

Mr Nicholas Hunt
Chief Executive
Tourism Alliance Victoria
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BY:.....



Think Long Term

Dear Mr Hunt

Thank you for your letter of 19 October about achieving tourism's growth potential.

I apologise for the lateness of this reply. But the pressure on political parties to respond to such representations becomes very intense as elections approach, and the Greens are running this campaign with a full slate of candidates and a fraction of the resources available to some of our opponents.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

As regards the generality of your submission - about the economic returns to be got by subsidising tourist facilities and events - we have heard a lot of this with respect to such events as the Olympic Games, the Commonwealth Games and the F1 Grand Prix, and learned to regard the claimed benefits with extreme scepticism. We will be using whatever influence we gain in the next State Parliament to call for rigorous public cost:public benefit analyses of such initiatives.

WIND FARMS

We agree with your manifesto to the extent that we have - in our 'Planning and Transport Policy' - at 3.2.19 - a commitment to "developing a decision-making process for siting wind turbines that takes into account their visual and acoustic impact, and their impact on migrating birds."

This was made against a background of approval of wind-farm sites which seemed to us in some cases to have ridden rough-shod over community objections.

However, we think it is necessary to maintain some perspective. Wind farms are an important component of our strategy for moving Victoria as a matter of urgency to a zero greenhouse emissions energy system. And many of the objectors, in our view, are straining at a gnat while swallowing a camel. The camel being that there will be no jobs on a dead planet - and no

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tourism either.

Again, we wonder that the objectors' distress over bird strikes does not extend to road kill; and that their concern about the impacts of wind turbines on landscape values apparently does not imply an even greater concern about the aesthetic impacts of open-cut coal mining and fossil-fueled power stations.

Again, we reject your implication that wind farms are not "economically as well as environmentally sustainable." Wind-generated electricity will remain more expensive than coal-generated electricity only so long as generators of the latter are allowed to externalise the costs of the enormous environmental and economic harm they are doing through their contribution to global overheating and in other ways.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

You call for:

"Sustainable development of our natural resources including recreational water flows, public land licensing and high country experiences."

Our whole reservation could be summed up in another adage: that you had better be careful not to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. Or - to put that another way - that your repeated prefixing of all these propositions with the word "sustainable" had better be serious.

As regards "recreational flows" from dams - a further demand on top of irrigation and environmental flows - there are problems of both water quantity and timing.

Re timing - there may well be conflicts in the attempt to meet these three requirements.

Re the quantity of water - the energy and water economy measures which we will be pressing for at every opportunity will help.

As regards the licensing of access to public lands - we will be vigilant to ensure that this is not killing the goose that lays the golden eggs - for instance, that it is not permitting off-road 4WD access into fragile and endangered ecosystems.

As regards high country experiences - we totally support the banning of cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park.

And as regards the facilitation of wilderness experiences by "unique high quality nature based accommodation investments" - we are somewhat reminded of the proposals of the Kennett government for Wilson's Promontory. We urge you to consider the danger that this might become a case of "unique high quality accommodation" come; "nature-basis" go.

The place for high-quality accommodation investments is in the settlements which border

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national parks. Once one entrepreneur gets to do his development inside the boundary of a park, a precedent will be set and others will demand the same rights and more and the rot will set in and the goose will get very sick.

We comment on the symbiosis of tourism and good land stewardship in our statement 'Forests' policy, which you will find on our website at www.vic.greens.org.au (click on 'State Election 2006' and then on 'Policies').

FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON GOOSE AND EGGS

Of course, from our point of view - and, indeed, from the point of view of the National Parks Act - the purpose of parks is the conservation of ecosystems in a pristine state for their own sakes - and the golden eggs are an incidental by-product.

However, we need not be at odds over that. We may value the goose over the eggs and you may value the eggs over the goose, but so long as we both recognise that both are important and that we can't have eggs without a goose we will have the basis of a good working agreement.

We will simply be agreeing – as you acknowledge on your manifesto - that what we are doing must be both economically and environmentally sustainable.

Yours sincerely



Colin Smith
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20 November 2006

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