

## **Senate Inquiry into Australia's national parks, conservation reserves and marine protected areas**

Australia's national parks are invaluable national assets. They protect our biodiversity, encourage everyone to enjoy the open spaces away from urban congestion and provide magnificent recreational areas in many parts of the country. As national assets governments should resource them at a level to which they can be sustainably managed.

I am concerned that there appears to be a trend of increasing the access charges for these facilities, so that they are not really national resources available equally to all Australians. Specifically the entry fees to the Kosiuszko National Park are increasing faster than the CPI. Annual passes are increasing from \$145 at present to \$190 next year, and day passes will increase (during the June-October period) from \$22 per day to \$27 per day in 2007.

Not only are the entry fees very large, but they are discriminatory.

If one happens to live in specified post code areas in NSW (see the map below, which outlines in orange the areas that qualify for annual discounts), then annual passes can be obtained at a cheaper rate. This seems to be at variance with Chapter V, Clause 117 of the Australian Constitution, which states that all Australians "shall not be subject in any other State to any disability or **discrimination** which would not be equally applicable to him if he were a subject of the Queen resident in such other State."

So if you live in Victoria, the ACT or for that matter in most of NSW, you have to pay more for an annual pass to the Kosiuszko National Park than you would if you lived in areas close to the Park in NSW.

Furthermore seniors' discounts are only applicable if one has a NSW seniors' card. This also seems to be at variance with Clause 117. If you are a Senior from Victoria or the ACT then it is just too bad.

I therefore recommend that the Committee urges the Australian Government, at the next COAG meeting, *to encourage the States and Territories' Governments, to rationalise the entry charges to all National Parks so that these do not depend on where one lives.*

The same argument should apply to Seniors' Cards. These Cards should apply regardless of where you live in Australia. After all, the Parks are supposed to be **National**.

Yours sincerely



