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SUBMISSION / COMMENTS re "Issues Paper No 3 - Rural and Regional Tourism"
27 May 2010 - attached via email – gcbabbler@optusnet.com.au

The Research Director
Economic Development Committee
Parliament House, George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

I am writing on behalf of my wife and myself, both aged in our sixties, as regular caravan travellers throughout Australia. I am often able to continue my part time work whilst on the road, allowing us to spend between one and five months each year in our caravan. We have been camping and caravanning for 30 years, more in the past 10 years when working part time but always spending one or two months away from home. Note that I have not taken the time to set out the following comments in point form as per your Paper as I am, after all, on holidays.

The thrust of my submission is that this overwhelming promotional surge to get each and every person in Australia to "head west young man" is a very short-sighted strategy. Further promotion of all of the inland areas will have the same result as the ongoing push for coastal development – you will eventually destroy the very thing people go there for. Once a town gets a Woolworths or a Coles, the structure of the small community is destroyed – and one town becomes a replica of the next. The "uniqueness" that people have travelled (often so far) to experience, has been lost forever. It is very sad for Australia, heritage devoured by greed.

Another point - surely each town could have just one booklet and one web site detailing accommodation and attractions. To arrive in each place and be handed 10 to 20 brochures is ridiculous, especially when most people drop them in the bin within 24 hours. What is the point of Landcare and the volunteers planting trees working to improve the devastated environment? Check on Google Earth for devastated environment, including anywhere along the main tourist traps – I find the clearing of the original vegetation on such a massive scale to be distressing.

The ongoing development of self-sufficiency in caravans means that tens of thousands of people are now free-camping every week, another huge strain on the environment because so few have any concept of conservation issues. Even your Committee seems to have forgotten conservation: "The role of this committee is to monitor and report on issues in the policy areas of employment, infrastructure, transport, trade, industry development, agriculture and tourism." At what long term cost to the environment?

I have been absolutely dismayed at how the once typical outback character of so many large and tiny western Qld towns, has been altered. The vested interests have catered for all the 'baaa baaa sheep' in their caravans racing in a mob from Point A to Point B on their glossy brochures, seeking those Gold Coast-type experiences.

I just don't know where to go next to escape the overflowing caravan parks, the overflowing free camps, the overflowing towns, the overflowing roads, the overflowing population – to find the Australia character.

If you believe bigger better and brighter is best, you've done a fantastic job. Growth, growth, growth. Those billions of dollars may keep rolling in for a while longer, which is good in so far as one day we will have to eat them.

Tony & Fay Bischoff

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