

Tourism and bushwalking in the Cradle Mountain -Lake St Clair National Park

Context, characteristics and impacts

by

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STATEMENT OF THE AUTHOR

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other higher degree or graduate diploma in any tertiary institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Michael Charles Byers

ABSTRACT

The Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park has a unique natural environment, characterised by a varied geology, a heavily glaciated landscape, a cool-wet alpine climate with considerable seasonal variation, a complex mosaic of plant communities including many endemic Tasmanian species, and high-quality wilderness values. The area now reserved in the Park has been subject to a variety of land uses, nearly all concerned with resource extraction or utilisation. The Park has considerable cultural heritage values, including numerous remnants of these previous uses.

The Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park is an important destination for tourists and bushwalkers alike. This study aims to examine tourism and bushwalking in the Park. This involves the investigation of the nature of these uses, the supply of tourism infrastructure, the numbers and characteristics of users, and the impacts resulting from these uses. Research work included personal observation, the collection of background information, the analysis of Parks and Wildlife Service statistics, water quality sampling, the undertaking of a questionnaire survey of Overland Track walkers, and a survey of the condition of the Overland and Pine Valley tracks.

The study finds that both tourism and bushwalking have increased considerably in recent years. Upgrading of the tracks and other tourist infrastructure has made the Park more accessible and attracted new types of visitor. While these increasing levels of visitation have resulted in a range of benefits, they have also resulted in many negative impacts, mainly on the natural environment. Tourism, bushwalking, and their resulting impacts require active management by the Parks and Wildlife Service. Several recommendations are made as to how this management can be improved.

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