



Institute of
Public Works
Engineering
Australia
(NSW Division)

IPWEA (NSW) ROADS & TRANSPORT DIRECTORATE

The Director General
Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water
59 Goulburn Street,
Sydney NSW 2000

Submitted by email: info@environment.nsw.gov.au

21 September 2010

Dear Director General,

DECCW Sustainability Assessment Criteria

The Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia (IPWEA) is a not for profit, membership based, professional organisation representing engineers and others involved in the provision of public works and services predominantly in the local government sphere.

The Roads & Transport Directorate has been set up by IPWEA (NSW) in conjunction with the Local Government and Shires Associations to provide support to its members working in local government across the state. It is supported financially by membership contributions from Local Councils in NSW.

INTRODUCTION

A number of Member Councils have drawn attention to an issue arising from the adoption of the *Sustainability Assessment Criteria for visitor use and tourism in NSW National Parks*. This document was published following the deliberations of the 2008 a Taskforce on Tourism and National Parks in New South Wales which was established by the NSW Government.

The most recent information available from the DECCW website states:

On 3 June 2010 the Minister for Climate Change and the Environment, the Hon Frank Sartor MP, introduced the National Parks and Wildlife Amendment (Visitors and Tourists) Bill 2010 to the NSW Parliament. The Bill was subsequently passed by both Houses of Parliament on 10 June 2010. The changes seek to strike the right balance between connecting people to nature and the conservation of park values.

It is our understanding that the draft *Sustainability Assessment Criteria* referred to above is about to be implemented.

THE ISSUE

Simply stated, the issue of concern to Local Government is that sufficient funding is currently not available to local councils to maintain the local road network and the successful implementation of this Bill will result in an increase in patronage to National Parks together with a corresponding increase in access road usage.

The best data currently available (*Road Asset Benchmarking Project 2008 Road Management Report*)¹ indicates that across NSW there is a maintenance backlog in respect of regional and local roads of \$6billion and that this backlog is growing at a rate of \$0.5billion per year. This situation is not assisted by the fact that National Parks are exempt from the payment of Council rates.

The issue is not that sustainable development is being encouraged within National Parks – for a number of councils this activity provides significant support through the tourism industry. The issue is that an opportunity to look at the suitability and sustainability of access roads to these new developments and other Local Government owned infrastructure has been missed.

Relevant matters external to the development are considered for all other private developments through the existing approvals processes. To not do so would create an inequity between private and National Park developments.

THE OPPORTUNITY

The development of *Sustainability Assessment Criteria* to ensure that any proposed development is compatible with conservation values, that it demonstrates sustainable resource use and is appropriate in terms of built form and scale is certainly appropriate.

The opportunity that exists is to extend these guidelines to ensure specific consideration of the impact of any new development on the management of external access roads and pathways so that the local community is not adversely affected either through:

- the lack of appropriate infrastructure to provide safe movement of people and goods to and from the development (e.g. lack of connecting pathways, external roads with inadequate capacity, provision for safety and/or functionality to service the development
- increased financial cost to the community to sustain connecting infrastructure due to increased park usage

CONCLUSIONS

The IPWEA (NSW) Roads & Transport Directorate fully supports the ongoing development of facilities within National Parks which encourage improved access to and increased use of

¹ Report available at

<http://www.ipwea.org.au/AM/Template.cfm?Section=UPLOADS&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=11079>

these assets. The issue which has not been addressed by the adopted *Sustainability Assessment Criteria for visitor use and tourism in NSW National Parks* Guidelines is the impact on the Local and Regional Road & Transport Networks that provide access to these facilities as part of the development assessment process.

The Roads & Transport Directorate requests that the draft *Sustainability Assessment Criteria for visitor use and tourism in NSW National Parks* Guidelines be amended to require that consideration be given to the impacts of any developments within National Parks on the sustainability of the connecting roads, drainage, pedestrian and cycleway access infrastructure to ensure that local communities are not adversely affected by any development proposal.

For further information in relation to the submission please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned on:

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Yours faithfully,



Mick Savage

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