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Official Committee Hansard

SENATE

ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNICATIONS, INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY AND THE ARTS REFERENCES COMMITTEE

**Reference: Australia's national parks, conservation reserves and marine protected
areas**

WEDNESDAY, 28 JUNE 2006

ULURU

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SENATE

ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNICATIONS, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND THE ARTS

REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 28 June 2006

Members: Senator Bartlett (*Chair*), Senator Adams (*Deputy Chair*), Senators Lundy, Marshall, Ronaldson and Wortley

Participating members: Senators Abetz, Allison, Bernardi, Boswell, Bob Brown, George Campbell, Carr, Chapman, Colbeck, Conroy, Coonan, Crossin, Eggleston, Evans, Faulkner, Ferguson, Ferris, Fielding, Forshaw, Humphries, Joyce, Ludwig, Ian Macdonald, Mason, McGauran, McLucas, Milne, Moore, Nash, Nettle, O'Brien, Payne, Robert Ray, Scullion, Siewert, Stephens, Watson and Webber

Senators in attendance: Senators Adams, Bartlett, Moore and Wortley

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

The funding and resources available to meet the objectives of Australia's national parks, other conservation reserves and marine protected areas, with particular reference to:

- a. the values and objectives of Australia's national parks, other conservation reserves and marine protected areas;
- b. whether governments are providing sufficient resources to meet those objectives and their management requirements;
- c. any threats to the objectives and management of our national parks, other conservation reserves and marine protected areas;
- d. the responsibilities of governments with regard to the creation and management of national parks, other conservation reserves and marine protected areas, with particular reference to long-term plans; and
- e. the record of governments with regard to the creation and management of national parks, other conservation reserves and marine protected areas.

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Committee met at 9.09 am

CHAIR (Senator Bartlett)—I formally declare open this public hearing of the Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee for its inquiry into the funding and management of Australia's national parks, conservation reserves and marine protected areas. I would like to start by particularly thanking the traditional owners for their welcome and for the use of this location.

This is the seventh public hearing the committee has conducted for this inquiry. Previously it has held hearings in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and two in Canberra and it has conducted site visits to a couple of locations. We are due to report to the Senate on 30 November this year.

We have circulated a program for today which I will endeavour to stick to. I remind everyone that these are public proceedings. We can agree to a request to hear evidence in camera, or determine that certain evidence be heard in camera, if people wish. All proceedings are covered by parliamentary privilege, which means that it is unlawful for anyone to threaten or disadvantage a witness on account of evidence given to a committee. It is also a contempt of the Senate to give false or misleading evidence to the committee. If a witness objects to answering a question for any reason, the witness does not have to answer a specific question and can state the ground upon which they make that objection or the reasons why they do not wish to answer. The committee can consider that. Similarly, if for some reason you do want to make a response in camera—which I do not expect is likely—I again formally indicate that that is available to you.

[9.11 am]

BOYTE, Mr Gareth, Resort General Manager, Voyages Hotels and Resorts

CHAIR—Welcome. Thank you for your assistance to date as well. If there is an opening statement you want to make to the committee before we throw some questions at you then you have that opportunity now.

Mr Boyte—Firstly, the evidence and answers that I shall give will be my own personal opinions and thoughts and are to my knowledge available to the public.

As you can appreciate, each park is different from the next and, being different, has different needs and different responsibilities. Each park's financial and resource needs have to be considered on an individual basis, not in a collective structure. After we are all dead and buried and successive governments have come and gone, the park will always be there but that community or tourism operation or support structure may not always be so. A long-term strategic plan for parks needs to be for at least 20 to 30 years with broad key objectives, and long-term strategies to reach those objectives, not only for the park's long-term management and goals but for those who reside in the park, especially traditional owners.

If we look specifically at Uluru we will see there are two key stakeholders involved with parks—that is, the Mutitjulu community and Voyages Hotels and Resorts. You are no doubt aware of the crisis in the community at the moment. I see parks having a very clear responsibility to develop and nurture that community just as Voyages has a clear responsibility to build a structure that supports and helps grow tourism, jobs and business opportunities within the community. This responsibility is not just for 12 months, three to five years or 10 years. It must be a 20- to 30-year plan so that successive park management, government changes, as well as those of Voyages, only need to update that plan and refine it.

Both the community and Voyages have a very close symbiotic relationship with parks for obvious reasons. The long-term strategies, funding and resourcing of no two parks can be the same. If they are, parks is neglecting its social responsibility to its symbiotic partners, its TOs, but, most of all, to the social environment that every Australian entitled to. Its responsibilities in this park lie not only in offering a world-class attraction; it has a responsibility as a key stakeholder to ensure ongoing health and prosperity for its inhabitants. In this case, it applies more to the traditional owners rather than to Voyages; however, in the environment of other parks it may well be more to the operators than to the traditional owners, as the requirements vary so much.

CHAIR—Thank you for that. Could I start by noting a document that appeared in my room yesterday—an environment and strategic plan. Is that a public document?

Mr Boyte—It is within Voyages Hotels and Resorts only. I have given that to you as a bit of background information.

CHAIR—Okay.

Senator MOORE—It does not go to everyone?

Mr Boyte—No.

Senator MOORE—Only special people!

CHAIR—I just wanted to get the status of it in case I refer to some of it. Could I get some of your background? How long you have been at this location? As I understand it, with Voyages you focus more widely on wilderness locations, iconic locations or nature based locations. What is your broader experience in that field?

Mr Boyte—I have been with Voyages for 3½ months, all of it out here. Prior to that I was based out of Asia covering the Maldives, the Far East, the Middle East and North Africa. Before that I was in Egypt. Most of my background is in environmentally sensitive areas with a wide range of varying cultures, particularly Third World cultures that are still developing.

CHAIR—Do you have any view—from the point of view of an outsider or an objective observer—of how Australia manages conservation objects and the protection of some of these nature based areas as well as the cultural interaction with traditional owners and the original inhabitants of the areas?

Mr Boyte—I think that the will is there but the way is not. It needs to be developed a hell of a lot more than it has been. Having worked in Asia, the Middle East and the Far East I know they are a long way behind Australia. They are just starting to build close relationships for their parks and the local cultures to work together. They have not progressed as far as Australia, from my experience, where there is the will and the way is still being found, as I mentioned. Referring specifically to Australia, there is a symbiotic relationship and that desire to go out and do something, but without a clear strategic objective that covers not just the park but the traditional owners, that just cannot happen. In my 3½ months here, I have been involved in several committees. At a recent one I was the only person with a commercial background. It was a politically inspired meeting and for four hours we just went around in circles—that is all we did. At the end I stood up and said, ‘Sorry, I am obviously seeing this from a totally different perspective than you are. No long-term strategy has been brought to this table by parks, the community, the government or us.’

CHAIR—I would like to ask about an issue that has come up through the course of our inquiry in evidence as well as in a number of submissions from people involved in different parts of the tourist industry. Do you have a view about whether the industry should do more in shaping consumer behaviour? And I mean industry more broadly rather than just your company; you can focus on whichever you like. That could involve reducing environmental impact, engaging with the local people in places like this or developing the cultural awareness of the places people are coming to? Or do you not see that as a job for industry but rather something that parks, governments or others should be doing?

Mr Boyte—No, industry should be fully involved in it, and this area is an example. It is a three-way relationship. If we were not the only operator in this area there would be a range of other operators, but I would expect that they would get together and work with parks and the local communities in developing the local communities. The two biggest reasons that people

come to our national parks is for Indigenous interaction and to see wildlife. That has come out in a raft of reports by the Northern Territory government, the Commonwealth government and even our own company, GPT, yet in this park we have very little Indigenous interaction.

If you compare it to New Zealand with the local Maoris and local Maori attractions that they have around there, you can see that Australia has a long way to go before we get to that level. I think too that each park is different. The Mutitjulu community here is different from the community that is based in Kakadu simply as to where they are at in their own personal development.

CHAIR—When you are saying that at this park there is very little interaction with Indigenous culture and perspectives, why do you think that is?

Mr Boyte—From what I have been able to gather over the last three and a half months, Mutitjulu is a relatively young community. It is something that has been started, rather than having been an established community. Without structures and long-term strategies in place, the Mutitjulu community is just lost, really—it has just lost its way. If we are going to turn that around and establish a real community long term that can work with parks and have a lot of input into parks, that 20- to 30-year plan needs to be put in place now. The elders that are there now are going to be dead in 20 to 30 years. The only people coming up behind them are people who are drug sniffing and drinking alcohol. That is not everyone, but it is going to get worse before it gets better.

CHAIR—I have a final question before I go to some of my colleagues. To use the example of climbing the rock—I do not particularly want to focus on that in itself; it is a big debate that everyone has an opinion on—the suggestion has been made that for a lot of the international tourist operators that fly people here and the bus companies and whatever, it is an expectation that that is part of what people should be able to do and so that is just the way it has to be. You cannot stop it because it is too much of an undercutting of people's right to do what they want. It is the expectation of the tourist experience. Should we be putting more pressure or encouragement, or whatever words you want to use, on that wider tourist industry to consider some of those wider issues? Again, it is a lot more than just whether or not you climb the rock, I suppose. It is, as you say, whether or not people who come here do engage with all of the cultural issues more broadly. Are there more things that we should be doing, although you cannot force people to do something, to encourage things down that path?

Mr Boyte—I think it comes back to the relationship that parks would have with the traditional owners. There is a modern way of doing things and there is an old way of doing things. The two have to move side by side, especially when you take into consideration the culture and heritage of the Aboriginal people. There is a give and take situation. Personally I would not climb the rock simply because the traditional owners do not like it. But at the same time, as you said, for people coming from all over the world it is an expectation. Through education, again, with the industry doing it, they need to understand the reasons why the traditional owners do not want people to climb the rock and then make their own decision. It is not something that we would take away. Other developments in parks have to be in consultation with the traditional owners. It needs to be done on the basis that it is not a short-term gain for a government department but a long-term strategy of working with traditional owners and taking into account their own thoughts and needs.

Senator ADAMS—Thank you for coming and thank you for your hospitality last night at your resort. It was very nice. We enjoyed having you with us. I asked you a lot of questions last night and I have the answers to those. But, coming back to the community, with the resort being so prominent in this area, what can you see that your organisation can do to help the community to get back onto its feet and actually move forward? You are talking about strategic plans but, specifically from the view of your own organisation, can you give us some comments on how you think you can help the situation?

Mr Boyte—GPT and Voyages already work very closely with the community. We have set up a foundation whereby guests make donations and GPT and Voyages match them dollar for dollar. We also support the college, which we originally set up. We provide rent-free land for that. We provide jobs; however, we do not have any people taking those jobs. From a business perspective, we would like to get involved in the community, help them build the 20- to 30-year plan and have their culture and heritage running alongside the modern way of doing things, so to speak, so that they can grow as a community and be far more established. Individually, within our own residential community, we have people who work with the community. We did a clothes drive recently because the kids were freezing. That comes from us, whereas you would think that the government would be involved in something like that. We give them furniture. Overall, I think we can help them nurture their business enterprises when they are at a level to actually start some meaningful ones. At the moment they go by the wayside because of short-term funding and short-term help. Again, there needs to be a long-term approach to a lot of things that happen. Really, there is not a lot more that we can do, apart from work with government agencies where we can and assist in providing better services—more long-term focused services for them.

Senator ADAMS—You were talking about the jobs that are available but not being taken up. Do you have a training program that your organisation can implement to mentor them?

Mr Boyte—Certainly. We have a training and development program that even our own staff do; for community employees it would be set at a longer time. We take into consideration their culture and the need to be away on occasions. The issue is about getting people to take those spaces.

Senator ADAMS—As far as your own staff are concerned, what would the turnover be?

Mr Boyte—We have an average length of stay out here of 8.7 months. We turn over about 80 per cent of our lower-level staff each year. That is purely because of where we are, in the middle of nowhere, so to speak, and it is hard work. The infrastructure out here is very hard to maintain and that puts limitations on the accommodation and facilities that we can offer our staff.

Senator WORTLEY—Voyages is probably the first point of call for a lot of the tourists who come to the park. What does your organisation do in relation to educating the people who stay there with regard to the expectations of the Indigenous community here?

Mr Boyte—We have a number of publications, some of which I have passed on to you. We put as much information as we can in those without making it too advertising orientated, or in that direction. We explain the history of the park and about the community from the point of view of the foundation that we have set up. We have information in every reception in the resort

which gives a brief background on the community and we ask the visitors to help support us in growing the kids' health, education and so forth. We have a visitor information centre which covers the historical side of the park. Parks and Voyages work with the community and so forth.

Senator WORTLEY—I have not had the opportunity to look at the information. Was it left in our rooms?

Mr Boyte—It was in the packs that were in your rooms.

Senator WORTLEY—In the information that you provided to us, I note that there is still some promotion of the climbing of the rock.

Mr Boyte—Yes. From a tourism perspective, the company still needs to promote what people come to do here, but at the same time, if you look through the information, we say that traditional owners ask that you do not climb.

Senator WORTLEY—From a press release last year, I understand that you are a member of the Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment project. You mentioned to Senator Adams the structured training and development program. Could you elaborate a little bit on that and on the difficulties that you have with that? Do you think there are any solutions, including long-term solutions?

Mr Boyte—To be quite honest, I think that some stakeholders within the parks out here—not within the parks business but operators and so forth—operate a bit unethically, dare I say. We have 850 staff here. I will give you an example. In El Questro—which is another business that I look after—out of 190 employees, there are 11 Indigenous positions filled. I have to say that I was very proud to see them there. They were laughing. They love their jobs; they were dealing directly with the people. Yet, while we have Indigenous people employed in the resort, they have not come through any of the Commonwealth job services or Territory job services. That relationship is falling apart, almost to the point that we are refusing to work with them.

Senator WORTLEY—When you say 'refusing to work with them', do you mean employment services?

Mr Boyte—Yes.

Senator WORTLEY—Can you explain?

Mr Boyte—It is just simply that we are not getting anything from it. We have these jobs here and we do not get anything from it whatsoever. It comes down to certain people within these organisations liking or disliking Voyages. This is not about an emotional relationship; it is about a community that we are trying to help. As I said, it is getting to the point that we are looking at dealing directly with the community itself, just to start getting some of these people into jobs and working, so that helps them in the long term.

Senator WORTLEY—You deal directly with the community rather than with the employment bank?

Mr Boyte—We are just starting to. We have a very clear mandate to deal through these agencies. With the lack of response we are getting, and this is over a couple of years now, we are looking at breaking that mandate and going direct.

Senator WORTLEY—You say that some organisations do not act ethically. Is that regarding employment?

Mr Boyte—No, it is across the board. In every organisation or community, like this out here, there are certain people that take advantage and are just on board for the ride and the money they get out of it. There are a couple of stakeholders that have significant influence over how we can do our business with the community. For example, we are not allowed to put on any cultural show or interaction without using certain companies. The cost of doing that, very little of which goes to the people actually doing the show, is prohibitive, so we do not. You will see very little cultural activities at the resort.

Senator WORTLEY—When you say it is prohibited, what is the factor that stops you? It is not just someone saying that you cannot do it.

Mr Boyte—I believe it was in an agreement that was signed several years ago.

Senator WORTLEY—The contract is between Voyages and who?

Mr Boyte—The people and organisations that are involved.

Senator WORTLEY—Is it the parks organisation?

Mr Boyte—No, it is nothing to do with parks.

Senator WORTLEY—And it is not local communities?

Mr Boyte—It is through the people and organisations associated with local communities.

Senator WORTLEY—What do you think can be done to overcome this? What can be done to address the issue of ethics?

Mr Boyte—There is a certain amount of pressure that can be brought to bear. Again, it is going to take the three key stakeholders getting together and having a long-term plan in place so the argument that ‘somebody has got to look after them’ cannot be used.

Senator WORTLEY—For the record, can you say who the three stakeholders are?

Mr Boyte—Voyages, parks and the community itself.

Senator WORTLEY—Is that dealing directly with the community rather than dealing with other stakeholders?

Mr Boyte—If we have got long-term plans that extrapolate down to short-term goals and objectives, then there would be a more structured approach to doing business with them, rather than having to do business with a range of other entities. That again gets back the fact that there are so many people wanting short-term goals or, alternatively, just being in there to make money that you just cannot deal with 20 different people.

Senator WORTLEY—When you talk about organisations not acting ethically, are you specifically referring to commercial organisations?

Mr Boyte—It is a combination of commercial organisations and certainly some people within the community that have their own agendas.

Senator MOORE—I want to talk a little about the exchange of information between your organisation and parks. Most hospitality agencies conduct surveys about where people come from, what their expectations are, what their disappointments are et cetera. Does your organisation collect those statistics? I saw something in the motel room, and did not fill it in—yet; I will. Is that process effective? Do you keep good databases on that kind of thing?

Mr Boyte—We do keep a lot of information and we do a lot of research. We also have some quite major programs coming up soon. I cannot comment on what it was like before I arrived, but it is certainly my intention to work with Rowan, the park manager, and to share information. Everyone can gain from it. The community will also gain from long-term plans being put together, and they will have that information as well.

Senator MOORE—My understanding from reading some stuff—which I am still working through—is that the accommodation area is on freehold land, which is not actually in the park, but the attraction for people coming here is to go to the park. Is that right?

Mr Boyte—That is right.

Senator MOORE—Is there a formal relationship between your organisation and Parks Australia?

Mr Boyte—In terms of meetings and so forth?

Senator MOORE—Meetings, memoranda of understanding et cetera. What is the relationship?

Mr Boyte—As far as any memoranda of understanding, I cannot answer that question. I have not come across anything yet. There are avenues through meetings with parks. Again, we have yet to explore that. We have both been very busy but we have made a time for next week. If we can identify any other areas, that is something that I will be more than happy to get involved in.

Senator MOORE—And that would be on the basis of information exchange and cooperative relationships?

Mr Boyte—Based on information exchange and working together with the community on projects and promoting the park in any way that we can.

Senator MOORE—What about the policing aspect—how does that operate? My understanding is that, in the park element, the parks organisation is responsible for ensuring that rules are maintained, people behave well and all that kind of thing. What happens in your freehold?

Mr Boyte—From an environmental perspective, we are very conscious of that and we do a lot of education on arrival about getting out on dunes, what animals to look out for, endangered species and everything else. We have the same emphasis as parks. We do the same, if not more. Because we are where all the commercial operations are, we are very conscious of it.

Senator MOORE—That would seem to me to be where some of the exchange of information could go on as well.

Mr Boyte—Yes, even more so.

Senator MOORE—For example, with people zooming between your area and the parks area and doing the wrong thing—where they are, what car it is and that kind of thing.

Mr Boyte—Yes.

Senator ADAMS—Does your organisation have much contact with the Central Land Council?

Mr Boyte—A little bit, but mainly for organising access. Again, El Questro is one that we are doing at the moment. We want to access over 200 Aboriginal sites on El Questro land, and that has to go through the land council. I have not had any need to do so here yet—though I did see that there is quite a thick file there; so I would imagine that the level of interaction is normally quite big.

Senator ADAMS—I have a question on policing. Do you consider that there are enough police here to deal with the people coming through, particularly with the roads and the park involvement as well?

Mr Boyte—To me, park involvement includes community. No, I do not think there are enough police. There needs to be a hard line taken to try to sort out some of the issues on that side of it. As far as the roads go, there is a relatively good police presence here covering the residential area and the parks. They have a large area to cover, though, so they cannot be everywhere at once. One would maybe hope that an extra person on the roads might reduce the number of accidents that happen here. Ninety-five per cent of accidents are single-car rollovers.

Senator ADAMS—Do you consider that your medical service is adequate to deal with the numbers that are coming through?

Mr Boyte—No, not at the moment. Again, looking at the community and us, we both have medical centres and we are doubling up on what we can do. We are one doctor short at the moment. Anyone wanting to make an appointment can be bumped out to two weeks before they get medical assistance. It is something that we are looking at addressing. Unfortunately, it will take a bit of time. We do not control the medical centre; it is RFDS.

Senator ADAMS—So the medical centre within the community is the Aboriginal medical centre, is it?

Mr Boyte—Yes. It is under administration at the moment.

Senator MOORE—One of the ongoing issues we are facing in this committee is the numbers of people wanting to use national parks and the balancing of various interests to ensure that the parks are protected, which is supposed to be the No. 1 priority. Have you got any views on numbers? I know that your accommodation area is large and expected to become larger. Do you have any general views about how you balance the numbers of people wanting to visit?

Mr Boyte—I think there will come a time when free and easy access to this park, for instance, will have to be tempered a little bit. It may be through a structured transport system that is either run by parks or run by an operator to move people about so that we are not impacting on the environment as much as we are. We will need to monitor very closely the impact that we are having and use that as a basis upon which to look at how we deal with those numbers. I do think that the future will bring a point when we will have to have a structured transport system within the park to handle the large numbers and reduce the impact as much as possible.

Senator MOORE—Would that be instead of the private operators? When I looked around this morning, there seemed to be a number of large buses that belonged to a certain number of companies, plus rented buses—the Winnebagos—and private transport. You have all of that zooming around. Are you thinking of a centralised system that would somehow overtake all of that?

Mr Boyte—Yes.

Senator MOORE—Is that operational anywhere else in your experience?

Mr Boyte—Theme parks have buses that tour around everywhere. In Thailand they have some areas where everyone has to go on one bus—it is probably more from a business perspective because somebody in an organisation is making money out of that—

Senator MOORE—I was just thinking that!

Mr Boyte—but the point is that they do lessen the impact. Infrastructure does not have to be huge and monotonous because you have so many cars and buses coming in; it can be kept small, yet people can still get out there and enjoy the experience and the attraction that they are looking at.

Senator MOORE—Have you got any idea in your forward plan about the optimum number for a place like this?

Mr Boyte—In terms of people coming?

Senator MOORE—And staying.

Mr Boyte—Because we control the accommodation we can dictate that to a certain extent.

Senator MOORE—I thought so.

Mr Boyte—I do not know whether we do that from an environmental point of view. I do not know where the company sits on that, although you will see when reading the environmental business plan that the company is very strong and accepts a social responsibility in that area.

Senator MOORE—Sure.

Mr Boyte—Again, it needs to be in consultation with the parks. I still think there is quite a scope to expand the number of people who can come here without the impact on the environment being so great.

Senator MOORE—Have you got current data? In my ignorance, I did not know that the backpack was to be taken away, so it is sitting in pristine condition in the room that I was in last night.

Mr Boyte—I will get it dropped out to you.

Senator MOORE—We were talking last night about the domestic numbers being solid and up and the international numbers being slightly down. What are the current numbers coming in?

Mr Boyte—In the year to date, I think we are just about on track with last year from our point of view—there were, I think, 350,000 who stayed.

Senator MOORE—Those are people who stayed overnight?

Mr Boyte—Yes. The great majority of those people stayed at the camp ground. That is where we can gauge the impact of people coming through. I believe that fuel sales are up about 10 per cent, which again shows that we have a lot more drivers coming through. I expect that with the numbers that are tipped to double in the next 10 years the greatest area will be in self-drivers or, at the lower end of the market, backpackers.

Senator MOORE—Are you an Opal community?

Mr Boyte—Yes. GPT have been a proponent of Opal and pushed it within government. We rolled it out officially on 1 June but we started a month earlier. So if people say, ‘It breaks our cars down,’ we can say, ‘You have been using it for a month so it can’t do.’

Senator MOORE—That is good information.

Senator WORTLEY—Just briefly, are there plans for additional beds at Voyages to accommodate larger numbers?

Mr Boyte—Yes, we have some plans that have been in place for a number of years. When you build a resort of that size, even if it is not owned by a single entity—it was owned by the government back then but operated by a single entity—there are always expansion plans in place. We have existing plans for a number of the properties and also for the expansion of the camp ground if we need to that we can put into practice without having to go out and turn a new

sod of dirt, so to speak, like it was with Longitude. Therefore, we can lessen the environmental impact because it is already within the confines of the resort.

Senator WORTLEY—How many additional places would that give you?

Mr Boyte—From a camp ground perspective, the first stage would increase it by a third again. From a hotel perspective, we are looking at just under 300 rooms.

Senator WORTLEY—An additional 300 rooms?

Mr Boyte—Yes.

Senator WORTLEY—For the camp ground, you said a third. What would that be?

Mr Boyte—A third the size again. In people terms, that is about another 700 people a night.

Senator WORTLEY—What do you have in place with regard to the camp grounds and the impact on the environment?

Mr Boyte—The camp ground is a cleared area, obviously. We do a lot of revegetation in and around the resort anyway, and that happens out at the camp ground. As I said, where we are going to expand will have very little impact on the environment because it is already cleared land and has been for some time.

Senator WORTLEY—We spoke earlier about employing people from the local communities. Do you have plans in place with regard to developing programs that would see more people from the communities employed by Voyages?

Mr Boyte—The company already have those programs in place. We even have an Indigenous employment person on staff whom we pay for. So we just need the people to do it.

Senator WORTLEY—You spoke earlier about not being successful in getting people through the agency.

Mr Boyte—Yes. As I said, we have to break this mandate so that we can deal directly with the community. At this stage, that is not too far off happening.

CHAIR—I assume it would be in your commercial interests, apart from anything else, if you could get more local Indigenous people on staff. It would reduce your likelihood of turnover.

Mr Boyte—Certainly, with the more that we can get, and it is not for business reasons. We do genuinely have a responsibility to promote that anyway.

CHAIR—I am trying to establish—I am not suggesting that it is not a genuine attempt—that it make sense all round.

Mr Boyte—Sure. It makes commercial sense as well.

CHAIR—I notice the material you have given us about looking at reducing the ecological footprint, particularly in water usage and energy consumption. I guess, because you are a nature based company anyway, that emphasising that makes extra sense. But, from a wider perspective, there are lessons we could learn in trying to do that in a more across the board fashion. How comprehensive is that footprint measurement? Is it predominantly on reducing that type of consumption or do you look at the whole thing?

Mr Boyte—The company takes a holistic view of it, right down to any purchasing contracts, and we do this country wide. Any purchase must have reusable content in it, otherwise we will not buy the product, even if we then have to pay more. Within the resort, we have sustainability committees and we have a large recycling program. In the last seven years we have shipped 216 semitrailer loads of cardboard back to Adelaide. That was only the tip of the iceberg, because there were all the cans and plastic bottles and so forth as well.

On a larger scale, we are going through a project now where we are looking at changing all of our vehicles—we operate 80 within the resort—or as many of them as we can, to hybrid fuelled vehicles and electric ones as well. From a water perspective, we are seeking approval for our contribution to a government and power initiative on treatment of grey water. It will involve setting up a new system that will be the first in Australia so that the grey water will go back in and we will use it for our irrigation, for which we use 80 per cent of non-potable water at the moment—and that is really just water going out there and being used for something that it should not be.

CHAIR—What about things like menus—the types of food? One other place I am aware of reduces the amount of meat, for example, because it has a higher footprint than other types of food.

Mr Boyte—No, we do not take it that far. We do include bush tucker and a lot of wild meats that are naturally out there—camel, kangaroo and everything else—right down to beef and so forth. But, no, we do not take it that far.

CHAIR—The other aspect of that, which I guess would be an unavoidable issue out here, is the issue of emissions from air traffic or from driving for people to get here. I am thinking of that on a global scale, rather than pointing the finger at a particular resort, because it is an issue on the tourism side of things more broadly that we are just starting to wrestle with in Australia. Do you have any views about how we address those sorts of things?

Mr Boyte—I think a centralised transport system can be taken even further to include whole regions, if that is seen as reducing the impact people have. As I said, our Mobil sales are growing significantly. While from a business point of view that is really good, from an environmental point of view that starts to concern us because of the impact we are having, hence our drive to change all our transport to hybrid systems that will reduce our impact on the environment. As to where that will go long term throughout Australia, again that will have to be looked at on a regional basis to see whether a centralised system can be put in place to help deal with it.

CHAIR—One thing struck me in the short time I have been here, and we are an example of it, I suppose. It links to the issue we raised earlier of there not being much engagement with visitors here and about cultural understanding and awareness. People come in here; they charge in,

charge out and disappear again very quickly—as we are. People use all that resource consumption to get here and then charge out again in a day; it is not overly efficient. A longer stay would obviously be in the interests of your business, but from all the other perspectives are there things that can be done to at least improve that, to some extent?

Mr Boyte—Certainly. At the moment, the main attraction is the rock and the Olgas. The number of tours are limited purely because of the destination, unless you want to go multi-night touring somewhere. The average length of stay is between 1.6 and 1.8 nights at the moment. Within the resort we set a minimum of two nights for stays at Longitude 131°. We are looking at a number of initiatives to increase the stay by looking at extra attractions that may keep people here another night. My personal view is that if we keep people here another night we will double the impact on the environment. That is something that is being considered, but there is also a lot more that people can learn by staying a little longer.

CHAIR—A final topic is a wider issue we are dealing with across the board—just looking at whether there are things we could learn from. The issue of resourcing for parks is obviously a big one. Regardless of how you define their responsibilities, there is always a need for more. Leaving aside whether that should be more from the federal government or from state and territory governments or whatever, there is obviously an issue of whether there are other revenue sources. Industry is another that comes up. We do have things like the park charge here, I guess, or the reef tax on the Barrier Reef, which you may be aware of, for marine operators. Are there other things? Perhaps in a more formal sense, you should be exploring opportunities for industry contribution, partly to avoid some of the more crude mechanisms of just whacking on taxes and charges and those sorts of things.

Mr Boyte—Commercial operations within the park, if they can be done without too big an impact. There is a place for them everywhere. User pays is always a good one! But how much the user is willing to pay is also a commercial decision by itself. When you look at the overview, government—Territory and Commonwealth—is an obvious source of funds, but industry has to contribute its share to managing the park. Again, it comes back to everyone having a clear, strategic plan to work together. If you have that and everyone is still getting the benefit from it, I do not see a problem with industry or even the community or parks not wanting to ensure that the attraction is in any way diminished because we do not have enough money to do it, as long as it is achieved with a planned approach.

Senator WORTLEY—In addition to the Indigenous training and development program, what assistance or benefits does your organisation receive from the Commonwealth government?

Mr Boyte—So far that I have found, not really a lot. We pay for everything. We pay for our power and water treatment. There may be anything that might be handled at head office, but normally I am across the board on most things and there is not a lot that we get out of it.

Senator WORTLEY—You cannot think of anything at the moment?

Mr Boyte—No. The only thing we get from the Territory is free education for our own staff through the Charles Darwin University because it is classified as remote area.

Senator ADAMS—Does your organisation put anything into infrastructure? We were discussing the airport last night. Are you involved with any financial contribution in that respect?

Mr Boyte—We own the airport, so we have to. It is costing us \$22 million. We reinvest a lot of money into infrastructure. It is 20 years old. As you found out this morning, the hot water takes 10 minutes to get through and so you did not have enough time. We are replacing things that are 20 years old. We are talking millions. We spend millions each year. It is a balancing act between repairs and maintenance on existing infrastructure and introducing new and more efficient and more environmentally friendly infrastructure, or, as is the case at the airport, making sure that we can handle the expected volume of people that are coming here over the coming years.

Senator MOORE—You have large advertising in the foyers about the Mutitjulu community project. Why is it capped? It says there is a cap of \$200,000 a year to that particular process. Also, what percentage of people say they are not going to put the \$2 in?

Mr Boyte—From those that we actually levy the charge on, we would probably have 30 per cent that would want it removed. Surprisingly enough, we have seen a sudden drop-off in the last week or two following all of the publicity around the Mutitjulu community.

Senator MOORE—That is people not wanting to put it in?

Mr Boyte—Yes. There is information that comes out that we cannot control, obviously. We do not charge Japanese tour groups because it is culturally insensitive to them. We do not charge bus groups because their bill is only going to be \$2 and it is going to cost us far more to process it. Unfortunately, it does, and it just clogs up everything. I honestly cannot answer why it is capped at 200. I suppose the company wanted to put a cap on what they put in, because we do through other areas—

Senator MOORE—I understand it is not the only project, but it is so well advertised and it says there specifically there is a cap of 200.

Senator ADAMS—What is the process for the money actually being handed over? Can you explain where it goes, how it goes and how it is audited?

Mr Boyte—It goes into a separate not-for-profit organisation, the Mutitjulu Foundation. We work with the Mutitjulu community through a company called Mutitjulu Incorporated. They advise or instruct us how they want the money spent. That decision is made based on meetings that we have regularly throughout the year. At the moment, as I mentioned last night, we are building a respite centre worth \$1.2 million. Stage 1 should be finished by Christmas. That is our first major project. The charter of the foundation is that it must be concerned with health, education and the children. There is the Garma Festival and we send people up there. There are other smaller activities that we undertake for them.

Senator ADAMS—Could you expand on the respite centre?

Mr Boyte—The respite centre is using an existing area. We have found out that we have to pull all the buildings down because they are filled with asbestos. We are building the respite

centre to handle the aged and infirm. It will also deal with dialysis. At the moment everyone has to travel to Alice Springs, so the elderly are in Alice Springs away from their homeland and away from their families. We want to bring it back so they can actually do it here. The second stage of the project is to build a green room, which is where people who are close to the end of their time can pass away in peace and be treated respectfully.

CHAIR—Thank you. Can I just confirm: you said 30 per cent of people who currently get \$2 extra on their bill asked to take it off?

Mr Boyte—FITs—free independent travellers, we call them.

CHAIR—At the moment an extra \$2 is put on their bill, people can ask for that to be taken off and 30 per cent asked to take the \$2 off?

Mr Boyte—Yes.

Senator MOORE—Pretty scary, isn't it?

Mr Boyte—It is. That does change with education, but how much do we spend on education for these people who come and visit here? They have one focus at the moment: to see the rock. It is a wider education emphasis that we have to make to drive that up.

CHAIR—I am surprised you get 30 per cent who bother to take it off, even if it was just there for the hell of it.

Mr Boyte—Two dollars is not very much, is it?

CHAIR—Thank you for your time. As I mentioned at the start, we are not reporting until the end of November, so if there is any extra information you think might be of use to us or other things you think of that you should have said, please feel free to pass that on. Similarly, we may ask for a little bit more information after people have had a think about what you have said. Thank you for your cooperation.

Mr Boyte—Thank you very much.

[10.02 am]

MORAN, Mr Sean, Joint Management Officer, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, Central Land Council

CHAIR—Welcome. I need to formally indicate to you that these hearings are covered by parliamentary privilege and that false or misleading evidence is not a good thing, which I am sure you were not going to do anyway. You can ask to give evidence in camera if you wish and we will consider it. If there are any questions you do not want to answer for some reason then you are not under any compulsion to do so; you can just indicate why and we will decide what to do from there. We are keen to get your views about what we can learn from this area and other areas that we can apply as part of our broader inquiry. We normally ask people if they want to make an opening statement by way of background or any particular points they want to make sure they get on the record before we go to questions, so I now invite you to make an opening statement.

Mr Moran—I work as the joint management officer in the national park here. My employer is the Central Land Council. In a moment I will go into a little bit more detail about what my work involves. Firstly, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to appear today and to apologise that the Central Land Council's director, Mr David Ross, cannot be here today—he has some longstanding appointments that he was unable to break to get down here. With regard to my role here, I am the Central Land Council's employee in the park, so if there are questions related to activities outside the park I may be able to answer them but there are a lot that I will not be able to answer. The Central Land Council would like the opportunity to put in a submission at some stage following today on issues you might ask us about.

My role here is enormously diverse but my main role is to undertake consultations with traditional owners of the park to ascertain and express their wishes with respect to management, conservation and development issues inside the park. I am also one of the four members of what is called the joint management team. There is a joint management partnership that operates in the park. The team member from the park itself is the park manager. The second member is from the board of management, represented in the team by the board secretary. The third member is from the Mutitjulu community, represented in the team by a community liaison officer who is employed by the community and primarily funded by Parks Australia. My position is as joint management officer. The Central Land Council and the traditional owners of the park are represented in the team by me. My position is also primarily funded by Parks Australia. Although Central Land Council has a range of other involvement, I have legal support and anthropological support, and that is funded through ABA funding.

Senator ADAMS—Mr Moran, are you based specifically in this particular park?

Mr Moran—Yes. I have some involvement in work that goes on in the two surrounding Aboriginal land trusts, but I am primarily in the park.

Senator ADAMS—Can you give us some indication as to how you see the future for the community in the park? Is it moving forward? What can you see that can be done to get people

more integrated into the park as far as their work goes and working with the resort? What is your point of view?

Mr Moran—In respect of the resort specifically, or how I see the community moving forward in general?

Senator ADAMS—In general to start with and then how you see it working through the different areas so that people can be employed and have a future.

Mr Moran—Specifically in relation to my position, I see strengthening of the connection between the community and the park, particularly with regard to employment and development proposals, which the park and the community can hopefully work on together over time. Similarly, I guess, with the resort—and I have to say I am much more involved in interaction between the community and the park itself, not so much with the resort—I would see strengthening of employment programs and education programs. There is what is known as the Working Together project. In the Central Land Council we have people who work on that project in particular. While I have some involvement with it, I am certainly not the primary person involved in that project. The Central Land Council would probably like to supply this committee with information in relation to that after today.

Senator ADAMS—That would be good.

Senator WORTLEY—In the submission there is a statement that says that the trust between the joint management partners at Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park has been damaged.

Mr Moran—Which submission is that?

Senator WORTLEY—It is on the website. I will go through it for you. It says:

The new Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 was passed by the Senate late in June 1999. It allows for a representative of the Northern Territory Government to sit on the Board of Management, while allowing traditional owners a say over who that representative may be. The position of Director is to be retained. Unfortunately these changes and the process by which they were implemented have damaged the relationship of trust between the joint management partners at Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park.

Mr Moran—It sounds like that might be a bit dated.

Senator WORTLEY—My question was: what has been done to repair the relationship and what is the current status?

Mr Moran—I am not sure of the time line. Approximately three to four years ago there was a lot of work done between the community, the Central Land Council and Parks Australia to try to get that trust back. There was a change in how joint management operated in the park. I think previously there was a joint management team that was based at Mutitjulu. That team has now moved to park headquarters. The Central Land Council has been brought into that team and so has the park manager, who previously was not part of that team. As I said at the start when I was introducing myself, there are now four members of that team. My view is that we currently work quite effectively on a number of issues. Sure, there are a number of improvements that could be

made. I have been employed here for nine months. I was here briefly six or seven years ago, when I would say there was a great deal of mistrust between the different joint management partners. My view today is that there is a lot more honesty and a lot more working together and there are real opportunities to develop that teamwork and trust over the next five to 10 years.

Senator WORTLEY—From what you have already said, I understand that you have a relationship with the community. Do you deal directly with the community?

Mr Moran—The community liaison officer deals directly with the community. It is that person's job to deal directly between the community and the park. My job is to facilitate communication primarily between the park and traditional owners. The community does have some traditional owners in it, but probably the majority of traditional owners live outside of the park in other areas, in other communities. My primary role is not to facilitate that discussion between the community and the park, though I certainly am involved in it. I am not the primary person but I have a lot of communication with the community council and I try to grease the wheels for interaction between the community and the park.

Senator WORTLEY—In your view, is the relationship between the traditional owners and the tourism operators, or what is going on in the tourism industry here, one that is working or are there things they can be done to improve it? We just heard from Mr Boyte from Voyages talking about Indigenous people from the communities and that there positions there but people do not come in and take advantage of them and those sorts of things.

Mr Moran—Yes, I definitely think there can be a lot of improvement—not just with the resort but between the tourism operators, traditional owners and the community.

Senator WORTLEY—Have you got some ideas as to what those improvements could be? Are there a couple that come to mind?

Mr Moran—One would be increased employment programs. I think traditional owners are of the view that the tourism industry often does not give the right messages about their culture, their beliefs and information about the park, so we certainly want to improve that. There is a tourism consultative committee. Some of the major players from the tourism industry and traditional owners, including some of the board members, sit on that committee. I often sit on that committee. That is one forum where we are trying to improve those relationships and agreements.

Senator WORTLEY—Would you say that one of the major issues is the cultural message that is being promoted by people in tourism? If that were addressed, would it then be a situation where people in the community would be more likely to participate in the various employment programs?

Mr Moran—Yes, that would be one way of assisting their involvement. I think it is very important to Anangu, the traditional owners, to be able to pass their culture on to people. They really appreciate the opportunity. To them, I think it is one of the most important aspects of what is happening in the park. I would not say that employment necessarily would come directly from that, though.

Senator WORTLEY—So they would not be more inclined to be involved?

Mr Moran—I think they would be to some extent, but you would have to have a particular focus rather than just the information. I think there is a whole lot of other aspects to trying to get people involved.

Senator WORTLEY—Mr Boyte spoke about ethics and some of the stakeholders not abiding by ethics in relation to the Indigenous communities and so on. Is that a shared view?

Mr Moran—I did not hear exactly what he said, but I think there is a concern often that some tour operators and some people working for tour operators do not have a great deal of respect for traditional culture here.

Senator WORTLEY—Is there anything that can be done in your view to overcome that or address that issue?

Mr Moran—Recently, about three weeks ago, we had a tour operator workshop. We are getting the park to promote online tour operator training. I think it is about communicating with them in those sorts of forums and getting that sort of interaction happening.

Senator ADAMS—Can you tell us exactly how the Central Land Council is dealing with feral animals?

Mr Moran—Outside of the park we have a range of projects. Again, we would like to provide you with a submission on that. We have had a particular focus on camels, horses, donkeys, cats and foxes. We have been involved with—I do not know their name these days—Parks and Wildlife in the Northern Territory for a number of years on those projects. I have a history of working on cat projects and also horse and donkey projects six or seven years ago. But definitely with regard to the more up-to-date information we would really like to provide a submission on that.

In terms of in the park, I think one of the more positive projects happening here is the interaction between parks staff and traditional owners to develop feral animal control programs. The most recent one was fox control—fox baiting and fox traps—and trying to get some sort of control on those issues. I think that both inside of the park and outside of the park there is increased work to try to incorporate traditional knowledge into those programs. The Central Land Council considers that it is essential to get a result out of the feral animal programs here. I think we are also of the view that there is not enough funding for that currently, to incorporate traditional knowledge into projects. We place particular emphasis on that when people are coming in to do research into feral animal control in those sorts of programs, that right from the start they have to look at incorporating both traditional owner involvement and knowledge into their programs.

Senator ADAMS—Specifically on camels, which are obviously a problem right throughout the land council area, have you got a program on that?

Mr Moran—I am not sure of the official title but we have a camel control project officer. We are currently looking at a range of projects—everything from pet meat to exported meat for

human consumption. My personal view is that it has gone quite slowly over the last five or six years. Certainly, in the last six to nine months the Northern Territory parks, the Central Land Council and the park here have had a lot more involvement. There have been Northern Territory parks staff who have come down here and have been doing presentations recently and the Central Land Council is involved in the forums in Alice Springs that are being run by Northern Territory parks. Anyway, I think that one is to be continued.

Senator ADAMS—Thank you. Obviously, management of weeds coming from outside into the park would be part of your concern too, I would imagine.

Mr Moran—Yes. Again, I worked quite closely with the park staff here and with incorporating traditional owners into management of weeds. As I think you saw yesterday, buffel is a particular problem. My thoughts are that, in the last nine months in particular, the extent of involvement of traditional owners in the control of buffel has been extensive—certainly on a day labour basis. I think buffel is primarily the focus at the moment simply because it has such an extraordinary impact.

Senator MOORE—You said earlier that ‘we held an information day for tour operators’, who is ‘we’ in that statement?

Mr Moran—The park.

Senator MOORE—Was that the joint management committee?

Mr Moran—The joint management team certainly had some involvement in it and a lot of input. It came directly from the park. Actually, it came down to the park from the board of management. I think over the years the board of management has pushed for increased work in that area. I certainly was not here at the time but I would suggest that the board of management passed on instructions to the park that it wanted to develop that area—if not the board of management, the tourism consultative committee.

Senator MOORE—Which feeds off—

Mr Moran—Which feeds directly into the board of management.

Senator MOORE—I am interested in the issue of number control and the possibilities of limiting numbers of people into the area. Do you have any views on that? Has that been discussed?

Mr Moran—It has been discussed quite a lot. I think the park manager has made statements in recent times about trying to double the numbers over the next 10 years, whereas the Central Land Council and traditional owners would be asking the questions: do we want to double the numbers and what would the impact of that be? We are very concerned in a number of ways. There is a question about whether the resort could hold those numbers. Over the years, the park has been discussing what would happen if those numbers came into the park. Would you have to restrict vehicles coming in independently? Would you have to move to some sort of bus shuttle service? There are infrastructure and transport plans for the park which discuss that issue. The Central Land Council is continuing to discuss with the traditional owners whether they would

like to see those numbers increase and whether they would like to see that extra impact on the park.

Senator MOORE—There is no easy answer. I just interested in the process being used by the people involved in this park to even look at the issue. So it is a regular discussion topic.

Mr Moran—It is a regular discussion topic. I do not know if, say, the board of management has asked the question straight out: do we want the numbers doubled to 800,000 or one million over the next 10 years? We have a process coming up over the next year to develop a new plan of management. The board of management has a plan of management workshop in two weeks. I think that is a direct a question which should be asked of people and then the answer teased out.

Senator MOORE—That is what I am trying to find out in terms of how these things are looked at. We have heard all kinds of evidence about what happens overseas and what happens elsewhere. I know that this park has fees. In Kakadu, where the Central Land Council is also involved—or is that the Northern Land Council—

Mr Moran—Northern Land Council.

Senator MOORE—they have just taken their fee off. Is there any general view about fees?

Mr Moran—Anangu traditional owners are very clear that fees should stay in this park.

Senator MOORE—Why?

Mr Moran—The lease agreement is very important to them and that sets aside 25 per cent of gate funds for traditional owners. I can go through what that has been spent. The traditional owners take the lease very seriously—it sets out the conditions that they leased the park on 20 years ago.

Senator MOORE—It is an important element.

Mr Moran—I can provide this to the inquiry if you want it.

Senator MOORE—We want everything, Mr Moran. What is that?

Mr Moran—This is a background to the gate fees into the park. The rent moneys are used in three different ways. Twenty per cent goes directly to Mutitjulu community for use on community projects. The budget of these funds is submitted to the Central Land Council for approval but it is for the community to put together what they want to spend that money on. The Yangkuntjatjarra Kutu Aboriginal Corporation receive 45.47 per cent, which they distribute to several hundred identified traditional Aboriginal owners. Some 2.27 per cent is spent on administration fees and 32.26 per cent is spent on what is called the Uluru rent money community development project.

Over the last two years the Central Land Council has been working closely with traditional owners to develop the Uluru rent money community development project. That is used to fund targeted community development projects in communities outside of Mutitjulu. Last year the

communities of Imanpa, Docker River and Areyonga were identified as being priorities at a traditional owner meeting. That was spent on a range of activities such as fixing up basketball courts and a substance abuse program. I will give you the list of those. More recently there has been a decision by traditional owners to try to spend some of this year's money on communities in South Australia. I am aware that there is a push to spend one-quarter to one-fifth of the money on the Ernabella community in northern South Australia, perhaps on making improvements to the arts centre down there.

Senator MOORE—That would be a really useful document in terms of that process. Where is the discussion at about whether the fees should go up or down, or things like that?

Mr Moran—Healthy. There was an increase two or three years ago. I am not sure of the date of it.

Senator MOORE—It was a while back now but I cannot remember the date either.

Mr Moran—Some traditional owners would like it to be increased more—or at least their proportion of it increased—but some do not ask for that. I think there is a recognition that it is not going to be increased, at least not in the short term. That increase is the money that is being used to go towards the non-Mutitjulu community development projects.

Senator MOORE—Thank you.

Senator WORTLEY—Mr Moran, as we move around the cultural centre, we see writings by and comments from traditional owners regarding decision making or rule making as to the park. But when we go out to the rock we see people walking on rocks and I understand that people take photographs of areas that are held by the traditional owners to be sacred. Given this, how seriously are the demands by the traditional owners taken and what is being done to improve their position in the future?

Mr Moran—You specifically mentioned the climb.

Senator WORTLEY—That was one of the areas. I understand—and I do not know if they are requests or demands, however you would like to word it—that there are certain things that traditional owners do not want to happen in the park, yet they are happening. So how seriously are those concerns being treated and what is being done to strengthen their position in the future?

Mr Moran—I think in general traditional owners' views are taken very seriously in this park, particularly through the board of management. I have a view, and I think traditional owners and the board of management have a view, that certainly around the base of the rock there are interpretive materials that need to be improved significantly. There is currently a project to try to improve those. I am not sure that there is enough money for that at the moment, and I would say it is probably moving at the moment a lot slower than what I thought it would. The climb is an issue which is quite frequently discussed at a board of management level and will continue to be discussed over the foreseeable future. I get the impression that Mr Cochrane, the director of national parks, takes that issue very seriously and would certainly like to see improvements to that and that he is listening to what people are currently saying about it. But in general the answer is that I think that people's comments are taken seriously and there is a genuine attempt

by the park, on most issues anyway, to try to incorporate traditional owners' views into park management and move those things forward. It is often quite difficult and quite complex to move them forward with respect to funding purposes. Also, it is often a quite difficult task to incorporate traditional owners' aspirations into what is essentially a large bureaucratic structure—the Department of the Environment and Heritage. I would say that quite often a lot of the views expressed by traditional owners are perhaps almost alien to people in Canberra.

Senator MOORE—And vice versa.

Mr Moran—Yes, and vice versa—exactly. Anyway, I think that, just by the nature of it, the park funding of the operations of the joint management team, the board of management and those support committees is evidence that in general Parks Australia take those matters seriously and are trying to place a lot of importance on traditional owners' views.

CHAIR—Does the land council have a view about any policy approach of the federal or territory governments on this park or other parks in your area that cause you concern or that you think you should draw our attention to?

Mr Moran—We would like to provide a submission on that, but I cannot comment.

CHAIR—Another thing, which I think you would probably also want to take on notice—and there is a separate committee looking specifically at the Land Rights Act changes and I am sure the council will put in a submission to that—concerns any aspects that you think may impact on either the park per se or the role of the land council in any say or control over agreements that may affect the park.

Mr Moran—Yes, definitely.

CHAIR—That is somewhat more urgent than our longer term inquiry—and I do not want us to go outside our terms of reference—but in as much as it may affect the park it would be worth drawing to our attention. With the issue of the local Mutitjulu community, obviously there are issues there that are wider than what are covered in our terms of reference for parks. Are there areas where Parks Australia or government bodies should be doing things differently that would assist the local community?

Mr Moran—Probably from direct experience there is one thing—and it is not so much where things can be done differently—that the park is changing and that is the way it looks at employment and how employment in the park operates. I know that the park's training officer and I and a few other people in the park are asking questions about how we get people employed and at what levels we should employ them and whether it is worth while for the park to get involved in numeracy and literacy programs. The park is currently looking at employing a couple of trainee rangers while at the same time employing people at other different levels. Could you just repeat your question?

CHAIR—It is really whether this thing at Parks Australia level or at the federal government level in respect of the park should be done differently to assist the local community in particular with some of the issues they are dealing with.

Mr Moran—Currently at some levels there is either a lack of communication, or misinformation, between the community and the park. The joint management team is currently working on a communication policy, a consultation policy. I do not think that it is formally set out how the four members of the team, the four partners, communicate with each other. Something that has been put onto my plate is to try to set out some sort of policy and some guidelines where that happens in a better way. Over the last six months there have been issues which might have gone to the park, for instance, or to the Central Land Council or to the community, and perhaps they should have gone to somebody else. We are definitely working on improving that and making sure that when issues do come in they do go to the right people. There is a perception, I guess, that people go to Mutitjulu community with certain expectations on an issue—it might be a park issue or a traditional owner issue—and we just have to make sure that people are much more aware of the rules, and vice versa. Things have gone to the park or to the Central Land Council and we probably could have told the other partners that that information had arrived a lot quicker, and perhaps it was a board of management issue or a Mutitjulu council issue. So sorting out that sort of communication is a priority at the moment.

CHAIR—The joint management arrangement here is obviously still evolving, developing and changing in all of those things. But, as a broad statement, is the model that is adopted here something that you think is a good one? There are different models and different ideas about how the government side of things should engage with traditional owners in park management issues. Everywhere is different, of course, and there are different characteristics, but as a general statement do you think that the model that is in place here is one that is worth looking towards?

Mr Moran—Definitely.

CHAIR—That is a nice categorical answer. I like that. Thank you for your participation today and your help yesterday as well. I think you have indicated that there is some further material and some submissions that you are going to provide to us, which we will happily receive along with anything else that does occur to you or the council. You will be sent a transcript of today's hearing to check. After reviewing what other people have said today, if there is anything that you want to respond to we are quite happy to receive anything extra that you would like to provide. Thank you.

Proceedings suspended from 10.40 am to 11.02 am

FRASER, Mr Donald, Chairman, Board of Management, Uluru-Kata Tjuta Board of Management**TJIKATU, Mrs Barbara, Member, Board of Management, Uluru-Kata Tjuta Board of Management, through Ms Kathy Tozer, interpreter**

CHAIR—I would like to give a special welcome to the traditional owners and board members of the Uluru-Kata Tjuta Board of Management, Mr Donald Fraser and Mrs Barbara Tjikatu. On behalf of the committee, thank you for your welcome yesterday and for all the help you have given us so far. I would also like to take this opportunity on behalf of the committee to acknowledge and congratulate Mrs Tjikatu on her receipt recently of the Order of Australia award. It is a very significant achievement. Given how recently she received that award, I thought we would acknowledge that.

The committee wants to find out what you think about how things are going here and how things could perhaps be done better, particularly in this park but anywhere else around Australia. We are keen to hear any other views you have. I invite you to make an opening statement before we go to questions.

Mr Fraser—Firstly, on behalf of the traditional owners here and elsewhere, I would like to say good morning and welcome to the mob from the Senate inquiry. Thank you for making yourselves available to come and hear our concerns. I would like to say something that the traditional owners of the country have been thinking and worrying about. We put in a lot of effort to get our land back so that we can control our important places and our ways and try to educate the visitors who come from all over the world to respect our law and culture. This is what I would like to say on behalf of the traditional owners: it would have been good if after the 1975 handover all the traditional owners from everywhere came and sat down and made a plan in order to negotiate agreement, a memorandum of understanding, between the businesses about shared responsibility for what happens around the park here and the resort, because lots and lots of issues and concerns are still outstanding in this country.

Parks Australia, the traditional owners and the rangers had a big job ahead of them at that time, and there still is today. Therefore, after the handover the three groups of people—Parks Australia, the traditional owners and the people from this park—should have sat down to negotiate and to throw their cards on the table. They should have really looked at it and said: ‘Where are we going to go in the future? Where are we going to go and set up the future for the younger generation who will come and look after the land?’ That is the way the traditional owners have been thinking and talking about for many years, to try to educate the government and the people to join them so that they can build up the path to go on for the future.

I mentioned the memorandum of understanding about how the park and the traditional owners work with the resort and tour companies. For a long time we have struggled with the limited number of people that we have working as rangers. We could not to meet the goals that we wanted to meet because the government have not been funding the park properly to monitor and to control our land the best way they can, like in other countries—in Sydney, Darwin, Melbourne, Adelaide or elsewhere overseas.

I mentioned a memorandum of understanding because if we would have done that and have had a memorandum of understanding with the resort and the tour companies there would have been percentages organised for the park and the traditional owners to do better. Simply, we have been underfunded to run this World Heritage rock and we have not been managing properly. We could have done a lot more. We have shifted some roads, some parking areas and other things to move them away from our sacred site.

What Parks Australia and the government have done we are very proud and thankful for, for shifting the roads and the parks, and the job is still to be done. People are talking about reconciliation. We are easy people to work with. We jumped on it straight away. I do not know how to explain this. There is a reconciliation wagon. The government wanted us to jump on with them. We did that quickly. But then the government is trying to say, 'We made a mistake—maybe the blackfella should sit on the edge, not with us.' That is the concern for us. If they talk about reconciliation, we should do it happily and properly.

We know we have a communication problem. We know that we, men and women, are the same. We know the colour is different. That does not matter. We know the way they come and teach us is different, which is hard for us and our kids to understand. If the government and the education department are really serious, they need to trust us and they need to talk to us so that they can teach us in the manner that we will want to learn so that we can communicate with each other better. Sometimes in the country here they teach us in a strange way which is hard for us to understand, then walk out of the classroom. We want to be part of everybody—no matter who. What the government and people of Australia must remember is that even though we are the traditional owners for certain countries and areas, most of all we must know that we are all Australian and we should all have equal opportunity to do our best towards a better future for our generation which is non-Anangu and Anangu.

There is one other thing I would like to turn back to. After the handover of the land rights, at the time there were also land rights working parties. They had been collecting all the information from the elders and the others. When it went through the parliament it came out a little bit different, therefore every land council in Australia should have done workshops so that we could have a look at the act so that when we understood the act we could do better. That is still outstanding. I would like to see the land council take us through the workshop so that we can understand. If we understand and be clear about it then we should be able to look at our budget and understand where we are going.

But we are in the dark all of the time and any mistakes that have been done throughout Australia we get the blame for. But we are really not money people. We need to meet regularly in a lot of sections of countries—we call ourselves the southern area land council—and we should have had regular consultations with the land council to make it even better. But all we get now is punishment and rubbish and we do not know what the media and everybody else is talking about. Even if the government cuts it when they get angry with us we do not even feel the cut. So it is a real concern to us to go through this. But we have done nothing wrong so we enjoy every day of the week, even in Darwin. We see a lot of rubbish going on. It does not hurt us at all because it is untrue.

CHAIR—Mrs Tjikatu, would you like to make any opening comment?

Mrs Tjikatu—I would just like to say that for very many years—for a long time—we have worked for land rights and we have worked to watch over the country we are responsible for. It is very significant country here for women's culture. Because of that strength of culture, we talked really firmly and strongly in order to gain control over the land here. Once we got the land rights, we worked consistently together with parks. We have talked all of this time to protect the rock.

Throughout this time we have observed all the numbers of tourists coming to this country. They come from all over the world and they have many different languages. Many of the people are not English speaking people—they come from Italy and places like that—and as we have watched them over the years we have seen that particularly many of those people are not understanding our messages.

We have developed from our Tjukurpa the python snake and the deadly snake. We have grown this cultural centre out of this Tjukurpa—out of that creation law. We have made this because we really want to welcome people to come here to enjoy their experience and to learn properly about our culture. So we built the cultural centre so they could come here and they could also get explanations in brochures to take away with them. We need to perhaps be a little more worried about the people that do not have English as their first language. They lose the meaning in the interpretation side of things. They miss out.

Overall that is what we do. We work together here with the cultural centre—the Aboriginal people and the white people. We are more than happy to invite people and to let the government know that we want people to come here. We want the government reps to come here as well, to sit down with us and learn fully about our culture. We have also put information in the cultural centre about the climb, and a request that people do not climb so that they do not have accidents. It is really a concern because many of the tourists have come and they have left their families in order to visit here—they have left their mothers and fathers behind. I use the Pitjantjatjara word, 'minga' for tourists. 'Minga' is a little black ant.

I have thought hard about all of these issues and worked hard for a long time in order to have reached the stage where we are now—working together, running the park and looking after culture. Looking into the future, it would be really good if the government was able to support us to extend the work we do here to outside the park boundaries. There are employment opportunities in protecting our country out there, especially waterhole protection in the surrounding country. We have been protecting this particular area really strongly. We have worked hard with tour operator workshops to educate tourists. We would really like to see government support to extend the opportunities that we have to go out into the bush to teach and learn about traditional foods, like the things you see on this tablecloth.

We have talked for a long time. We have been trying with joint management for a long time but there are some frustrations about the lack of support for us to extend and to get better opportunities through joint management to better look after our country and to better look after future generations. The thing that upsets me and that I feel frustrated with is thinking: where can we go on foot from here? We cannot just stay in the one place; it is not our nature to be in one place. We find it hard to get out into fresher country.

The work that we have to do is extensive. It is to do with looking after fauna, burning the country to protect it and hunting—going out and being able to continue our knowledge of our hunting skills. The government, though, has for a long time not actually really made these things happen. They have not signed the document that allows that kind of work to go on. The reports that might have been made have not come to anything.

It is not just the obvious traditional bush foods like you see here; there is a whole range of different types of bush foods. One example is the mulga apple that grows on the mulga trees. So there is lots of work to be done in continuing the cultural traditions to do with traditional lifestyle and food.

At the moment the tourists can come here to the cultural centre, but the only thing they get to take away often is a little bit of information written down. I am also thinking about the future and the talk about many more tourists continuing to come here. We are very aware of the fact that I am not going to be here forever. I am elderly now, so my time is coming. I am concerned about preserving the knowledge that I have—perhaps recording it on paper so that people can still continue to learn when they come here when I am gone. Everybody is talking about the number of tourists. You know that they are going to increase. I am worried that there is not going to be enough information on paper or in brochures now. Maybe there should be more. I was just saying to Mr Fraser that we have established interpretations in the cultural centre here. But we need to make sure that that continues and that further generations are able to continue to learn more.

Mr Fraser—Maybe they can come and learn here first before they wander around the rock. I mentioned earlier the memorandum of understanding. Traditional owners have been concerned about underground water. Sooner or later, with the number of people coming here, we need to start monitoring the water down in the bore.

There should be a machine to tell us how we are going with the water, because that is everybody's life. There is nowhere else that we can go if the water dries up. That is another concern I forgot to put on behalf of the traditional owners. People are very worried about the watertable in the country. If we pump a lot of water, we will create salt water more and more.

Senator ADAMS—Thank you both for coming. Congratulations again on your award; that is very good. Just on the water, I was very interested when Mrs Tjikatu said that there is nowhere to go; you do not want to stay in the same place and you want to move on. With the water situation, if the community wanted to move, where would you be able to go?

Mr Fraser—What she really meant is that many years ago people from the communities were sometimes picked up, taken and used as trackers to find troublemakers. What she really meant is that, because of the lack of funding and everything else, the people need to get out into the field and prepare things—and they hope this idea will work. They really want to take the women who come here out into the field. The women who come here must have time to prepare things and they can come and pick them up here or elsewhere—maybe Yulara. They can show people how they used to live a long time ago with things like the bush apple, berries and other bush tucker and by using a grindstone to make flour for families. That is what she meant. The women need transport to get around to do these sorts of things. With the community not having been funded properly, they have not been able to do that.

Senator ADAMS—You have spoken of the young people in your community and how you want to hand things down to them. Are there any programs that you think have worked in the community that should be funded again to continue to help educate, train and prepare people enough to go on to work?

Mr Fraser—I do not know what happens in this community, but I hear things. They have a youth program here, but it has not been funded properly. But on the South Australian side—which is the line put in by the government to control people, their money stories and this and that—there is only a very small amount of money coming into APY land and people want to do more. They have lots of ideas, which they have had for 100 years and that they want to pass on to the people. These unique, natural, local, tribal Aboriginal people want to continue their lives in that way.

A lot of the time, the government puts a rope around them to drag them into its system. But people do not want that and they say, ‘Why can’t they fund us so that we can run our own program to live like our parents used to live a long time ago?’ People lived in family groups then and they want to go back to living that way, but they are not getting anywhere.

Many years ago, the Australian and British governments chased the hell out of people. They grabbed these people—they were not clothed—put them on the backs of Land Rovers, took them to settlements and clothed them, just so they could test the bomb. People have been stuck in those settlements since then and we are all sick today. If they had left the bomb alone or tested it somewhere else, we still would be walking around in the bush.

Senator ADAMS—Coming back to the present, what do you suggest can be done to get young people prepared and able to work for money and to run their own lives?

Mr Fraser—Firstly, education needs to be fixed in the centre. Also, nowadays we need the full amount of funding that we ask for. Put it this way: we should be able to work out the programs and their budgets and give the total to the government, saying, ‘This is what we need for programs to get our youth away from sniffing, drinking and drugs and to educate them our way and also your way.’ The well is dry every time we ask. Ever since we started asking for money for youth programs, the government says that the well is dry. But the well is always full for immigration people coming on to the land of Australia. We believe that we should be looked after first and immigration people should be looked after second—because they are people too.

Senator ADAMS—What do you think about a partnership between the parks and the people of your community—because they are looking after their land—to help prepare them to go on and understand the land, as Mrs Tjikatu has said? Can you see any way for that to go forward?

Mr Fraser—The park can do only so much. As I have said, there is not much money in the park. They are willing to help this little community as well as other communities the best they can. The park has been trying to help through the land council, with the limited amount of money that it has received, and it cannot afford to keep on doing that. The government should chuck in the same amount that the park gets now. The park really has nothing to do with the communities. The traditional owners want to run the park with that money in the best way they can. It is the government that should be helping the community with proper funding. The government should be looking at what is being requested by the community, instead of throwing

such requests back to the park. As I said earlier on, we are understaffed and we are not doing the job properly—not only for the traditional owners but for all Australians.

Senator WORTLEY—Mr Fraser, you have talked about shared responsibility and about there being issues and concerns. Can you tell us perhaps of a couple of the major issues and how you think they could be addressed?

Mr Fraser—The shared responsibility agreement I have mentioned was with the resort. The resort and the tour companies make lots of money—millions of dollars. The traditional owners of the park want to sit down and negotiate with them to work out some sort of percentage, so we can have money to use on youth programs and communities around the area. Other traditional owners live in other communities. They have homelands where they lived in family groups but, because of the bomb test, they were all brought into the settlements. They are trying to get out of those so that they can live normal Aboriginal lives. That is why I have mentioned the memorandum of understanding and shared responsibility, so that we can sit down and negotiate some sort of percentages—and also negotiate percentages from the tour bus and Toyota Landcruiser companies and those sorts of things that they do here. We need to sit down and work out some sort of percentages to be brought into the park and for the traditional owners. With the resort being big and wealthy and making a lot of money, there should be shared responsibility or the traditional owners even should have shares in it. They might be renting or just leasing it, and we need to see some sorts of percentages or—

CHAIR—Dividends.

Mr Fraser—dividends or shares in it.

Senator WORTLEY—Would the issue of the percentages that you have just raised be discussed at a joint management level with the resorts and the tour operators? Has it been discussed elsewhere, or is it just an idea that you would like to pursue?

Mr Fraser—We have not talked about it in the board, but we hear every day of the week from the traditional owners. But we just do not know whether to bring it in and talk about it, because it is all associated with the land rights act.

Senator WORTLEY—So it is an idea that you would like to develop?

Mr Fraser—Yes.

Senator WORTLEY—Mr Boyte from Voyages spoke of a \$2 levy put on each person who stays there that goes back into the community. In your view, are those sorts of things beneficial to the community, or does your idea need to be on a much greater level?

Mr Fraser—It needs to be on a much greater level. The \$2 levy is really an issue between the Mutitjulu community and the resort; it has nothing to do with the traditional owners of the land.

Senator WORTLEY—I have a question for Mrs Tjikatu. You said that overseas tourists do not have a very good understanding of your messages. How can that understanding be

developed, and are there other specific messages—I understand one would be the climbing of the rock—that need to be imparted?

Mrs Tjikatu—We do not have members of staff who speak those other languages. Perhaps we could have people who could do interpretations in the other languages, just like with an interpreter we can speak in English. I am concerned that they could come to grief or have accidents on the rock through a lack of understanding.

CHAIR—I have a final question to both of you. The impression I have of the need to get a better understanding of your ways is that one of the problems seems to be time—we are always so rushed. Do we need to be more patient and find ways to take more time to talk through some of these things and to get people coming here to take a bit more time to hear some of the messages?

Mr Fraser—When people travel here on holidays they need to plan them so that they can come and learn a little bit from us. They need to be patient, to stop and say G'day to the local people and to try to understand and communicate. They are like what we call minga—white tiny little ants that run flat out every day until the last minute. They seem to be like that. They travel up here flat out. They need to respect our land and culture and try to slow down a bit to understand. So patience in our country would be good, and also it will be for their own good. They should not just rush and fall over and die. That is a concern to us. I know people say, 'But it's not your business.' It is. They leave a scar when they die in our park and it takes a long time to heal. We are loving, kind people in the Centre—right across the Centre.

Somebody asked about the climb. The climb is very sensitive place and it is hard for us to talk about it. Somebody mentioned earlier in questioning Sean or somebody else that it is very sensitive. Also somebody mentioned—and correct me if I am wrong—reducing the number of people coming here. Closing the climb might be one way to do that. The water is everybody's life. To monitor and control the water used to make the worst trouble in the Centre. There were wars between family groups to get rid of some people in case their water dried up. Are there any more questions—

CHAIR—Despite what you have just said about us needing to be a bit more patient we do need to keep moving.

Mrs Tjikatu—I appreciate that you have got planes to catch and there is no time left. But on the topic of water, this is really important for us in wanting to get outside the community and onto land and taking our children out and teaching them and taking people out and accessing the country in the traditional way. We need that water and, because it is harder to get the water from the traditional waterholes now, maybe bores out in the country would enable us to travel out to those points and that would be really good support.

Mr Fraser—There are a lot of things to talk about, things like business opportunities—maybe next time.

CHAIR—Thank you again for your time and your efforts this morning. If there is more that you want to tell us, people can send it in and we are happy to take that. We are at this for a few

more months. Thanks again for the chance today and yesterday to have a brief look at your wonderful country. I am certainly keen to get back and I am sure that many of us are.

Mrs Tjikatu—Thank you very much for your patient listening.

[12.12 pm]

COCHRANE, Mr Peter, Director of National Parks, Parks Australia Division, Department of the Environment and Heritage

EWINGS, Mr Steve, Manager, Visitor and Tourism Services, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, Department of the Environment and Heritage

FOLEY, Mr Rowan, Park Manager, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, Department of the Environment and Heritage

GUEST, Ms Tracey, Senior Ranger, Natural and Cultural Resources, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, Department of the Environment and Heritage

JAMBRECINA, Ms Mirjana (Mim), Acting Manager, Natural and Cultural Resources, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, Department of the Environment and Heritage

CHAIR—Welcome. I will take the opportunity to put on the record our thanks for all your assistance to date during our all too short visit. Mr Cochrane has to leave shortly to go back to the far less enjoyable location of Canberra—and we will allow him to do that! He has given us a statement that he would like to have incorporated. I will give the committee members an opportunity to read it, as part of proper process, to make sure they are fine about it being incorporated. I think in some ways that might actually be better than reading it out and engaging with that topic, in any case. We will take it as being okay to incorporate that document unless anyone raises an objection with me before we finish here today.

The document read as follows—

On the matter raised by Lateline about the past convictions of a current park Board member for indecent dealings with a minor, I should stress that neither the Minister for the Environment and Heritage nor the Parliamentary Secretary had any knowledge of this before ABC Lateline made its enquiries late yesterday.

The Minister has asked us to urgently inquire into this issue. We will be providing urgent advice on any action the Minister can take to have the Board member in question removed from his position. The Minister also wants to look at Board appointment processes and his current powers under the EPBC Act. Clearly the Minister will be looking to being able to form his own views on whether a nominee or incumbent is a fit and proper person for Board appointment. If he needs to amend the EPBC Act to provide him with this capacity then we will be providing him with that advice.

I should add that the Board member in question and the majority of Board members are nominated by the park's traditional owners, and that these nominations are made on the advice and recommendation of the Central Land Council (in the case of Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park).

Lateline also made reference to the handling by Parks staff, and me in particular, of allegations about a former staff member being a paedophile.

Nearly 2 years ago, the then Uluru park manager, a Parks Australia employee, informed the local police at Yulara, NT, when he was first made aware of suspicions about a then member of his staff providing petrol to sniffers in return for sex. I was advised at the same time. My view then, and now, is that allegations of such a serious nature must be dealt with by the police. Our park manager did exactly the right thing in informing police.

The park manager continued to immediately inform the police of further concerns about this individual and of additional evidence that might help their inquiries.

Even though police did not lay charges, our staff then worked with the community to try and get more evidence to the police, and help them get this individual out of their community if possible.

We placed extremely tight constraints on his work activities with us. We withdrew his access to vehicles for example, and his work attendance was closely monitored. I believe we exercised our powers as an employer under the Public Service Act as far as we could in the circumstances, with the result that the employee resigned and left the community.

My observation is that the closer one is to these issues, the more distressing and difficult they become. I feel deeply for the staff, past and present, who have been affected by this. At the end of the day however, matters as serious as allegations of paedophilia must be dealt with by the police as criminal matters.

CHAIR—I formally remind members of the committee that departmental officers are not required to give answers to questions about matters of policy, so committee members can remind themselves not to ask about those things. That ruling prohibits only questions for opinions on matters of policy and does not preclude questions asking for explanations about policy or factual questions about how and when policies were adopted. Witnesses: it just means you do not have to respond to anything on the political side of stuff. Are there any opening comments that any of you want to make, specifically for this purpose or in immediate response to some of the other things that have come up this morning? It is not compulsory. If not, I am sure we have got some questions that we would want to ask you.

Mr Cochrane—I think it would probably be easier to respond to questions.

CHAIR—What came up fairly significantly in the evidence we just had was the issue of water and what is done with water monitoring inside the park and in the wider region. Inasmuch as you have any involvement in that, is that one of the areas that does need more focus?

Ms Jambrecina—I can provide a bit of information on that. The park has commissioned a report on the two major aquifers that supply water for the park, Yulara and Ayers Rock resort. It basically looked at the sustainability of those aquifers. We are quite fortunate that we are well within the limits of the one in the park—the southern aquifer. The extent of the aquifer that is outside the park and that supplies the resort is not well understood at this stage and it does require further research. That is something that we will be looking into and talking to the resort and the Northern Territory government about.

Senator ADAMS—Tracey, I would like to ask you about the Green Corps program that you were running. How can you see that program working with the parks and youth and where can we take it forward?

Ms Guest—Last year we ran two Green Corps programs here. I was working for Nyangatjatjara Aboriginal Corporation at that time. Since then I have joined the park. The first one we just did with the community. For the second one we worked with the park as a partnership. We worked on weed problems and general involvement of youth in the community, trying to get them some skills so that it would create a pathway for them to future work in the park as trainees and rangers. That worked really well. The problem was that it only lasts for six months. Sometimes you need these things to roll on a bit longer just to get the guys into a routine of work. By the end of those six months we had a good crew regularly turning up. So it worked really well. That was basically because of the joint management with the park on that particular thing. We also had other kids who were not registered for Green Corps coming on board and working using the MOU money, which worked fabulously. We did not ever have to turn anyone away because they were not part of the system. They do not understand that you have to sign up. But there are a lot of issues. Rather than going on about it, I can give you a paper so that you can follow up on that.

Senator ADAMS—We can accept that as a tabled document I think.

Ms Guest—Those were the problems that I came across just working with people and the issues they had.

Senator ADAMS—Can you see that same program going forward with the resort?

Ms Guest—We had four people going to work for the resort after being in Green Corps. We slowly introduced them through work experience. They did a garden up there. The guys got confident working there and got to know some of the people in there. We had two fellows in the end who worked for a good few months with the resort. But once one fellow left, the other fellow did not have a malpa so he felt a bit uncomfortable. You need to have people going in pairs—they do not speak English well—so that then they can have a conversation; otherwise, they are just left on the sideline a bit.

Senator ADAMS—Since the program closed down are those people still in the area?

Ms Guest—Yes, some have moved and come back. I actually had one fellow who came back and he has been floating around. He popped over to my place last night just to let me know that he is back and he is ready to do something again.

Senator ADAMS—So now you will try to get him employed somewhere carrying on with that program? As to those people who were on the program, if they have not gone on with their work, what has happened?

Ms Guest—We have a couple of the girls who come reasonably regularly who were part of the Green Corps program last year. Some of the other team members are working here doing art work and a few other things. We try to encourage them back again.

Senator ADAMS—That is great. Thank you.

Senator WORTLEY—Can you tell the committee what stage Uluru and Kakadu are at with regard to their National Heritage listing?

Mr Cochrane—That is a good question. I do not have that precise answer with me so I am going to have to take that on notice, I am sorry.

Senator WORTLEY—Is there active lobbying going on with regard to having them put onto it?

Mr Cochrane—My understanding is that it is pretty much automatic for properties that are already on the World Heritage List to come onto the National Heritage List. But I cannot confirm whether one or both of them are actually formally on the list or whether it is just by virtue of their being world heritage properties that they are on the National Heritage List. I would need to take it on notice to give you an accurate answer.

Senator WORTLEY—Thank you.

CHAIR—This is a bit hypothetical, but is it within the power of parks, if it was agreed to go down that path, to require people to stop somewhere and go through an induction process when they come through the entry gate and pay their money or flash their pass or whatever? ‘Induction’ might be too strong a word, but could you require everybody that comes, before they go anywhere else, to spend 30 minutes or an hour getting some very basic cultural information? I am not asking you to say it is a great idea. Would that type of thing be within your legal power if it were made part of the planned management and all the i’s dotted and t’s crossed?

Mr Cochrane—It would be easier to do with people who came in with tour operators because tour operators require a permit and we can set conditions around which they operate in the park. That issue would be vastly more difficult with free and independent travellers. The park roads are public roads. Other than our requiring them to pay an entrance fee, abide by the other rules of the park and not leave the road, they are pretty much free to use the park.

Mr Foley—With the sheer weight of numbers that we receive, particularly during the winter months, it would be a difficult thing to do with independent and free travellers. I believe it probably would require extra resources. Steve has been working particularly strongly in the area of educating media, film and photography people. We do a briefing, which I will ask Steve to talk about. We receive over 350,000 paying customers a year—sometimes 1,000 to 2,000 people per day. The sheer weight of those numbers and the resources needed can be prohibitive at times.

Mr Ewings—I will just add that we, as managers, are certainly very aware of strategies to direct people through the cultural centre. With the new sunrise development, part of the access we are considering is to use the road past the culture centre so that it becomes a first point of call as you come into the park in the morning. There are strategies that we can employ to focus people’s attention at the culture centre prior to moving around the park. That is certainly one of the ways that we manage traffic.

CHAIR—I note that the financial data in the annual report of the director of national parks from the last financial year lists operating costs at nearly \$11 million; about \$2 million is paid to traditional owners. Is the mechanism of paying traditional owners in effect money that is spent on infrastructure et cetera for the Mutitjulu, for example? Or is it separate, like a royalty or lease payment, and then other expenditure on the local community comes under your operating costs, if that makes sense?

Mr Cochrane—I will get Sean from the Central Land Council to give you a more precise answer but, generally, the majority of that \$2 million comes from the 25 per cent share of the revenue at the gate. There are some other fees which they also have a 25 per cent share of. That money is paid quarterly to the Central Land Council for disbursement to a royalty association, primarily, in terms that are agreed between the Central Land Council and the traditional owners. It splits in a number of different ways for different purposes. Some goes to the land trust members, of which there are nearly 700; some goes to different communities as well as the Mutitjulu community.

CHAIR—Do you spend extra money on the Mutitjulu community, providing infrastructure or support for them?

Mr Foley—Absolutely. We provide the essential services for the community, which are power, water and sewerage, and the maintenance and upkeep of all of those services. Roughly speaking, it is around \$1 million per year out of the park budget.

CHAIR—So it is \$1 million out of the \$11 million operating costs.

Mr Foley—Yes. For our main generators, we spend approximately \$10,000 per week on diesel. It is a huge cost to the park. There are discussions with power and water corporations for the transfer of the essential services and, somewhere down the track, that may take place. We provide an enormous amount of support to the community.

CHAIR—Keeping in mind what I said earlier about you not having to answer policy questions, it hardly seems to me to be core park business to be spending 10 per cent of your budget running town services for a council. How has that come about?

Mr Foley—It is a historical legacy.

Senator MOORE—What happens in Kakadu? As a comparable situation to this community that you are providing that infrastructure for, what happens in Kakadu at, say, Oenpelli or the community in the middle of the park? Who funds all those services there?

Mr Cochrane—Oenpelli is not in the park; Jabiru is the main town. It is a township of about 1,300 people of whom over half are mine employees. Power and Water runs the power station for the mine and people purchase power in a normal provider-purchaser relationship.

Senator MOORE—And the park has no infrastructure responsibilities for that community.

Mr Cochrane—We do for our own staff. We have a number of district ranger stations and quite a number of houses. We provide power to those. There are a very small number of outstations that I think we contribute to power supply for. Again, that is partly historical and partly because we have staff living and working there.

Senator MOORE—But not water and sewerage.

Mr Cochrane—No. Water and sewerage is run by the Jabiru Town Council.

Mr Foley—The major difference between here and, I believe, any other national park in Australia is that we have a full Aboriginal community with houses, council, medical clinic, school, shops and garage located inside the national park. It is quite a unique situation. In Kakadu, they have outstations, but we have a full Aboriginal community with all the trappings of that.

CHAIR—You do not fund the whole town operation but those infrastructure services.

Mr Foley—No, just the essential services.

Senator MOORE—Do you have a seat on the town council?

Mr Cochrane—No. I should note that the community and the township have grown up with the park. The park was first declared in 1977. I understand that at around that time the community was about 30 people. It now varies between about 220 and 400. It has grown progressively over that time. Perhaps in the early days this made sense, but it does not make a lot of sense now.

Mr Ewings—To add something to that, I do not want to edge into anything but it should be said that, whilst you have pointed out that aspect of what we provide to the community, over that period of time the community have also had to consider similar things about resourcing and facilities that are available to them. That has caused a lot of frustration for the community as well. I appreciate the fact that you have asked us a question about parks, but, to be fair to the community, it is a problem that they struggle with as well.

Senator ADAMS—I would like to talk about the safety issues. We did discuss them yesterday. With the increasing number of visitors and the park's responsibility for safety, is your budget keeping up with the safety issues?

Mr Foley—Yes, we are keeping up. We have to have at least six fully trained rangers, 365 days a year, to be able to respond to emergencies, particularly on the climb. If someone had a heart attack halfway up the climb, they would sound the signal at the base of the climb. We have to respond immediately and we have to have a rescue crew there within minutes, which we do. With the staff turnover—most people stay here at least two to three years—there is a constant level of training that is required to maintain the level of competency in rock rescues.

It is a difficult issue. It is something that we are very mindful of. We have at least one death per year. Several months ago a gentleman passed away from a heart attack walking around the base. He could have been walking down Queen Street or anywhere; it just so happened he was here. Through greater management of the climb, those incidents are reducing in that sense, but the incidents are offset in sheer visitor numbers by that. When I was a ranger here 16 years ago, we had an average of a rescue every second week. I remember we did 26 in one year—and they were fully blown rescues, not just people falling over. That was when the climb was open 365 days. There has been a greater management presence with the climb and I think that has significantly reduced those incidents.

However, when we walked out to Kata Tjuta, the Olgas, yesterday, you would note that on the walking track out there you could easily sprain your ankle or trip over. In the middle of summer,

we have a number of heat stress incidents because it is so hot out here. I know it is ‘cold’ now—come in the summertime! The alarms are tested every Sunday and people are on a constant state of alert, if I can put it that way. All the tour operators brief their customers. Steve, you might want to add a few points and, Mim, you are pretty experienced in this area as well.

Mr Ewings—Certainly through the tour operator workshops of which we have run two over the last financial year, representing 20 tour companies with about 50 tour guides within that, the OH&S issues are hammered during the workshops. Also our publication, the visitor guide, which you received a copy of yesterday and which visitors receive as they come through the entry station, has a section on safety. As Rowan mentioned, after the coronial inquest in the late nineties, there were a series of implementations recommended and put in place by Parks Australia for the climb particularly—that is, the climb is closed if there is rain expected within three hours, if the temperature exceeds 36 degrees or that is forecast for the day and if the wind is over 25 knots on the summit. That has certainly reduced fatalities in the last four years on the climb.

Mr Cochrane—I want to add one other point which is fairly obvious, I suppose: the more visitors that come, the larger the gate takings and therefore the more resources available to the park to manage them.

Senator ADAMS—As a hypothetical, if a bus rolled over or something like that outside the park, would you then have to go out and help with something like that as backup for police or community?

Ms Jambrecina—The Northern Territory Emergency Services are based in Yulara, so the police would take control of a situation like that. The firies in Yulara would also assist, so there are plenty of resources there. But the park does assist the resort when we are requested to. Quite often, that is on fire events. We have an experienced fire crew in the park and we do often provide assistance during bushfires.

Senator ADAMS—On the labour side once more, if there were more youth available to be trained, would the park be able to cater for them and employ them?

Mr Foley—We have two trainees being brought on board at the moment, and a training manager. I would like to have at least four trainees on the park. That would be fantastic. A number of the people work on the day labour program. There are two MOUs. Collectively, it is approximately \$305,000. There is a lot of Anangu employment in day labour programs. The mala fence is a particularly good example of that. I believe there were over 2,500 hours of community labour and 30 to 40 mainly young guys worked on that. The walking track out at Kata Tjuta—we did not get to see that—is another particularly good example. Over 20 young guys worked on that project.

On the training side of things, people do undertake a formal training program. They are required to come to work every single day—turn up at 8 o’clock and finish at 4.30 pm. Some people are interested in that type of work and others are not. We try to have a flexible labour employment strategy where people’s cultural obligations are understood. People may only want to come to work for a couple of days per week. That is fine. We have eight Anangu employed on the park at the moment, and we are very keen to increase the employment figures on the park.

We have a lot of different programs like fire management, weed management, track work and endangered species management that are heavily reliant on working with the traditional owners—to the point where we could not do it without them. I will hand over to Mim to talk about some of the different programs in the natural and cultural resource management area.

Ms Jambrecina—Within the natural and cultural resources area we have four staff that work on an ongoing basis with us, part time. We also have quite a good crew of members of the community who come on as day labour. As Rowan said, the types of programs that we run at the moment include, for example, fire. We are doing our burning now, in the cooler winter months. You might have noticed yesterday as you were going out to Kata Tjuta that there was quite a crew of Anangu out there burning with park staff. We also have our mala enclosure—the rufous hare-wallaby enclosure. That enclosure is about 170 hectares with a 5.6-kilometre fence. One-third of it is pest proof. That fence was built mainly using community day labour over an 18-month period. There were about 40 people involved. Some of them were there for six months at a time; others would come and go depending on what other cultural, social or family obligations they had.

Other programs that we run include invertebrate pest management. We are just preparing to start a fox-baiting program in our core threatened species habitat. We do regular fauna surveys, and regular rock art maintenance and patrols are done by Anangu staff and day labour. We have cultural site patrols and other programs like that. Our section in particular involves a lot of community members because of the type of work that we do. It is natural and cultural resource management, and that is where a lot of people from the community have a strong skills base and knowledge, and a lot of interest to get out and look after country.

Ms Guest—We also do a few bush trips. We take the older women out and often engage as a cultural exchange so that new members of the park can come and get to know the people a little better. Anangu are really happy sitting by a fire and showing things. They come to life. It is amazing just seeing the difference when you take them out bush compared with sitting down in a white fella manner. It is really interesting.

Ms Jambrecina—We have always had a very strong focus in this park on combining traditional skills with scientific methodology. Invertebrate pest monitoring is a classic example of that. We are using scientific methodology but for the skills of actually tracking animals we use the traditional owners. We use Anangu to do the tracking for us. Obviously, the data is analysed using scientific methodology. There has always been a very strong focus in this park on using both sets of skills.

Mr Ewings—Another example of that is in the junior ranger program that we run out of Visitor and Tourism Services. The junior rangers are from the Mutitjulu community and also from the college, so there are primary and secondary kids involved in that. That is very much driven by traditional owners but there is also a component in there where they look at bush foods and we might use microscopes, so there is that combination again of traditional and Western approaches.

Senator WORTLEY—Camels are causing considerable damage to the park. What is being done to address this?

Ms Jambrecina—It is a difficult issue because camels are wide-ranging animals and they estimate that we have about 750,000 in Central Australia currently. It is difficult for the park to undertake a broad scale control program without it happening on a regional scale. The government has provided \$800,000 over the next three years for the development of a national camel strategy, and the park will certainly have quite a lot to do with inputting information into that strategy. At the moment we just do opportunistic control. In particular, our aim is to keep camels away from our vertebrate pest proof enclosure because they have the capacity to damage the enclosure if they walk into it. So our focus is going in ad hoc control at the moment, but it is simply not cost-effective for us to do anything more until there is a regional approach.

Senator WORTLEY—On another topic, Mr Cochrane was saying that tour operators require a permit before they come into the park and that they provide the conditions on which the permit is issued. Are the traditional owners involved in putting the conditions or are the conditions specifically set out by national parks?

Mr Ewings—There is actually a mixture of both in there. There are conditions that are set under the EPBC Act, which is the legislative framework, but there are certainly cultural considerations built within those permit conditions about where they can visit and at least considering and abiding by the considerations of the traditional owners in terms of photographing and accessing certain areas.

Senator WORTLEY—Is that monitored? For example, with regard to brochures and any sort of advertising material, is the photographic area monitored?

Mr Ewings—All images used in advertising, and that includes tour operators, are viewed by the media section which uses a set of guidelines that have developed with traditional owners and the tourism industry to assess those images to ensure that they are not using sacred sites or material that is inappropriate to publish and advertise their company.

Senator WORTLEY—If the material is found to be inappropriate, do you have the authority to stop its use from proceeding?

Mr Ewings—Certainly with the tour guides, because it is a part of their permit condition. Generally the tour industries are actually very compliant at that level. Once approached, or if they submit something that is actually not appropriate, they readily withdraw it.

Senator WORTLEY—That is with regard specifically to tourism in the park. What about travel agents and places like that? Are they governed by any regulation regarding the use of inappropriate photographs or material?

Mr Ewings—They are, and they fall under the same set of guidelines, the *Film and Photography Guidelines*. Over the last couple of years, Anangu stakeholders and parks, facilitating that process, have worked quite diligently to refine them for the tourism industry, to help in turnaround times but also to ensure that the cultural aspects are maintained within them. Most of the images are sourced for travel agents through the Northern Territory tourism association and Tourism Australia. We go through their library and if there are images that the media officers are unable to make a decision on they are referred to a film and photography subcommittee composed of Anangu elders, and they will make the call on those images.

Senator WORTLEY—Does that cover material for overseas use as well?

Mr Ewings—We certainly provide advice for overseas use of material. Our EPBC Act is a piece of national legislation. It certainly is a sticking point at times that the international community is not obligated legally to comply. But certainly we do that through our education programs. Just recently, last year, we developed a DVD media briefing in seven languages. In fact, some of the people sitting here as Anangu appeared in that. It is very strong on showing those cultural sites and instructing people how to use images without offending Anangu. It has been a very successful little project, might I add.

Mr Foley—It is also very challenging to let people know that an area is restricted. Compliance with these areas is always a sensitive issue. It is not something that is easily dealt with in the mainstream media, if I can put it that way. The understandings and learnings are developing, but we still have a long way to go.

Senator WORTLEY—One of the other witnesses spoke about ethical issues. I am not sure if you were listening at the time. Would you like to perhaps elaborate on that or add your views to that?

Mr Foley—I was not here. Can you clarify that point?

Senator WORTLEY—We were discussing ethical issues. I think that some of the tourism operators and others had some ethical issues perhaps or there were ethics that they did not abide by that they should abide by. If you did not actually hear the comments then it is probably—

Mr Foley—Yes, it is probably best not comment on it.

Senator WORTLEY—One of the comments that was made by Mrs Tjikatu was that perhaps one of the ways of addressing the issues of overseas visitors not having an understanding of the culture would be to employ officers who could speak other languages. What is your view on that, or what is the possibility of that?

Mr Foley—It would be a wonderful thing. I do not know how many Japanese ex tour guides we have.

Senator WORTLEY—What would be the two languages that would be most required?

Mr Ewings—Certainly Japanese would be one of them and then German. We used quite a range of languages on the DVD, of course. There was German, French, Korean, Chinese and Japanese.

Senator WORTLEY—So advertisements for rangers would include the ability to speak other languages?

Mr Foley—In our recruitment strategy we strongly encourage the rangers to learn Pitjantjatjara and have a base level of understanding of that language. We have Pitjantjatjara training courses on the park. That is certainly something that is very strongly promoted.

Senator WORTLEY—What do you do to assist the overseas tourists to have an understanding of the culture?

Mr Ewings—We certainly do have publications in a range of languages. The visitor guide that you were given a copy of yesterday has just gone through a whole redevelopment and reformatting over the last few months. This is the English version, but we have plans for the next financial year to start producing that in various other languages as well.

Senator WORTLEY—Are there plans to establish a way that, when tourists come into the park and have gone and put their luggage down, they actually come to the cultural centre first before they go out to the rock?

Mr Ewings—I guess that harks back to something we were speaking about earlier, and the question was asked about the legal side of that, if you like. Certainly in terms of managing the traffic and future work here we are considering the cultural centre as the focal and initial point of contact, so that when roads are designed—like the road for the new sunrise project—it will come past the cultural centre and be a direct invitation—

Senator WORTLEY—And the further development of the cultural centre to include perhaps hands-on activities or things for children?

Mr Ewings—Yes. We spoke about this last night. I think there are certainly things that we can continue to do. We have got a children's activity booklet in development at this stage and, for other people's benefit, we have talked about activities that children could be engaged in—

Senator WORTLEY—Like the painting activities—

Mr Ewings—That is certainly something that the cultural centre, in conjunction with traditional owners, would be very interested in.

Senator MOORE—With regards to numbers of visitations and future planning and the park's position in terms of balancing the numbers of the people who want to come with your role in protecting the park's integrity—

Mr Foley—There are a lot of questions in there. At the moment we believe we have around 351,000 paying customers—

Senator MOORE—That has gone up by a thousand—

Mr Foley—I was just jogging my memory there. That is for 16-year-olds and above. That is not the real figure. If you got a school group of 14- and 15-year-olds, which we do get regularly, they are not paying customers, in that sense. With mum, dad and two kids, the only figures we will pick up are mum and dad. So the real figure, I believe, is much higher than that. We understand through CATIA, the Central Australian Tourism Industry Association, that the tourism figures for Central Australia are going to increase significantly in the next 10 to 15 years and that will certainly provide a huge challenge for this park in terms of visitor management. The sheer weight of people visiting will increase significantly.

At the coach sunset area last night you would have seen the people there and realised that there are a lot of people on this park. There is a limited amount of space and at some point into the future there will have to be a decision made about transport on the park. We are probably not at that point just yet but in terms of vehicles and buses the congestion on the park is going to be a significant factor and that is going to diminish people's enjoyment experience. It is a huge challenge. Obviously we want a lot of people to come and visit Uluru—it is a great place. We obviously get revenue from that as well. But there has to be a balance and where that balance is is perhaps not as clear as it could be.

Mr Ewings—That is quite true. We have certainly been aware that it is really important to start getting our head around what is happening now. About four months ago we began installing a traffic asset management system. It is a state-of-the-art system in terms of monitoring vehicles on the road—where they travel, what time of the day they travel and what type of vehicle is travelling—and we have four of those in the park now. In the next financial year we have budgeted for a number of pedestrian counters that will actually count people on the ground as well. That sort of data will inform us to start considering what is going to take place and where people are moving and that will help us plan in the future.

Senator MOORE—I asked the representative from the resort this morning about the relationship between the resort and the park service and whether there was formal consultation going on there on the basis that it is their business to have the park operating at a very high level. That is why people come here. I would imagine there would be very few other reasons why someone would go to that area unless they were coming here. They have quite sophisticated surveying processes going on through their various resorts about the kinds of visitors who come and what they like and do not like. Is that information effectively shared with parks? And is the kind of information that you are doing going to be shared with them? I am trying to see how you support each other in doing your job.

Mr Foley—We use two forums. There is a consultative forum—an Ayers Rock consultative forum—and we are actually going to be meeting next week. We normally meet a couple of times throughout the year—maybe three or four times—and we talk about the relationship between the park and the resort. It is a symbiotic relationship. We rely and depend upon one another. We are also invited along to the Ayers Rock resort's meetings of their businesses within the resort, during which they actually give statistics. They let us know what their visitor statistics have been and about a range of issues that have come up as well. So there are two forums that we have where we do that. Obviously, I take the opportunity to speak with Gareth, the general manager, whenever I can, so there is an informal channel through which we discuss issues.

Apart from the consultative committees and informal discussions, there is not a formalised relationship. We are planning to develop a business plan for the national park. The board of management have approved that. I believe that there is scope within that business plan to certainly identify and clearly understand what the relationship is. We have grown up side by side—that is the historical aspect of it—and the resort has been the resort and the park has been the park. The relationship in the past has perhaps not been as good as it could have been, but certainly things have improved over the last several years. There is much greater working together now, but there are certainly issues that we need to tackle. The business plan is potentially one aspect of doing that with a much more formalised approach. We have also got the plan of management that is being developed over the next 12 months. There will be a great

opportunity for the resort to have input into the plan of management. Steve, do you want to add anything?

Mr Ewings—Yes, I would like to talk about the destination surveys that you were referring to. Traditionally, in the Northern Territory the Northern Territory Tourist Commission have performed most of those surveys throughout the parks in the NT. As of last year they have cut back their destination surveys, particularly as to Uluru. That has galvanised us a little to take a bit of a more proactive approach ourselves. That is why we have the traffic asset management system in place now. We are also developing intercept surveys and destination surveying within the park as well, and those are in development. So we are going to have a little space there but our data will be a lot more pertinent and useful to us as managers here than the sort of information that we have had from the NTTC in the past has been.

Senator MOORE—I refer to training. We have had various sorts of information at other places across the country about resource levels and the need for ranger training and flexibility. I would like to get something on record, if possible, about the flexibility of your staffing, so that people moving in and out of this park can go into others—that kind of thing—and also whether there is any specific training for people working in this park. Are there specific challenges in working here—as opposed to working on Norfolk Island or in Canberra gardens—in terms of the expectations you have? Would you put on record for us what you believe the training process for someone to be a good ranger should be?

Mr Foley—Yes. There certainly are some challenges. A lot of people who come here may not have worked in an Aboriginal park before or lived within an Aboriginal community before and been confronted by the issues that we deal with on a daily basis. We have an orientation manual on the park. We also have a training plan for the park that looks at a range of strategies, training programs and core competencies. We now have a training manager.

Senator MOORE—There are about 47 staff?

Mr Foley—Yes, there are about 47 staff.

Senator MOORE—And there is a training manager?

Mr Foley—Yes, we have a training manager. There are two aspects to it: there is the technical aspect in terms of law enforcement—you need to undertake a CLEB training course and sit for your ticket and you get it; and the other aspect is the learnings that people have to undertake in terms of dealing with community members who may be sniffing petrol, dealing with domestic violence and dealing with in-your-face poverty. These are very challenging things. If you have come out of a white middle-class background, you may not have ever really had to face these before. A lot of staff have to deal with these issues. There is a lot of support for one another on the park.

Perhaps others outside of the park do not understand what that actually means. They may have an academic understanding of it, but when you are there facing it, it is quite a different situation. It is a very intense park to work in. We do face many different challenges, but people are incredibly passionate and very committed to joint management, and there are lots of wonderful things that we do here. Just the other day in the burns program we had over 10 Anangu. We

simply could not do the range of things that we do without support from the community. But it is certainly a challenging environment.

Senator ADAMS—Something that has been coming up is people feeling aggrieved about being locked out of national parks as more national parks have been taken up. We have had the horse riders up in the Kosciusko area, mountain bike riders, quad bike riders, motocross—all these sorts of things. Dogs I suppose is the other one. Do you have any issues with those?

Mr Ewings—I think there is quite a strong appreciation by people when they come here that it is a World Heritage area. By and large, people respect that. There are certainly incidents where people do walk off track. We are pretty solid on ensuring that people comply. Being an ex-cocky myself, it is a little bit like where you have one sheep the rest will run. So we certainly pay attention to those sorts of issues. I do not think I would be too far wrong in saying that generally there is an appreciation that this is a very wonderful place. People appreciate its World Heritage values both naturally and culturally.

Ms Jambrecina—We are also fortunate in that we in a different situation where we are remote and people travel very long distances specifically to come here. It is unlike other parks perhaps that are in more urban settings or closer regional areas where you do have more of a sense of direct ownership of parks from people living in those communities.

CHAIR—I have a final question which might seem a bit of obtuse. Is there any policy, formal or informal for that matter, about the use of the names ‘Ayers Rock’ and ‘the Olgas’ as opposed to ‘Uluru’ and ‘Kata Tjuta’?

Mr Ewings—I cannot remember the gazettal dates—I can certainly find those for you should you need them—when the name was changed from ‘Ayers Rock’ to ‘Uluru’. Since it has been gazetted we have advertised and named everything with those names. We have a policy that adheres to that gazettal change, even to the point where our road signs will incorporate the Aboriginal names for many other areas apart from Uluru and Kata Tjuta.

CHAIR—I should have asked this of the previous witnesses: are names like ‘Ayers Rock’ an irritant to the Anangu?

Ms Jambrecina—I would suggest strongly that it is.

Senator ADAMS—I note that Qantas uses ‘Ayers Rock’.

Senator MOORE—In the Qantas lounge, yes.

CHAIR—It is the resort’s name, I suppose.

Mr Foley—I noticed that when we left Alice Springs they asked, ‘Where are you going—Ayers Rock?’ and when we arrived here they said, ‘Welcome to Uluru’. I do not know why.

Senator ADAMS—I was surprised when I looked in Perth. I just expected it to be ‘Uluru’ and it was ‘Ayers Rock’.

Mr Ewings—Their excuse is destination marketing—that it has been marketed for so long as that name—but I think it just needs a little bit more education.

CHAIR—Thank you for that. We would like to ask more questions, but we have to get on one of those planes. Thanks for your time and your help with our visit as a whole. I am sure I speak for all us, and hope that we get a chance to get back here. If there are any other things you think of that you want to send our way, we would certainly gratefully receive them. We are not reporting until the end of November, so we have a bit of time.

Before formally concluding, we will take as a supplementary submission your material about Green Corps. I note also that earlier we incorporated a statement from Mr Cochrane. The issues that statement deals with have been raised in the media lately. The committee believes they are important and serious ones, so we do not want to give the impression that we are ignoring them. But, given that they are matters that are being investigated by others, I do not think they are something that we need to have dealt with in this hearing today. We will follow the progress of them with interest.

Resolved (on motion by **Senator Adams**):

That this committee authorises publication of the transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 1.07 pm