

27 February 2006

RE: SENATE INQUIRY INTO AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL PARKS

I would particularly like to comment on whether governments are providing sufficient resources to maintain national parks and, further, how the objectives of national parks are not being met through the lack of funds. I will refer to several national parks.

Kakadu National Park: I visited this park in 2005. I believe that much more money should be spent on employing local Aboriginal people to portray the indigenous culture of the area through activities such as story telling and craft workshops at the visitors' centre for example. There was a dearth of authentic locally made craft items for sale at the shop at the visitors' centre. I watched as a captive audience, desperate to buy any locally made craft item, ended up buying items made overseas such as plastic trays with an Aboriginal design etc.

Research and money needs to be spent on the eradication of the cane toad. This animal was prolific at night in particular and is obviously in plague proportions.

Lake Mungo National Park: The quality of the display in the visitors centre is very poor compared to the high quality visual and interactive experience in the visitors' centre at Karijini National Park in WA.

Berowra Valley Regional Park: Now that the Trust has been dissolved and Hornsby Council is no longer permitted to carry out bush regeneration works in the Park, the quality of park maintenance has declined.

Likewise, not enough money is being spent on bush regeneration and weed control in the Pennant Hills Park section of **Lane Cove National Park**. Again, when Hornsby Council maintained this area the bush was in much better condition.

In summary, more money needs to be spent on the day to day maintenance activities being carried out in national parks and also on enhancing the cultural experience of tourists. The latter action, in particular, would bring extra revenue to parks such as Kakadu and go some way towards providing a more stable existence for local indigenous people.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Nichols