



National Tourism Alliance

11 April 2014

House of Representatives Standing Committee on the Environment
Via email: environment.reps@aph.gov.au

Submission to Inquiry into Streamlining Environmental Regulation, 'Green Tape', and One Stop Shops

I am writing on behalf of the National Tourism Alliance (NTA), whose membership comprises national and state industry associations who together represent the interests of an industry with 280,000 businesses in Australia; around 90% of these are small businesses, and about half of them are in regional areas.

The tourism industry endorses the Government's initiative to implement a 'one stop shop' for environmental approvals while maintaining high environmental standards, to remove duplication in regulation between State and Federal governments.

Tourism is an integral component of the Australian economy, contributing \$41 billion to Australia's GDP. Tourism generates \$25.5 billion in export earnings (representing 8 per cent of total exports). Total consumption of tourism goods and services in Australia is \$106.6 billion. Tourism makes a valuable contribution to regional Australia, with 46 cents in every dollar of domestic tourism expenditure being spent in regional Australia. Tourism related employment in regional areas generates over 200,000 jobs and provides more jobs for Australians than mining, agriculture, forestry and fishing.

A major report¹ commissioned in 2011 found that two of the five core barriers to effective investment in tourism involved complex approvals regimes and complex regulatory schemes. In addition, it recommended that supply of tourism in high natural amenity areas could be facilitated effectively to increase sustainable accommodation and experiences in these areas. Areas of national significance only have tourism value if the tourism development preserves the heritage and natural values of the areas.

Tourism development in areas of national significance under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) are low risk, low impact activities, compared to impacts from other industries such as mining and resource development.

Unfortunately, however, low risk, low impact tourism development currently goes through the same dual approval process under the EPBC Act as mining and other higher impact uses, with the same potential risks and delays to the tourism development. This disadvantages the tourism development, as the investment report also found, as tourism – for a number of reasons – does not produce the same commercial return as developments such as mining. The same regulations

¹ Tourism Investment and Regulation Review, 2011, L.E.K. Consulting

therefore have a more detrimental impact on tourism, as smaller projects often cannot afford the cost and risks associated with federal government approval under the EPBC Act. The aggregate impact is that this layer of unnecessary regulation is deterring and preventing tourism investment. Another layer of state and territory based legislation applies to tourism developments in national parks and other protected areas which needs to be addressed in the bilateral assessment agreements.

The NTA is therefore advocating a policy under which any tourism development, including within national parks and other protected areas, which has state government approval, would be automatically accepted under the EPBC Act without any further Federal compliance, regulation or approval required. This could be achieved through the establishment of approval bilateral agreements and ongoing management arrangements through binding commercial leases and appropriate certification

We understand that draft assessment bilateral agreements are currently being negotiated between the Commonwealth and States/Territories. To address the recommendations in the tourism investment report, and remove some of the core barriers to effective and sustainable tourism investment, it is proposed that approval bilateral agreements are established between the Commonwealth and States/Territories. These agreements would cover ecologically sustainable tourism developments, including within national parks and other protected areas, and would ensure that tourism developments covered by the approval bilateral could be assessed and approved by the State/Territory, without requiring a further approval from the Minister under the EPBC Act. A list of relevant legislation governing development in national parks is provided at Attachment 1.

The bilateral agreements between the States and the Commonwealth would need to ensure that both the spirit and the intent of the EPBC Act were followed and proposed developments that contravene the Act would not be approved, and if so, a mechanism comes into effect to withdraw the approval.

Draft assessment bilateral agreements governing development in national parks and other protected areas would ensure that low risk low impact tourism developments such as a safari tent camp, helipad, caravan parks, cabins, jetties, canopy walks, etc., in places of high natural and heritage values could proceed without the additional cost and time incurred by requiring a Federal government approval process on top of state government approvals.

Ecotourism development in protected areas has been approved in some States and Territories around Australia with success, e.g. Sal Salis and the Purnululu safari camps (Western Australia), Green Island and Mamu Rainforest Canopy Walkway (Queensland). The ongoing management of these sites has been monitored through a combination of binding commercial leases and certification to ensure the spirit and purpose of the development is retained.

Ecotourism developments by their nature are ecologically sustainable and have minimal environmental impact, and there is demand for such experiences from both domestic and international travelers and visitors. The World Trade Organisation identified ecotourism as the fastest growing tourism sector internationally, and the UN World Tourism Organisation has a major focus on ecotourism in its strategy. In addition, a more recent report by Deloitte Access Economics, 'Positioning for Prosperity?', found that tourism is expected to be the country's second fastest growing industry over the next 20 years, with 4.08 per cent annual growth in output projected, eclipsed only by the gas industry. In light of the international context and this forecast, strategic investment by the tourism industry is essential for Australia to remain competitive in this growing sector.

The benefits of tourism investment also flow through to the whole economy. Tourism Research Australia's 2012 report *Tourism's Contribution to the Australian Economy, 1997-98 to 2010-11*, states

that “tourism’s total output multiplier was valued at 1.92. This means that for every dollar tourism earns directly in the Australian economy, it value adds an additional 92 cents to other parts of the economy. At 1.92, tourism’s total multiplier is larger than other important industries such as *Mining* (1.67), *Retail trade* (1.81) and *Education and training* (1.38).” The high value of this multiplier indicates that a higher indirect value is created in the economy.

Please contact our office on _____ or via email _____ if you need further information.

Yours faithfully

Juliana Payne
Chief Executive Officer
National Tourism Alliance

NATIONAL TOURISM ALLIANCE MEMBERS

- Accommodation Association of Australia
- Australian Regional Tourism Network
- Australian Tourism Export Council
- Caravan, RV & Accommodation Industry of Australia
- Ecotourism Australia
- Queensland Tourism Industry Council
- National Capital Attractions Association
- Restaurant & Catering Australia
- South Australian Tourism Industry Council
- Star Ratings Australia
- Tourism Accommodation Australia (AHA)
- Tourism Council Western Australia
- Tourism Industry Council NSW
- Tourism Industry Council Tasmania
- Victoria Tourism Industry Council

ATTACHMENT 1

STATE NATIONAL PARKS LEGISLATION

NSW	VIC	TAS	SA	QLD	WA	ACT	NT
National Parks & Wildlife Act 1974	National Parks Act 1975 and Regulations	National Parks & Reserves Management Act 2002	National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972	Nature Conservation Act 1992	Conservation and Land Management Act 1984	Nature Conservation Act 1980	Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act
National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2009	Crown Lands (Reserves) Act 1978 and Regulations		Forestry Act 1950	Nature Conservation (Admin) Regulation 2006			Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act
Forestry Act 1916	Forests Act 1958			Land Act 1994			
Crown Land Act 1989							