

## TOURISM POLICY

5 The Nature Conservation Council of NSW represents environmental and conservation organisations with a combined membership of about 100,000 people. The Council was formed in 1955 with the primary objective being to *"promote the cause of conservation throughout the State of NSW."*

10 The rapid expansion of the tourism industry has resulted in a variety of conflicts of interest regarding tourism development in natural areas. In conjunction with a number of other conservation organisations, Council has produced a policy on tourism development that will hopefully be of benefit to government and industry as well as the environment movement.

This policy was unanimously endorsed at the Nature Conservation Council's 1987 Annual Conference. It has since been amended at the 1988 Annual Conference.

### INTRODUCTION

15 1.0 Tourism is an important component of the New South Wales economy. The primary reason for this is the quality and diversity of the State's natural environmental assets. There is a need for environmental protection and the maintenance of these natural assets for their own sake. The NCC is aware, however, that these assets are viewed by the tourism industry as the resources sought for a sustainable tourism industry.

20 1.1 The ad-hoc and unplanned approach to tourism, with the style and location of new development being determined almost entirely in the market place will continue to lead to the degradation of the natural environment.

1.2 Significant impact on the natural environment is occurring because:

25 1.2.1 entrepreneurial tourism is cash selective in its allocation of economic value to natural environmental assets;

1.2.2 there are natural environmental assets which are not being protected from exploitation for tourism purposes;

1.2.3 the market does not measure the components which contribute to environmental quality;

30 1.2.4 the market adopts a short-term view while environmental consequences are characteristically of a long-term nature.

1.3 A planned, co-operative approach involving all levels of government and the tourism industry, which gives due regard to conservation of our natural, scenic, historic and architectural heritage is seen to be the only rational basis for the

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development of a sustainable tourism industry.

- 1.4 In general, new tourism developments should not be sited on lands in a substantially natural condition, nor on wetlands, nor on undeveloped coastlines, any skylines or escarpments. Instead, new tourism developments should be located on lands altered in the past and preferably within the boundaries of existing townships.

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#### **NON-RECREATION AREAS**

- 2.0 There are special areas such as Nature Reserves under category (i) of the IUCN definition which should be completely exempt from any form of recreational activity and associated amenities.

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#### **THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT**

- 3.0 The Commonwealth Government has a key role and obligation to conserve sites recognised to be of national or international significance.

**The Commonwealth must**, therefore, exert the powers vested in it by the Constitution to:

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- 3.1 enter into joint management arrangements with State Governments for sites recognised to be of World Heritage status or subject to other international agreements for the protection of the environment e.g. Japan/Australia Migratory Birds Agreement;

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- 3.2 take unilateral action to ensure the proper management of such sites, where the States fail to accept responsibility for their protection;

- 3.3 use its external affairs powers to prevent the use of foreign capital for purposes which directly, or indirectly damage sites on the Register of the National Estate and other environmentally sensitive areas;

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- 3.4 apply the **Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals Act)** and other appropriate Commonwealth legislation to all tourism developments which require Commonwealth approvals or which involve Commonwealth funds;

- 3.5 allow tax rebates and other incentives for tourism operators who contribute financially to the up-keep and restoration of sites listed on the Register of the National Estate;

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- 3.6 require the Australian Tourism Commission to promote to the international tourism market, environmentally sensitive tourism operations.

**THE STATE GOVERNMENT**

- 70 4.0 The State Government and its Statutory Authorities have a key role and obligation to ensure proper land-use planning controls including pollution control, and the reservation of sites of environmental importance.
- The State Government must, therefore, use its powers to:**
- 4.1 undertake state and regional land-use planning in order to determine, by using natural resource assessment techniques:
- 75 4.1.1 sites and areas which should be preserved in National Parks, Nature Reserves and State Recreation Areas;
- 4.1.2 sites and areas which do not require full protection by dedication, but which are sensitive to many development activities;
- 4.1.3 sites and areas which are suitable for planned tourism development.
- 80 4.2 include procedures for full public participation in land-use plan preparation, especially:
- 4.2.1 the location of future tourism development;
- 4.2.2 the style and nature of future tourism development.
- 85 4.3 ensure, via State and Regional Conservation Strategies and planning instruments, the protection of natural ecosystems and features likely to be affected by tourism;
- 4.4 apply a moratorium on the alienation of any Crown Lands until a comprehensive assessment of their conservation significance has been completed and until any resulting land-use recommendation can be implemented;
- 90 4.5 enforce the recommendations of the State and Regional land-use plans, particularly where these relate to the reservation of specific areas;
- 4.6 co-operate with the Commonwealth Government in joint management of sites recognised as being of World Heritage status, or subject to other international agreements for the protection of the natural environment;
- 95 4.7 require all government land managers of areas with natural values to write into their Plans of Management for reserved public lands, strategies for the control of tourism and recreation, including:
- 100 4.7.1 the optimal number of visitors, under what seasonal and climatic conditions, specific sections of the Park or Reserve can safely carry without compromising the conservation and environmental values of the areas;

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- 4.7.2 the interpretive and education facilities suitable for that Park or Reserve;
  - 4.7.3 the range of recreational and tourism opportunities and activities which the Park or Reserve is able to provide;
  - 4.7.4 the procedures and facilities which would be required to monitor and maintain the integrity of the natural environment on a sustainable basis;
  - 4.7.5 appropriate prohibitions on tourism and tourism developments within Nature Reserves;
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- any tourism-related activity shall be in accordance with the public recreation and education responsibilities of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and subject to the provisions of the National Parks and Wildlife Act. Thus, tourists who visit National Parks should visit them on the same terms as visitors for whom the National Parks and Wildlife Service already caters, not as visitors of a special class or category;
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- 4.8 provide sufficient funds for all NSW Government land managers to carry out their duties;
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- 4.9 legislate to ensure that tourism operators who profit from the use of public lands of environmental importance, contribute to the up-keep and restoration of those areas;
  - 4.10 ensure that all tourism development and activities are subject to the provisions of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979:
    - 4.10.1 full public participation must be maintained in the process of considering any Development Application for tourist development;
  - 4.11 promote a secure and diverse tourism industry by preparing Regional Environmental Plans (REP) on Tourism:
    - 4.11.1 by identifying gaps in the services and opportunities offered by the existing tourism industry;
    - 4.11.2 by investigating methods by which private enterprise may be encouraged to fill these gaps;
    - 4.11.3 by undertaking year round tourist and resident attitude surveys;
  - 4.12 provide education and information on the qualities of the natural environment to tourism operators so as to promote greater care and environmental sensitivity;
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- 4.13 legislate for and enforce significant penalties for tourists, tourism operators, developers, construction companies, etc., who breach environmental protection laws.

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**LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

- 5.0 Local Government has a major role to play in ensuring proper planning, site works and design for tourism development. They should also provide a channel through which members of the community can express their views on the acceptability, location and style of proposed development.

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**Local Councils should:**

- 5.1 employ Environment Officers, being persons trained in natural resource management to assist the Council, as part of their duties, in considering the environmental impact and general suitability of proposed development;

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- 5.2 prepare Local Tourism and Recreational Strategies for their area which:

5.2.1 are compatible components of the Councils' overall land-use planning instruments, (LEP's and DCP's);

5.2.2 are based on local resident and tourist attitude surveys;

5.2.3 ensure both public participation and environmental protection as consistent themes;

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5.2.4 identify possible tourism development sites, and which recommend zonings for inclusion in planning instruments;

5.2.5 integrate new tourism developments into existing landscapes, infrastructure, communities and economies;

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5.2.6 are consistent with the requirements of State and Regional planning instruments.

**TOURISM OPERATORS AND DEVELOPERS**

- 6.0 Tourism Operators and Developers have an obligation to minimise their environmental impact to ensure that degradation of the assets they use does not occur, that existing residents using these assets are not disadvantaged, and that tourist appreciation of those assets is heightened.

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**To this end, private enterprise must:**

- 6.1 conduct full and proper environmental impact assessments of their proposals before the submission of Development Applications;

- 6.2 consult with the community and public interest groups from the earliest stages

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of development planning;

6.3 avoid duplicating existing facilities;

6.4 allow the natural features and processes of the location to influence the siting, design and style of the development proposal;

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6.5 take into account aesthetic, social and cultural factors in the design of new tourism development and to avoid the importation of stereotypic architectural styles;

6.6 provide educational and interpretive facilities to assist visitors to appreciate the environmental assets and minimise their impact upon them;

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6.7 operate in an environmentally responsible way, especially through carefully controlled site-works at all stages of construction.

### **THE TOURIST**

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7.0 For the purposes of this policy, NCC accepts the definition of a "tourist" as defined in the State Tourism Development Strategy, viz. "any person who makes a journey of more than 40km for any reason and is away from home for at least one night".

7.1 The active promotion of tourism through commercial advertising, obliges governments and private enterprise to provide the tourist with:

7.1.1 a reasonable fore-knowledge of the place to be visited, including both attractions and hazards;

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7.1.2 a clean environment;

7.1.3 wherever possible, a diversity of nature-based experiences;

7.1.4 information on how to minimise his or her personal environmental impact.

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7.2 The tourist has a right to expect these services and basic information in nations, states, regions, localities or sites to which they have been invited.

7.3 **The tourist also has obligations.** These are:

7.3.1 to keep his or her personal environmental impact to a minimum;

7.3.2 to respect the cultural, social values and privacy of residents;

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7.3.3 to abide by laws, regulations and guidelines which are imposed to minimise environmental impact.