

**ECONOMICS AND INDUSTRY  
STANDING COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION, USE AND REGULATION OF CARAVAN  
PARKS (AND CAMPING GROUNDS) IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE TAKEN  
AT PERTH  
TUESDAY, 28 JULY 2009**

**SESSION FOUR**

**Members**

**Dr M.D. Nahan (Chairman)  
Mr W.J. Johnston (Deputy Chairman)  
Mr M.P. Murray  
Mrs L.M. Harvey  
Mr J.E. McGrath**

**Mr D.A. Templeman (Co-opted member)**

---

**Hearing commenced at 3.38 pm**

**MUIRHEAD, MR RICHARD**

**Chief Executive Officer, Tourism Western Australia,  
examined:**

**DUFFECY, MS JENNIFER**

**Executive Director, Tourism Western Australia,  
examined:**

**CRAWFORD, MR STEVE**

**Director Strategic Policy, Tourism Western Australia,  
examined:**

**SUCKLING, MS VICKI**

**Planning Manager, Tourism Western Australia,  
examined:**

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** On behalf of the Economics and Industry Standing Committee, I would like to thank you for your interest and appearance before us today. The purpose of this hearing is to assist the committee in gathering evidence for its inquiry into caravanning and camping. You have been provided with a copy of the committee's specific terms of reference. The committee is a committee of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia. This hearing is a formal proceeding of the Parliament and therefore commands the same respect given to proceedings in the house itself. Even though the committee is not asking witnesses to provide evidence on oath or affirmation, it is important that you understand that any deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as contempt of Parliament.

This is a public hearing. Hansard will be making a transcript of the proceedings for the public record. If you refer to any documents during your evidence, it would assist Hansard if you could provide the full title of the document for the record.

Before we proceed to the questions we have for you today, I need to ask you a series of questions. Have you completed the "Details of Witness" form?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** Do you understand the notes at the bottom of the form about giving evidence to a parliamentary committee?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** Did you receive and read the information for witnesses briefing sheet provided with the "Details of Witness" form today?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** Do you have any questions in relation to being a witness at today's hearing?

**The Witnesses:** No.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** I thank you for your submission to the inquiry. Together with the information you provide today, your submission will form part of the evidence to this inquiry and may be made public. Have you made any amendments to the submission?

**The Witnesses:** No.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** We have some questions for you today, but before we start, are there any opening comments or an opening submission that you wish to make?

**Mr Muirhead:** Perhaps one or two of us will just say a few things. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Economics and Industry Standing Committee on this issue, which is of critical importance to both the short-term and the long-term future of tourism in Western Australia. We have already introduced ourselves, so you know who is here. Tourism Western Australia has three outputs. We are responsible for destination marketing; that is, marketing Western Australia. We are responsible for building the industry base of tourism in Western Australia. Ms Duffecy is the head of that division, and Mr Crawford and Ms Suckling both work in that area. We also have responsibility for EventsCorp, to build and nurture events in Western Australia. The area we are coming from now is the output that has to do with building the industry base, or what we call the supply side of tourism. I will leave this document here today. It is Tourism Western Australia's "Strategic Plan 2008-2013", released in 2008. It was quite a paradigm shift for the organisation, in that we spend a lot more time in this strategy focusing on the supply side of tourism. This is something that is happening right across Australia at the moment. The Tourism Ministers' Council, chaired this year by Hon Elizabeth Constable, was held in Perth last Friday. The national long-term tourism strategy, being prepared by federal Minister Martin Ferguson, is again focusing on supply-side issues in tourism. This is probably the area in which Australia is at most risk.

Our strategy talks about the fact that there are two areas of accommodation that we need to focus on in particular. There is the area of what we call very high-yield tourism—luxury nature-based lodges with very high-cost visitors—and there is what we call cost-effective or economic tourism at the lower cost end, which really, if you cut through the language, is about caravan parks. We are talking about great holidays for people in great locations at a reasonable price. Our view is that those are the two areas in which we are seeing the most market failure, and they are the most difficult areas for investors to come in and place a stake in the ground. The report talks about this, but the figures have been a little updated. Before July 2005, Western Australia had lost 14 caravan parks. In the four years since then we have lost another 14. One more has yet to be closed. Two have opened over that time, and five new ones are proposed. We are going backwards at a significant rate. In some areas—we will talk about this a bit more later—such as the Pilbara, where occupancy by fly in, fly out or short-term workers has filled caravan parks, the use by leisure visitors has really been sterilised. Caravan parks are often in great locations that would normally be unaffordable to the people who use them, and that is an important consideration.

Caravan parks are a very big part of the tourism infrastructure in Western Australia. Around 600 000 visitors to Western Australia stay for between 3.9 million and 4.8 million nights a year. This is a very big range, because it comes from two surveys. One is the national and international visitor survey conducted by Tourism Research Australia, of which we can furnish you copies. The other is a survey of tourism accommodation by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. By the lowest figure, we have 4 million nights a year spent in caravan parks and at the top end 4.8 million nights. This constitutes 8.4 to 10.3 per cent of total visitor nights in Western Australia. They are very important. On top of those four to four and a half million nights in caravan parks, another 1.8 million nights is spent by people caravanning or camping outside of formal areas. This may or may not be because they could not get access or because they wanted to be outside of those areas. In terms of people who are travelling widely around Australia, 68 per cent of caravanners enter the state in the north through the Kimberley and exit through the bottom across the Nullarbor. We have seen a real problem in recent years, because in the middle of our state it is very difficult for these

people to get accommodation. We do know that some people actually turn around and head back because they discover an area of land in the middle where it is very difficult for them to find accommodation.

[3.45 pm]

Demand is going to grow. Last year we saw a 20 per cent increase in registrations of both camper trailers and caravans, and fifth-wheelers also increased by 20 per cent; I am assuming that committee members know what they are. That increase in fifth-wheeler registrations probably explains the decline in motorhome registrations of around 16.7 per cent. The Big4 Holiday Parks chain put out a newsletter today saying that in the March quarter this year it had a 10 to 12 per cent increase in visitations across all their holiday parks nationally. That is against a downturn across Australia of tourism of nine to 10 per cent. The Big4 group is running countercyclical to the current trend.

I will finish my comments by saying that none of the problems that we are talking about relate to the global financial crisis, not the shortage in supply or the increase in demand, which is countercyclical to what is going on but may be a reaction to more cost-effective holidays. I will let Jennifer make a few comments on the supply side.

**Ms Duffecy:** It is obvious that we are facing a growth in demand and a reduction in supply, which is not a great place for us to be. We have recognised in the work that we have done on caravan parks that they are used for both permanent housing and holiday short-stay accommodation. We recognise that permanent housing is a valid use of those sites, but obviously we are concentrating on the holiday short stay. We have two issues: one is availability, which is the reduction in supply, and the other issue is quality. From a quality perspective the location of caravan parks is really important; that is, making sure they are in spots that are conducive to a great holiday. Obviously, beachfront locations have been of great interest to us. A good example of that is the work we have been doing to try to encourage the use of Locke Estate in Busselton for potential caravan park use in the future. That is because it is a fantastic location: it is a north-facing site and it is on the beach side of the road et cetera. Those locations are really important, and we are losing those locations. The other part of quality is the potential for conflicts between uses where there are multiple uses within a caravan park with permanent residents as well as short-stay accommodation. The activity patterns are different between those two sets of users, particularly where there are shiftworkers in caravan parks and people on holiday, and the kids get up early and the adults stay up late and both make lots of noise; and sometimes that is not conducive to being in a residential area. We have the same issues with residential homes being used as holiday homes. That is on the quality side and we are really interested in making sure that the quality of experience for visitors is protected in a caravan park.

The availability of land is of interest to us, and Richard has talked about the closures. A lot of those have been driven by the economics of the land value and what would be seen as a more valuable use of a site for something else. It is also the availability in the proportion of a caravan park that might be used for short-stay versus permanent accommodation. The trend for the Pilbara caravan parks, certainly over the past 15 years, to be substantially used for worker accommodation as opposed to holiday accommodation has caused us some issues. We have been trying to address some of those issues with land availability by making sure that crown land and local government land is considered for caravan parks and by securing those parcels of land. We know that when it is leasehold land from either local government or the state, it is easier to secure the long-term future of the caravan park. We have a program called Landbank, which is trying to facilitate that across the state. That is a long, slow road but we are getting there. The use of the planning system to secure sites for caravan parks is also something of interest. Vicki is a town planner and works a lot with local governments and the WA Planning Commission in making sure that our town planning

schemes are securing sites through appropriate zoning. We think that is an important mechanism that the committee needs to consider.

The third issue is from an operator perspective. We want the people who run caravan parks to make a good living out of it, as well provide a good service to tourists. We know that the economics of running a caravan park are tight, and there are policy mechanisms that could be considered. We raised in our submissions the issue of water tariffs and there are different policy mechanisms that could be put in place to encourage operators to invest in caravan parks in the long term. We also know that the economics of running a caravan park can be enhanced by the mixed use of a caravan park. Whether it is tent sites, powered sites or chalet sites, it stretches out a season, particularly in the seasonal areas, and allows people to make a better dollar out of it. We are interested in that because we know that will secure them for the future. That is a summary of the issues that we have been doing over the past years. I am sure, given the committee's visits around the regions, members will have found the same things.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** Absolutely. I have a couple of issues that arise out of those comments. You have said that two parks opened in the period of time you discussed. Do you mean since 2005 or over the whole period that you discussed the closures?

**Mr Muirhead:** I think it is over the whole period, is it not?

**Ms Duffecy:** Since 2005.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** Where would those parks be?

**Mr Crawford:** One was at Ledge Point.

**Mr Muirhead:** Yes, Ledge Point Caravan Park in 2007 and Cove Caravan Park June 2006; and an additional 16 sites were opened in the Cove Caravan Park in May 2008.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** In respect of Landbank, have any sites been identified to date that would be suitable for caravan parks, and where are you at?

**Ms Duffecy:** We have identified sites. Particular sites that come to mind include a site in Kununurra, and one in Broome, which is part of the Broome North proposal that Minister Brendon Grylls launched last week with LandCorp. That will secure part of the Broome North area because of the shortage of caravan parks in Broome. Kalbarri is another site that comes to mind. We have about 36 Landbank sites on the list. Those sites are —

**Mr Muirhead:** Not all caravan parks.

**Ms Duffecy:** — not all caravan parks. They range from high-end tourism sites within a national park to town-based sites like in Broome. What we tend to do when we go into an area like Shark Bay, which we are doing at the moment, is to undertake a supply and demand study to identify the future tourism needs in that area. If it turns out that a caravan park will be needed in that area in the long term, then we will start to work with the local government and the state land agencies. The land availability side of it has been somewhat restricted because of issues that we have with access to land that is pastorally owned—that is, pastoral leases—and also the lack of development in national parks. We are working with both the Department of Environment and Conservation and with the Lands portfolio trying to open up those areas. The Premier has made statements about opening up national parks. That is not necessarily for caravan parks, but it is potentially for sites on the edge of national parks or just within the borders of national parks to facilitate those sorts of developments.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** What percentage of your promotion budget is spent specifically promoting caravan and camping tourism in Western Australia?

**Mr Muirhead:** There would be no specific allocation. Our marketing tends to be around the whole brand of destination. We do undertake joint campaigns with some operators, but by and large I

cannot think of any specific ones. We might have done a little bit of work with the Caravan Industry Association WA. It would be very difficult to do it, and it would be a very small amount.

**Ms Duffecy:** I am not the marketing person, so I will not remember some of this, but we have identified five different types of travellers that we try to attract: the experience seeker, the people who want to reward themselves—one of which is what we generally call the grey nomads. Our recent holiday-at-home campaign leaned toward those groups. We think that at the moment caravan parks are doing very well out of that campaign.

**Mr Muirhead:** Backpackers is another section. They will often travel by coach or public transport and will stay in on-site accommodation or even have their own tents or vehicles and will use caravan parks. Then there is the intrastate level with the mums and dads taking the kids on school holidays, or whatever.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** So you have not done any joint marketing with Britz and others?

**Mr Muirhead:** I cannot think of any joint campaigns with Britz or any of the big motorhome companies. I should say that we have done some work with Big4 Holiday Parks, which I think is why I am on their mailing list to get their newsletter, which came in today.

**Ms Duffecy:** The responsibility for intrastate tourism is heavily focussed on our five regional tourism organisations. They do a lot of cooperative work because it is their focus, particularly Western Australia's coral coast, which has done cooperative work with Britz.

**Mr Crawford:** I might add that businesses like Britz and those national companies do get involved in tourism promotions such as the Australian Tourism Exchange or at a local level, the Western Australian Tourism Exchange, and the offers are made to those businesses to participate in such promotions.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I am a little curious about the figures. We have heard wildly conflicting reports from people about the number of nights that people stay in caravan parks and camping sites and what proportion of those people are tourists. You mentioned a tourism body that conducts research into tourism. I am just curious to know how Tourism WA verifies those figures. Does anybody follow that up by ringing caravan parks, for instance, and finding out whether the occupancy rates match up? The Tourism WA caravan park statistics show a slump in business days, while the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicates an increase in occupancy rates. It seems like a free-for-all. I wonder what you do to verify the stats that you use.

**Mr Muirhead:** A "free-for-all" is probably a good way of putting it. The first set of figures that I quoted ranged between 3.9 million nights and 4.8 million nights, which is a big variation. The figure of 3.9 million nights was drawn from two surveys; one is called the International Visitor Survey and the other is the National Visitor Survey. Both surveys are conducted by Tourism Research Australia and every state and territory government contributes to those surveys. They are the major visitor surveys used in Australia right now. Generally speaking, the International Visitor Survey is considered to be pretty accurate, and we are pretty comfortable with it. We have evidence that the National Visitor Survey is out by as much as 20 per cent. This has been recognised by Tourism Research Australia and a major program that is under way is being overseen by the tourism research committee, which is a subcommittee of the Australian Standing Committee on Tourism, which services the Tourism Ministers' Council.

[4.00 pm]

It is going to try to correct what is clearly an anomaly in that research. Those surveys are sample surveys. The national survey in particular is done by telephoning people and interviewing them about recent holiday behaviour and they extrapolate the data out. We have had significant problems for nearly three years now with the accuracy with respect to Western Australia. The ABS data, which is the other set which resulted in the 4.8 million numbers, is a survey of tourism accommodation conducted by the ABS. I am not aware of the sample sizes on that. The sample

sizes, by the way, on the international business survey and the national business survey are quite high—thousands and thousands of people every year—but they still have some clear issues. So in terms of ringing caravan parks, the ABS survey actually does survey the caravan parks directly and they report on what their occupancy rates are. That is how that research is gleaned but there is a big variation in the figures.

**Ms Duffecy:** I would also make the point that there certainly are areas of the state where caravan parks are not doing very well. The south west in recent times has been doing very poorly compared with the rest of the state in terms of its tourism across the board. A lot of that is driven, in my view, by an oversupply in the south west, and in particular a lot of holiday homes that have come into the market that have taken up some of that family holiday experience. I would also have to say that there are some caravan parks that are being outdone by better competitors in those areas where the product has not kept up with the times and they are being outdone by their competitors. I suppose our view is that we are trying to get a quality experience and it is not just any caravan park that is going to give the reputation that we want from our tourism industry.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I am interested in your comments earlier, Richard, about the global look at it from Australia's perspective and that the state ministers and the federal tourism minister are focusing on or recognising that supply is a focus, which is what you mentioned. This committee is obviously looking at what we should be doing in this state with regard to protecting the caravan and camping industry, enhancing it and encouraging it from the view of both an economic and a life experience-tourism experience. I am interested then in your comment about the issue of supply and where we compare with other states. You have cited dozens now of closures in the last 15 years—a couple of dozen. Is that replicated in other states or are we a little bit unique? Is this a trend that has happened across the country and worldwide in the last period? If not, what have some of the other states done to curtail that trend that we do not do here in Western Australia, because these are the sorts of issues that we need to be making recommendations on? That is the first part of the question. The second part of the question is: in the strategy that you mentioned, the WA tourism commission strategy, are there any other actions that you have identified to address this issue from our state's perspective? You mentioned the Landbank issue and looking around and finding some other land that is appropriate and that you are going to get up. Are there any other actions that the WA tourism commission is actioning or is about to action focused on addressing the client?

**Mr Muirhead:** I will do the first part of it. It is a national trend. We are seeing that caravan parks are declining around the country. I cannot quantify it. I am not sure if you guys can, and I will pass to them in a minute. Certainly it is not something that is unique to Western Australia, though I think we are suffering more; but I might pass to you guys to see if you can quantify any of that.

**Mr Crawford:** I do not have figures to refer to, but there is a trend towards a changing product base. The thing that needs to be kept in mind when looking at Western Australia is the basic statistic that 68 per cent of caravanners enter in the north of the state, so it is to do with issues of remoteness more than anything else that need to be grappled with. You can imagine that the distance between Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing is 300 or 400 kilometres and there are not any established parks between those two points. So it is difficult for a caravanner who has chosen to drive that distance to try to find a place and, with the constraint level of supply in the marketplace, to satisfy that need. That is where a lot of the issues occur, in that sort of remote setting and during peak seasonal times. So that same person travelling during the wet season is not going to have that much of a problem, although they might experience a few floods along the way. So there is that sort of issue that needs to be dealt with, and the way the developers have moved is to change their product base. They have tried to achieve greater yields out of a caravan park site. So if you have a mix of between, say, unpowered sites, powered sites, chalets, bungalows and different configurations within your park, a prudent investor will go for that which will give the greatest economic return. The economic return from a powered site is less than the economic return you will get out of a chalet or some other configuration. Then you are confronted with the problem of constructing a site. If you wanted, let us

say, to expand your base, in the remote areas of Western Australia you would probably have to come up with between \$40 000 and \$45 000 per powered site; in the south west probably \$30 000 to \$35 000 per powered site. You need to make an economic return on that, so quick sums would indicate that it is very hard, again, for the prudent investor to stack up a viable investment proposition. So you see a bit of economic forces at play here that are driving that change, but on the demand side a lot of families still want to hook up with the caravan and find somewhere to stay. We have seen that also manifested in the growth in roadside camping areas. You may be taking evidence from those who work in that area of camping, free camping and those sorts of things. Our anecdotal evidence is that that is increasing as well. So the inability to supply in an urban town setting means that there is a chance that a lot of these people are just drifting out into the unregulated areas of the state and having some impact on the environment as well.

**Ms Duffecy:** From a strategic perspective, the three things that we focused on for caravan parks are access to land, getting the planning system right—those are two things that the other state tourism organisations have not focused on. Probably Western Australia, as a state tourism organisation, has a heavier focus on the supply side than the other states do, but they talk to us a lot about what we are doing if they are thinking of going in that direction. The third area is in the policy area, about making submissions about land tax. We made a submission through the Henry tax review about what the potential incentives were for taxation; things like water rebates. We know that there are differences between each state about how those things are handled, so we have tried to push the policy agenda through different parts of government to do that. They are the three things specifically about caravan parks that we have done in terms of intervention. Then there are lots of things that we do with the entire tourism industry in terms of dealing with workforce issues, raising the quality, getting customer service right and making sure that every tourism operator has got an online distribution system so that they can get their product to market better. That is not just confined to caravan parks; that is to every tourism operator.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I am going to be the devil's advocate now. Why should we save this dinosaur of the 50s and 60s, when people took their family off to an onsite van? They may have taken their family off to Mandurah, to Rockingham, to Busselton or to Augusta. They bundled the family off and they either rented an onsite van or nana and pop had their van onsite down there. The statistics seem to suggest that we have lost X number in the last 20 years. Have we had this market shift where the chalet, the smaller resort-type style has become more attractive or easier? Really are we trying to save a dinosaur? Are we actually trying to save something that really is beyond saving, and we should be sort of focusing on encouraging developers and landowners who have land to come up with interesting concepts which, hopefully, will cater for families, or not? I am putting that to you because to me this is the crux. In Mandurah I have lost five or six in the last 10 years and there are probably three at risk. A lot of them have currently permanent residents, but they also play an important role in that affordable holiday. Am I bashing my head against a brick wall?

**Mr Muirhead:** Can I start the answer. I think it is a great question, but it is actually a question which refers across tourism. If you talk now to any developer, it is impossible to build a business case to build a four or five-star hotel in Perth or in any other capital city of Australia—Jennifer and I attended the Australia and New Zealand property and hotel investment conference six weeks or four weeks ago in Sydney where this was again confirmed, because tourism accommodation does not stack up against higher and better uses. At the current time it is offices and residential, particularly high-density residential. So jurisdictions, including our own, are having to look at issues like other ways to incentivise a developer or to effect a change of business mix such that there is another way that the tourism asset gets paid for by something else, whether that is mixed-use land development or whatever. So it is actually a question for Australia and for each state to look at in terms of whether we want to continue to have a share of leisure visitors, as opposed to business visitors; and if the boss says, "Go to Timbuktu," you go, no matter what type of hotel there is there. I think if you start to get down and look at the value of the tourism industry to the state,



which is around about \$7 billion per annum return from visitors, we have to make a decision whether we want to stay in that game or not. I do not believe that the caravan industry per se is a dinosaur by any means, the growth in demand being exhibited by the fact that people are buying and registering more and more vehicles that they use in that context. I suspect that if we looked at the retail sales of camping equipment, we would probably see an increase. We have not done that as far as I am aware, but it indicates to me that we are not trying to falsely keep a demand up. The issue as to whether it is a white elephant or a dinosaur or not is actually one which I agree on the face of it the business case does not seem strong for this and maybe none of us are charging enough for access to all our tourism product—hotels, motels or caravan parks—but I think it is a decision if we want to stay competitive. If we want to continue to have our own people holiday here rather than lose their expenditure to other destinations—Bali is a classic and is almost a holiday at home for Western Australians now, unfortunately; the only problem is the money gets lost to the economy—and we want to attract other visitors both from interstate and internationally, then we have to continue to have a product in this area. I think the holiday experience for locals is an important one, too. I am now getting emotive rather than economic, but I think it is an important one because one of the things that we have identified nationally as a trend is that we have lost that notion of people having a holiday at home. Australians now think when they have a holiday—research has demonstrated this—they go overseas for a holiday. They have a short break at home. One of the reasons they are surmising that has happened is that my generation, which still has a holiday at home, grew up having holidays at home in caravan parks and whatever and we think that is how you do it. My kids did not; they grew up doing other things, and they are not leaving themselves to have a holiday at home; they are going overseas. So I think, in terms of trying to keep tourism as a key part of our economy, it is something that we need to focus on because if we do not, we will change the patterns forever and I think they will be very hard to rebuild. So I do not think it is a dinosaur; I think it is a fundamental part of tourism infrastructure. If we are going to stay in the tourism industry as a key industry, which does employ 80 000 people directly and indirectly in Western Australia—43 000 direct employees and 37 000 indirect employees—then we need to address this.

[4.15 pm]

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** We have not got much time, though. The problem is that the sites are very rapidly disappearing.

**Mr Muirhead:** Yes.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** You will have the situation, in some coastal towns in particular, where the bull has gone. The gate is open and the bull has gone. Sorry, now I am getting emotional!

**Ms Duffecy:** He said what I was going to say. That next step up from caravanning is the chalets—the footprints-type development at Preston Beach. It was quite interesting because Tourism WA did not support that development. The tourism industry said, “So you’re not supporting a tourism development.” We said, “Because we think that’s a strategically located caravan park site and should be protected for that. Find somewhere else. We’d love you to build that up the road somewhere.” It is about making sure that there is a balance right across all of the holiday types. Richard is right. I holidayed at home when I grew up in Western Australia, and my kids holiday at home here. But they also go skiing in Japan. It is about what they are going to do with their kids and whether they are going to make that contribution and value the community that we live in. It is an emotional argument as well as an economic one.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I have got a couple of questions for Steve. The \$45 000 cost per site to develop a caravan park, can you tell me where that has come from?

**Mr Crawford:** Rule of thumb; just by talking to people in the industry. As you go further south, it becomes less. You talk to any developer who is in that sector and they would probably give you around about the same statistic—anywhere between \$30 000 to \$45 000.

**Ms Duffecy:** That is a powered site, so it has got the infrastructure, water, waste, electricity —

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I understand that. It is another one of those figures that is out there. I am having difficulty grasping where this comes from. It is a little bit like the anecdotal data about holidaying at home and people's interpretation of holiday at home as opposed to going on holiday. Has that come from a statistically relevant survey?

**Mr Muirhead:** That is from research. I cannot quote the document. I will have to come back to you. There has been a decline in domestic tourism for the past 15 years in Australia. Our holidaying behaviour has not slowed down; we are holidaying less in Australia, both interstate and intrastate. It is a trend that is very much worrying the entire industry. There was a very significant study done by Tourism Australia. I think it was jointly funded by the states and territories.

**Mr Crawford:** We can send that.

**Mr Muirhead:** We can send you the results. That shows exactly what I am talking about. It has identified the reasons and it has identified the trend as a real trend.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** A lot of the information that we have been gathering from operators is that caravan parks, if they have an effective manager in them, and perhaps a small mix of permanents to tide them over in the seasonal areas, can in fact run very efficiently and very profitably. We are not actually getting reports back from our interviews within the industry that they are struggling to compete. What they are struggling to do is maximise on the land value, and a lot of the land valuations have come about because of a change from a caravan park designation to tourism designation, which has caused our land tax problem as well. I would be interested to hear what your comments are on that. The view that I am forming is that we need to perhaps go back to a more site-specific classification if we are going to save these parks.

**Ms Duffecy:** We would agree with that. We would be cautious about affecting the existing land value from an existing land owner. For a lot of people it is their superannuation, and taking it from a tourism site back to a caravan park is going to affect the land value of it. One of the reasons we are looking for new sites is to make sure that they are zoned as caravan parks or holiday parks and that it is quite specific about how they can be used so we do not face that in the future. It is difficult for the planning system to redress some of those issues, but it certainly can deal with the future. I think we cited in our submission about having a look at the South Australian model, which does that. The "Tourism Planning Taskforce Report" that was done a few years ago also dealt with the issue about having a specific zoning around caravan parks, which is something that we would gleefully support.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** What is your view about the growth opportunities for caravanning holidays in inland regions?

**Ms Duffecy:** It is tourism in general in inland regions.

**Mr Muirhead:** I guess I would start by saying that tourism is built around the five As of tourism. Have you guys heard of these five As? They have been around forever, and when I first started this job eight years ago I pooh-pooed them, but we have actually been using them more and more lately because they still make good sense. The five As of tourism are access: how do you get there; accommodation: where do you stay when you get there; attractions: what gets you there—I will come back to attractions because it is the core of what you asked; amenities; and awareness. Amenities is: can you buy a coffee; can you use the bathroom?

**Ms Duffecy:** Is it a nice place to be?

**Mr Muirhead:** And awareness: people knowing about it. They are the five As. If any one of those As fail, it all falls apart. For Western Australia, access is no-brainer. If you cannot fly here, you cannot get here. The issue for us on inland —

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** Can I stop you there. That is actually wrong in respect of what I am discussing because these are people who get there only on the road.

**Mr Muirhead:** The road is the access.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** You just said if they cannot fly here —

**Mr Muirhead:** Sorry, as an international destination.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** Yes, I know; but I am not talking about international destinations.

**Mr Muirhead:** Roads is the other access. Generally we are well served in WA by access—air, road; pretty good. There is the attraction issue. There are quite identified attractions which are fantastic and which have got huge opportunities. There are certain places now, in fact, where I would love to see improved caravan parks.

**Ms Duffecy:** Ask him about Mt Augustus!

**Mr Muirhead:** Mt Augustus is an example that I think it has fantastic opportunities, but it is not being capitalised on because the quality of the park there is abysmal. I have had a personal experience of it as a holiday-maker. I think there is significant potential for some of our inland attractions. What I do see is that the quality of the parks in a lot of those places is really abysmal. I was very lucky; I took four months off several years ago and took an off-road trailer and a four-wheel drive and travelled around Australia with my family, and spent probably 25 to 30 per cent of the nights in caravan parks.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** Free camping?

**Mr Muirhead:** Some free camping, some staying with friends—but a lot of free camping or national parks; mainly national parks and very low-key facilities in national parks. I think as a general rule I would say that the quality of inland parks in the rest of Australia is much better than the quality of inland parks in Western Australia. I think that is what has let us down, because we have been so focused on the marine experience as Western Australians. They are the areas where you find the better parks. I think there are significant opportunities. I think it is also one of the types of accommodation you can make work inland, which might be more problematic for people who are looking for hotels, because I think there will be continual demand for those; and whether they have chalets or whatever on them as opposed to towing your van in or camping there, I cannot really comment on. But I think there is more opportunity for inland holidays in Western Australia.

**Ms Duffecy:** It is around the attractions, though. It is around Karijini, which is inland; it is around Newman— some of the road developments there. Mt Augustus-Kennedy Ranges is an area that we are looking at, both for sites for high-end accommodation and for a caravan park. Kalgoorlie-goldfields and going up through the northern goldfields are also an opportunity; and the developments around Lake Ballard. The road traffic there is increasing significantly through the middle of Australia, and the Kimberley inland, on Gibb River Road and the road through Fitzroy up to Halls Creek. Yes, there are opportunities, but those opportunities do not exist everywhere. On the camping side of things, where you cannot support the full caravan park—the camping opportunities that are run through DEC or on pastoral lands—it is really important to make sure that the stops are there for people to make.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** Is there not an issue—I think that Richard has identified this for himself in terms of his own journey—that people do not always want a full facility?

**Mr Muirhead:** Yes.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** We have experienced—I did not go—south of Broome, an eco park, which would be a generous description of it, with 300 caravanners parked up behind the beach.

**Mr Muirhead:** There is a real opportunity there. What we were referring to were nature parks. In my experience—we were fairly self-contained—I did not need a lot of the fruit and nuts. I did not need powered sites, for example.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** People are telling us that they have spent \$120 000 on a van, and they do not need to plug in for 28 days.

**Mr Muirhead:** Exactly.

**Ms Duffecy:** As long as there is not damage being done to the environment and that local governments are not picking up the rubbish. We have debates with local governments every year about whether they are going to open their overflow caravan park site. Exmouth, two years ago, decided, “No. We’re not opening it this year.” It was a huge issue. All of a sudden, because they did not have the energy or the capacity to service it, they had had enough of the visitors that year, so they could go away. It is about getting the management regimes right.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** Is some of that—do these places actually want to have tourists; and if they make the decision to have tourists, do they not have consequences?

**Ms Duffecy:** Yes. That depends on who is voted in to local government at the time, and that changes; so getting a strategy so that it has some longevity. The good thing about having private sector investment in a caravan park site is that you know that there is somebody in it for the long term, which you do not always know that local governments are.

**Mr Muirhead:** Mr Chairman, if you look at the caravan demand side, there will be the differences. There are people who want to stay in a park and there are people like me who would prefer not to. I will go for a national park all the time, where you basically take your own rubbish out. It has a toilet that you can use, so you take your water in, your rubbish out, and do not leave anything behind and do not take anything out. That is nirvana to me. But I think we have to look at where we can put them, which is not necessarily in national parks. I think that can fulfil a lot of demand, particularly, as you said, for the new type of infrastructure people are buying to travel in.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** There seems to have been a massive focus in this state on this high-yield, high-end tourism product. Clearly, there has been an explosion of camping stores in this state, and they all report that they are doing incredibly well, thank you very much. By focusing on this high-yield product, we are not actually responding to what the market is in fact telling us, which is that people are buying camping gear and they want to go camping, which is traditionally seen as a low-yield product. What we are getting across the state from caravan park owners is that they feel like they are being driven to provide this high-yield, high-end product that is being promoted through Tourism WA, and that they need to be providing four-star chalet accommodation on their sites. That is resulting in a net loss of the availability of caravan park sites and tents. I am interested to hear your views on that. What we are getting from operators is that they are feeling that Tourism WA are pushing a high-yield, high-end product and that that has left caravan parks out of the picture.

**Mr Muirhead:** When we talk about high yield and high end, we are not talking about chalets and caravan parks; we are talking about probably El Questro. We are talking about experiences upwards of \$800 a night.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** Can I just clarify that. How many sites are there in Western Australia, outside the metropolitan area, that are \$800 a night?

**Mr Muirhead:** Probably eight to 10.

**Ms Duffecy:** El Questro, Sal Salis, Eco Beach resort. But the economic return from that visitation and the employment from that level of visitation in total—because it is usually international visitors coming in, it is all new money into the state from an economic development perspective. That is the future of the tourism industry, as well as —

**Mr Muirhead:** That is where we see the two ends—almost two extremes. It is not the middle range that we think needs attention by the state.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** If I went to your website and looked at it, do you think that most of that would be discussing the high-value tourism or the more nature-based, low-cost tourism?

[4.30 pm]

**Ms Duffecy:** On our website you will find the attractions around which those products are based at both ends. If you look for Broome, it will tell you about Cable Beach and the things that you can do. It will have caravan parks on the site as well as Cable Beach Club, Eco Beach retreat and the new Pinctada. It will have the product in there. We are promoting the destination and the attractions.

Going back to your point about having chalets within caravan parks, that has been driven from within the industry itself and those caravan park owners who understand that the economic returns can be driven through mixed-use developments within their sites. You will find that the caravan parks that are doing very well in terms of their occupancy rates and their revenue per average site are the ones that do have a mixed use development. Those caravan park owners who are not doing that are suffering because of the competition. That would be my frank view about it.

**Mr Muirhead:** I do not think we have been pushing caravan park owners to put in chalets. Sometimes we are concerned because they are sacrificing sites for chalets. Is there still enough space there?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I probably did not explain myself quite clearly. With the high-yield product and high-yield push for tourism product throughout the state, caravan park owners are scratching their heads, saying, "Instead of making \$100 000 out of this park, if I convert it into four-star chalets, I can be making a lot more money out of it. I'll get a higher yield per square metre from the land that I have." It is not all about economics. There is a social cost to pushing operators to continue to consider the yield.

**Ms Duffecy:** I think the operators are the ones who are worried about the yield.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** That is not what they are saying to us.

**Mr Muirhead:** We know that a lot of the tourism industry is a very marginal industry. Our board's view is that we have to help the industry become more profitable because in many ways it is simply not sustainable. An example of where it starts to fail and fall apart occurred towards the middle of last year when the mining industry was going so strongly, it was literally impossible for operators to get staff to work for them because they could not pay a high enough wage. They could not pay a high enough wage because they were not charging enough and they got into this vicious circle, and people were closing kitchens because they could not get chefs or staff and cleaners. The issue is that the industry does not generate enough revenue to compete with other industries like the mining industry, which is a tough gig. I do not think we will ever apologise for encouraging tourism operators to drive for profitability in everything they do because if we do not, frankly, we do not have an industry. There are many marginal operations in this state. There is a mix between high yield and caravan parks, if you take a microcosm of this. I am probably cheating a bit here, but if you take El Questro, it has a range of products. I do not know what the homestead costs per night now.

**Ms Duffecy:** About \$1 200.

**Mr Muirhead:** It costs \$1 200 a night compared with their caravan sites on the river, which are \$30 a night, and into just a camp site in their large caravan and camping ground. It is very interesting. They do not have to market themselves. We pushed this up to Western Australia. People hear so much about El Questro that they just want to go there, and then they find out they can stay there for \$30 a night. You have to book the sites at El Questro because it has pretty well full occupancy through the season. That is a very interesting way to look at it. The only thing it has ever marketed is the homestead. We do not see it advertising its camp sites or anything else. It is an aspirational thing. People can still go and experience the attraction, which is El Questro, at an affordable level. That spells it out for us. You have this product that has a range of different levels of accommodation, and it is profitable, but it is at the high end and the low end. We see WA as a big version of that. That is why we push at the high end, and we know that international growth will

come from that. We cannot compete internationally unless we have a competitive edge. That is what we are pushing for at the very high end, primarily based on international and interstate markets and for growth out of those markets. I am not sure that we have answered your question.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** It is sort of helping us more to get a picture, I suppose.

**Mr Muirhead:** I do not in any way want to leave you with the impression that we do not think this is an important area. We would not have made the submission and asked to come and talk to you if we did not believe that affordable holidays were crucial to the future of tourism. We know that backpackers are important because they come back later when they have a job and they have real money, as opposed to money they earn fruit picking or washing dishes. From a state point of view, we see tourism for the long term. This sector is critical to maintaining a strong tourism industry.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** I am happy to hear that. One of the things caravan users raise with us is roadside rest areas and dump points for waste. Is this something that you have experienced? What are you contributing to try to deal with those issues that were raised with us?

**Ms Duffecy:** That fits under “A” for amenity. They are the extra bits that are required. We work with Main Roads with its planning and try to encourage it to get the rest areas in the right places, to get the signage right and make sure there is shade in those areas. It is the responsibility of Main Roads. We have regional managers who work in regional Western Australia and give advice to Main Roads about those things. In terms of the dump points for waste, we know that local governments want that to happen. From an environmental perspective, we would support that as well. We have done some work with some of the wheatbelt communities that see themselves as getting a bit of an edge by providing those services. If they get people to stay an extra night, they will do their shopping there or buy a coffee or eat at the pub that night because the extra services are provided. There are some good examples of that on the east coast where communities have made themselves Winnebago-friendly. We have floated that idea with some of the wheatbelt communities. We find that the first time around Australia, the caravan and camping set will stick to the marine experience. The second time around, they will start to go inland and you will get the more experienced travellers who are very well equipped and aware going into those areas. A lot of the first-timers are unequipped and unaware. They are harder to deal with. Some of the shires on the coast are struggling with first-time travellers whereas the inland communities are getting the more experienced travellers and they are having a better time of it.

**Mr Muirhead:** What about the issue of waste, particularly black waste? We get a lot of complaints about that from travellers—lack of waste disposal.

**Mr Crawford:** It is a matter of finding the access points. Where do you go? The Department of Local Government carried out a mapping exercise of where these points are. There are people out there who, rather than pay \$5 to go to a dump point, just bung it down the road and let it loose. There will always be that kind of behaviour.

**Ms Duffecy:** We do think it should be user pays. Just because you bought your Winnebago does not mean that there should not be any additional cost.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** It is not just Winnebagos; it is caravans too.

**Mr Crawford:** There is the issue of water supply as well. A lot of people treat that as a free good. Potable water is a scarce commodity in remote areas. All sorts of things are generally seen as a free good. Roadside camping is generally seen as a free good by the community. Somebody has to pay for it and somebody has to look after the facilities and service the facilities.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** On a completely different tack, with the Landbank initiative that you mentioned, obviously that has been part of your report. I am just wondering how far you have managed to go in getting cooperation from other government departments that own the land and how much industry interest you have had in getting developments up and off the ground from these Landbank sites that you have identified. I would be interested to know how many have come online

when you have identified these sites and how long you think it will take before some of them do come online.

**Ms Duffecy:** From an investor perspective—people who want to build on sites that we are releasing—there is no shortage of interest. There is a big line at the door from investors who are interested in Western Australia. They know that it is a very prospective place for getting new tourism developments off the ground, not necessarily caravan parks. We have not really tested the market there. At the high-end safari lodge, eco tent area, yes. In terms of getting Landbank, we do not control the land. It is a challenge for tourism in Western Australia. Landbank was never set up to fast-track anything. It really meant that we would do some of the work instead of the investors doing the work. An investor might come into the state and want to do something, but it will take him five years to get a site off the ground. We thought it was better for the brand of Western Australia as an investment destination if we did some of that work up-front so it was not seen as being so hard. We face the same challenges as private developers. We have to go through native title clearances, we have to deal with traditional owners of land, we have to do the flora and fauna studies and we have to do the hydrological studies. We have to put all those things in place before we go to market. It is a hard road. Tourism is not as mature an industry in Western Australia as some of the other asset classes like commercial and residential are, particularly resources. Getting some of the other government agencies to go, “Yee haa, tourism is a great thing and we’ll put it at the top of the pile” takes a lot of effort on our part to implement. The short answer is that it is hard work and it has been slow. We would like to see it prioritised. It is also expensive. The Kununurra caravan park is a very good example. It will cost us over \$100 000 to do the pre-feasibility work to get that to market.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** How long have you been working on it?

**Ms Duffecy:** We have been working on it for about two years and we will probably get it to market before the end of this year.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Is that \$100 000 cost your total cost?

**Mr Muirhead:** That is expenditure outside our fixed costs of staff and other things. Some of the more complex sites we have done have cost around \$300 000. We have had a lot of criticism from the tourism industry, saying, “You’re so slow to get the sites up.” That is why Jennifer started her comments by saying that it was never meant to fast-track or create hurdles. The first complaints we had when Landbank was created were from the environmental movement because it thought we were going to ride roughshod within government over the normal checks and balances. That has not been the case. It has given us a very tight awareness of the fact that development is extremely difficult in Western Australia and other parts of Australia, but we do need to look at that. The red tape committee, which has been set up by the government, is addressing some of those issues. That will be applauded by developers. We hear from developers all the time about the difficulties of setting up here. We heard from ANZPHIC in Sydney how other jurisdictions do it. Developing nations such as the Maldives and Indonesia do not have anywhere near the time frames. It is a very different environment all round. We do not break the checks and balances. We do not fast-track. We cop that up-front and hand the developer something that is more investor ready.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** Did you say that you have not brought any of these to market at this stage?

**Ms Duffecy:** We have had four Landbank sites to market. We decided on something really easy for the first one—Rottnest. The Landbank side of Rottnest worked really well. We did all the pre-feasibility work with the Rottnest Island Authority and it went to market. There was a great field. We picked a developer and then the deal fell over. We are talking to the Rottnest Island Authority about going out again.

**Mr Muirhead:** That was not the deal with the government; it was the deal with the developer. It had internal issues.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** Was that the site on the old water collection area?

**Ms Duffecy:** Yes, at Mt Herschel. Interestingly, the site has gone back into the bank. That is the idea if a site goes to market and we do not get a decent proposal, which is what happened with a site in Denham-Shark Bay. We put out a site and we did the pre-feasibility. That site was controlled by the local government authority. We got some proposals in and they were not seen as being up to scratch. We said, "Let's put it back in the bank and go back out in 12 months and see whether we get a better deal out of it."

[4.45 pm]

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** At this stage things have come to market, but nothing has happened?

**Ms Duffecy:** There is a hotel site in Tom Price, for which our preferred developer is Austcorp. It is doing the work on that now. The other one, which is sort of a Landbank site, was the old Treasury building. They have not laid a brick yet; we know that, if that was the next question.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I was just wondering if LandCorp had had any communication with you about your Landbank program, because obviously you are duplicating, to a degree, work that it is already doing.

**Mr Muirhead:** No, we actually pay LandCorp to do a lot of the work for us. We commission them and work in partnership with them, and they will then do a lot of that work for us and they will actually take the sites to market for us. We do not go out and try to sell them. We do not hang a shingle up; LandCorp does. We are now working with the East Perth Redevelopment Authority as well, particularly on sites in the city for hotels. We have a focus on that because we have a shortage of four-star and five-star hotels.

**Ms Duffecy:** The Broome North caravan park site is LandCorp controlled and we are working with them. We have a good relationship.

**Mr Muirhead:** The other partnership we have is with the Department of Environment and Conservation on sites within its areas of responsibility.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** Do you intend to recover your costs from the developer, such as the \$100 000 that you spoke about?

**Mr Muirhead:** No, not at the current time. We do not operate under the same rules as LandCorp, which has to recover costs. This was something quite new; no other jurisdiction has ever tried this type of thing in tourism, but we have seen that as a sunk cost, as an investment in tourism. In fact, we have had to reduce our costs and we are looking at how far we can take a site and whether there is some halfway point in between. Jennifer is working with her team on that. That is an area in which we are very actively involved. We now have four town planners at Tourism WA, which is very different to what you would have found if you went there six or seven years ago, because we see the importance of trying to get the settings right. I think we can reduce the cost of bringing sites to market as we understand it better. We also think there are opportunities for working with organisations like LandCorp. LandCorp can actually make a return. Provided that we talk to it about it, I think we can reduce our costs and reduce sunk costs.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** That sounds good. I have a last question, and then I will hand it over in case you want to make a final comment. From your opening comment, I understand that between 8.4 per cent and 10.3 per cent of nights spent in WA by visitors are spent in caravan parks—I think that was the figure you quoted.

**Mr Muirhead:** That is correct, yes.

**Ms Duffecy:** That is nights, not spend.



**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** I understand that, and they are way down the bottom. Do you think that would be worth having its own budget for promotion, given that you commented that you do not spend directly on that market?

**Mr Muirhead:** I do not know. It is a difficult question, because again the issue we try to push is about brand building, and at the moment we are reviewing our brand and we have appointed a new advertising agency. We are now looking at the next stage of what we call “brand marketing”. Just to give you a very quick snapshot of history, if you go back over memorable history, we really started the serious marketing with the Elle campaign, which was very, very effective in telling people that WA was here and they could come here. The research showed that it built awareness extraordinarily, but people did not know what we had here.

The next really big campaign was “The Real Thing”. We are at the end of the “The Real Thing” campaign now, which was telling people about the diversity of things that are here. We are now looking at the next stage, which has to actually give people both a reason to visit WA and a reason for people who live here to stay here; it is about what is the really compelling thing about getting people to convert to a sale. In terms of whether you would have a separate promotional budget for what I call “road tourism”—I am the only person I know who does, so it is not really an official term—I do not know. I do not have enough understanding of the research around it—I will ask if you guys do—and around the motivations of people who take those type of trips. We know they are there and we know they do and we know that in peak times we do not have enough supply for them. Our research has tended to focus at a national level on trying to stop Australians from going overseas, and it has focused on getting international and interstate people in here.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** I am sorry to interrupt you, but I know we are short of time. I do not want to stop you from talking, but it seems to me that if somebody has spent \$50 000 to \$100 000 on a van and \$60 000 on a four-wheel drive to hook it up to at the front, they are not going to Bali for a holiday because they have already sunk their costs into their rig. Are they not a captive market for you to look at?

**Mr Muirhead:** I should say that we are doing some things. A huge amount of investment has gone into putting maps and itineraries on [westernaustralia.com.au](http://westernaustralia.com.au). We are doing real mapping on there so that people can actually start to plot where they are going to go. They can click on it and find out whether there is a caravan park there, for example. We are also doing a lot of work at the moment on itinerary development so that we can actually give people predetermined driving itineraries. My daughter is on her way to Sydney to live and she is driving there. I was watching her planning her road trip, and it was interesting how she had to struggle to get information about where she was going to stay. It was not well set up electronically in all the states to guide her through that. We are doing work in the area of helping people to do that. In terms of going out and doing advertising and promotion and marketing to people, it is something that I had not really thought about. In answer to your question about whether they have those rigs and whether they will still go to Bali; I tend to think that people still do both.

**Ms Duffecy:** Can I just suggest that you are right. There is no need to convince people who have already bought their caravan and are going to go on the road to go on holiday. What they need is the information so that they will go for longer, go to the right places and spend their money when they get there. Visitor centres have a really important role in that; the RAC has a very important role in that as well, as do our regional tourism operators. It tends to be less about marketing to get people to make a decision than it is about the conversion strategy about getting them to get on the road instead of leaving the caravan in the backyard for two years before they actually go. We are cooperating with Tourism Australia on the slogan “No leave, no life”. The caravan and camping people are a club, and I am sure that you have heard about the need for them to get the right information.

I think the role of visitor centres is important because people are making decisions on the ground. They get somewhere and they go to the local visitor centre and find out where to stay and what to do. That is slightly different from marketing; it is really about visitor information, in my view.

**Mr Muirhead:** GPS technology also provides a huge opportunity to disseminate information by way of interactive systems on your computer, your GPS and your phone. That whole online environment is ballooning. As you are driving along, your phone might ring and tell you that there is a Big4 caravan park 100 kilometres ahead. That technology is probably three to four years away from being rolled out by the private sector; we will not have to do it.

**Ms Duffecy:** One day we will wean people off the paper brochures, but a lot of people still love paper brochures.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** We have not got any further questions. I have a closing statement, but I wonder whether you wanted to make any closing remarks.

**Mr Muirhead:** I do not think so; I think we have covered what we wanted to say, and I think you have asked some good questions.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** We are very pleased to hear that.

**Mr Muirhead:** They were questions we are glad you asked because it gave us the opportunity to expand on a few issues.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** So there were no questions you were not glad we asked!

Thank you for your evidence before the committee today. A transcript of this hearing will be forwarded to you for correction of minor errors. Any such corrections must be made and the transcript returned within 10 days of the date of the letter attached to the transcript. If the transcript is not returned within this period, it will be deemed to be correct. New material cannot be added via these corrections and the sense of your evidence cannot be altered. Should you wish to provide additional information or elaborate on particular points, please include a supplementary submission for the committee's consideration when you return your corrected transcript of evidence.

**Hearing concluded at 4.54 pm**