

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**WRITTEN QUESTION**

Mr Maley

to Minister for Tourism

Parking at Tourism locations

With tourism being the Northern Territory's second largest industry, when will the Government increase the number of car and bus parking places at popular tourist spots, particularly Litchfield Park?

ANSWER

Managing the number of car and bus parking places in NT National Parks is the responsibility of the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment's division of Conservation and Natural Resources. The Parks and Wildlife Service, which is part of the Conservation and Natural Resources Division, manages Litchfield National Park.

Our tourism industry relies on natural areas such as those found in our Parks and Reserves. 66% of visitors in the Territory went to a National Park in the 2001 calendar year (Source: NT Travel Monitor). The primary object of management of protected areas such as Litchfield National Park is to protect the natural and cultural values, whilst allowing tourists to enjoy and use these areas. It is vitally important to the sustainability of the industry that we maintain the quality of experience that attracts tourists to the Territory.

In some cases, this means that strategies to cap the number of visitors are introduced, sometimes through limiting car parking spaces. These strategies ensure that the impacts of tourists on the natural and cultural values of site are minimised and help to maintain a quality experience of tourists. Buley Rockhole is a case in point. Parking at this site is limited to protect the environmental integrity of the area.

In other cases, sites that are able to sustain higher levels of visitation without significant impact on the values of the area may be expanded or further developed to cater for a majority of visitors. An upgrade and expansion of the day use car park at Wangi Falls is on the current 02/03 capital works program. New areas may also need to be opened up to cater for larger numbers of tourists.

Decisions about development of parks and reserves are made through a planning process that takes account of the natural and cultural values of the area and the capacity of the site to sustain development and use. Other considerations include the range of recreational opportunities available elsewhere and the type of experience one is trying to create.

Future car parking needs and development within the Litchfield National Park will be considered in the Park's second Plan of Management, which is currently being prepared by Parks and Wildlife.