

# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction to the Problem

The first national park in Australia, eventually renamed Royal National Park, saw the setting aside of a large area of land for recreation purposes (Pigram 1983). As Sydney grew in terms of population density and in terms of physical size, there arose a demand for an area of land suitable for the population of Sydney to use for recreation purposes. The Royal National Park was thus established in 1879 and, to this day, it remains one of the most popular national parks within the New South Wales estate.

Following the establishment of the Royal National Park came the development of other areas throughout New South Wales, again designed to serve the recreation needs of a rapidly growing population. In what was a far different system from the one currently used by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, which sees culturally and ecologically sensitive parcels of land reserved, national parks in the early part of the last century were developed in areas where there were few land use alternatives. More often than not, these original national parks were established on land that was unsuitable for agriculture or mining (Pigram 1983; Pigram 1990). Inadvertently, then, the national parks estate of New South Wales was originally made up of land that, at the time, was perceived to be of little ecological or historical value.

The purpose of national parks began to change in the 1950s with the development of the conservation movement (Pigram 1983). In 1957, the National Parks Association was formed to lobby the government for the establishment of a department responsible for the natural areas of the State. This led in part to the establishment of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service in 1967 (National Parks Association 1999). At this time, national parks became a tool to protect large areas of native bushland and to minimise the amount of land being cleared of native vegetation.

In 1974, *the National Parks and Wildlife Act* was declared, effectively making the primary function of national parks one of conservation. *The National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* defines national parks as being 'spacious areas containing unique or outstanding scenery or natural phenomena' and the primary objective for the management of these areas was interpreted as being the preservation and protection of the unique or outstanding scenery or natural phenomena (Worboys *et al.* 1997). As the role of national parks became increasingly orientated toward conservation, the perception was generated in some quarters that national parks existed only for the purpose of preservation and this created a feeling that the general public were 'locked out' of national parks (Ginns 1999).

In the last ten years, it seems that the emphasis of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service has again begun to change. As more and more people are visiting national parks, it seems that they no longer feel so excluded from national parks. Instead, it is realistic to say that national parks have developed as a key recreation resource in New South Wales. Visitor numbers to national parks reached 22 million in 1997 and this figure is expected to reach almost 28 million by 2005 (Worboys *et al.* 1997). Thus, although conservation remains the priority of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, tourism and recreation are again beginning to take on a major role in the day-to-day life in national parks. This change of emphasis for national parks is presenting itself as a management challenge for the National Parks and Wildlife Service. It is timely, therefore, to investigate what the future of national parks might be.

This thesis investigates the future of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service and the national parks estate in view of the growing role of tourism and recreation within national parks. What is happening in New South Wales is not of course unique. All over the world, tourism in natural areas, such as national parks, is developing rapidly (McKercher 1998). Almost half of all foreign visitors to Australia visit a national park at some time during their stay (Australian Tourist Commission 1998) and research shows New South Wales to be the most commonly visited state amongst both international and domestic tourists (Tourism New South Wales 1999). It seems reasonable, then, to assume that a large proportion of tourists within New South Wales spend at least some of their time in a national park.

The growing popularity of the national parks among tourists and recreationists is likely to have management implications for the National Parks and Wildlife Service. As a general rule, the

more visitors to a particular resource, the greater the management pressures are on that recreation resource. This study is concerned with exploring the future of tourism and recreation in national parks so that it is possible to discuss some of the management ramifications that may concern the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service.

In studying the future of tourism and recreation in national parks, there are of course several issues that need to be noted because they have the potential to dramatically influence the way in which national parks are managed in the future. As a result, it is necessary for this study to also consider the issues of government funding, government reform and the role of the private sector and how each of these factors relates to tourism, recreation and the future of national parks in New South Wales.

As is the case with many government departments, there is the perception in some quarters that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is inadequately funded for the management responsibilities placed upon it (Figgis 1993). As tourism and recreation continue to develop within national parks, the management responsibilities of the National Parks and Wildlife Service are growing considerably and some feel that funding is not adequate to meet these new duties (Lipscombe 1993). Furthermore, the staff of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, who tend to be from an ecological background, are being forced to become recreation and tourism managers. This in turn has the potential to impact negatively upon the conservation of national parks (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998a; Ginns 1999). This study is concerned with the current plight of the National Parks and Wildlife Service as well as with exploring ways in which some of these concerns could be overcome in the future.

The situation of the National Parks and Wildlife Service is not unique within the public service. There is a move throughout government departments to increase efficiency and accountability while, at the same time, reducing expenditure (Rogan 1997). Health care, education, and employment services are all under pressure to perform more with fewer resources (Cohen 1996). This is all part of a government reform process designed to increase efficiency in order to reduce public expenditure (Dollery and Wallis 1997). This, in turn, is leading many governments toward using the private sector to provide facilities that were traditionally the responsibility of the public sector. Examples can be seen in health care, corrective services, and transport (Porter 1992).

Although national parks currently remain the responsibility of the public sector, and there is no indication that the situation may change in the near future, the trend toward private sector involvement in other government departments cannot be ignored. For one thing, the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service has already signed a conditional agreement with a hotel management group to lease a part of the Quarantine Station at North Head and a private coffee house is also planned for Fort Denison (Woodford 2000). It has also been estimated that 25 per cent of funding for national parks already comes from commercial leases (Duff 1993). It is reasonable, then, to suggest that the notion of the private sector being actively involved in national parks is not completely foreign to either the government or to the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The private sector also seems keen to become involved in the nature-based tourism industry. In 1997, there were 162 commercial lease agreements in existence within New South Wales national parks (Worboys *et al.* 1997). There are also many examples of private nature-based tourism operations working in the natural environment. Many of these businesses are concerned with operating successfully while also ensuring the sustainability of the environment on which their business is based. With this in mind, the present study examines the changing role of government, and the changing face of the private sector, in order to discuss what the implications may be for the future of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service.

## **1.2 Aims and Objectives of the Study**

The overall aim of this study is to explore the extent to which, and the ways in which, the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service will need to incorporate tourism and recreation with conservation in the management of the national parks estate. The New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service has been chosen specifically to keep the study manageable by focussing on a single legal jurisdiction. It is readily acknowledged that other Australian States and overseas countries face similar problems. A comparison of how these places handle the issues would be a thesis in its own right.

Currently, the management priority of the National Parks and Wildlife Service is conservation. This is strongly supported by conservation groups such as the Australian Conservation Foundation and the National Parks Association. Conversely, tourism in national parks is becoming increasingly popular and it may therefore be necessary for the National Parks and

Wildlife Service to consider making tourism and recreation a management priority in at least some national parks. This thesis aims to consider the *status quo* and to examine whether the National Parks and Wildlife Service should maintain its current management regime or look to incorporate tourism and recreation more closely with conservation in parks management.

Specifically, the objectives of this study are:

1. To document the increase in nature-based tourism as a component of the tourism industry in Australia and specifically in New South Wales.
2. To discuss the current state of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service with particular reference to tourism, government reform and the interest from the private sector in becoming active in natural area tourism, particularly in national parks.
3. To develop a methodology to explore the opinions and views of key stakeholder groups concerned with the future of national parks in New South Wales.
4. To discuss the influences that could shape the future of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service and the way in which the national parks of the State could be managed.

### **1.3 Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis has eight chapters. Chapter Two, *Tourism and the Natural Environment*, examines the tourism industry within Australia generally and within New South Wales specifically. This chapter also looks at the significance of nature-based tourism and its associated components, cultural tourism, adventure tourism and ecotourism. Chapter Three, *National Parks-Current and Future*, looks at the current circumstances of the national parks estate in New South Wales with particular reference to the growing popularity of national parks for tourism and recreation pursuits. To generate a complete picture of the state of affairs within the National Parks and Wildlife Service, it was also necessary to look at the issues of funding and the government reform process that is impacting not only on national parks but on all areas of the public sector. There is also a significant discussion in Chapter Three of the private sector and nature-based tourism ventures. This discussion facilitates consideration of the role of the private sector in providing for tourism and recreation within national parks.

In order to move from a general to a specific discussion, a case study was selected. The Blue Mountains National Park made an excellent setting for research. Chapter Four, *The Blue Mountains National Park-A Case Study*, looks specifically at the Blue Mountains National Park

and the current management circumstances. The themes of tourism, the private sector and zoning as a management approach, are discussed in detail in this chapter. By looking specifically at the Blue Mountains National Park, it was possible to identify user groups, conservation groups and the members of the business community who could be approached to participate in this study. This posed methodological challenges.

Chapter Five, *Methodology*, looks at the process used in developing and conducting the survey of stakeholder groups concerned with the future of national parks in New South Wales.

Chapter Six, *Results and Discussion*, presents the results of the questionnaire and looks at the differences and similarities in the responses of the different stakeholder groups. From the results presented in Chapter Six, it was possible to identify some facets within the National Parks and Wildlife Service that might need further attention.

Chapter Seven, *National Parks: A Role Revisited*, is an interpretation of what the future of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service may be, based on the information from the questionnaire and the opinions within the literature review. This Chapter considers just how complex the future of national parks will be.

Chapter Eight, *Conclusions*, explores the future of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service and the national parks estate. The thesis then concludes with a discussion of the importance of further research into the future of national parks in New South Wales.

## **1.4 Significance of the Research**

The literature strongly suggests that tourism in natural areas, such as national parks, will increase significantly in the next decade. People are beginning to have more free time and greater access to natural areas and, as a consequence, natural area tourism is developing at such an extent that it is expected to become the largest sector of the tourism industry in the near future (Lacey 1996). With this being the case, it is difficult to argue that the national parks of New South Wales can be made immune from the developing tourism market. Therefore, it is important to explore what part tourism and recreation may have in the future of national parks in New South Wales. Predictably, the future of national parks is not going to be dictated solely by the developing

tourism and recreation market. Other issues that need to be factored into the equation include funding, government reform and the role of the private sector.

The New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service appears to be aware that the future of national parks requires further discussion. In 1997, a Draft Tourism and Recreation Strategy was commissioned by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, outlining how the Service could better co-ordinate tourism and recreation within its management regime. Although this strategy remains in draft form, it signifies that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is aware that the future of national parks is intertwined with tourism and recreation and this strategy provides a starting point to begin discussions.

There was also considerable media attention in January 2000 outlining the changing face of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service. The claim was made that the Service is looking to operate national parks from a more commercial orientation while also looking to update the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* to formally include recreation as one of the foci of national parks (Woodford 2000).

Although it is not appropriate to comment on these reports at this stage of the study, it is possible to use this information to demonstrate that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is at a point of change. It is also reasonable to claim that the way in which the National Parks and Wildlife Service will manage national parks in the future is presently uncertain. This study is therefore important to the extent that it explores the current circumstances of the National Parks and Wildlife Service and, using this information and the input of concerned parties, speculates about what the future may hold for the national parks of New South Wales.

## **CHAPTER 2    TOURISM AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

There has been a noticeable change in society over the last half of the twentieth century. More so than in any other period, people have uncommitted time as the result of fewer working hours, an earlier retirement age, a longer life span and an overall improvement in general health and well being (Walmsley and Lewis 1993; Lacey 1996). In turn, people are using their spare time to participate in leisure, recreation and tourism pursuits.

All over the world, people are becoming active participants in the tourism industry. Stanford University in the United States estimates that the tourism industry is developing at a rate close to 9 per cent per annum (Creamer 1995), making tourism the world's largest and fastest growing civilian industry (Trauer and McIntyre 1998).

Accompanying these changes, there has also been a growing interest in the world's natural environment as tourism and recreation resources. As a result, nature-based tourism has become the fastest growing component of the tourism industry (Lacey 1996; McKercher 1998). Chapter Two therefore notes the attraction of Australia's natural areas to both international and domestic visitors and outlines what it is that constitutes nature-based tourism. To do this, nature-based tourism needs to be set in the wider context of tourism and recreation generally.

This thesis does not attempt to discuss the notions of tourism and recreation but rather it is concerned with the broader context of the relationship between tourism and recreation and national parks. Standard texts concerning the study of tourism and recreation devote much attention to the concepts of carrying capacity, recreation opportunity spectrum and the limits of acceptable change. These are the foundations on which much subsequent work has been based. These three concepts are therefore looked at briefly in this chapter so as to present a broad overview of literature concerning tourism and recreation management. It is important to note, of course, that this chapter gives only brief attention to the study of tourism and recreation and clearly does not attempt to do justice to the vast literature in this field. After all, it is not the aim of this chapter to rework the available literature concerning tourism and recreation but rather to provide a broad overview of the important ideas. In doing so, it enables a solid framework to be established from which the remainder of this study is developed.



## 2.1 Terminology and the Tourism Industry

'Tourism', 'leisure' and 'recreation' are three terms crucial to this study and it is appropriate therefore to outline a definition for each. This is not an easy task. Tourism, leisure and recreation mean different things to different people (Walmsley and Lewis 1993) and, ultimately, the distinction between the three terms is blurred. There are just about as many different definitions for tourism, leisure and recreation as there are textbooks and it is not the aim of this thesis to look at the various definitions but rather to provide a broad-brush overview of the major components of tourism/ recreation studies. Indeed, it is the contention of this thesis that tourism, recreation and leisure represent different perspectives on the same form of human behaviour.

As a general rule, leisure can be defined as free time or freedom from occupation while recreation is the activity undertaken during leisure time (Howat *et al.* 1991). Tourism is recreation that typically involves at least one night away from the participant's home and therefore involves a significant element of travel (Walmsley and Lewis 1993). The distinction between work-time and rest time is of course difficult to determine due to a change in the nature and the location of people's work. For some, their work time involves an activity that others see as recreation, and what some see as recreation others may interpret as tourism (Walmsley 2001). Telecommuting and part-time telecommuting also compound this problem of differentiation.

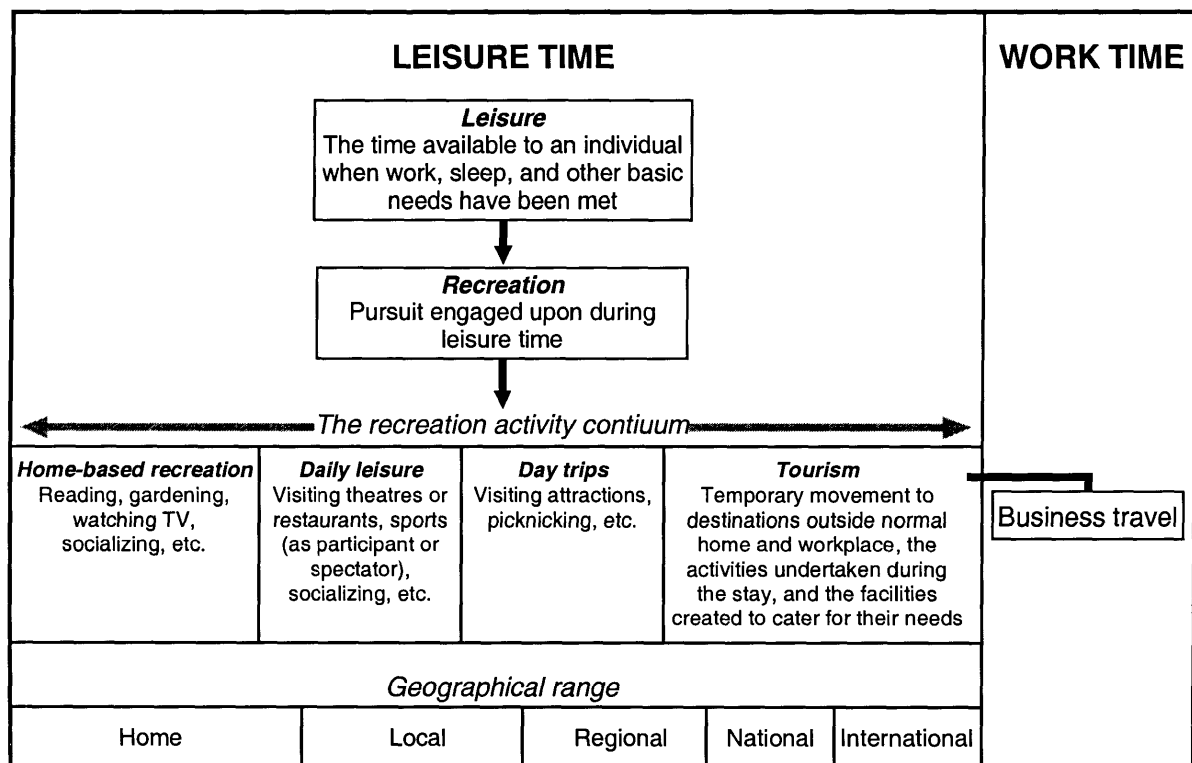
As was mentioned previously, there are many definitions of recreation, leisure and tourism and, to a large extent, any one of them could have been used here. However, the definition chosen for this study helps to show the relationship between tourism, leisure and recreation while also looking at them as separate entities. Boniface and Cooper (1987) suggest that recreation, the activity undertaken during leisure time, can be broken up into four components, with tourism being one of them. The four components are:

- home-based recreation which involves activity in the range of the home, such as gardening and reading;
- daily leisure which tends to occur within the local area of the participant's home, e.g. visits to restaurants, socialising;
- day trip recreation which involves activities within the region of the participant's home, e.g. bushwalking, picnicking; and
- tourism that involves excursions outside the region of the participant's home base. Often tourism involves travel to national or international destinations.

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From this perspective leisure, recreation and tourism cover the same area of human endeavour. The concepts overlap in terms of the phenomena that they describe. Figure 2.1 summarises the definition by Boniface and Cooper (1987) and emphasises the links between tourism, leisure and recreation. This diagram summarises the interpretations used in this thesis. For the remainder of this study, then, the terms ‘tourism’ and ‘recreation’ will be used interchangeably, due to the similarity between the respective definitions, to denote the area of discretionary activity differentiated as non-work in Figure 2.1.

**Figure 2.1:** A diagrammatic representation of the relationship between leisure, recreation and tourism (Source: Boniface and Cooper 1987)



As was noted earlier, the notions of carrying capacity, the recreation opportunity spectrum and the limits of acceptable change are central to leisure, recreation and tourism and they therefore need to be explored. There are also other concepts that have developed in recent times such as the Visitor Impact Management Framework and the Visitor Management Process (Hall 1998). A decision was made not to consider these recent developments and instead to address the three primary concepts so as to stay focused on the fundamentals of tourism and recreation. The Visitor Impact Management Framework and other later formulations are after all the result of studies into carrying capacity, recreation opportunity spectrum and limits of acceptable change. Although these second-generation notions have merit in other studies, it is the role of this particular chapter to provide enough background to tourism and recreation to set the scene for a study into tourism and recreation in national parks, not to explore alternative models of visitor management. The following section, therefore, looks briefly at the three main concepts concerned with recreation and tourism management so as to show that they exist as a fundamental part of tourism and recreation studies.

### Carrying Capacity

Carrying capacity is one of the oldest and most widely discussed concepts of the recreation/ tourism industry (Lipscombe 1993). The purpose of the concept of carrying capacity is to identify the point beyond which visitor numbers and/ or developments in a particular area adversely affect the ecological and recreational value of the area (Walmsley and Lewis 1993; Archer and Cooper 1994). In simple terms, the carrying capacity concept provides an important management tool for determining how many users in an area become too many users (Lipscombe 1993).

However, it is felt by some researchers that carrying capacity as a management tool is not adequate to deal with the complexity of the tourism/ recreation industry due to a lack of specificity and due to the fact that the concept is subjective (Lindberg *et al.* 1997; Lindberg and McCool 1998). Furthermore, there exists only minimal base-line data for many recreation sites and, as a result, it is difficult to determine how much use is too much (Evans-Smith 1994). Therefore, the concept of carrying capacity is not being used as often as once was thought desirable. Instead, people are working to identify the most desirable circumstances for a particular site, commonly known as the limits of acceptable change (Lipscombe 1993; Lindberg and McCool 1998).

### Limits of Acceptable Change

The notion of the limits of acceptable change is an extension of the concept of carrying capacity and involves determining the level of impact or change that is acceptable for a particular area (Moore 1991). The focus of managers using the notion of limits of acceptable change is to establish the condition of a particular recreation site rather than trying to determine the number of users a particular site can maintain (Lipscombe 1993).

Recreation sites vary in their social and ecological characteristics and some sites are more sensitive to large numbers of users than other sites (Evans-Smith 1994). The benefit of the notion of the limits of acceptable change is that it allows for the particular characteristics of a site to be taken into consideration when determining the most appropriate use level and type (Lipscombe 1993).

It is, of course, important to point out that capacity limits vary from one place to another and from one activity to another (Glasson *et al.* 1995). In some cases, such as in a wilderness area, only minimal change can be tolerated before it is unacceptable, whereas in a built environment, change of any description may be less noticeable and therefore more acceptable. Some activities may also cause more 'change' than others. For example, access to natural areas via a four-wheel-drive may result in more significant change than that caused by people walking within the area.

The limit of acceptable change framework is also dependent upon the opinion of those conducting the assessment (Glasson *et al.* 1995). Despite there being a formal assessment process, the decision as to what is acceptable is ultimately subjective in that different people will interpret different levels of change as acceptable. It is important that this shortcoming is taken into account when the limits of acceptable change is implemented as a management tool.

### Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

The recreation opportunity spectrum is the third common planning framework in the tourism management field and, like the limits of acceptable change, it is concerned with the site characteristics and the needs of recreation users rather than the number of users (Lipscombe

1993). The recreation opportunity spectrum was developed in the United States by researchers Clarke and Stankey as a means to consider the recreation potential of a particular setting (Butler and Waldbrook 1991). The basic notion behind the recreation opportunity spectrum is that there are potentially as many recreation needs and expectations as there are users. A variety of recreation opportunities and settings therefore needs to be provided by recreation managers as the most likely means of meeting the majority of user preferences (Lipscombe 1993; Pigram 1993). In simple terms, the greater the range of recreation activities provided at a particular site, the more likely it is that the expectations of different recreation users will be met. If the needs of users are ignored, user dissatisfaction can occur (Clark and Stankey 1979).

Predictably, as with the notion of carrying capacity, there are problems associated with the notion of the recreation opportunity spectrum and these include the fact that the recreation opportunities provided in an area often reflect the ideas of the recreation managers rather than the needs and views of users. There is also little room for change once the decisions concerning a site have been made and it is often difficult to consult with potential users about potential use types (Pigram and Jenkins 1999).

Interestingly, the recreation opportunity spectrum is almost like a *de facto* form of zoning in that the principle of the framework is to provide a range of recreation activities or different recreation zones, all within close proximity. The notion of zoning is one of the major issues considered at a later stage in this thesis and the recreation opportunity spectrum serves as early recognition of the importance of zoning.

### Australian Applications

When considering the relevance of these three concepts to the Australian context and, more specifically, to New South Wales, it is important to note that neither carrying capacity, nor the recreation opportunity framework, nor the limits of acceptable change approach appears to be superior to the others (Pigram and Jenkins 1999). However, the notion of carrying capacity was considered in the management of the Jenolan Parks Reserve in New South Wales and several problems arose. First, there was inadequate environmental data available to determine the ecological carrying capacity of the site. Moreover, the social carrying capacity was too difficult to determine due to the number of variables associated with visitor expectations (Wight 1998). Ultimately the management groups decided that using the notion of carrying capacity for the

Jenolan Caves Reserve oversimplified a complex problem (Manidis Roberts 1995) and this outcome is worth keeping in mind in considering the application of carrying capacity.

In using any of the three concepts, it is necessary first to determine the desired management outcomes for the situation. In doing so, it is possible to select the most appropriate framework and to make modifications if necessary (Pigram and Jenkins 1999). It is also possible that more than one approach could be implemented at the same time. In the conservation and development of the Wallis Island Crown Reserve on the Central Coast of New South Wales, a combination of both the limits of acceptable change approach and the recreation opportunity spectrum was implemented as a combined management approach. The aim of the management task was to protect the natural environment while also allowing for a range of recreation opportunities. The first part of the planning approach involved defining and allocating management classes for the reserve, in other words determining a recreation opportunity spectrum. Within each of the management classes, management actions were identified to ensure acceptable levels of development occurred/ did not occur (Pigram and Jenkins 1999), thereby illustrating the use of the limits of acceptable change.

Further examples can be given although the purpose of this section is not of course to review the literature on these topics *per se* but to establish their centrality to consideration of tourism in national parks. The recreation opportunity spectrum, for instance, was used in a study of open space management at Newcastle/ Lake Macquarie (Hamilton-Smith and Mercer 1991), and the limits of acceptable change has been used by the Department of Water Resources for the management of rivers in Northern New South Wales (Pigram and Jenkins 1999). These examples clearly illustrate that the frameworks are adaptable and can be used to achieve a range of management outcomes in the general field that is of interest in this thesis. This is worth noting when considering the future of recreation and tourism in national parks as it suggests that it is possible that the limits of acceptable change and the recreation opportunity spectrum may serve as key management approaches.

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Although the three interrelated concepts have only been discussed briefly here, they are important tools in the management of visitors in nature tourism sites that has become necessary because of the rapid rate of development of the Australian tourism industry. It does not appear

that any one of the frameworks is superior to another. Indeed, the application of the different frameworks depends upon the size and the scale of the project they are being used for (Pigram and Jenkins 1999). All of the frameworks, however, require a solid amount of base line information, concerning either visitor numbers and/ or environmental conditions. Sadly, this information is often lacking in the Australian context (Evans- Smith 1994). This is one reason why it is timely to reflect, in this thesis, on how visitation to tourism sites might best be handled. Clearly, this is an enormous topic that is well beyond the scope of any one thesis (see Chapter One. This thesis does however make a contribution by exploring stakeholder views in one case study area.

Given the overall thrust, the focus of this study moves now to consider the size and significance of the Australian tourism industry. Australia's tourism industry is, after all, a major contributor to employment and the economy of this country, as well as the context for this thesis. The remainder of this chapter will detail the importance of tourism to Australia and New South Wales, as well as considering the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry, nature-based tourism.

## **2.2 Tourism in Australia**

In line with current world trends, the tourism industry is Australia's fastest growing business activity. The tourism and recreation industry is a major contributor to the level of employment in Australia and already directly accounts for approximately six per cent of the gross domestic product (Bureau of Tourism Research 2000).

It is appropriate therefore, to devote a significant proportion of this chapter to looking at the government bureaucracy associated with the tourism industry. Tourism is, after all, a major economic and policy concern of the government and there is a large commitment of government resources to the development and implementation of policies for tourism (Hall 1998). This section will therefore seek to document public sector commitment to the field of planning, something that is central to the question of public-private co-operation in the case study area (see Chapter Four). It is also appropriate to consider the commitment of the government to tourism as means of showing how important the tourism industry is to this country and, indirectly, why case studies like the one contained in this thesis are needed.

There are three major Commonwealth Government organisations in Australia that are responsible for the management and promotion of tourism so as to ensure that the maximum potential of the industry is met. These are:

- Australian Tourist Commission,
- Bureau of Tourism Research, and
- Office of National Tourism in the Department of Industry, Science and Resources.

All three of these organisations have a significant role in the Australian tourism industry and it is therefore necessary to outline the function of each before considering the actual tourism industry. Each of the three Commonwealth instrumentalities is discussed only briefly so as to present a summary of its respective role within the tourism industry. It is important to note that the terms Commonwealth Government, Federal Government and Australian Government are all interchangeable and mean the same thing.

#### Australian Tourist Commission

The primary function of the Australian Tourist Commission is to promote Australia as a tourism destination at the international level (Hall 1995; Department of Industry, Science and Resources 1998). The Australian Tourist Commission provides input for government policies concerning issues such as foreign affairs, immigration and the image of Australia internationally. The Australian Tourist Commission serves as a means of attracting international visitors to Australia (Australian Tourist Commission 1998) and has developed many radio, television and print media campaigns. In 1996-97, the Australian Tourist Commission brought 800 international media groups to Australia in the hope of generating almost \$700 million of publicity in overseas countries (Australian Tourist Commission 1998).

The Commission is funded by the Commonwealth Government from general tax revenue and from industry contributions (Tourism Organisation of Australia 1998). In the 1998/99 budget, the Government committed an extra \$50 million to the Australian Tourist Commission over the following four years, taking the total level of funding to almost \$340 million for the period of 1998 to 2002 (Australian Tourist Commission 1998).

The Australian Tourist Commission is made up of a Board of Directors, a Deputy Chairman and a Chairman. There are offices in the capital cities of Australia and in London, Frankfurt,



Stockholm, Johannesburg, Los Angeles, Tokyo, Osaka, Seoul and New Zealand (Australian Tourist Commission 1998).

It is important to note that the Australian Tourist Commission is in some ways unique. It is a government or public sector body but it is non-departmental and so falls into the category of 'quasi governmental' organisations or 'quagos' (Wettenhall 1983). Although the Australian Tourist Commission is funded in part by the government, it is also funded in part by the industry. Because of the nature of quasi-government organisations, they are removed from departmental accountability (Walmsley and Sorenson 1983). In fact, it is possible to think of the Australian Tourist Commission as a semi-private organisations with a public interest (Wettenhall 1983). Its very existence shows how a public-private co-operation can be very effective, an idea to which this thesis will subsequently return in its case study (see Chapter Four).

#### The Bureau of Tourism Research

The primary function of the Bureau of Tourism Research is to provide accurate statistical analysis of the Australian tourism industry to the government, industry and the general community (Bureau of Tourism Research 1998). Two key areas of research include the design, administration and analysis of surveys of international and domestic tourists and the publication and marketing of the results of research programs. The information provided by the Bureau of Tourism Research contributes to effective long-term planning by government departments and tourism groups (Department of Industry, Science and Resources 1998).

Both the State and Federal governments jointly fund the Bureau of Tourism Research, while the Bureau also generates revenue from the sale of publications and consultancy services (Bureau of Tourism Research 1998). There is no indication that the Bureau of Tourism Research receives funding from the private sector. The Commonwealth Minister for Tourism and the Minister's Department are responsible for the administration of the Bureau of Tourism Research.

### The Office of National Tourism

The Office of National Tourism in the Department of Industry Science and Resources is part of a Federal government department responsible for the development and administration of tourism policies for the Australian Government (Department of Industry, Science and Resources 1998). The Office of National Tourism is also responsible for delivering government funding to regional tourism programs and managing the inclusion of Australia in international expositions.

Within the Office of National Tourism, there are three sub-branches. These are:

- the Regional and Environmental Tourism Branch which is responsible for encouraging sustainable tourism in Australia;
- the International Tourism and Industry Development Branch which focuses on making the Australian tourism industry internationally competitive; and,
- the Tourism and Transport Development Branch which focuses on managing the infrastructure for the tourism industry (Department of Industry, Science and Resources 1998).

The Australian Tourist Commission and the Bureau of Tourism Research both work closely with the Office of National Tourism so as to co-ordinate between government departments (Department of Industry, Science and Resources 1998). However, there does seem to be some degree of overlap, particularly between the Australian Tourist Commission and the Office of National Tourism. Both instrumentalities are, in part, concerned with the promotion of Australia as a tourist destination and this could be seen to be an unnecessary doubling up of resources.

### Other National Bodies

The Federal Government has been and still is involved in a number of initiatives concerning the development and management of tourism in Australia. The Tourism Council of Australia, although not a Commonwealth authority, was a key industry group funded by the Government and the Australian tourism industry. In this sense the Tourism Council of Australia could be seen as the peak umbrella organisation for the tourism and hospitality industries of Australia, representing over 600 organisations (Harris and Leiper 1995). However, in December 2000, the Tourism Council of Australia was placed in voluntary administration due to being unable to meet its debts to the Commonwealth Bank (Australian Leisure Management 2001).

The Tourism Task Force is also an industry group funded in part by the Government. It is concerned with developing future goals for the tourism industry and in lobbying the government to achieve the most appropriate outcomes for its members in the tourism and recreation industry (Hall 1998).

In an attempt to develop co-ordinated policy for tourism, the Federal Government has also established a number of consultative forums. The Tourism Ministers Council involves the Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers and the New Zealand Ministers responsible for tourism (Hall 1998). The Council usually meets once a year to facilitate the consultation and development of policies between members. There is also the Australian Standing Committee on Tourism that is concerned with improving the degree of co-ordination between Government policies relating to tourism. The Standing Committee on Tourism usually meets twice a year and is made up of representatives from the relevant Ministers departments, industry groups and the Bureau of Tourism Research (Department of Industry, Science and Resources 2000).

One outcome of the activity on tourism at the national level is the production of several policies and strategies. One in particular is important in the realm of nature-based tourism, the National Ecotourism Strategy.

### The National Ecotourism Strategy

The National Ecotourism Strategy was an initiative of the Federal Government to help manage the growing nature-tourism market. In 1994, the Keating Government developed the National Ecotourism Strategy (Figgis 2000). At the time, the Government considered ecotourism to be the most likely area for tourism growth and therefore it sought to develop an overall policy for the planning, development and management of ecotourism (Allcock *et al.* 1994).

The National Ecotourism Strategy outlined twelve objectives for the development of tourism in natural areas. In summary, these twelve objectives were concerned with encouraging sustainable practices within the tourism industry (such as recycling). The principles of the Strategy aimed to strike a balance between conservation and tourism and to encourage a degree of environmental self-regulation within the industry. The National Ecotourism Strategy was also concerned with the education of tourists, the viability of individual ventures within the tourism industry and with showing individuals how to save money by implementing certain strategies. The National

Ecotourism Strategy was also committed to researching new and better ways of managing the relationship between tourism and conservation.

As a result of the National Ecotourism Strategy, the standard of many tourism initiatives in natural areas improved considerably (Figgis 2000). Furthermore, the Strategy also led to an increase in the awareness of environmentally sensitive tourism. Additionally, tourism operators were made aware that tourism could actually assist natural areas (Figgis 2000). However, since the change of government in 1996, the National Ecotourism Strategy has not been recognised as a significant strategy by the Liberal Government (Wearing and Neil 1999). This effectively leaves the future of the ecotourism industry with State government agencies and industry bodies, and several States have developed their own ecotourism strategies (Wearing and Neil 1999).

The aim of the National Ecotourism Strategy is to achieve sustainable tourism in natural areas. Unfortunately, the withdrawal of support by the current Federal government raises the concern of how this objective will be achieved. The nature tourism industry is constantly changing. The role of national parks for tourism is of great concern to some groups and it is unfortunate that the Federal government has elected to withdraw from a leadership role in the management of this dynamic industry, notwithstanding the fact that national parks come under State jurisdiction.

The Federal Government has not of course been completely oblivious to the needs of the tourism industry. The Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism, for example, is one area where the Government has shown a commitment to the tourism industry. The Centre is concerned with research and development of the Green Globe 21 initiative. Green Globe 21 is the work of the World Travel and Tourism Council, following the recommendations from the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 that the tourism industry should consider its relationship with the environment. The World Travel and Tourism Council worked in cooperation with the World Tourism Organisation and the Earth Council to develop a statement called Agenda 21 for Travel and Tourism (Green Globe 21). The Green Globe initiative is concerned with encouraging industry groups to develop an annual environmental report so as to improve environmental standards. The process also involves a certification process whereby participating industry groups are required to meet certain environmental standards (Green Globe 21).

### Tourism New South Wales

In terms of State Government organisations, Tourism New South Wales is the predominant agency responsible, as its name suggests, for tourism in New South Wales. Other States have similar agencies. Tourism New South Wales was established in 1985 and is the State government agency responsible for marketing and developing New South Wales as a premier tourism destination. Tourism New South Wales is committed to expanding the tourism opportunities of the State and to improving the standards of service within the industry through staff training and education programs (Tourism New South Wales n.d).

There are currently eight board members for Tourism New South Wales and Government funding for 1998 totalled over \$35 million (Tourism New South Wales 1998). Tourism New South Wales provides funding to non-government community organisations, such as Broken Hill Community Nadredak Ltd, as well as for major tourism events throughout New South Wales, exemplified by the Greg Norman Holden International Golf Tournament, and, in the past the FAI Cup National Championships. A number of publications detailing tourism opportunities within the State have been produced by Tourism New South Wales and are distributed free. Ultimately, Tourism New South Wales is committed to marketing New South Wales as the destination of choice to both domestic and international visitors, generating economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits for the State and leading the tourism industry of New South Wales (Tourism New South Wales n.d,2).

Tourism New South Wales is responsible for the Regional Tourism Strategy, which has resulted in the development of 16 regional tourism organisations throughout New South Wales (Tourism New South Wales 1998). The 16 regional tourism organisations are:

- Hunter Tourism
- Tourism Snowy Mountains
- Central West Tourism
- Tourism Mid North Coast
- Riverina Regional Tourism
- Tourism Murray River
- Big Sky Country
- Blue Mountains

- Central Coast Tourism
- Tourism Holiday Coast
- Capital Country
- Illawarra
- Greater Western Sydney
- Tourism South Coast
- Hunter Tourism
- Outback New South Wales and
- Northern Rivers.

The Regional Tourism Organisations throughout New South Wales are committed to increasing visitor numbers and visitor length of stay within regional areas (Tourism New South Wales n.d).

There has also been the development of some sub-regional tourism organisations, such as that which has occurred within the Big Sky Country Regional Tourism Organisation. Big Sky Country covers such a large area of land from the New England to the North West of New South Wales that Tourism New England was developed. This enabled the two main areas within the Big Sky Country Regional Tourism Organisation to be promoted as separate entities. Without creating the sub-region within Big Sky Country, promotion may have proved difficult because the features of New England are significantly different from the features of the North West. Each of the Regional Tourism Organisations is made up of a number of local government areas. For example, the Blue Mountains Regional Tourism Organisation is made up of the Blue Mountains City, Greater Lithgow, and Oberon. In total, there are 177 local government areas across New South Wales.

Local government areas have an important role in the tourism industry as they are closest to the relevant issues of each region (Hunter Valley Research Foundation 1995).

The functions of local governments in relation to tourism include:

- understanding and marketing local and regional tourist assets;
- understanding market demands;
- understanding local and regional tourist trends;
- understanding local and regional environmental issues;
- providing signs to promote tourist assets, environmentally sensitive and/or dangerous areas;
- providing interpretive information on natural assets;

- constructing walks, trails, seating and shelter for tourists within natural areas;
- developing suitable parking away from the natural area so as not to detract from the attraction, and
- considering several attractions in the area rather than a single, capital intensive project.

In addition to regional and sub-regional initiatives, some local government councils have developed tourism plans for their local area (Ashworth 1992). However, it needs to be noted that many councils have developed a marketing plan as opposed to an actual tourism plan (Rayner 2000). The aim of a tourism plan is to encourage goals that are acceptable to both the community and the tourism industry (Butler *et al.* 1997). A *tourism plan* also assists in maintaining continuity between local tourism goals and the tourism goals of the State and Federal Governments (Hunter Valley Research Foundation 1997). At this stage, funding from local government councils for initiatives such as visitor information centres, is not dependent upon the development of a tourism plan (Rayner 2000) but rather tends to be looked at on a case-by-case basis.

\* \* \*

Although the different functions of the Government instrumentalities have been discussed only briefly here, each instrumentality plays an important role in developing the Australian tourism industry. Furthermore, government at all levels has made a significant commitment to the tourism industry and it is important that it be recognised. The following section of Chapter Two details the domestic and international tourist figures for Australia as well as considering the effects of the recent Asian economic crisis and the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games on the future number of tourist visits to Australia.

### **2.2.1 International and Domestic Tourism in Australia**

In 1990, 2.1 million people from other countries visited Australia. By 1996, this figure had reached 3.8 million visitors and in 1998, visitor numbers had increased to 4.3 million (Australian Tourist Commission 1998). In 2000 international visitor numbers reached 4.9 million and this figure is expected to increase to 8.9 million by 2008 (Tourism New South Wales 2001).

Expenditure by foreign visitors to Australia for the 1997-98 financial year was estimated to be almost \$14 billion (Bureau of Tourism Research 2000).

New South Wales is the most popular tourism state with both international and domestic visitors. Of the 4.3 million international visitors that came to Australia in 1999, over half visited New South Wales (Bureau of Tourism Research 1998). Of the 75 million domestic tourism visits throughout Australia in 1997-98, 25.4 million were spent in New South Wales (Bureau of Tourism Research 2000). Figures for domestic tourism of course reflect the fact that New South Wales is the largest State in population terms.

Domestic tourism accounts for the majority of tourism in Australia. Over the 1997-98 financial year, expenditure by domestic visitors was worth an estimated \$46 billion, bringing the total tourism expenditure for the year to approximately \$60 billion (Bureau of Tourism Research 2000).

Both the domestic and international tourism industry in Australia are major contributors to the economy and the level of employment of this country (Tourism Organisation of Australia 1998). For example, tourism directly contributes approximately 6 per cent to Australia's gross domestic product (Tourism Organisation of Australia 1998) and, in 1993-94, tourism was estimated to account for 535, 600 full-time, part-time or equivalent positions or 6.9 per cent of the total workforce (Tourism Organisation of Australia 1998).

It is important to note that Leiper (1999) has criticised figures that attempt to assess the economic and employment values of tourism. For example, in Leiper's view, the real number of jobs provided by tourism is closer to 200 000. The discrepancy exists due to the misinformation and exaggeration of what actually constitutes the tourism industry (Leiper 2000).

Over the next decade, the World Travel and Tourism Council estimates tourism in Australia will account for almost 12 per cent of all jobs and contribute 11 per cent of Australia's gross domestic product (Tourism Organisation of Australia 1998). However, it is difficult to make an accurate prediction of the future tourism figures in Australia because of the recent economic crisis in Asia and the influence of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, notably, the extent to which these events might have a flow-on effect. Indeed, it is possible that the effect of the two events will actually balance each other out.



### Asian Economic Crisis and Tourism in Australia

In recent years, Asia has accounted for almost half of all international visitors to Australia (Tourism Forecasting Council 1998b). However in 1998, East Asia experienced a weakening economy which in turn resulted in a devaluation of East Asian currencies. This in turn led to a large decrease in the value of Asian stock and an increase in the number of 'bad' loans (Tourism Forecasting Council 1998b). Unfortunately, the devaluation of the Asian currencies caused an increase in the cost of outbound travel so visits from Asian countries to Australia declined by almost 25 per cent in the nine months to September 1998 (Tourism Forecasting Council 1998b).

Fortunately, international visitor numbers to Australia from America and Europe were maintained and actually increased slightly, and this offset some of the effects of the Asian economic crisis on the Australian tourism industry (Tourism Forecasting Council 1998). In 1998, the total number of international visitors to Australia declined by 4.3 per cent overall (Tourism Forecasting Council 1998). In 2001, international visitor numbers are expected to increase by 8.3 per cent on 2000 figures, taking the total number of international visitors to over 5.3 million (Tourism Forecasting Council 2001). There is expected to be a steady growth in visitors from Europe, the United States and even from Asia (although this depends on the rate of economic recovery in the Asian nations). The signs are hopeful for a quick recovery but future levels of travel are still very uncertain.

### The Sydney 2000 Olympic Games and Tourism in Australia

In September 2000, Sydney was host to the Olympic Games. The Australian Tourist Commission estimated that media interest in the Games generated approximately \$900 million in international publicity, which could result in an extra 1.6 million visitors to Australia between 2000 and 2004 (Australian Tourist Commission 1998). New South Wales was expected to receive approximately 50 per cent of the Olympic-related visits (Australian Tourist Commission 1998) and a substantial share of the flow-on effect.

In view of the Asian economic crisis and the Sydney 2000 Olympics, the Australian tourism industry can be described as being in a solid position as well as being internationally competitive (Australian Tourist Commission 1998). Much of the international and domestic tourism in Australia is the result of a growing interest in the natural and cultural features that are unique to

this country (Tourism Organisation of Australia 1998) as well as a decline in the value of the Australian dollar. McKercher (1998) suggests that tourism to Australia's natural environments is the fastest element of tourism growth in Australia.

The focus of the present study is on tourism in natural areas such as national parks and, therefore, it is appropriate to consider what constitutes nature-based tourism and how important it is to the tourism industry of Australia.

## **2.3 Nature-Based Tourism**

Australia is an internationally competitive nature tourism destination (Department of Industry, Science and Resources 1998b). Australia has a variety of accessible natural and cultural attractions including:

- the world's largest reef;
- the world's oldest culture;
- fourteen world heritage areas; and
- a diversity of unique and accessible fauna and flora (Figgis 1993).

Furthermore, Australia is politically stable and offers a high standard of living and an attractive climate, particularly when the Northern Hemisphere is in its winter season (Figgis 1993).

Visits to the natural areas of Australia increased by 33 per cent between 1993 and 1996 (Department of Industry Science and Resources 1998b). McKercher (1998) estimates that there are over 2500 tourism providers based in natural environments throughout Australia. One of the most popular natural recreation resources is national parks and a recent survey of international visitors to Australia estimated that half of these visitors experienced a national park or bushwalking activity during their stay (Tourism Council of Australia 1997).

### **2.3.1 What is Nature-Based Tourism?**

In its simplest form, all tourism can be divided into either mass tourism or alternative tourism. As a rule, mass tourism involves large numbers of people in institutionalised, inauthentic settings such as theme parks and cities, including resort-type attractions (Dowling 1995). Conversely, the alternative form of tourism tends to involve a more authentic type of experience where there

is some level of interaction between the visitors, the host community and the environment (Dowling 1995). Nature-based tourism falls within the realm of alternative tourism.

Nature-based tourism is recreation motivated in some way by an interest in the natural environment (Laarman and Gregersen 1996). Nature-based tourism is primarily resource-based and is predominantly concerned with wildlife types, habitat types, cultural attractions and archeological sites (Kusler 1991).

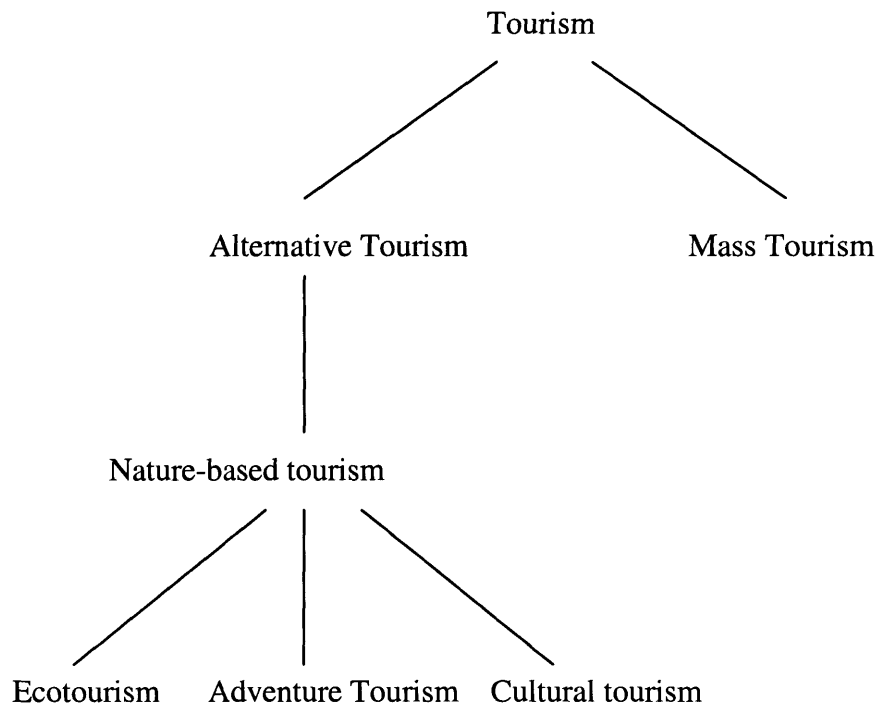
Natural area tourism is characterised as being:

- small in scale;
- dispersed away from built environments;
- with fewer infrastructure requirements than other forms of tourism; and
- attractive to tourists who are interested in a more authentic experience (Brockelman and Dearden 1990).

Tourism activities in natural areas range from informal bush walks by individuals to organised talks to groups (Preece *et al.* 1995). Other types of natural area recreation include the passive enjoyment of scenery and wildlife, mountaineering, canoeing and research programs (Goodwin 1996). Recreation in a natural area generally involves the visiting of an area because of its beauty and because the area and the activity are pleasurable (Hanneberg n.d).

Since nature-based tourism became prominent in the early 1980s, there has been a multiplicity of titles applied to it (Dowling 1995). These include 'green tourism', 'sustainable tourism', 'adventure or thrill tourism' and 'ecotourism' (Griffiths 1993). For the purpose of this study, nature-based tourism or natural area tourism will be viewed as having three subset groups. These are ecotourism, adventure tourism and cultural tourism. This concept is illustrated in Figure 2.2.

**Figure 2.2:** A diagrammatic representation of the components of nature-based tourism into ecotourism, adventure tourism and cultural tourism (Adapted from: Creamer 1995; Dowling 1995).



It is important to note that Figure 2.2 depicts an overly simplified distinction between mass tourism and nature-based tourism. The aim of the diagram is to demonstrate that nature-based tourism tends to be removed from the tourism associated with built environments, such as theme parks, where visitors pay on mass to be entertained. However, tourism in the natural environment can generate its own form of mass tourism and, unfortunately, the notion of ecotourism and, to some extent, nature-based tourism have become little more than commercial catch-cries. Although the pre-fix 'eco' suggests something good, tourism of this kind can be just as damaging as conventional mass tourism. By encouraging tourism in natural areas, parts of the landscape are opened up that would otherwise have been inaccessible to people. It has become somewhat fashionable to seek outdoor forms of recreation as opposed to those found in built environments and there are therefore more people in our natural areas than at any time before. As a result, it is important to note that although nature-based tourism has been described as a separate entity from mass tourism, the distinction between the two is very fine, and each can cause as much damage as the other. Natural areas can be 'loved to death' if care is not taken. The focus of this thesis is on stakeholder perceptions of the extent to which the public and

private sectors can combine to prevent places being used in such a way that they are 'loved to death'

Although nature-based tourism can be seen to have three components, each of the subsets is closely related to the others and also unique in its characteristics. It is important, therefore, to give some consideration to the features of each type of activity so as to illustrate nature-based tourism in its entirety.

### Ecotourism

One of the first advocates of ecotourism was Hector Ceballos-Lascurain in Mexico City in 1983 (Victorian Department of Conservation and Environment 1992). Ceballos-Lascurain described ecotourism as being:

tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals as well as any existing cultural manifestations found in these areas (Victorian Department of Conservation and Environment 1992, p. 2.)

Since this initial definition of ecotourism, there has been a mass of new and slightly differing descriptions. For example, ecotourism is described as being:

- ...ecologically sustainable tourism that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation (Duff 1993 p. 18.);
- ...low impact nature tourism which contributes to the maintenance of species and habitats either directly through a contribution to conservation or indirectly by providing revenue to the local community sufficient for local people to value and therefore protect their wildlife heritage area as a source of income (Goodwin 1996 p. 288.).

Instead of trying to develop a single, universally accepted definition of ecotourism, Charters *et al.* (1996) believe it is more appropriate and achievable to focus on outlining the characteristics of ecotourism. As a result, Charters *et al.* (1996) have developed the following criteria relative to ecotourism.

Ecotourism constitutes tourism which:

- occurs in a natural area and may include cultural and indigenous elements;
- includes some heritage interpretation and education programs;
- focuses on developing and using principles of best practice;
- contributes to the area's conservation either directly or indirectly through the support of a conservation project;
- involves local communities (directly and indirectly); and
- is ultimately a tourism experience.

For these characteristics to ensue in practice, each ecotourism project must be appropriate for the location so that there is minimal permanent degradation to the environment (Valentine 1992).

There are an estimated 600 ecotourism operators in Australia (Department of Industry, Science and Resources 1997). Although this is far too many to detail here, Dowling (1995) discusses three real world cases which serve as examples of ecotourism operations in Australia. These can be cited to give an indication of what is involved.

#### *Brocklands Valley Ecotours, Western Australia*

The basis of this business involves tours into the surrounding Jarrah and Karri forests and the Blackwood River Valley with the focus of the tours being interpretation and education programs for the guests.

#### *Discovery Ecotours, Northern Territory*

The Discovery Ecotours take in Central and Northern Australia and the Spice Islands of Eastern Indonesia. The predominant feature of these tours is that the tourists interact with researchers and scientists who travel to and study these areas. Discovery Ecotours also contribute a proportion of the profits to local communities and to researchers.

#### *The Undara Experience, Queensland*

The Undara Experience involves guided tours through the world's largest lava tube system. All of the guides involved are well trained and place a great deal of emphasis on quality interpretation.

Just as ecotourism is characterised differently from mass tourism, so ecotourists are described as having certain attributes that distinguish them from other tourists. Generally, ecotourists tend to be:

- male, aged 20-50 years;
- tertiary educated and semi-professional;
- of the higher income category;
- environmentally conscious;
- interested in natural areas; and
- prefer small groups of people (Duff 1993; Griffiths 1993).

There is an element of social and ecological responsibility evident in each of the participants in ecotourism (Griffiths 1993). It is entirely possible for the visitors themselves to take an active role in protecting and conserving the ecological or cultural attractions of an area (Orams 1995). Similarly, it is possible for visitors to become involved, through research, fundraising or participating, in formal interpretation programs.

Much of the attraction of ecotourism lies in the physical and mental challenge that it offers the participants (Theophile 1995). Tourism of this type has been described as an experience that can influence a person's life and affect 'their understanding of a person's place in the scheme of life' (Hunter 1994, p.12).

There is a considerable learning component associated with ecotourism where the participant learns about different cultures and environments and develops a positive environmental message (Creamer 1997). Although ecotourism is a component of nature-based tourism, they are not the same thing. The biggest difference distinguishing nature-based tourism from ecotourism is the formal element of education that is associated with ecotourism (Dowling 1995). Although nature-based tourism *can* be educational, education is not a formal component of the activity (Nelson 1994). There are also significant spiritual, intellectual and emotional qualities that make the experience of ecotourism all the more unique, while natural area tourism is unlikely to have such a spiritual impact on the participant (Vickery 1996).

### Adventure Tourism

Although the literature available on adventure tourism is limited, this type of activity is one of the most popular forms of nature-based tourism (Cunningham 1993). Activities include rock climbing, abseiling, caving, hang gliding, whitewater rafting and free fall parachuting. The excitement and thrills that result from participating in these activities are part of the main attractions of adventure tourism (Scace 1993).

On the whole, adventure tourism tends to occur in 'unusual, exotic or remote wilderness areas' (Scace 1993 p. 63) and is generally a demanding activity both mentally and physically. There is also a high level of risk involved that tends to add to the attraction of the activity.

Adventure tourism provides an opportunity for a limited few to experience unique, natural environments and to develop an individual appreciation for the area and for what they have achieved (Norris 1992). Adventure tourism also poses a substantial personal challenge to the participant (Scace 1993).

Unfortunately, adventure tourism does not necessarily assist in the conservation of the area which its participants depend upon (Norris 1992). Nelson (1994) raises the concern that the desire for greater thrills on the part of the participants will lead to greater social and ecological risks being taken. Ultimately, it is feared that adventure tourism will increase the accessibility of pristine natural areas to tourists, resulting in significant ecological degradation.

### Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism is a specific component of the nature-based tourism industry and one of the most sought-after forms of recreation (Cunningham 1993). Australia has one of the world's oldest cultures with its indigenous peoples' heritage and, as a result, the demand for cultural experiences is high (Figgis 1993).

Although the literature available on cultural tourism is limited, this type of nature-based tourism can be defined by an interest in the history, lifestyle and artifacts of other people (Bosissevain 1996; Foo 1998). Foo (1998) lists the following key features of cultural tourism:



- historic or heritage buildings, sites or monuments;
- Aboriginal sites or cultures;
- art and craft workshops;
- festivals;
- performing arts; and
- museums and art galleries.

### **Chapter Summary**

All over the world, people are using their leisure time to undertake recreation and tourism activities. As the number of hours in the average working week declines and people begin retiring at an earlier age, society has more unobligated time than at any stage in the past (Lacey 1996). As a result, tourism is growing to be one of the world's largest industries.

Tourism in Australia contributes significantly to the economy and to the level of employment. Over the next decade, the World Travel and Tourism Council estimates that 12 per cent of all jobs in Australia and 11 per cent of the gross domestic product will be attributed to the tourism industry (Tourism Organisation of Australia 1998). However, the recent Asian economic crisis and the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games have altered tourism estimates somewhat. Despite the uncertainty surrounding the effects of these events, Australia is likely to witness an overall growth in international and domestic tourism over the next decade.

The fastest growing component of tourism in Australia is nature-based tourism. People are becoming increasingly interested in the natural environment and Australia has many natural features that are attractive to tourists. In the last half of this decade alone, Australia's prime natural attractions, such as the Great Barrier Reef, Uluru and Kakadu, have experienced dramatic increases in visitor numbers (McIntyre and Boag 1995).

The focus of this study is the nature-based tourism industry with the particular focal point being on the Blue Mountains National Park. Chapter Three therefore characterises the national parks of New South Wales and outlines the recreation value of the parks system. However, as Chapter Three also demonstrates, the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, the managing body of national parks, is faced with growing management concerns. Visitor numbers

to national parks are expected to increase dramatically over the next 10 years (Worboys *et al.* 1997) while, at the same time, the current management regime of many government departments such as the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, is at a point of change.