6th National Wilderness Conference: 
*Wilderness, tourism and national parks – taking stock and looking ahead*
Sydney, 21-23 September 2012

**Summary of Workshop Findings**

Compiled by Ian Brown using notes from each workshop

**Workshop questions:**

*What should be the future of tourism in protected areas?*
- What is the ‘right’ balance?
- How do we achieve it?
- What are the risks if we get it wrong?

(all 6 workshops addressed the same questions)

**Balance**

- Is ‘balance‘ is the right word?
- ‘Balance’ can be misleading as it cannot always be achieved and may not be appropriate, e.g. horseriding is not appropriate or sustainable in (most?) wilderness, recreational shooting is not appropriate, some infrastructure is not appropriate
- Activities/developments must be consistent with the ‘place’ and *all* of park’s values – sustain and improve them
- Recognise parks are public domain – not for exclusive use
- Does tourism benefit biodiversity conservation?
- Note that only 1% of visits to NSW PAs are ‘commercial’
- More resources to provide for ‘ordinary’ (non-commercial) visitors
- Encourage lower impact environmental and educational ‘experiences’ in PAs
- Better to have new buildings off park

**Achieving it**

**Principles**

- Emphasise intrinsic values of PAs, scientific evidence and precautionary principle
- Give at least equal (or more) emphasis to ecological sustainability over economic principles
- Accept some compromise between impact levels and benefits of visitation

**Planning**

- Regional planning across tenures
- Respect plans of management
- Robust, regional, consultative processes before developing plans of management
- Need to calibrate tourism with park-specific and region-specific values, through inclusive discussions
- Involve various other interests in management discussions: research/academic, indigenous, mental health, education, youth advocates, biodiversity advocates
- Systematic approach to identifying and conserving (and not developing) the highest priority sites
Adaptive management plan - adapt as species move and knowledge improves
More resources for impact studies and monitoring (allow adaptive management) - respond!
Good zoning - use recreational opportunity spectrum
Use facilities to reduce impacts
Work closely with user groups
Might need to limit numbers - permit systems

Advocacy
Build public support for PA objectives
Lobby for ecological management of PAs
Create links with the health industry to promote lower impact/eco logically sustainable activities

Community engagement
Engage with local communities, Landcare/Bushcare groups, schools, adult groups, families and grey nomads
Strengthen role of NPW Advisory Council and local Advisory Committees
Understand tourism viewpoints and impacts - work together for common objectives
Promote tourism and job opportunities for indigenous peoples

Education
Visitor education - minimal impact
Use skilled volunteers to educate visitors, eg. campground hosts
Use “friends” groups

Other
Possibly devolve management to regional level to reduce political influence? (drawbacks)
Depoliticise NP service – failure of govt?
Well-designed facilities, tracks, etc

Risks
Loss of biodiversity, localised extinctions
Pest/pathogen invasion
Erosion
Entrenched activities become hard to stop (ie. to apply adaptive management)
Reduced visitor enjoyment
Safety issues
Degradation of wilderness areas
Loss of social values of interconnectedness with nature
Cultural entrenchment of anthropocentric/resourcist world views
Economic consequences
Progressive pressure to expand development footprint and impacts
 Appropriation of public land
Hidden costs of managing tourism development a drain on public purse and diverts funds from conservation
Loss of public support for PAs (and credibility/budget for NP agency)

Concerns in relation to tourism in PAs
Rights of nature to exist
Health of the environment