

**Submission
No 5**

INQUIRY INTO TOURISM IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

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⌘ flood and effluent studies ⌘

⌘ water and the environment ⌘

⌘ ecological sustainability ⌘

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General Purpose Standing Committee No.3
Parliament of NSW
Macquarie Street
Sydney 2000

Tourism In Local Communities

Dear Committee

I am a resident of a highly visited area in NSW, in fact I recall that visitor numbers to Byron Bay are exceeded only by those landing in a few capital cities in Australia.

There is a massive overload of visitors on residents and this effectively privatises the highly-prized beautiful assets of the area, for the profits of those servicing the visitors.

The numbers would be available to you through the ABS if they didn't do the census on a Tuesday night in the middle of winter. Such numbers are clearly skewed towards capturing a picture of the 'at-home' average Australian and are inappropriate for any meaningful analysis of areas of high tourism.

Tourism is often presented as positive for the economy and I'm sure that its promoters have a good case, based on estimates of dollars spent etc. Such figures are generally a product of the tourism industry itself and don't consider what activities they have either replaced or prevented or to which they are coincidental. In other words, the zero-tourism alternative is not presented. Nor is it realistic and I'm not proposing it.

But the economics may be skewed.

And on the other side of the scales are the impacts of tourism. These are many and varied and likewise not well presented by the tourism industry itself. Like all smart businesses, the industry trumpets its benefits and doesn't acknowledge its costs. That's understandable. So, please look outside the industry for presentation of those costs.

As a resident of a highly visited area, I can report the following negative impacts on life in general and on my personal lifestyle:

1. I am a resident of Byron Shire but no longer feel safe in (and don't visit) Byron Bay at night, due to the danger of being attacked by hooligans drawn to the Bay by its image as an easy-going drinking and drug mecca;
2. I rarely access Byron Bay and its world class beaches (I used to frequently) by day because traffic means the journey that used to take half an hour now takes a full hour or sometimes two;
3. both the issues I raise above grew far worse with the opening and subsequent massive use of the Pacific Highway upgrade connecting us to the Gold Coast and Brisbane. Government trumpets such upgrades to us but I'm sure they don't consider the side-effects, impacts off the highway;
4. living in or near Byron Bay includes high housing cost, for renters or owner/occupiers. This is partly due to the infamous "holiday let" accommodation, plonked in the middle of residential areas with consequences of (i) noisy nights, (ii) increased rents, and (iii) loss of neighbourhood. Even the direct side-effects of tourism get ignored;

5. there are hidden infrastructure costs such as for water and sewer. Peak population requires upgrade of major headworks (a new dam; a new tip; new Sewage Treatment Plants) that would otherwise not be required. The cost of these unnecessary works is shared with the locals who don't need them.

Tourism has many other social, economic and environmental impacts. I am really pleased you are taking the time to investigate them. I encourage you then to come up with ideas on what the state government can do about them.

Yours faithfully,