

CHAPTER 3 NATIONAL PARKS CURRENT AND FUTURE

Chapter Two was concerned with providing a background to the study of tourism so that the thesis is able to progress to looking at the relationship between tourism, recreation and national parks. Before looking at this relationship in any more detail however, it is necessary first to look at the history of national parks in Australia generally and New South Wales specifically.

In 1879, just over 7000 hectares of land were set aside at Port Hacking, south of Sydney. Originally, this area of land was simply called the National Park. It represented Australia's first venture into national parks. It was later renamed the Royal National Park in 1954. The establishment of national parks in Australia was heavily influenced by the process occurring in North America at the time. Yellowstone National Park had been established in 1872, primarily for recreation purposes, and the same was true for Australia's first national park (Boden and Baines 1981).

In 1894, a second park was dedicated, called Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. However, the development of national parks in Australia was slow following Federation in 1901. Following World War One, there was a growth in bushwalking clubs and this saw a relatively rapid growth in the national park movement. The following information, in point form, provides a summary of some of the main features in the history of national parks in New South Wales and shows the gradual and often slow development of what is today an extensive national parks network.

- 1879- Establishment of 'National Park', Port Hacking south of Sydney.
- 1894- Ku-ring-gai National Park was dedicated.
- 1901- Federation of Australian colonies.
- 1927- Sydney Bushwalkers established by Myles Dunphy, followed by the establishment of the Bush Tracks Club and the Coast Mountain Walkers Club.
- 1932- Clubs combined to form New South Wales Federation of Bushwalking Clubs.
- 1932- Development of the National Parks and Primitive Areas Council with Myles Dunphy as secretary. The Council became crucial in changing the focus of national parks from recreation to conservation.

- 1934- National Parks and Primitive Areas Council proposed the establishment of the Blue Mountains National Park, which was later dedicated as such in 1959.
- 1944- Kosciuszko State Park Act was developed.
- 1954- National Park renamed Royal National Park.
- 1955- The first national parks bill was drafted.
- 1957- New South Wales National Parks Association was created.
- 1959- Blue Mountains National Park was dedicated.
- 1960 ff- The conservation movement developed at a rapid rate.
- 1967- The establishment of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service. The first director of the National Parks and Wildlife Service was bought out from Northern America.
- 1967- National Parks and Wildlife Act was passed, giving control of national parks to the National Parks and Wildlife Service.
- 1974- National Parks and Wildlife Act amended, combining all previous acts. The classification of State Parks was removed and amendments were added to strengthen the preservation and protection of Aboriginal sites and relics.
- 1975- The Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service was established. 'National' parks such as Norfolk Island, were established and operated in conjunction with the State parks system. The Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service is now a part of Environment Australia.
- 1987- The Wilderness Act was enacted.

(Mosley n.d.; Pettigrew and Lyons 1979; Boden and Baines 1981; Convey 1993; Jenkins 1995; Hall 2000; Pigram and Jenkins 2000).

Recreation was the primary purpose of the legislators who established the first national park in New South Wales (Boden and Baines 1981). As understanding of ecological processes and the importance of conservation developed, there was a shift away from recreation and tourism toward conservation and preservation. However, tourism and recreation remain a key management concern for the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

In 1997, there were approximately 22 million visits to national parks in New South Wales (Cook 1999) and it is expected that this figure will increase to 28 million by 2005 (Worboys *et al.* 1997). Because of the rise in conservation at the same time as growing visitor numbers, the

management pendulum in national parks tends to swing between achieving conservation and providing for the needs of park users. Unfortunately, it can be said that, in the majority of national parks, neither conservation nor recreation is managed for very well. Furthermore, the issue of national parks management has always been made difficult by the fact that legislative decisions are often based primarily on short-term economic and political objectives (Boden and Baines 1981).

In light of this point, and before this study moves on to look specifically at national parks in New South Wales, it is important to touch briefly on the political philosophy that shapes the management of these parks. The thesis is not of course a treatise in political science or philosophy and the ensuing discussion is necessarily brief and designed to do no more than highlight the important ideological context in which park management needs to be considered. The aim of looking at the political philosophies associated with national parks is simply to demonstrate an awareness that national park management is influenced by more than environmental issues or issues relating to visitor needs.

The policies developed by governments are more often than not reactive rather than proactive. Often government policies reflect the mood of the times as opposed to what might be termed a vision for the future. Often political expediency and the electoral cycle drive decisions to be made in at times a less than coherent fashion, leading to the piecemeal development of policy. This is what is known as disjointed incrementalism and this situation has influenced how national parks in Australia generally, and New South Wales specifically, have been managed over time (Turner 1981).

One reason for disjointed incrementalism in natural resource management, including that for national parks, is the existence of user groups and interest groups, also known as pressure groups. Government decisions are often a response to the activities of such groups. The power of pressure groups is significant and has been studied extensively (Miller 1987; Sekvless 1991; Pross 1992 and Abbott 1996), especially in relation to the conservation movement (Lowe and Goyder 1983; Smith 1995 and Thornton *et al.* 1997). Scientific and rational decision making may be a goal of government circles but it often involves the appeasement of pressure groups. (Mercer 1991).

An example of disjointed incrementalism and national parks exists in the April 2000 decision to create several new national parks along the south coast of New South Wales. The Government claimed that they had created a 350 kilometre 'green corridor' from the Victorian border to just north of Nowra (total area of approximately 324 000 hectares) (Bissett 2000). Conservationists had been campaigning for the protection of this land for over 20 years. The move by the Government was presented as a great win for the environment. However, a more detailed look at the decision showed that four key wilderness areas had received only partial protection (Woodford 2000b). It seems that the government attempted to satisfy the demands of conservationists by protecting the majority of the land that they campaigned for but also kept its options open for the future by leaving key parts of the land free of reservation.

Interest groups or pressure groups have, in the past, played a major role in national parks management and continue to do so in the current political climate. In the beginning it was a bushwalking club that encouraged the national parks movement. However, the land chosen for national parks was often land that had little suitability for anything else. In choosing such land the Government pacified the developing conservation movement by providing land for national parks but acted in such a way that it did not impact upon economic industries such as mining and forestry.

One problem with pressure groups is that they tend not to be representative of the general public. These groups have been found to be elitist rather than representative (Turner 1981). Attempting to appease such groups can lead to rapid, knee-jerk type decisions without sufficient consideration of long-term policy issues. It is this disjointed political climate that has influenced the way in which national parks are managed and which has resulted in a management regime partly committed to conservation and partly committed to recreation as opposed to a management process that works to manage both (Ginns 1999) .

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To recap, the purpose of Chapter Three is to review the nature of tourism and to consider the issues of funding and of the private sector in relation to the future of national parks in New South Wales. To do this it is necessary to look at the economic reform process that is occurring within the public sector and to review the growing commitment of parts of the private sector to the

environment. Zoning as a management tool within national parks is also considered in this Chapter.

Before proceeding with this Chapter, it is necessary to point out that this study is concerned with broad strategies concerning national parks, not fine details. It has been a deliberate aim to avoid getting caught up in small details that relate only to specific parks. A particular case study is considered later in Chapter Four. The ensuing review in this Chapter has been compiled from material found in the following databases and sources:

Heritage and Environment

Australian Public Affairs

Current Contents

Austrom Environment

Austrom Tourism

Some international journals found using these databases tended to focus on specific details as opposed to broad-based management approaches, which was what was needed for this study. In order to maintain a tight focus on the New South Wales context, material from the above sources is discussed below where it has general or specific relevance to New South Wales. In-house documents available from the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service tended to focus on particular specifics. They were therefore of limited value in this study which is more concerned with the general trends. Moreover, this study is not concerned with preliminary internal documents, except where they were formally endorsed as policy. Undoubtedly, internal papers would provide a fascinating look at the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service. However, such detail should be the subject of a separate thesis.

3.1 The National Parks System of New South Wales

A national park in New South Wales is described as an area containing unique or outstanding scenery or natural or cultural phenomena (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998a). As of June 30 2000, there were 146 national parks in New South Wales covering an estimated 4 212 982 hectares (New South Wales 1998f).

Over the last decade there has been a steady increase in the number of national parks in New South Wales. Table 3.1 summarises the change in the number of national parks since 1990 as well as the change in the area of the national parks estate in New South Wales between 1990 and

2000. As a point of interest, there has been an increase of 78 national parks, totalling an increase of just over one million hectares in the 11 years to 2000. The increase in the numbers of parks has outstripped the increase in area of the national parks estate, thereby exacerbating the management positions under consideration in this thesis.

Table 3.1: The change in the number and area of National Parks in New South Wales between 1990 and 1998.

Year	Number of National Parks	Total Area of National Parks (ha)
1990	68	3 184 816
1991	70	3 188 735
1992	76	3 246 566
1993	76	3 250 102
1994	76	3 251 952
1995	86	3 324 218
1996	98	3 504 097
1997	103	3 761 901
1998	103	3 771 745
1999	144	4 160 527
2000	146	4 212 982

(Source: New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service Annual reports 1990-2000).

The managing body of the national parks system is the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service. The Service was established in 1967 and is described as being the government instrumentality that develops and implements management plans within national parks (Richardson 1992). It is the role of the Service to maintain the ecological and cultural integrity of natural areas (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1997). The Service is also concerned with evaluating the relationship between tourism and natural area conservation (Figgis 1993; Preece *et al.* 1995).

The basis for the exercise of power by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service comes from:

The *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* where the Director-General of the National Parks and Wildlife Service is responsible for the care, control and management of all areas reserved and dedicated as national parks, historic sites, nature reserves, Aboriginal areas and State recreation areas.

The *Wilderness Act 1987* where the National Parks and Wildlife Service is responsible for the investigation, protection and management of wilderness in New South Wales.

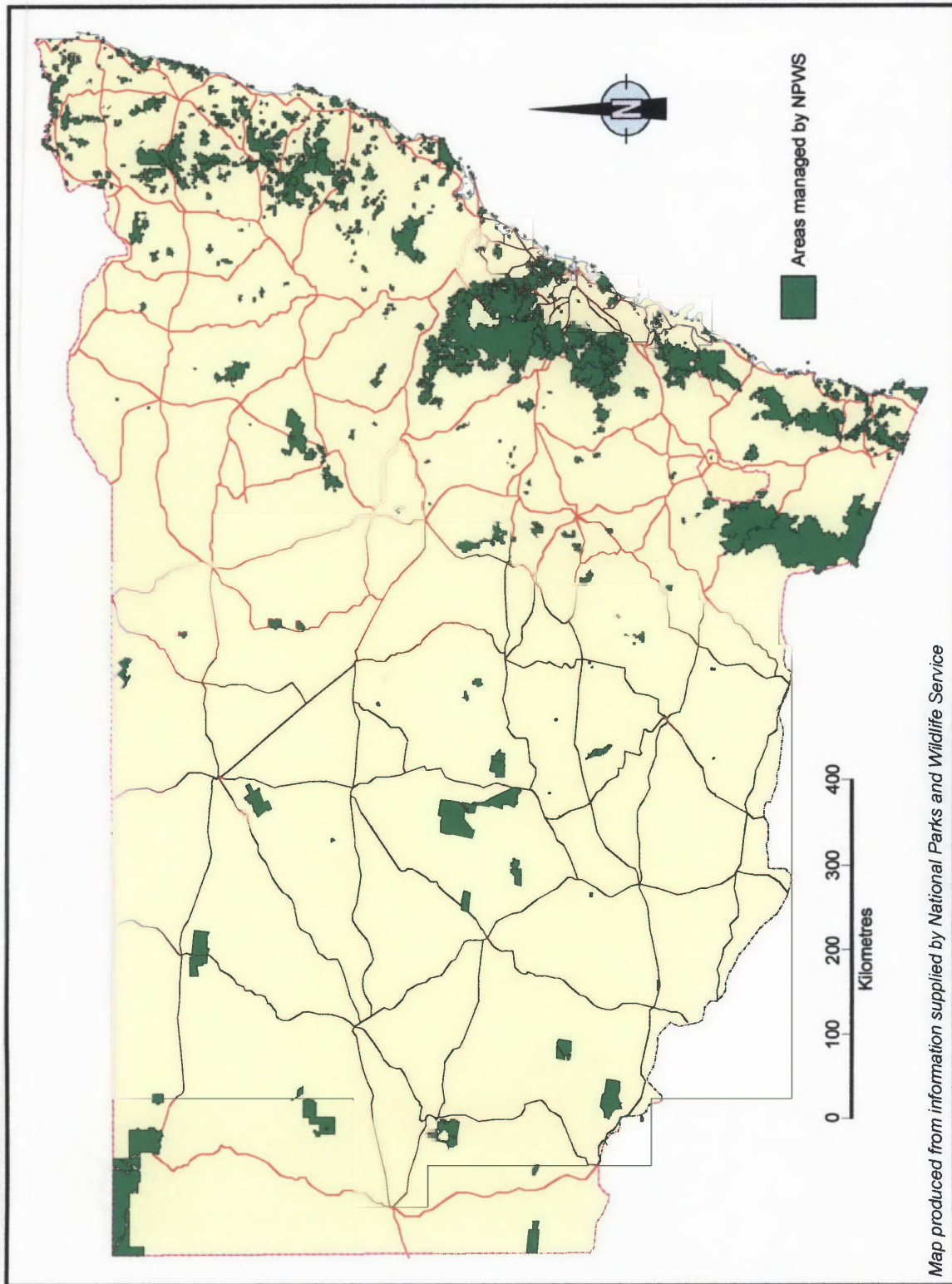
As of the 30th of June 2000, the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service was responsible for 5 099 674 hectares of land in New South Wales, land which is reserved under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. This area of land represents approximately 6.37 per cent of the State (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 2000). It comprises:

- 146 National Parks;
- 302 Nature Reserves;
- 13 Historic sites;
- 32 Wilderness areas;
- 11 Aboriginal areas;
- 19 State Recreation Areas and;
- 2 World Heritage Areas (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 2000).

There are other areas that are protected under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* that include marine reserves and karst conservation areas. All of these areas within the control of the National Parks and Wildlife Service are managed primarily for the purposes of preservation, conservation, education research and some recreation pursuits (Worboys *et al.* 1997). Figure 3.1 illustrates the location of the protected areas of New South Wales, managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

(Picture on page 19 of Recreation Startaegy by Worboys etc)

Figure 3.1: The location of the protected areas in New South Wales that are managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (Source: Worboys *et al.* 1997)



In total, the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service is responsible for 524 protected areas ranging from national parks to karst conservation areas. This is a considerable and costly responsibility.

The annual operating budget of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service for 2000 was approximately \$272 379 000 (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 2000). Government contributions to national parks accounted for \$218 908 000 of the total funding while the remaining revenue came from sources other than the government, such as sales, services, fees and fines (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 2000). The annual running costs of national parks are substantial and it has been suggested that most parks suffer from a lack of funding (Cohen 1996). Westcott (1995) believes that the funding for national parks within Australia has neglected to keep up with park expenses. Because of its critical importance, the financial situation of the National Parks and Wildlife Service will be looked at in more detail at a later stage in this chapter.

It is a requirement of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* for all national parks in New South Wales to have a Plan of Management to outline appropriate land use types and activities for a particular area. Of the 146 national parks in New South Wales, just under half have a Plan of Management and a further number of parks currently have Draft Plans on display for public comment (Ramsey 2000). Under the Act, there is not a time frame stipulated for the development of these Plans. Rather, national parks are required to have a Plan of Management 'as soon as practicable' (Ramsey 2000).

The Act stipulates that the Director-General of the National Parks and Wildlife Service is legally responsible for ensuring plans are prepared and implemented at the appropriate time. In practice, the plans are prepared and implemented by the local rangers. Initially, a draft plan is developed to allow for public comment and then the National Parks Advisory Council reviews any submissions. A number of recommendations are then developed and reviewed by the State Minister for the Environment. It is at this time that the most relevant plan of management for a particular national park is adopted. This process is also necessary for areas newly declared as national parks.

The National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council has particular responsibilities under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* to address and report to the Minister for the Environment

about the 'Plans of Management'. The Advisory Council consists of 13 members including the Director-General of the National Parks and Wildlife Service and representatives of conservation, education, scientific and natural resource organisations and community groups, appointed by the Minister for the Environment (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998f).

Each region of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service also has a National Parks Advisory Committee, which reports to the Advisory Council on issues concerning the care, control and management of the national parks within its region (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998f). Each committee is made up of 12 members with a range of expertise in the areas of conservation, local government issues and regional and rural topics. Committee members serve for a period of four years following a selection process involving regional managers, regional directors and, finally, the Minister for the Environment. Members of the committee can include representatives from local bush fire brigades, neighbouring properties, Aboriginal groups, business groups and research organisations. Service personnel are not usually recommended for a position on the Advisory Committee (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998f).

The National Parks and Wildlife Service also manages state recreation areas and regional park areas for the single purpose of providing a recreation resource within a natural setting (Worboys *et al.* 1997). State recreation areas are recognised as being places of regional significance that can be enjoyed for recreation purposes without causing damage to the natural and/ or cultural environments (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1997). Regional parks are more modified than State recreation areas, yet regional parks still offer open spaces for recreational activities close to regional centres (Worboys *et al.* 1997).

The National Parks and Wildlife Service promotes activities within national parks that attempt to maximise visitor enjoyment and appreciation. The aim is to ensure that different recreation activities co-exist with and complement each other (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1997). This is the basic premise of the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum discussed in Chapter Two. It is the responsibility of the Service to provide sufficient access to parks via roads, signage, notice boards, brochures and booklets, discovery walks and tours, to ensure user satisfaction.

There are a number of policies that deal with natural area tourism in national parks. These exist so as to limit the adverse ecological and social impacts of tourism. These policies are actively employed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and include a commercial recreation policy, vehicle access policy, accommodation policy and a commercial use of Service buildings policy (Creamer 1995). The basic principles of these policies are outlined below.

Commercial Recreation Policy

The National Parks and Wildlife Service recognises that national parks are popular for commercial activities and that commercial activities within parks can significantly improve the recreational opportunities for park visitors. However, it is the policy of the Service that any commercial activities will be consistent with the management objectives of an area. All commercial ventures within a national park require a licence and the appropriate public liability cover. It is also the right of the National Parks and Wildlife Service to monitor a commercial activity to ensure it remains in compliance with the objectives of the area.

Vehicle Access Policy

There are three types of road access within the national parks estate: public access roads maintained by the Service; roads maintained by other authorities e.g. the Department of Main Roads; and management roads and tracks not accessible by the public. Under the Vehicle Access policy, the general public, including those with trail bikes and off road vehicles, are permitted access to the public roadways. The Service has however the right to close an area or charge an access fee to an area for management or protection reasons.

Accommodation Policy

The National Parks and Wildlife Service recognises that there is a demand for accommodation facilities but it is policy not to provide such facilities on Service land in areas adjacent to urban regions where alternative accommodation facilities can be found. The Service encourages the development of off-park accommodation although some low-key accommodation such as cabins may be appropriate in some areas.

Commercial Use of Service Buildings

The commercial use of Service buildings may be permitted via a lease or licence arrangement. However, any commercial activity has to be deemed appropriate so that the building and the surrounding environments are preserved.

3.2 Tourism in National Parks of New South Wales

Visitor surveys conducted by the National Parks and Wildlife Service between 1990 and 1998 have indicated that there were 20 million visits to a national park or reserve in New South Wales in 1990, 21 million visits in 1994, and 22 million visits in 1997 (Cook 1999). As mentioned previously, this figure is expected to reach 28 million visits by 2005 as a result of the publicity generated by the Sydney 2000 Olympics and the growing interest in natural area tourism (Worboys *et al.* 1997). In fact, it has been suggested that soon over 60 per cent of the Australian population will visit a national park during the course of a year (McGregor 1999).

Research has shown that people seek natural areas such as national parks, for enjoyment, to promote fitness, to escape from the everyday lifestyle and to reduce stress and tension (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989). As was pointed out in Chapter Two, as a society, we have more uncommitted time than at any stage in history; hence the increase in the popularity of national parks. Interestingly, walking is said to be the most popular activity undertaken in national parks (Plumb 1997; McGregor 1999).

While research suggests that park users rarely move beyond the picnic areas and access tracks (Pigram 1993), there are many popular recreation activities undertaken within national parks. These activities include:

- escorted or unescorted walks;
- water based activities;
- rock climbing;
- abseiling;
- distance walks involving overnight stays;
- camping;
- fishing;

- rafting;
- visits to look-out sites;
- picnics;
- scenic drives; and
- wildlife observation (Worboys *et al.* 1997).

In 1997, the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service increased maintenance spending considerably from the year before. However, between 1998 and 2000, there was a decline in spending on park maintenance. This is alarming in light of the fact that the numbers of visitors to national parks are at an all time high (Worboys *et al.* 1997) and are likely to be causing more degradation to parks than has occurred in the past.

Table 3.2: The amount of money spent by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service on the maintenance of park facilities such as roads and picnic areas, between 1990 and 2000.

Year	Maintenance Expenses for National Parks (\$A 000)
1990	2 571
1991	3 133
1992	5 957
1993	6 482
1994	NA
1995	9 071
1996	8 553
1997	21 163
1998	22 701
1999	16 506
2000	15 985

(Source: New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service Annual Reports between 1990 and 2000).

It is possible to suggest that the increased spending on park utilities and park services is a reflection of the growing needs of park visitors as well as a growing commitment by the Service to recreation in national parks. In view of the growing costs associated with recreation in national parks, it is important to note that there are considerable advantages from recreation and tourism. These are considered next.

3.2.1 Advantages of Recreation Activities in National Parks

The tourism industry in Australia is a major contributor to the economic and employment profile of this country (Tourism Council of Australia 1997). Chapter Two looked in detail at the economic and social implications of tourism in this country. Charters (1995) claims national parks are a major recreation resource within Australia and account for a large proportion of the revenue generated from tourism. Furthermore, as has been pointed out already, the Tourism Council of Australia (1997) estimates that almost half of all foreign visitors to Australia visit a national park at some stage during their stay. Obviously, then, national parks are a significant recreation resource in Australia. Indeed, from a parks management perspective, tourists and recreationists can be treated as the same as they are in this thesis. From a management perspective, all are visitors that create the need for visitor services plans.

Theoretically, tourism to national parks places an economic value on protecting natural areas (Goodwin 1996). This in turn helps to prevent the land being cleared for grazing, logging or mining (Environmental Protection Agency 1997), as tourism serves as an alternative business (Figgis 1994).

The public use of national parks has the potential to meet both the economic and ecological objectives of an area (Theophile 1995). Visitors to national parks offer an economically viable alternative to more degrading land use types such as mining and agriculture (Duff 1993), while also helping to generate community support for the conservation of large areas of land.

No more is this case than in the town of Coolah, 140 kilometres north east of Dubbo, where a former logging site was converted into the Coolah Tops National Park (Clennell 1998). The area had been logged until 1996 and it includes the former Bundella State Forest. However, the area is a significant site for grey kangaroos, red neck wallabies and has world record densities of

greater glider populations. The area is also the home of the tallest stand of snow gums in Australia (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998e).

The development of the Coolah Tops National Park has seen visitor numbers in the area increase to 4000 annually, contributing approximately \$46 000 in regional business turnover and creating 17 local jobs (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998e). Visitor numbers to the area are expected to reach 10 000 annually and create a further 29 jobs. Initially, there was a great deal of concern about the closure of the logging business in Coolah. The ecological and economic benefits of the national park, however, are obvious. Although the number of employment opportunities may be fewer as a national park, the business of national parks conservation is likely to be more sustainable than that of the logging industry. Put simply, tourism to the Coolah Tops National Park has provided an economic and ecological alternative to logging.

Other ecological benefits from tourism in national parks include promoting an awareness of environmental issues to the wider community (Cunningham 1993). Tourism can, for instance, contribute to the conservation of an area by developing a strong environmental ethic among park visitors (Chapman 1995). Tourism in natural areas is thus important for the National Parks and Wildlife Service as it stimulates an awareness of the importance of conservation, works at reducing ecological damage, and provides a productive use for the areas (Ceballos-Lascurain 1991). Furthermore, tourism in national parks can generate public support for the conservation of these specific areas (Ceballos-Lascurain 1991; Evans-Smith 1994). This is important when the political philosophy associated with national parks shows that interest groups heavily influence the decisions made regarding national parks.

Potentially, nature-based tourism creates economic benefits such as generating foreign exchange (Ceballos-Lascurain 1991), creating employment, generating primary and secondary spending amongst tourists and encouraging the maintenance and further development of surrounding infrastructure (Griffiths 1993). Recreation in national parks also provides a means of promoting cultural education and encourages cultural exchange (Griffiths 1993). Ecotourism can be an incentive to restore traditional celebrations and monuments (Millman 1989), ultimately preserving certain cultures for future generations (Griffiths 1993).

Although tourism in national parks is at an all time high, the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service has a significant management concern. Like many public sector organisations, the claim is being made that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is under-resourced for the management responsibilities expected of it (Westcott 1995; Howard 1997). The focus of the next part of this Chapter therefore moves away from tourism in national parks and instead looks at the issue of funding and the reform process that is influencing many public sector services, including the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service.

3.3 Funding Constraints and the National Parks and Wildlife Service

As has already been noted, like most public sector organisations, the claim is often made that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is inadequately funded (Figgis 1993; Cohen 1996). The National Parks and Wildlife Service has itself said that its management outcomes are dramatically influenced by a lack of adequate funds (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1991; 1993; 1996). Other consequences follow. For one thing, the national parks estate is said to be unrepresentative of the natural and cultural resources found in New South Wales (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998c). For example, there is a significantly larger proportion of land reserved in the Sydney basin (35 per cent) than in the Riverina where only 0.3 per cent of the land is reserved (Woodford 2000b). It is going to be costly to rectify the relative under-representation of some ecosystems in the national parks estate.

Making this situation worse is the fact that only 6.37 per cent of New South Wales is reserved under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. Compare this figure with the United Kingdom where 20.3 per cent of the territory is protected and the United States where 10.6 per cent of the area is protected (Environmental Protection Agency 1999), and it is clear that New South Wales has quite a low proportion of land reserved. However, to increase the size of the national parks estate in New South Wales to anywhere near overseas levels will cost hundreds of millions of dollars, money which the National Parks and Wildlife Service simply does not have (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998a).

The concern has also been raised that as tourism in national parks gains momentum, National Parks and Wildlife Service staff will be required increasingly to manage parks for both conservation and for tourism (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998d; Robinson 1998). This change in the role of Service personnel evokes genuine concern that the

National Parks and Wildlife Service is being forced away from the role of conservation that has been a focus since the inception of the Service, to the overall detriment of the park system (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998a; Ginns 1999). As a rule, the majority of parks personnel are from a science background but are being expected to manage business issues such as marketing and visitor satisfaction. The problem is made worse by the absence of a formal visitor management centre within the Service for staff to gain training and advice (Ginns 1999).

Moore and Carter (1993) believe that staff within the National Parks and Wildlife Service are inadequately trained in developing a balance between tourism needs and minimising visitor impacts on the environment. It was also suggested by Mr Ian Brown of the Blue Mountains district of the National Parks and Wildlife Service that there is not a good system in place for managing the human use of national parks. This has resulted in the degradation of visitor sites, particularly in the high use parks close to Sydney. Ginns (1999) also states that there is a lack of analysis about what it is park users want and whether the expectations of park users are met. Providing adequate training and facilities for research within the Service would be very costly and it is likely that, in the current economic climate, these costs will not be met.

With these issues in mind, claims have been made that the National Parks and Wildlife Service receives inadequate funding from the government to do all that is expected of it (Howard 1997). Furthermore, the claim is sometimes made that a game of 'funding catch-up' is occurring within the Service, where areas are gazetted by the Service so that more money will be awarded by the government. This money is then used to 'catch-up' on jobs that were to have been completed in the previous financial year (Evans 1999).

Given these comments on the National Parks and Wildlife Service position, the inevitable question is whether these views are justified. Herein lies the problem: when the operating statement of the National Parks and Wildlife Service is looked at, it is difficult to understand how the National Parks and Wildlife Service can be having financial problems. The accounts of the National Parks and Wildlife Service actually present a government organisation that, on the surface, is managing its finances very well. Table 3.3 is a summary of the operating statement for the National Parks and Wildlife Service between 1990 and 2000 and, as the figures show, it seems that the National Parks and Wildlife Service has been generating a substantial profit, particularly from 1996 to 2000.

Table 3.3: A summary of the operating statement for the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service between 1990 and 1998.

Year	Government Contribution (\$A000)	Total Receipts (including government contributions) (\$A000)	Total Payments (\$A000)	Surplus/ (Deficit) (\$A000)
1990	53 637	74 506	72 671	1 835
1991	59 923	86 059	87 027	(968)
1992	59 273	83 767	90 711	(6 944)
1993	68 969	97 116	103 053	(5937)
1994	67 410	123 895	107 508	16 387
1995	103 358	146 924	151 029	(4 105)
1996	115 166	205 570	149 721	55 849
1997	152 964	255 230	185 428	69 802
1998	161 824	262 850	218 314	44 536
1999	183 407	274 433	227 342	47 091
2000	218 908	272 379	239 481	32 898

(Source: New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service Annual Reports between 1990 and 2000).

According to the annual reports of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, revenue for the operation of national parks comes from:

- sales of goods and services e.g. park entry fees, leases and rentals of premises, user charges such as camping fees, the sale of assets, and, the sale of publications and manufactured goods;
- investment income e.g. bank interest;
- retained fees and fines e.g. licences and permits for operations within national parks such as a licence to conduct walking tours or a permit to cull kangaroos, and parking fees;
- other revenue such as telephone rebates, insurance recoveries and miscellaneous items;
- grants and contributions where funding is provided by the Commonwealth and State Governments as well as from corporate and private sponsorships (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service Annual Reports between 1990 and 2000);
- government allocations where the Service receives State consolidated funds to supplement its revenue from other sources. Government contributions to national parks are twofold. First,

funding is in the form of money for recurrent services, which comprise the day-to-day operations of national parks (such as conservation programs and scientific research). Secondly, the funding is in the form of money for capital works within parks.

Expenses for the operation of national parks arise from:

- employee related expenses e.g. salaries, wages, superannuation, long-service leave, workers compensation and pay roll tax;
- operating and maintenance expenses, e.g. maintenance of park facilities and insurance,
- depreciation expenses e.g. roads and access ways, buildings and park facilities;
- grants and subsidies to encourage conservation projects. For example, a grant was provided to the Lord Howe Island Board.

Given this context, the financial problems of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service become more apparent when a comparison is made between the government contributions to national parks and the expenses associated with managing the national parks estate. It is possible to carry out this comparison by looking at the data in the second and fourth columns of Table 3.3. Table 3.4 summarises the percentage of National Parks and Wildlife Service expenses that were met by government funding between 1990 and 2000.

Table 3.4: A summary of the percentage of National Parks and Wildlife Services expenses met by Government contributions.

Year	Percentage of National Parks and Wildlife Service Expenses met by Government Funding (%)
1990	73.8
1991	68.9
1992	65.3
1993	66.9
1994	62.7
1995	68.4
1996	76.9
1997	82.5
1998	74.1
1999	80.6
2000	91.4

(Source: New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service Annual Reports between 1990 and 2000).

It is clear from the figures in Table 3.4 that, although the National Parks and Wildlife Service has reported a 'profit' in 1996, 1997 and 1998, the Service is substantially under-resourced from the government to meet the responsibility of managing the national parks estate. The situation was particularly acute during the early 1990s. This, in turn, forces the National Parks and Wildlife Service to look to other sources of funding.

It is important to highlight the substantial increase in government funding for national parks in 1999 and 2000. Much of this funding increase can be attributed to the legal costs associated with the 1997 Thredbo landslide. The New South Wales State Coroner found that the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service was, in part, responsible for the landslide that resulted in loss of life and loss of property (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 2000).

The lack of government funding in other years is reiterated in the annual reports for the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The claim was made in the 1991 Annual Report that government funding needed to be increased if the National Parks and Wildlife Service was to provide better

facilities for park users and improved access ways while still maintaining conservation practices (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1991). In 1993, it was pointed out in the Annual Report that the operations of the National Parks and Wildlife Service were severely hampered by a lack of government funding. Furthermore, the Service felt that it would benefit significantly from an injection of funding to maintain the infrastructure of national parks that in many cases has deteriorated due to inadequate funding (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1993). As Table 3.4 illustrates, in 1994, funding from the government for the management of national parks was very low and it was at this time a comprehensive resourcing bid was submitted to the government. Following a detailed review of the concerns, the Government announced a major resource package to be implemented over the following five years (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1994). As Table 3.4 shows, there was a substantial increase in government funding in 1996 and 1997. Despite this increase, the point was made in the 1996 Annual Report that the costs of maintaining the infrastructure within national parks were increasing at a rate faster than the government was able to provide funding. In turn the National Parks and Wildlife Service was faced with a great deal of pressure to undertake all of its management responsibilities (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1996). This suggests that the apparent financial health of the National Parks and Wildlife Service might mask a falling level of service provision.

Despite the promise from the Government of more funding for national parks between 1995 and 2000, 1998 saw yet another decline in the amount of government funding available to meet the management needs of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (Table 3.4). This followed a commitment from the Government in 1995, one-year after the promise for more funding, to achieve specific financial results. This, in turn, saw the budget allocations of government agencies, including that of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, reduced, in favour of improving productivity and accountability within the public sector (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1997). This reform within the Government is discussed at length later in this chapter (see Section 3.4). For the moment therefore, it is only necessary to note that the ideology of financial rectitude impacted upon the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service.

As was mentioned earlier, the amount of government funding given to the National Parks and Wildlife Service was not adequate to meet the expenses of the Service during 1990s and this, in turn, forced the National Parks and Wildlife Service to look to other sources of funding. These

other sources of funding have already been outlined: entry fees, camping fees, sale of publications and manufactured goods, grants and donations, licences and permits. Table 3.5 is a summary of the amount of 'other' income sources used by the National Parks and Wildlife Service between 1990 and 2000.

Table 3.5: A summary of the amount of 'other' funding sources (i.e. other than government contributions) used by the National Parks and Wildlife Service 1990-2000.

Year	Amount of 'other' sources of income used by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (\$A000)
1990	20 869
1991	26 136
1992	23 174
1993	26 180
1994	33 350
1995	37 316
1996	39 532
1997	102 786
1998	102 239
1999	91 028
2000	53 061

(Source: New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service Annual Reports between 1990 and 2000).

As Table 3.5 illustrates, the 'other' sources of income for the National Parks and Wildlife Service had been getting substantially larger over time but have reduced in 1999 and 2000. Much of this increase in 'other sources' of income throughout the 1990s can be attributed to the implementation of accrual accounting procedures in 1992, in accordance with New South Wales Government policy. From 1992 onwards, the asset values and depreciations within the National Parks and Wildlife Service are reflected in the accounts. The assets of the National Parks and Wildlife Service have been valued in accordance with public policy guidelines issued by the New South Wales Treasury in 1990.

Although it took a number of years for all of the assets of the National Parks and Wildlife Service to be evaluated, the majority of assets were included on the national park asset register

by 1995. Following this, the value of contributed assets (such as land, buildings, access ways and other infrastructure) were included as an 'other' source of revenue for the National Parks and Wildlife Service. In 1996, contributed assets accounted for \$50 566 000 of 'other' funding. In 1997, contributed assets accounted for \$62 966 000, and in 1998 contributed assets accounted for \$45 017 000. In 1999, this figure was \$41 276 000. No data was available for 2000.

In terms of the overall rationale for national parks, there seems to be a problem in using the value of national park assets as an 'other' source of income for the National Parks and Wildlife Service, as these assets cannot actually be sold off to generate money. Land within the national parks estate is dedicated land and so cannot be used for any land use alternatives. The circumstances are the same for buildings and access roads within the national park estate. National parks land is not a tradeable asset in the sense that a factory may be in, say, the automobile industry.

For argument's sake, if the value of the assets as a source of funding was removed from the revenue for the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the financial situation of this organisation would not look anywhere near as strong as the reader is initially led to believe. To gain a more realistic look at the finances of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Table 3.6 looks at the surplus/ (deficit) (from Table 3.3) for 1996 to 1999 and compares it with the asset values mentioned previously.

Table 3.6: A summary of the difference between the surplus of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service and the asset value of national parks

Year	Surplus (\$A000)	Asset Value (included as a component of Surplus) (\$A000)	Real Surplus/ (Deficit) for the NSWNPWS (\$A000)
1996	55 849	50 566	5 283
1997	69 802	62 966	6 836
1998	44 536	45 017	(481)
1999	47 091	41 276	5 815
2000	32 898	-	-

(Source: New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service Annual Reports between 1996 and 2000).

Table 3.6 gives a much clearer look at the financial situation of the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the figures show that, in 1998, the National Parks and Wildlife Service actually operated at a \$481 000 loss. This is considerably different from the original figure of a profit of \$44 453 000. In 1999, the Annual Report suggested a profit for the financial year of \$47 million. However, a closer look shows a much smaller profit of \$5 million. Although this is an improvement on the figures for 1998, it shows that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is not in the strong financial position that first appears.

The finances of the National Parks and Wildlife Service are very complex. However, it is possible to see that the National Parks and Wildlife Service really does not have sufficient resources to manage the national parks estate effectively without drawing heavily on non-government sources. This said, it seems unlikely that government funding will be increased and, therefore, the 'other' sources of income available to the National Parks and Wildlife Service are likely to become very important. It is possible that tourism and recreation in national parks could serve as a real source of income. Furthermore, there might be a role for the private sector to become involved in the management of national parks and to improve the financial situation of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

private sector in the management of national parks (Woodford 2000a). As has already been mentioned in Chapter One, there has been a conditional agreement signed between the National Parks and Wildlife Service and Mawland Hotel Management for the lease of the Quarantine Station in Sydney. This move hardly constitutes the total privatisation of national parks but it does suggest that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is more willing to work with the private sector than it has been in the past.

The potential for an increasing role of the private sector in national parks is of course not surprising in view of the current reform process occurring within the public sector generally. The following section of this Chapter looks at the public sector reform process in the context of the situation facing national parks.

3.4 Public Sector Reform in Australia

In Australia, the provision of goods and services such as transport infrastructure and public health care, has largely and traditionally been the responsibility of the government (Sly and Weigall 1992). In New South Wales, it has been customary for the management of these goods and services to be undertaken by government business enterprises. Even to this day, such enterprises are responsible for almost two-thirds of infrastructure services such as buses and trains in Sydney (New South Wales Treasury 1998). Unfortunately, in many circumstances, the performance of the government business enterprises has been viewed as being deficient due to over-capitalisation, poor management and work practices, and a high level of input and low levels of output. These weaknesses are often thought to have had a negative effect on the overall economic performance of Australia (Riley 1993). Certainly, this was the view promulgated by the Hilmer Report with its stress on heightened competitiveness (Donovan 1995).

In the late 1970s, the majority of governments around the world, including Australia, were faced with significant levels of debt, partly as a result of an economic recession triggered by OPEC price rises and partly as a result of the ending of 'the Long Boom' of economic prosperity (Strachan 1998). Public expenditure was high and growing and there was a view that governments had become too large and too expensive (Bell 1998). At this time, and as a result of this mindset, there was a major reform process within many governments (Riley 1993). This saw the United Kingdom, in particular, undertake the privatisation of public assets such as telecommunications, water, electricity and gas (Porter 1992). This trend was labelled

of this mindset, there was a major reform process within many governments (Riley 1993). This saw the United Kingdom, in particular, undertake the privatisation of public assets such as telecommunications, water, electricity and gas (Porter 1992). This trend was labelled 'Thatcherism' after Dame Margaret Thatcher, the British Prime Minister at the time the reform process began (Riley 1993).

Since that time, public sector reform has become a major component of policy making in Australia (Witherby *et al.* 1997). There is a growing opinion among decision makers that public expenditure needs to be reduced as a means of enhancing the efficiency and competitiveness of the Australian government (Dollery and Wallis 1997). Such views have permeated the higher levels of the bureaucracy (Pusey 1991)

The reform process in Australia has exposed government enterprises to a greater level of competition and has illustrated the need for services to be highly productive at the lowest possible cost (New South Wales Treasury Reform 1998). Ultimately, the aim of the reform process is to improve the use of the nation's resources (de Laine *et al.* 1997). The reform process involves:

- decreasing the level of government expenditure by encouraging private ownership;
- creating 'quasi public organisations' via commercialisation;
- improving outputs, costs and the quality of services; and
- contracting out government responsibilities (Ryan 1997).

Public sector reform in Australia has reduced the size and cost of the government. In 1985-86, government spending in Australia as a percentage of gross domestic product was 42.7 per cent. In 1989, this figure was down to 33 per cent (Weller *et al.* 1993). On the positive side, there has been an average decrease in electricity, gas, communications and transport costs over the last decade (New South Wales Treasury 1998). It is this sort of result that heartens the reformers.

The reform process continued in the 1990s with the partial or total sale of several government enterprises to the private sector. These enterprises included:

- 49 per cent of the Commonwealth Bank between 1991 and 1993;
- 100 per cent of Grain Corporation in 1991; and
- 100 per cent of the Government Insurance Office in 1992 (Riley 1993).

Public sector reform in Australia and around the world is presenting itself as the management direction of governments (Scott 1994). Private ownership is thought to assist in maximising the efficiency of community based services via increasing productivity, raising the standard of services, and reducing the need for government assistance (Porter 1992; Riley 1993). Scott (1994) adds that private sector management practices also produce more accountability which, in turn, improves the standard of the service provided.

The New South Wales State Government has made increasing moves toward the private sector providing infrastructure. For example, in 1992 the New South Wales State Government announced a plan for a new hospital in Port Macquarie that would be built, owned and operated by private investors (Forde 1995). The hospital, now well established, is available to public patients and is aimed at alleviating some of the financial and managerial problems facing the State government. Hospitals are one area that requires a high proportion of public sector funds, so any plan that removes some of the funding burden from the government, while at the same maintaining health standards for all patients, is seen as worthwhile.

Universities are another service that in the past has been the responsibility of the public sector. However, the funding available to university institutions was dramatically reduced through the 1980s (Smart 1986). At the same time, Bond University, a private institution, was established with the campus being financed privately (Smart 1986). Although the emergence of a single university did little to overcome the problems of reduced funding and student crowding in the public sector, it did set a precedent for future management directions in the public service. For example, Australia now has other private universities. Smart (1986) predicted that private universities such as Bond University will be important alternatives for the future of education in this country. This is a prediction that seems to have come true. Private funding in fact extends to the entire post-secondary sector as can be seen in hospitality training centres such as the Blue Mountains Hospitality School.

Corrective services are also an area where the private sector has had considerable involvement in Australia. By 1996, Australia had six operational corrective centres under private control, located in Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales. There are plans for a further four private correctional centres to be developed (Harding 1997). The private sector is involved in these institutions in tasks that were traditionally public sector responsibilities such as

the classification of inmates, the transfer of inmates between correctional centres and the identification of breaches of corrective service legislation (Moyle 1994).

Predictably, there has been some opposition to privately operated correctional centres and there is unlikely to be a dramatic increase in their number (Harding 1997). However, private sector involvement within the corrective services has served the purpose of alleviating some of the financial pressures and the pressures relating to centre over-crowding, in the public sector (Moyle 1994). Most importantly, it is believed by some that privately operated centres improve the overall standards of Australia's correctional services (Harding 1997).

This notion of contractualism, or the contracting out of government services to the private sector, is one of the prominent principles in the current public sector reform process. Due to the potential relevance of a contract arrangement for private sector involvement in national parks, it is important that further consideration be given to the concepts of contractualism.

3.4.1 Public Sector Reform and Contractualism

In Australia, contractualism as a public sector reform process is a component of what is called the 'National Competition Policy'. The aim of this policy is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public sector services by providing opportunities for private services in the public arena (Ryan 1997). The government of Australia is using the principles of contractualism to provide community services, particularly in the area of welfare services (Rogan 1997).

Contractualism, or contracting-out, involves selecting the most preferred provider of a good or service from a range of potential providers who submit a tender application (Department of Finance and Administration 1998). It is possible for a tender to be submitted from either a private sector provider or from within a government department. Under a contract arrangement, the requirements of the service provider are outlined by the contract for the purchaser to be able to monitor (Ryan 1997).

An example of the contract process is the situation with the Commonwealth Employment Service or the CES. In 1994, the White Paper of the federal Labor Government, *Working Nation*, was published and it suggested the complete reform of the CES, using the expertise and

experience of the community and the private sector by way of a contract with the Government (Wearing and Smyth 1998). The aim of the CES reform process was to meet the needs of job seekers more effectively, to establish a better understanding of employment opportunities, to coordinate the needs of job seekers and to help people who were uncomfortable working within the government bureaucracy (Wearing and Smyth 1998).

The CES reform process resulted in a choice for job seekers between CES and non-CES providers, who took out a contract with the Government to provide a service where the payment for service was based on performance. To ensure a fair competition within the employment agency business, a new public authority was established, the Employment Service Regulatory Authority. It was the role of this body to regulate competition, accredit and develop the expertise of the non-CES providers and provide advice on funding arrangements (Wearing and Smyth 1998).

It is not only in the realm of employment services that the contracting process has been used. Within New South Wales, the services of private contractors actually account for almost 60 per cent of all public works (Riley 1993). For example, the cleaning services at many of the State's schools and hospitals are provided via a tender arrangement and many waste collection operations are conducted by a private contract (Riley 1993). Contractualism of this nature is beneficial to government because it reduces the size and responsibilities and, therefore, the operating costs of government departments while also improving the efficiency and quality of a service (Ryan 1997).

In terms of examples of contracts in the public works arena of New South Wales, waste collection and health services have both experienced lower costs and increased productivity since the advent of contractualism (Riley 1993). However, the most important feature of contractualism is that private agencies are accountable for their services (Department of Finance and Administration 1998). This is seen as a good thing because, as a rule, the public sector is accused of being risk-averse as no one group or individual is held responsible for an action (Ryan 1997, p.157).

Australian governments are increasingly supportive of the private sector providing hitherto public sector facilities and services (New South Wales Treasury 1998). In light of this situation, it is appropriate to give further consideration to the private sector being more actively involved

in the management of the national parks of New South Wales. This is one of several issues that need to be considered as a future management issue for the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service.

3.5 The Potential of the Private Sector and National Parks

Traditionally, national parks have been the responsibility of the public sector. As was mentioned earlier in this Chapter, Australia's first national park, declared in 1879, was provided by the government as a recreation resource for the growing population of Sydney (Pigram 1983). However, times have changed, and as was also mentioned earlier in this Chapter, the primary function of national parks has become conservation. At the same time, however, the private sector has been given an increasing role in the operations of national parks. Already, there are an estimated 162 commercial lease agreements in existence in New South Wales national parks (Worboys *et al.* 1997).

In the current public policy climate where government funding is limited and where the private sector is being given the opportunity to provide what were traditionally public goods and services (Wearing and Bowden 1999), it is worthwhile considering the value of the private sector in national parks. The private sector has the ability to generate extra park funding through entrance fees and concessions from recreation facilities. The private sector also has a wealth of expertise and experience to bring to the management of national parks in terms of both tourism and conservation processes.

This chapter has already demonstrated that, although Australia has an excellent national park system, it is felt by some that it lacks adequate funding for long term, effective management (Figgis 1993). At the same time, there are many demands placed on the public sector resources for health care, education and financial assistance programs with a result that extra spending on national parks and conservation is sometimes difficult to justify (Figgis 1994; Cohen 1996). This has raised the suggestion that a privately assisted national park system would cost less to manage and would be better able to achieve the necessary conservation objectives than the current public system (Chisholm and Moran 1993).

The single greatest limitation upon the implementation of conservation strategies is a lack of financial resources from the public sector (Kusler 1991). In the eyes of some, much of the

funding from the public sector for tourism management in natural areas is put into promotion and marketing. As a consequence, there is little used for the actual research into developing a positive relationship between tourism and conservation (Craik 1992). In the eyes of these commentators, too little money is being spread too thinly to achieve effective goals in the area of conservation.

In the case of private sector assistance in national parks, the private sector, more so than the public sector, may be able to provide and operate tourist facilities, such as gift shops and restaurants (Jenkins 1993). Concessions from these facilities could then be used to assist with the cost of conservation projects while also helping to justify a national park remaining uncleared and being used in a non-consumptive manner (Dixson and Sherman 1991; World Tourism Organisation and United Nations Environmental Program 1992; Brandon 1993).

3.5.1 The Expertise of the Private Sector

There is likely to be considerable opposition to the proposal for the private sector to undertake a more active role in national parks management. One concern is that private sector involvement will compromise the quality of national parks through poor management and unsuitable infrastructure developments that could ultimately cause the demise of the national parks system (Figgis 1994). Furthermore, the economic objectives and the desire for profit of some private sector operations may lead to irreparable environmental damage (Brockelman and Dearden 1990; Jenkins 1993).

The private sector does, however, have much to offer the nature tourism industry in national parks. For instance, there are many examples of private operators committed to developing and implementing 'Best Management Practice' techniques as an example to other business managers (Preece *et al.* 1995). No more is this so than in the case of the Ecotourism Association of Australia.

Ecotourism Association of Australia

The Ecotourism Association of Australia was established in 1991 by private business people and members of the Natural Area Tourism Industry who wished to achieve an overall improvement

in the environmental standards of the Australian tourism industry (Ecotourism Association of Australia n.d; Black 1996). At the present time, the Association is made up of tour operators, business people, government representatives, academics and interested members of the public (Ecotourism Association of Australia n.d; Walmsley 1996).

The objectives of the Ecotourism Association of Australia are to:

- develop a set of ethics and standards for ecotourism operations;
- promote an understanding and appreciation of the conservation of natural/ cultural areas;
- promote ecotourism; and
- facilitate tourist/ host community relationships as well as community relationships with industry, government and conservation groups (Black 1996, p.5).

In a co-operative effort with the Australian Tourism Operators Organisation, the Ecotourism Association of Australia developed the 'National Ecotourism Accreditation Scheme' (Ecotourism Association of Australia n.d). The accreditation scheme is designed to encourage responsible tourism practices amongst tourism operators, especially those in natural areas (Richardson 1992). The scheme requires a tourism operation to meet strict criteria for basic accreditation and bonus criteria for advanced accreditation (Ecotourism Association of Australia n.d).

The accreditation program has three categories: accommodation, tours and attractions (Walmsley 1996). Accreditation lasts for three years and requires a report to be lodged annually to the Ecotourism Association. The accreditation can be revoked at any time if the operation is deemed not to have maintained its standards. After three years, accredited members need to reapply (Walmsley 1996).

The importance of the accreditation scheme is that it allows organisations with a rating to market themselves as such (Ecotourism Association of Australia n.d). Furthermore, the environment is benefiting from better practices amongst tourism operators. Ultimately, it is hoped that the Scheme and the Association will serve as such a significant marketing tool that will improve the standards of the tourism industry overall. The Ecotourism Association is the first of its kind in the world (Ecotourism Association of Australia n.d).

In keeping with the ideals of the Ecotourism Association of Australia, there are many examples of nature-based tourism developments that are concerned with the well-being of the surrounding

environment and are also successful private sector business operations. Indeed there are a number of private developments that are concerned with ensuring that they cause as little environmental degradation as possible and with implementing 'best practice' management approaches, even if it involves some additional financial costs. The following is therefore a review of some of these examples. It is included in order to give an indication of the business knowledge and ecological expertise that private developers could bring to the management of recreation in national parks.

For the purpose of this study, large-scale private developments have been considered rather than small scale, park-based operations. The reason for this is that often the large-scale ventures are criticised for their impact upon the environment and, by looking at the larger developments, it is possible to show that not all large-scale businesses are simply concerned with making a profit. If large-scale operations are able to implement best practice techniques, it follows that smaller park-based business should be able to implement similar techniques for use in national parks.

Rather than look at individual cases, a list of some of the operational practices used by large-scale developments has been made. Following that, a list of some of the businesses that have implemented these practices successfully is presented. It is important to note that these lists are by no means exhaustive but, rather, a way of demonstrating the level of environmental commitment of some private business.

Examples of techniques used by private tourism developments include:

- The use of energy efficient designs such as roof angles of 45° to minimise the amount of midday sun absorbed by buildings. This reduces the amount of air-conditioning that is required.
- Flora and fauna surveys of the site prior to any construction works and the collection of native seed from the site that is then used in the re-vegetation process.
- The design and construction of buildings around pre-existing vegetation.
- Removal of waste off-site (in the case of an island) and/or the implementation of recycling programs.
- Employing staff trained in ecological management techniques.
- The construction of buildings in prefabricated sections thus minimising the level of site disturbance.
- Construction of boardwalks around the site, again to minimise the level of site disturbance.

- Use of self-composting toilets.
- Use of alternative energy sources such as solar power (photovoltaic panels) or a micro-hydroelectric power system.
- The collection and ultra-violet light sterilisation of rainwater.
- Use of LPG to minimise the need for coal based electricity.
- Maintaining building colours in neutral tones to blend with surroundings and to construct the buildings below the tree line.
- The involvement of the organisation in school programs such as 'Earth Keepers'.

Some of the developments that have implemented these sorts of best practice techniques include:

- King Fisher Bay Resort and Village, Fraser Island.
- Skyrail Rainforest Cableway, Cairns.
- Green Island Resort, Queensland.
- Jemby Rinjah Lodge, Blackheath.
- Eco-Beach Resort, Broome.
- Lemonthyme Lodge, Tasmania.

All of the developments mentioned here have invested significant amounts of time and money into the research and development of their product. Many of these examples have been used in both national and international publications as examples of best practice. All these examples considered in this chapter have provide evidence to suggest that tourism facilities can exist in the vicinity of natural areas without causing significant environmental damage. For example, Fraser Island is listed as a World Heritage Area and is also the site of King Fisher Bay Resort and Village. Green Island is a national park and a lease exists for the operation of the Green Island Resort. The Skyrail Rainforest Cableway, Cairns, is surrounded by the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, while at the same time serving as an example of best practice within the tourism industry. All of these examples are working illustrations of managing a site to retain the natural qualities of the area while also ensuring visitor satisfaction.

Although the private sector has the potential to be beneficial in the provision and management of recreation in national parks, a fundamental concern regarding its involvement is the orientation of private business towards short-term economic gain whereas conservation is a long-

term issue (Brockelman and Dearden 1990; Skyes n.d). It is sometimes felt that the primary concern of private business is the rate of return on investments and the level of profit (Goldstein 1990; Jenkins 1993). As a result, the resource base on which the business ultimately depends may be over-exploited to reach profit objectives, at least in the eyes of some commentators (Buckley and Pannell 1990; Alderman 1991).

Figgis (1994) is particularly concerned that the quality of natural areas will become increasingly compromised through the involvement of the private sector. Instead of the focus of management being on the conservation of the area, visitor numbers and visitor satisfaction may take precedence (Figgis 1994).

Brandon (1994) suggests that the so-called links between tourism and conservation are actually indirect. In fact, tourism in natural areas has been described by some as being in conflict with the principles of conservation (Giannachini 1993). Sometimes, only a small proportion of funds generated by private sector investments goes toward the actual conservation of an area (Skyes n.d). Furthermore, the areas that are in the most need of extra financial assistance are those that are sometimes least attractive to business enterprises. Instead, areas already developed may receive excess funding with little benefit to the less known environments (McNeely and Thorsell 1989).

Among the opponents of private sector involvement in national parks, there is also the concern that private sector investment may cause the development of inappropriate boundary regions in natural areas. Protected areas may be determined on the basis of development potential and not on the basis of ecosystem boundaries or geographical features (Esau 1996). Moreover, once an area has some level of development within it, it may become difficult to limit access (Kusler 1991). In time this may cause an area to become artificial or commercialised, ultimately detracting from the natural features of the area (King and Stewart 1996).

There is currently a trend to label activities within natural areas with the prefix 'eco' which implies an environmentally sensitive operation (Figgis 1994). Often this is not the case and visitors can therefore be attracted to an area by a false claim. In such cases the reality of the experience does not relate to the expectations (Figgis 1994; Butler *et al.* 1997).

Another social issue resulting from private operations within natural areas is that smaller scale, community based operations can become displaced (McNeeelly 1993). The cost to the consumer at a privately owned facility may also be higher than at a publicly owned operation and this may result in the exclusion of lower income groups (Skyles n.d).

In view of these concerns, it is not appropriate to consider access by the private sector to all parts of a national park. It was mentioned previously that the quality of national parks is variable and the parks themselves can be zoned into different management areas. It is therefore appropriate to look at zoning as a potential management approach to be used by the National Parks and Wildlife Service in cases where it may be practical to set areas of parks aside for the private sector and for tourism, without compromising the entire national parks estate.

3.6 Zoning

One of the most important features to consider in the management of the national parks of New South Wales is the fact that the quality of the land is not homogenous (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998d; p7). Nearly all national parks within the national parks estate have some degree of human modification but the extent of this varies considerably (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998d). Furthermore, it has been observed that some areas which could have been declared 'State Recreation Areas' were given the higher protection status of a national park as a result of public pressure (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998a). The National Parks and Wildlife Service has also worked to gain a variety of environments within the national parks system and this has led to a great deal of variation in the quality of national parks throughout New South Wales.

Based on the variability of the landscape features and ecosystems within the national parks in New South Wales, it is possible to suggest that some parks will be suited to being graded or zoned into regions ranging from high use areas to areas best kept for minimal human development or wilderness areas (Woodley 1992; Smith 1993 and Chapman 1995). This sort of concept has been used for the Solitary Island Marine Park on the North Coast of New South Wales. The Solitary Island Marine Park was established in January 1998 under the New South Wales *Marine Parks Act 1997*. The management of the marine park is based on dividing the area into zones so that the recreation and commercial needs of the community can be assured while, at the same time, conserving the ecology of the area. The New South Wales National

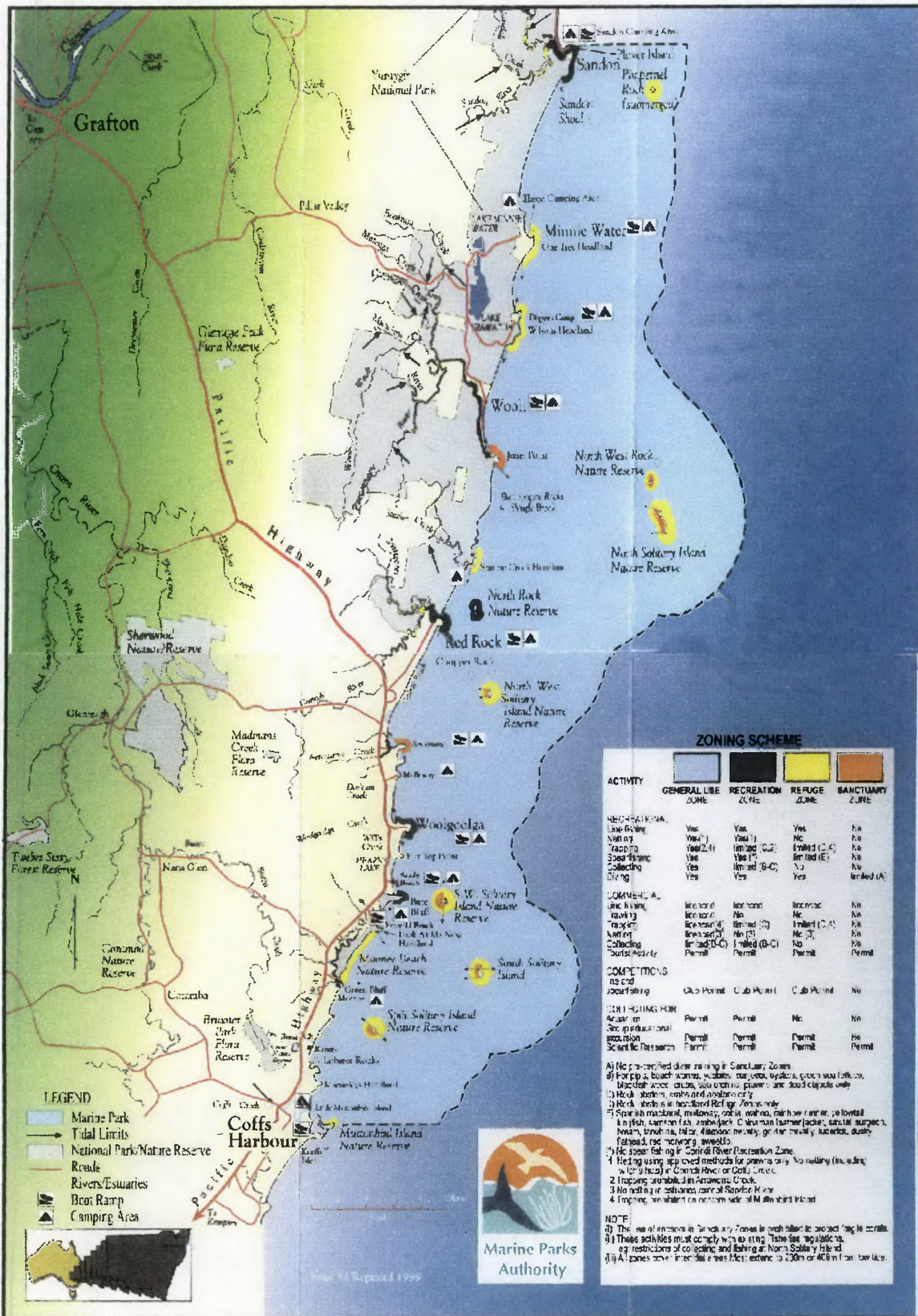
Parks and Wildlife Service is responsible for the conservation of Solitary Island in conjunction with the Department of Fisheries and the Marine Parks Authority.

These three management authorities identified four zones within the Solitary Island Marine Park (Marine Parks Authority n.d). These zones are:

- the General Use Zone which provides for ecological protection of the environment and allows sustainable commercial and recreation activities;
- the Habitat Protection Zone which provides for ecological protection of the environment and allows sustainable commercial and recreation activities that are deemed to have no significant impact on the surrounding marine habitats;
- the Sanctuary Zone which provides for maximum ecological protection for the environment and allows for research, education and low impact recreation that does not impinge on the surrounding marine habitats; and
- the Special Purpose Zone which provides for special management arrangements where conditions do not suit the application of the other three zones.

Figure 3.2 illustrates the zoning process implemented within the Solitary Island Marine Park.

Figure 3.2: The zoning process implemented within the Solitary Island Marine Park. North Coast of New South Wales.



The process of zoning, like that used for the Solitary Island Marine Park, involves the evaluation and classification of land to determine the area's suitability for development (World Tourism Organisation and United Nations Environment Program 1992). Zoning involves the setting aside or rationing of certain areas for a particular purpose (Graham 1986). A zone most appropriate for recreation purposes is generally identified according to attributes such as the desirable number of visitors, the desired recreation activities and the level of existing infrastructure and equipment development (Mandziuk 1995). Zoning also serves as a means of resource protection by defining the rules of use for a particular area (Graham 1986). Chapter Four looks in detail at the Blue Mountains National Park where zoning has actually been outlined as a management tool in the Draft Plan of Management.

3.7 National Parks – the possibility of change

The future of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service is likely to be shaped by the influences of tourism, the private sector, the public sector reform process and the need to manage national parks as a number of smaller areas. There have been a number of newspaper articles in recent times that have given consideration to what will affect the future of national parks of New South Wales. There are in fact several indications within the media that the National Parks and Wildlife Service may be at a turning point in its management approach.

In November 1999, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported the planned restructuring of the National Parks and Wildlife Service 'to encourage a new, more corporate and economically accommodating service' (Woodford 1999). Following this report came a lengthy report in January 2000, outlining an overhaul for the National Parks and Wildlife Service. This article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* suggested that there would be an expansion of the commercial uses of national parks as well as a new definition of a national park (Woodford 2000). Under the current *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, a national park is defined as 'spacious areas containing unique or outstanding scenery or national phenomena'. The proposal reported in the media is to amend the definition so as to move closer to that outlined by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, which includes recreation in its definition of a national park. The new definition of a national park is likely to be 'an area of land and /or sea containing outstanding and /or representative ecosystems, natural landscapes and phenomena that provide opportunities for public appreciation, inspiration and appropriate recreation' (Woodford 2000).

Following this report in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in January, the New South Wales Minister for the Environment, Bob Debus, released a press statement which said that the rumours of a move to make the National Parks and Wildlife Service a commercial enterprise were unfounded. The Minister then went on to say that the *status quo* would remain as much as possible.

In a short period of time, the National Parks and Wildlife Service has been witness to a restructuring process and a re-evaluation of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, in a move to encourage a more commercial Service. In April 2000, the announcement was made that 100 new national parks and reserves were to be created along the South Coast of New South Wales (Woodford 2000b). The private sector has been given at least two opportunities, Quarantine Station and Fort Denison, to operate in conjunction with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and a substantial addition of land has been made to the National Parks estate. Combine all of this with the growing tourist element of national parks and the future of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service looks very dynamic and challenging. The possibility of change certainly seems to be on the agenda for the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Chapter Summary

The national parks of New South Wales are highly desirable recreation destinations. The Australian Tourist Commission (1998) estimates that 12 per cent of all international visitors come to Australia primarily to visit a national park. New South Wales is the most visited State and this equates to a large number of visits to national parks, as has been stressed already. On top of this there are very large numbers of domestic visitors.

Managing tourism in national parks is of course a costly exercise and it is estimated that almost half of all Service expenditure is spent on the management of park visitors (Ginns 1999). Despite this level of commitment from the Service, the claim is still made that many of the recreation resources in national parks are in need of comprehensive restoration works (Prasser 1996). This will be at a considerable cost to the Service.

Like the majority of public sector organisations, it is the opinion of some that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is inadequately funded (Kusler 1991; Figgis 1993; Hundloe 1996). However a review of the financial position of the National Parks and Wildlife Service has shown a profit in the vicinity of \$44 million for the 1998 financial year. It is unclear why the Service

seems to be lacking in available funds. This certainly reflects a discrepancy of views that requires a great deal more consideration. Such consideration is beyond the scope of this thesis although this chapter has shown how an operating deficit can be masked by accrual accounting of capital in the form of land.

The national parks of New South Wales are not immune to the changes occurring within the domain of the public sector. The inclusion of the private sector in areas that have traditionally been public sector responsibilities is presenting itself as a management direction for governments in a wide variety of contexts (Scott 1994). Since government funding is becoming less certain, decision-makers within the National Parks and Wildlife Service are beginning to consider the appropriateness of the private sector in national parks.

There are well-founded concerns over the notion of the private sector in national parks. One fundamental concern is that the private sector is interested in short-term economic gain as opposed to the long-term commitment required for conservation (Brokelman and Dearden 1990). Although this concern is realistic, there is a proportion of the private sector committed to furthering sustainable tourism developments such as Kingfisher Bay Resort and Village.

One way in which the National Parks and Wildlife Service may be able to manage for tourism and conservation is through zoning. The premise behind zoning being is that national parks are not uniform in nature and, as a result, different parts of parks can be managed in different ways. Zoning has been used by the National Parks and Wildlife Service to manage the Solitary Island marine reserve for recreation, commercial fishing and conservation. The principles outlined in that case are likely to be very relevant to other parts of the national parks estate.

The next chapter, Chapter Four, is a case study of the Blue Mountains National Park, selected to illustrate some of the issues outlined in this current chapter. The Blue Mountains National Park is highly popular with both domestic and international tourists. However, like most parks, it is suffering from some level of under-funding. It is also a park that has had an interest from the private sector wishing to tap into the growing tourism market. Zoning has also been outlined in the Draft Management Plan for the Blue Mountains National Park, as it is park that is quite variable in its level of 'naturalness'. The aim of using the Blue Mountains National Park is to show that the issues discussed here are relevant in the real world and not simply theoretical abstractions.