Tourism-protected area partnerships in Australia: Designing and managing for success

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Why a research priority?

Tourism White Paper (Cth, 2004):
• Need partnerships to grow tourism in protected areas

Pursuing Common Goals report (Cth, 2004):
• Need for partnerships between tour operators & protected area managers

TTF Australia activities since 2004:
• Emphasising the importance for the tourism industry of partnerships between the industry & protected areas

Recently released Project X report by TTF Australia:
• Key finding re ‘harnessing our natural advantages’ achieved by partnerships between tourism & protected areas

Why tourism-protected area partnerships?

• Inject money into protected area management
• Provide much-needed facilities and services
• Improved efficiency and biodiversity outcomes
• Government policy

The research project

• 2-year national project commenced in October 2006
• Researchers from WA, Victoria & Tasmania
• Project advised by Industry Reference Group (across Australia)
Successful partnerships result in...

- 14 outcomes listed and all important (e.g. understanding, economic gain, relationships, access to funding)
- Most important were
  - Purpose of partnership achieved
    - 'If you do not achieve what you set out to do, where are you?'
  - Benefits to all partners
    - 'If cottages are maintained well, it attracts a different clientele – someone who is not likely to damage the Parks. We get revenue and...they manage people in a small area which is existing cleared land and provide good infrastructure.'
  - Improved information available for protected area management
    - Added to visitor experience, resulted in better mgt, improved community knowledge

Successful partnerships contribute to sustainable tourism through...

- 14 outcomes listed and all important (e.g. environmental quality, social and cultural benefits, local community engagement, waste minimisation)
- Most important were
  - Improved understanding of values of protected areas
    - ‘A “halo effect” – gives a positive experience to an influential group, so they become advocates back in the community.’
  - Improved biodiversity conservation
    - Members contributed directly to biodiversity conservation through monitoring by volunteers, visitor education, promoting responsible visitor behaviour and implementing sustainable management
  - Increased social benefits to local communities
    - Increased economic viability and prosperity of the local community

The partnerships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnership Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve</td>
<td>ACT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian Alps National Parks</td>
<td>ACT/Victoria/NSW</td>
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<tr>
<td>Savannah Guides</td>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lamington National Park – O'Reilly’s Rainforest Retreat</td>
<td>Queensland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deep Creek Conservation Park</td>
<td>South Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gloucester Reserve</td>
<td>South Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heyes Trail</td>
<td>South Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cradle Mountain Huts</td>
<td>Tasmania</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gordon River Cruises</td>
<td>Tasmania</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ross Female Factory</td>
<td>Tasmania</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dolphin Tours – Port Phillip Bay</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Great Ocean Walk</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mount Buffalo Chalet</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Queenscliff Harbour Redevelopment</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bibbulmun Track</td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nambii Turtle Interpretation Centre</td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ningaloo Reef Retreat</td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Penguin Island Conservation Park</td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purnululu National Park Safari Camp</td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rockingham Lakes Regional Park</td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walpole-Nornalup National Park – WOW Wilderness EcoCruises</td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Features contributing to success…context-related

- 12 features of the *working environment* listed and all important, mostly present
- Most important were
  - Leadership provided
    - Often important agency role
  - Support provided by PA agency
    - Support through communication, inclusion and providing resources
  - Empathy between partners encouraged
    - Awareness of what required to achieve outcomes: appreciating others, using information
- Important but not always present
  - Power equally distributed (46% present)

Features contributing to success…context-related (cont.)

- Important but not always present
  - Shared accountability (50% present)
  - Legal support for implementation (57%)
  - Risk addressed (61%)
  - Written agreement (66%)

Features contributing to success…partner-related

- 12 features of partners listed and all important, mostly present
- Most important were
  - Leadership provided
  - Support provided by PA agency
  - Empathy between partners encouraged
  - Written agreement central
- Important but not always present
  - Power equally distributed (46% present)

Features contributing to success…process-related

- 20 features of *working together* listed and all important, mostly present
- Most important were
  - Open communication
    - Openness and ready availability of information
  - Trust
    - Sense of obligation, may take years
  - Agreement on purpose
    - Written agreement central
- Important but not always present
  - Partners dependent on each other (69% present)
Most influential features (based on correlation analysis)...

FEATURES
- Decision makers involved
- Commitment
- Adequate support
- Shared accountability

OUTCOMES
- Purpose achieved
- Capacity strengthening
- Benefits
- Stimulation of innovation
- Improved understanding of others’ interests

Overall contributors to successful partnerships

Communication
- Open communication
- Access to information
- Trust

Roles & powers
- Leadership
- Flexibility in roles
- Working with multiple levels

Understanding
- Helps balance conserving & use
- Working with partners’ needs
- Commercial realities of tourism

Regulations & agreements
- Written agreement
- Supportive legislation

Resources
- Staff
- Money
- Involvement
- Time

What causes problems in partnerships?

- Lack of resources
  - Included staff, financial backing & time
  - Solutions: working with partners to get funding, communication, meetings
- Problems with regulations and agreements
  - Inconsistencies across jurisdictions
  - Short lease/licence terms
  - Solutions: adaptability/flexibility, negotiation (not courts)
- Lack of direction
  - Too diverse needs
  - Resistance to change
  - Solutions: focus on priorities, communication, accepting differences

Recommendations - Managing the features of partnerships for success

Recommendation 1. Select partners and manage the partnership itself to ensure
- Inclusion of decision makers
- Support from protected area agency
- Leadership
- Participation & empathy

Recommendation 2. Manage how the partnership works to ensure
- Communication, trust & commitment

Recommendation 3. Manage the working environment to ensure
- Adequate support
- Written agreement
- Supportive legislation
Recommendations - Managing the overarching factors for success

Recommendation 4. Achieving open communication by
- Two and multi-way exchanges
- ‘Internal’ and ‘external’ communication
- Addressing problems as soon as they arise
- Working with staff communication skills

Recommendation 5. Working effectively with regulations and agreements by
- Working innovatively
- Supporting legislation for tourism
- Continue to standardise/streamline licensing
- Work with all partners’ legal obligations & liabilities

Recommendations - Creating opportunities for the future

Recommendation 5. Creating opportunities for innovation by:
- Working at multiple levels in organisations
- Taking a flexible, adaptable approach
- Fostering honesty and openness as a precursor to innovation

Our Partners