

ADDENDUM TO PARKS AUSTRALIA RESPONSE to the Parliamentary Inquiry into opportunities and methods for, and impediments and challenges to stimulating the tourism industry in Northern Australia on 17 February 2017.

CHAIR: “Can I ask you to put an addendum to your submission and give us a bit of an insight on what you require to be able to develop the commercial side of it within the park to be able to build on what they have. I understand there are always constraints in relation to budgets and things like that but, in a perfect world, what would you need to be able to focus in those areas rather than having one person in marketing et cetera and very thin on the ground. Tell us what you need, and we can have a look at it”.

Parks Australia is gearing up its Senior Exec team, going out to market to employ experienced senior managers, to develop and deliver significant projects that will increase visitation and improve the visitor experience. This is a critical time, as the tourism markets’ appetite for natural and cultural tourism is at an all-time high, openness to appropriate tourism development in parks is increasing and there is a willingness in government to capitalise on this demand and opportunity.

As outlined in the submission, a Tourism and Marketing team has been formed, headed up by a manager with 20 years’ experience in the private sector, developing and marketing sustainable, culturally-focussed tourism product. This has changed our approach that was traditionally about “visitor management” to exploring opportunities and openness to private investment in experience development.

Parks is also in the process of recruiting a further two new key positions, to provide the capacity/expertise needed to deliver on development of new experiences and supporting infrastructure:

An EL1 Project Manager, to act as a conduit between Parks Australia and business stakeholders during the development of innovative business initiatives such as the management of commercial development projects within our National Parks, as well as management of infrastructure and capital works. They will also represent Parks Australia in high level negotiations with Government agencies, contract negotiations, Indigenous representative agencies and key stakeholders.

An EL2 Strategic Business Manager that will lead a multidisciplinary business team, bringing together Parks Australia and business stakeholders during the development of innovative business initiatives such as the management of commercial bidding processes for tourism development within our National Parks.

This expertise and leadership in the agency will enable us to be more responsive to commercial interests and work with the private sector to deliver the products and services needed in our parks to make them outstanding visitor destinations.

Of particular importance is the improvement of roads to key sites such as Jim Jim Falls and Gunlom campground. Feedback from key tourism industry figures is that the key to increasing visitation to Kakadu is in extended, or year-round, access to these key sites. Year-round access will encourage tour operators to increase the amount of touring product, increase visitation in the ‘shoulder’ and low seasons and allow access to a great number of visitors due to improved vehicle access – less reliance on 4WD’s.