



New Tourism Law Weakens National Parks Protection

In June 2010 special tourism legislation passed NSW Parliament that will change the way commercial resorts, function centres, shops and other tourist developments are approved in our national parks.

Blue Mountains National Parks have until now been largely free of any commercial tourist developments.

When the tourism law was first proposed earlier in 2010, distinguished barrister Tim Robertson SC concluded that the Bill will have a 'revolutionary' effect on the National Parks and Wildlife Act. He warned that it would allow new developments for tourists such as supermarkets, fast food outlets, racing car circuits, rifle ranges, wedding receptions and tourist resorts

Blue Mountains Conservation Society and other environment groups successfully campaigned to remove the worst aspects of this new law, but there remains an ongoing threat.

The altered tourism legislation, the *National Parks and Wildlife Amendment (Visitors and Tourists) Act 2010*, passed Parliament in early June.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society believes that the National Parks and Wildlife Service are planning to use the new tourism law to allow new exclusive commercial operations in national parks that will compete with the restaurants, cafes, guesthouses and other tourist facilities in Blue Mountains townships.

For commercial developments in national parks, the new tourism law:

- Allows more tourist accommodation, resorts and facilities
- Expands the types of commercial developments, allowing the building of conference and function centres, private sporting and recreational facilities, galleries and museums.
- Allows leases for unlimited periods, even for 50 years or more.
- Limits the ability for the public to comment on many proposed leases
- Does not ensure that conservation has priority
- Fails to transparently ensure commercial operators comply with environmental standards

Environment Minister, Frank Sartor, stated to Parliament that the new law 'improves the *National Parks and Wildlife Act*' and seeks to 'uphold[ing] the absolute primacy of nature conservation.'

Blue Mountains Conservation Society is confident that the new tourism law does not do this. We want to keep our national parks free of tourism developments and this new legislation makes it easier, not harder, for these developments to take place.

In the absence of stronger legislation, Blue Mountains Conservation Society will campaign with the community against each and every new commercial development that the NPWS and developers advance.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society has a vision of well-managed national parks in the Blue Mountains attracting people to enjoy their low-key walking tracks and picnic areas. Food, accommodation and other tourist services are provided by nearby vibrant townships. Improved funding to national parks is the best way to achieve this.

Further information:

1. See the full article on the new tourism law on Page 3 of the July 2010 Hut News
<http://www.bluemountains.org.au/HutNews/1007news.pdf>
2. See the New Tourism Law Q&A
http://www.bluemountains.org.au/NationalParks/newtourismlaw_qa.pdf