/access.

As a State, Tasmania is uniquely placed to develop, pilot and leverage this investment in systems and processes and we would like to draw the Senate's attention to this investment. We believe that optimising the investment made into funding our protected areas is vital to our future and would value an opportunity to present and discuss these issues with the Senate Inquiry Committee.

(Signed)

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