



## Submission to the Inquiry Into the Use of FIFO and DIDO Workforce Practices in Regional Australia

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I initially planned to write this submission drawing on my qualifications and experience researching in tourism management and development, when I realised that a more powerful presentation at this inquiry would be a very personal one.

Last Easter I took my three girls (aged between 6 and 12) to camp at Karijini National Park. It was very busy when we arrived and we secured a spot on one of the outer camping ring roads and I settled the girls to sleep in our tent. At around 11 pm I woke to the sound of engines revving and party noise.

Over the next hour or so, I listened to and watched a group of drunken mining workers (male and female), in a mining car, flag up/lights flashing, taking turns to speed around the camping ground.

The inevitable happened, and the mining car crashed into a camper's vehicle. I could hear the raised, infuriated, scared voice of the father, yelling that his children were sleeping in a tent only metres away. There was some discussion and finally there was silence at camp.

Over the next few days, we shared the sacred gorges and pools of Karijini NP with groups of mining workers who carried down eskies of beer, walked through rocky gorges drinking from wine bottles, and who loudly partied to music blaring from portable players, blatantly disregarding written signage of park protocol (no glass, quiet respect for the sacred pools of the Rainbow Serpent), and obviously violating the social and unwritten codes of respectful behaviour with tourists and visitors.

Later discussion with the park rangers revealed large numbers of FIFO workers, from Tom Price and a FIFO camp located just kilometres from the Hamersley Gorge, are utilising the park and there are increasing issues with the anti-social behaviour of FIFO workers, the use of alcohol, and use of the park as an uncontrolled party place, particularly on weekends and during holiday periods.

Discussions also revealed the difficulty in providing staff numbers to adequately monitor use of the park, and please note that many tourism/recreation areas around Broome, for example, Willie and Barred Creek Quondong Point, James Price Point and Crab Creek are unpatrolled, except for an occasional ranger visit, and also have significant Aboriginal heritage sites within and around them.

In terms of the impact of a FIFO workforce on tourism, I hope it emerges from this story, the clearly detrimental impact of large numbers of FIFO workers, who then dominate the use of tourism and recreation resources, in ways that are unacceptable to the broader population, both residents and tourists. Research in Queensland (Carrington & Pereira, 2011) has found that where a town or a community needs to accommodate a FIFO population greater than 25% of the overall population,

the resistance to offering a social license, becomes stronger, due to the experienced, not perceived, social and economic impacts.

In Broome's case, with expected growth in the mining sector, this percentage is likely to be at least 50%, given plans for a construction camp of at least 8000 for the proposed James Price hub, and not withstanding further development in the Canning Basin and surrounds. The debate around Broome's future economic focus needs to involve very careful consideration of whether it is even possible to co-exist as a thriving tourism destination and as a support town for a FIFO workforce.

**Reference:**

Carrington, Kerry & Pereira, Margaret (2011) *Social Impact of Mining Survey : Aggregate Results Queensland Communities*. Availaunmissble <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/42056/>