

# Public and Private Partnerships Between Tourism and Protected Areas: The Australian situation

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## **Abstract**

*Most nature-based tourism involves private companies in public protected areas. Most of these operate under a simple concession permit, but more complex partnerships are being introduced. Visitor infrastructure, and some tours, are also provided directly by public agencies on public land. Tourism products, generally private, can also operate very successfully as commercial ventures in private protected areas. This form of partnership has a long history in Europe, and is used widely in Sub-Saharan Africa and South and Central America, and increasingly in North America. It has been little used to date in Australia or Asia, although there are one or two outstanding examples. Crowding is increasing in public protected areas in these countries, however, and commercial tours are coming into increasing competition with private recreational users, non-profit groups and public tours. Private tour operators will therefore need to establish additional protected areas, in partnership either with private landholders, or public land management agencies such as state forests.*

## **Introduction**

Is tourism a boon for the natural environment, or a bane? It depends on the circumstances. The tourism sector has the potential to make a significant contribution to conservation of the natural environment through a variety of mechanisms (Buckley, 1998), and some individual tour operators do indeed make significant contributions (Buckley, 2002a; Carlisle, 2002; Charters & Law, 2000). Many more, however, make small but heavily-publicised contributions which are used principally as marketing tools; and the vast majority of the mainstream tourism sector perceives the natural environment as a cheaply-available resource which can be exploited for private profit. Because of the scale and suddenness of its impacts, commercial tourism has become a major threat to ecological integrity in many protected areas.

There are, however, examples of mutually beneficial partnerships between tourism and protected areas, both public and private. In the past, these have been particularly important in developing nations, where public protected areas are often only "paper parks": under-funded, under-staffed, poorly policed, and vulnerable to a wide range of human impacts. In such circumstances, international tourism has sometimes provided not only the economic and social justification, but the cash funding and on-ground personnel to protect

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native wildlife from poaching, and native vegetation from wholesale clearance (Butler & Boyd, 2000; Diecke, 2000; Grant, 1999; Harrison, 2001; Honey, 1999; Weaver, 1998, 2001).

Partnerships between tourism and protected areas are now also becoming important in the more developed nations (Fennell, 1999; Godde, Price & Zimmerman, 2001; Hall & Lew, 1998; McCool & Moisey, 2001; Newsome, Moore & Dowling, 2002; Page & Getz, 1997; Priestley, Edwards & Coccossis, 1996; Stabler, 1998). As visitor numbers and visitor impacts in national parks continue to grow, the need to establish additional areas for nature-based tourism has become extremely pressing. At the same time, both public and private landholders have come to appreciate the economic potential of tourism development (Charters & Law, 2000). Finally, as governments continue to reduce funding for management of national parks, park management agencies are being forced to turn to their visitors, including commercial tour operators, as a source of funds for infrastructure and management.

The tourism and travel sector is currently valued at nearly \$5 trillion *per annum* worldwide, and over \$60 billion *per annum* in Australia (Worboys, De Lacy & Lockwood, 2000). At least a third of this is in the nature, eco and adventure tourism (NEAT) sector (Buckley, 2000b). Tourism within natural areas makes up a significant share (Blamey, 1995). Queensland's parks alone generate over \$1 billion *per annum* in tourism expenditure.

Natural environments provide a major market differentiation between otherwise similar tourism products in different countries. This is particularly important for countries like Australia which are distant from major world population centres. At present, nature-based tourism in Australia is largely dependent

on protected areas, including national parks, conservation reserves, marine parks and World Heritage areas (Allcock, Jones, Lane & Grant, 1994; Australia, Department of Tourism, 1991; Figgis, 1999; Pigram & Jenkins, 1999; Worboys *et al.*, 2000).

The World Conservation Union (IUCN) defines a protected area as an area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means (Davey, 1998; IUCN, 1994). This definition can include privately owned land. Under this definition protected areas cover about 7.7% of the earth's land surface (Worboys *et al.*, 2000). IUCN recognises 6 categories for protected areas worldwide depending on the level of protection and use. These range from strict protection with limited public access, to areas where recreation is encouraged but resource development is not, to multiple use areas where resource utilisation, recreation and nature conservation are all practised (IUCN, 1994).

Individual protected areas are managed for a range of different objectives (Figgis, 1999; McNeely, Thorsell & Ceballos-Lascrain, 1992; Pigram & Sundell, 1997; Preece, Van Oosterzee & James, 1995; Worboys, 1997; Worboys *et al.*, 2000). Typically these include: the conservation of plant and animal diversity, air and water quality, cultural heritage, wilderness and landscapes; and use for tourism and recreation, scientific research, and in some cases, production of natural resources through traditional or modern means.

In Australia, most protected areas are managed by State and Territory governments. Some are managed or co-managed by Commonwealth and local governments, and some are privately owned and managed.

Many publicly-owned protected areas have management plans which specify the level of tourism and recreational development allowed. These plans may be developed in consultation with other relevant parties such as traditional owners, local communities, tourism operators, other government agencies, non-government organisations and the general public. In general, the aim of management plans is to protect the natural environment and provide the public, including tourists, with the opportunity to visit, enjoy and appreciate natural areas without creating adverse environmental impacts. In addition to a well-established suite of tools and indicators for managing visitors and natural resources (Buckley, 1999), management plans may include: acquisition of additional land, construction of visitor infrastructure, and partnerships with tour operators and other stakeholders.

Although there are many marine and terrestrial protected areas in Australia, most of these are very small (Cresswell & Thomas, 1997; Figgis, 1999; ASEC, 2001). They include 13 World Heritage areas. Government budgets for managing public protected areas are generally very poor, less than half the global average of about A\$9 per ha (Figgis, 1999, James, Green & Paine, 1999; ).

Many of Australia's public forests, the State and Territory forests managed by Forestry Commissions or equivalent agencies, also have very significant values for both conservation and tourism. These areas, however, are currently used primarily for logging. Tourism has not yet received full recognition as a major economic land use in these areas, though this may be changing. For example, canopy walkways in public forests, such as the Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk in Western Australia (WACALM, 2002) and the Tahune Airwalk in Tasmania (Forestry Tasmania,

2002) have proved to be extremely successful tourist attractions, and further forest tourism development is planned in both States (Table 1).

There is also a significant tourism industry on Aboriginal lands, both those dedicated as Reserves, and privately-owned properties. Examples include Manyallaluk (Schmiechen, 2002) and Umorrduk (NTVC, 2002) in the Northern Territory (Table 1).

There are relatively few private protected areas in Australia to date, but there are significant areas of privately owned land which could be used for conservation and tourism if the owners think it appropriate. There are various government programs designed to encourage conservation use of private land.

Internationally, partnerships between tourism and protected areas are not new, either in concept or in practice (Buckley, 2000). Currently, there is intense political debate in both the USA and Australia over tourism in parks and tourism in forests, as well as rapid growth of tourism in farms. It is therefore timely to summarise the various partnerships options available, both public and private, and the issues, principles and practices associated with each. Practical examples are useful to show what can be done. Principles are useful to avoid constantly reiterating the same issues in an *ad hoc* manner for every development application, lease application or management plan.

Accordingly, the four main options are considered below: public or private tourism, in public or private protected areas. Other land tenures are also very significant both for the development of nature, eco and adventure tourism in Australia (Table 1) and for their future role in conservation of the natural environment. This analysis, however, focuses on protected areas.

### **Private tourism on private land**

Privately-owned conservation areas are relatively uncommon in Australia to date, but are common internationally. In Europe, for example, there are large private estates owned by individual wealthy landholders, many of them incorporating areas of conservation significance, which are now open to the public and effectively operate as private tourism ventures. In many Latin American countries, there are private landholdings purchased specifically for conservation, and supported by small-scale tourism ventures. In North America, there are large private landholdings which are managed in a relatively undisturbed state for recreational hunting. There are also significant areas of land owned by private organisations such as The Nature Conservancy, and managed primarily for conservation, and in some cases also for tourism.

The global prototypes for private tourism on private land, however, and also for conservation funded by tourism, are probably the private game reserves and safari lodges of Southern Africa; and the icons of this sector are companies such as Conservation Corporation Africa and areas such as the Sabi Sands reserve, adjacent to Kruger National Park in South Africa.

Conservation Corporation Africa operates over 20 game lodges and reserves in 5 African countries, with 2500 employees. It was established in its current form in 1990, but many of its reserves have been operating for much longer, some since the 1920's. CCA reserves are funded through upmarket wildlife tourism. For example, Londolozi, CCA's first lodge, is a member of the exclusive international Relais et Chateaux groups, and Ngala Lodge is a member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World. Both have won numerous tourism awards.

Ngala is an unusual partnership between a government agency, a non-government organisation and a private corporation. The Ngala property was donated to the South African National Parks Trust, via the Worldwide Fund for Nature, by a private landowner. The Ngala land has been incorporated into Kruger National Park, but CCA has exclusive tourism operating rights over the Ngala land, including the Ngala Lodge. In return it pays a substantial lease fee and a proportion of profits, the National Parks Trust uses to expand conservation areas.

Flagship of CCA's conservation efforts is Phinda Private Game Reserve, adjacent to the Greater St. Lucia Wetlands World Heritage Area in South Africa. Except in the Sabi Sands area, most of the areas used by CCA, and other wildlife tour companies in southern and eastern African nations, are leased under various concession arrangements. At Phinda, however, CCA bought the land freehold and has built 4 permanent upmarket tourist game lodges: Forest and Vlei Lodges in the rare lowland sand forest, and Mountain and Rock Lodges in nearby granite uplands.

Dedication as game reserves has conserved areas such as these from clearance for agriculture. Operation as upmarket private tourism destinations generates significantly more revenue than if they had simply been gazetted as additions to adjacent National Parks. The overall result is a highly successful partnership between tourism and conservation, including a major addition to the conservation estate.

The Sabi Sands Reserve is a group of private reserves immediately adjacent to Kruger National Park. Whilst each of these reserves has its own game lodge and operates as an independent tourist destination, there are no fences between the properties and from a wildlife

*Table 1: International and Australian Examples.*

<b>Ownership</b>	<b>International</b>	<b>Australia</b>
<b>Public land, public tourism</b>		
Protected areas: parks	IUCN Category II reserves worldwide. Visitor management, facilities, carparks, campgrounds, boardwalks, lookouts, visitor centres, self-guided tracks and ranger-guided hikes.	National Parks (largely state government tenure) (see ASEC 2001)  Facilities as internationally
Production areas: forests	Public forests, e.g. US Forest Service Wilderness Areas, with trails, signs, camping etc.	State Forests, used both for informal public recreation, e.g. 4WD access on inactive logging roads and forestry camps; and increasingly for large-scale tourists infrastructure such as Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk in WA and Tahune Airwalk in Tasmania
Production areas: farms	US Bureau of Land Management lands, e.g. in arid southwestern USA.	Pastoral properties in some states are technically leasehold but operate as if private: see below.
<b>Public land, private tourism</b>		
Protected areas: parks	"Concessionaires" in US National Parks, often since origins; CTO's operating under permit in parks in many countries.	CTO's operating under permit in State, Territory and Commonwealth protected areas: see Buckley et al. (2001 a,b), TAPAF (2002).
Production areas: forests	Ski resorts on USFS land, e.g., most major resorts in Colorado; tourism on USFS lands contributes 30x more to US national economy than timber production	Numerous small-scale mobile adventure tour operators e.g., 4WD, mountain bike, horseriding, and whitewater rafting; little or no fixed infrastructure. There are also some major tourist developments (e.g., Skyrail) on areas formerly forest but converted to parks.
Wildlife management areas	Hunting and photo safari concessions in many eastern and southern African nations	
<b>Private land, private tourism</b>		
Protected areas: private reserves	Large private estates in Europe and USA; private game reserves used for tourism and conservation in Africa, e.g., Conservation Corporation Africa	Large independent private reserves: Earth Sanctuaries Ltd. Private tourism on private land adjacent to public reserves: many examples, e.g., O'Reilly's at Lamington National Park  Private land added to public reserve but tourism rights retained: e.g., Undara Lava Tubes.
Multiple use areas: community land and Indigenous reserves	Community tourism projects in many Asian, African and central and south American nations. Indigenous tourism projects on First Nations land, e.g., in Canada	Aboriginal tourism projects, especially in NT.: e.g., Manyallaluk, Umorrduk; co-managed tourism, e.g., in Uluru and Kakadu
Production areas: farms	Farmstay tourism, e.g., very successful farmstay industry in New Zealand, also in Chile, Argentina etc.	Farmstay tourism, especially in southwest WA and in New England Tablelands, NSW
Private land, public tourism		One example where a PAMA* has leased land adjacent to a park to provide facilities for public visitors

\* PAMA = Protected Area Management Agency

habitat perspective the entire area acts as an extension of Kruger National Park. In addition to properties such as CCA's Londolozi, the Sabi Sands includes reserves such as Sabi Sabi, with three lodges on two separate areas of land, in the southern sector; and the smaller Chitwa Chitwa in the northern sector. Formerly used for cattle grazing, the land has been rehabilitated for wildlife viewing, with the reintroduction of lion and white rhino. Sabi Sabi also supports various wildlife conservation groups including the Endangered Wildlife Trust.

All of these models could be applied to a greater extent in Australia. For private tourism ventures in private protected areas, it is probably most common for the landholder to also own the tourism business. However, this is by no means necessarily so. A private landholder may lease part of their estate to an independent tourism operator, as in fact occurs in some large rural properties in Australia. In either case, however, the landholder and tour operator have no particular responsibilities to the general public except for the broad requirement to comply with applicable legislation, e.g., for planning and development approval, environmental impact assessment, endangered species protection, etc.

By far the most notable Australian example of private tourism on private land is Earth Sanctuaries Ltd., ESL is a listed public company with over 4000 shareholders, which buys and rehabilitates land, removes feral animals and restocks with native fauna, especially endangered species. Revenue is generated from a range of tourism and visitor services and sales. As a listed public company, Earth Sanctuaries Ltd. is subject to the vagaries of the stock market. In early 2002 its share price fell steeply, forcing it to list several of its properties for sale.

### **Public tourism on private land**

This approach is very little used in Australia. It would be feasible for public protected-area management agencies to lease adjacent areas of private land in order to establish and operate publicly-owned visitor facilities. However, it is more commonplace for facilities on private land to be owned and operated by private companies. There is apparently one instance in Australia where a protected area management agency has leased an adjacent area of private land for car parks and visitor facilities, to avoid further degradation to a narrow coastal park.

Australia does have a number of

**Incentive programs such as Save the Bush and Landcare encourage biodiversity conservation on private land.**

government-funded incentive programs, such as Save The Bush and Landcare, to encourage conservation of biodiversity on private land. There are also cases where private land has been turned over to public ownership in return for a special tourism lease, e.g., at Undara Lava Tubes in north Queensland.

### **Public tourism on public land**

Management agencies for national parks and other public lands in most countries have a long history of providing visitor services and infrastructure, at least in more heavily-visited areas. Historically, these have been funded, along with other park management costs, from agency budgets allocated from the state or country's general tax revenue. Currently, it is commonplace for protected area management agencies to charge fees of various types for both

public visitors and commercial tour operators (Bickerstaff, 1997; Buckley, Witting & Guest, 2001a,b; Bushell, Chouchena-Rojas & Jenkins, 1999; Dawson & Ducker, 1998; Driml & Common, 1995; Eagles, 1995; Hanif, 1999; Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service, 1996). Effectively, they have become providers of recreational services, commonly at prices far less than if equivalent services were provided on private landholdings.

Until recent years, outdoor recreation has been largely a personal leisure activity, often using skills and equipment that individual members of the public have acquired gradually over a lifetime of experience (Buckley, 2000). Public land management agencies have provided recreational opportunities as a public service, not as a commercial or revenue-raising venture. Where fees have been charged, they have rarely been intended to recover even operational administrative costs. In consequence, parks have not been perceived as part of the tourism sector, either by their management agencies, tour operators or the general public. The commercial nature, eco and adventure tourism (NEAT) sector was far smaller than it is now and was not treated as significant by the mainstream tourism industry. Parks were used extensively by the outdoor education sector, but this was largely non-profit and publicly-funded in the same way as the parks themselves.

Over recent decades, visitor numbers have continued to increase, and government funding for protected areas in Australia has continued to decrease in real terms. Park management agencies have been therefore forced to turn more and more to visitor charges of various types as a way to offset the increasing management costs associated with higher visitation rates, and in some cases also the higher per capita management

costs associated with visitor demand for more sophisticated infrastructure (Buckley *et al.*, 2001a,b).

This has led to a gradual change in perception. Mainstream tourism industry associations now recognise protected areas and other public lands as a vital asset for national tourism industries. Similarly, protected area management agencies recognise that commercial tour clients make up a significant component of their overall visitor mix, and that for planning and management purposes it can be useful to examine the role of parks within the overall tourism industry (Worboys, 1997). This has led some national parks agencies, generally in response to

**An evolution is occurring . . . because of growing visitor numbers protected area management agencies recognise both the costs of tourism and the potential benefits of their own involvement in it.**

a particularly severe shortfall between management costs and operating budgets, to consider running their own commercial tour operations as well as managing natural resources.

In a number of well-known instances, however, such proposals have met with very severe public opposition. When the South Australian government proposed construction of a resort and golf course within Wilpena Pound National Park in the Flinders Ranges, for example, it was met first with a court case under its own legislation; and when it subsequently proposed to amend the legislation, was met with such concerted public opposition that it was compelled to withdraw the proposal. Similarly, when the Victorian government proposed construction of an upmarket hotel and other tourist facilities in the park campground at Tidal River in

Wilson's Promontory National Park, with associated infrastructure in the park, it received over 3,500 public submissions of which 98% opposed the proposal. This is apparently the largest number of submissions on any government plan in Victoria (Slattery, 2001).

There seem to be four possible reasons for this public opposition, each with different implications for public tourism in public parks.

1. Perhaps the public considers that national parks are a public resource for public recreation and conservation, where everyone is on an equal footing; and not a component of the tourism industry where wealthier clients can obtain a higher level of service.
2. Perhaps the public does not think that protected area management agencies themselves should be in the business of commercial tourism development.
3. Perhaps the public wants public capital spent only on facilities open to the public, even if a public investment in profitable tourism facilities could raise revenue to hold down fees for other visitors.
4. Perhaps public opposition is generated not by public tourism development *per se*, but by a sudden change in the character of the park. Indeed, where existing tourist facilities in parks have been upgraded, public opposition seems to have been much more muted.

To date there has apparently been no systematic study to distinguish between these four possibilities: and of course, public opinion is likely to change over time. Note that these possibilities refer specifically to publicly funded tourism development in public parks, and may not apply to privately funded tourism, described below.

In addition to public opposition,

at least some commercial tour operators are also opposed to protected-area agencies offering their own tourist products, because the commercial operators see this as competition. From a profit-making perspective, of course, private businesses can gain maximum commercial advantage if they can gain cheap or free access to high-demand protected areas as part of a tourism product, especially if they can obtain exclusive rights to prime areas. From a public perspective, however, what matters is the ability of the public agency to provide a public service.

Competition with private operators is only relevant if (a) the agency can provide a better public service, for its overall operations, by issuing permits to private tour operators rather than operating tours itself, and (b) private operators can only remain viable, or can provide better opportunities at lower cost, in the absence of public competition. Overall public service, in this context, includes both: (a) the agency's ability to meet conservation goals as well as providing recreational opportunities within constraints of available funds including tour fees; and (b) equity between visitors from different socioeconomic backgrounds. In other words, competition with private tour operators need not automatically be of concern to public land management agencies, but may well be a significant consideration in specific cases. Indeed, this is why private tourism operations in public protected areas have become increasingly commonplace, as outlined below.

#### **Private tourism on public land**

The fourth major type of partnership between tourism and protected areas is between private tourism operators and public land management agencies. This is probably the most common category of

partnership. Arguably, it is likely to be most efficient, in that it combines the business skills of commercial tourism operators with the land management skills of protected area agencies. However, it also has the potential to be highly contentious, generally more so if the partnership is initiated by the private-sector partner rather than the public land management agency (Buckley & Wild, 2000). This need not necessarily be so, as long as some basic principles are followed, as below.

The most important function of National Parks and other protected areas for human society and the human economy, is to maintain the functioning of a global ecosystem which can continue to provide breathable air, drinkable water, and genetic diversity for use in the industry sectors such as pharmaceuticals, agriculture and textiles. In most countries and jurisdictions, this primary aim is specified in establishing legislation for protected areas, and as the cardinal principle in their management plans. Even where it is not specified in legislation, however, this is still the most critical and valuable use of parks to the human economy (Buckley, 2002a).

The second major function of parks and other protected areas, subsidiary only to conservation, is for recreation. Outdoor recreation, including that in parks and other protected areas, provides major benefits to human society in terms of both physical and human health. It also provides major economic benefits, supporting a large international outdoor recreation, outdoor education and nature tourism industry. A large body of international expertise and information has been built up over the past century, in reconciling demands for recreational opportunities with primary conservation management, and accommodating competing demands for con-

flicting types of recreation (Buckley, 1999; Manning, 1999; Newsome *et al.*, 2002; Weaver, 2001). This body of knowledge includes scientific, management, economic and legal components, which are largely applicable to commercial tourism as well as private recreation.

Commercial tourism in parks and other protected areas is one type of recreational use, and as such is subsidiary to the primary conservation function of those areas. The demands of commercial tourism are also subsidiary to those for public recreation. Commercial tourism in parks varies enormously in scale. Small groups may be very similar, in a park management context, to similar-sized groups of private visitors. Large high-

demand for commercial nature tourism is increasing disproportionately, as increasingly urbanised populations are treating outdoor recreation as a purchasable short-term holiday experience rather than a lifetime personal skill (Buckley, 2000).

Within this overall framework, there are significant opportunities for mutual benefit between protected area management agencies and commercial tour operators, as long as partnership arrangements are constructed appropriately. Partnerships range from permitting of small-scale eco-tours, where the tour operator gains a commercial opportunity and the park management agency gains greater control over some of its visitors; to long-term leases on areas of public land, where private companies develop and/or operate tourism facilities and contribute revenue to assist in the management of the remainder of the protected area estate.

**Protected areas (including National Parks) serve two major goals for human society - maintaining healthy ecosystems and fostering beneficial recreation.**

volume tour operations, tourist accommodation and other tourist facilities, in contrast, may need special management conditions if they are to operate as a commercial success without jeopardising the park's primary conservation function, or the recreational opportunities for private visitors and non-profit groups such as schools and other educational organisations (Buckley, 2002b).

There is currently a strong global growth in demand for outdoor recreation, including commercial nature tourism. This is leading to a large increase in the number of visitors to national parks and other protected areas and public lands worldwide. This increase is placing an increasing strain on the public resources allocated to protected area agencies for management of visitors and of land, water and biological resources. At the same time, the

Ways in which protected areas can contribute directly to commercial tourism operations include: nationally and internationally-known attractions; publicly-funded marketing of parks and other natural and cultural icons by government agencies, the World Heritage Bureau, etc.; privately-funded marketing in newsletters and magazines of conservation groups, outdoor recreation associations, etc.; and publicly-funded infrastructure including access roads, carparks, toilets, power and water supply, telephones, campgrounds, picnic areas, visitor centres, interpretation facilities, walking tracks, lookouts, safety rails, stairways, etc.

In addition, natural environments provide a major market differentiation between otherwise similar tourism products in different countries - particularly important for countries like Australia which are distant from

Table 2. Major Issues and Principles.

Ownership	Issues	Principles
Public land, public tourism	<p>Most were established for conservation foremost, but also for public recreation</p> <p>Growth in visitor numbers not matched by government funding</p> <p>PAMA's* forced to charge fees to offset costs of managing visitor facilities and impacts</p>	<p>Land managers restrict recreational activities to maintain primary conservation function of reserves.</p> <p>Restriction must be equitable, i.e. regulated on the basis of factors such as activity, place, time, equipment, etc; not factors such as wealth or ethnicity</p>
Public land, private tourism	<p>Strong pressure in Australia for more access to PA's by CTO's**</p> <p>Except for adventure tours, CTO's prefer parks to other public lands such as forests, because they have publicly funded visitor facilities and destination marketing</p> <p>Some CTO's even object to PATA's providing public educational tours</p>	<p>Permits and concessions to CTO's should not jeopardise primary function of PA's as conservation reserves and secondary function for public recreation.</p> <p>Returns to PAMA's from CTO's should exceed cost to PAMA's: if private entrepreneurs profit from use of public resources, both natural and built, public management agencies should share in that profit to offset overall agency costs.</p>
Private land, private tourism	<p>Widespread and highly successful overseas. Still uncommon in Australia. Most rely on adjacent public protected areas</p>	<p>Subject only to broad planning, development approval, impact assessment and pollution control law</p>
Private land, public tourism	<p>Rare in Australia and internationally</p>	<p>Only likely if PAMA needs land for public visitors and/or adjacent landholder not convinced of or currently interested in tourism opportunities.</p>

\*PAMA = Protected Area Management Agency, \*\*CTO = Commercial Tour Operator

major world population centres.

Ways in which commercial tourism operations can contribute to protected area management (Buckley, 2000; Buckley, 2002b; Pigram & Jenkins, 1999; Worboys *et al.*, 2000; ) include: direct cash contributions; e.g., through permit and licence fees; adding private land to protected areas; building infrastructure available for public use; payments of various kinds in exchange for preferential use rights; contributions to environmental foundations to support protected areas; in-kind contributions to protected-area management agencies; and cooperative monitoring and management programs in protected areas.

Most importantly, commercial tourism can provide a significant source of revenue for protected area management in areas where

public funding is inadequate. Note that management costs include both those associated with tourism, and those associated with other anthropogenic impacts such as weeds, feral animals and water pollution from outside the park.

Commercial tourism may also contribute indirectly to conservation of the natural environment outside protected areas through, e.g., change of land-use from less sustainable industries to tourism; testbeds for new environmentally-friendly technologies; increased individual environmental awareness from tourism; and industry-led standards, codes, best-practice and accreditation (Buckley, 1998, 2000).

At the broadest political scale, commercial tourism can provide an economic incentive for

protecting natural and cultural heritage through the declaration of protected areas and through conservation use of other public and private lands.

In general, commercial tour operators and their clients in protected areas are not on the same footing as members of the public visiting for individual private recreation. Even where their behaviour on the ground is indistinguishable from private visitors, legal relations with the land management agency are different. This is one major reason why all forms of commercial operation in protected areas generally require permits.

As a general principle, the degree to which operational arrangements for commercial tours, including fees, differ from conditions for public recreational visitors, should depend on the

degree to which commercial tour clients receive additional privileges or services, and/or the degree to which commercial tour operators provide services or facilities to the protected area agency which that agency would otherwise provide at its own expense.

Trade-offs may be made either in cash, e.g., through adjustments to per-capita entrance or camping fees, or lease or licence payments; or in-kind, e.g., by providing a special service to park management in return for special privileges for tour clients. For example, a tour operator might want a guarantee of entry, accommodation space or access to interpretive facilities, a year or more in advance, where members of the public have no such guarantee. Alternatively there may be an advance booking system for members of the public which tour operators are perfectly prepared to use. Similarly, park management agencies may ask environmentally responsible tour operators to act as surrogate rangers in remote regions of the park, monitoring visitor behaviour and impacts and reporting breaches of regulations; or alternatively they may simply prefer to rely on their own staff.

For protected areas where large numbers of relatively small operators conduct relatively infrequent small-volume or low-impact tours, administrative efficiency will generally require a routine and uniform permitting and operational system, which will largely dictate the terms of partnership. These are already widespread in many protected areas. Where major facilities in protected areas are owned or operated on a private commercial basis, however, customised partnership arrangements can be established, and formalised through a special lease or other contractual arrangement. This approach is currently becoming more common, and more important for park managers, as

visitor numbers increase without any corresponding increase in government operating budgets.

### Conclusions

Major issues and general principles for each of the four major combinations - public or private tourism on public or private land - are summarised in Table 2. Under the right conditions, partnerships between tourism and protected areas can be highly successful and beneficial for both tourism operator and landholder, public or private.

With the current low level of government funding for protected areas in Australia, partnerships with tourism are fast becoming a financial necessity. At the same time, the growth of nature tourism is providing an increasing financial incentive for commercial tourism to operate in protected areas and to contribute to their establishment and management.

In Australia, three strategies or general directions are likely to be particularly successful and worth pursuing in all States and Territories.

1. Fixed-site, privately-managed, large-scale tourism facilities, either publicly or privately owned, in heavily-visited sections of public protected areas, yielding sufficient revenue to contribute to management of the remainder of the area as well as profit for the commercial operator.
2. Charges for low-key recreational activities and facilities, for both private visitors and small-scale commercial tours in less heavily-visited areas.
3. Private tourism ventures on private landholdings set aside as protected areas, including: adventure activities and outdoor sports; scenic tours, sites and facilities; and wildlife-based tourism operations such as game lodges, wildlife sanctuaries and fauna reserves, birdwatching tours, etc.

In addition, though public forests, Aboriginal lands and working rural properties are of course not protected areas, there are major commercial tourism opportunities for all of these.

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