THE ROLE OF KANGAROOS IN AUSTRALIAN TOURISM

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Generally absent from the debate on the management of kangaroos (Macropodoidea) is discussion of their role in tourism. This paper examines the role that kangaroos play in Australian tourism, synthesising the findings of four related projects undertaken recently by the Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism. It investigates the role of kangaroos in tourism marketing imagery, international tourist demand and existing tourism enterprises, and examines opportunities for future development of tourism involving kangaroos. In order to assess these aspects, experimental studies, interviews, visitor surveys, content analysis of advertising material, postal surveys of wildlife professionals and site visits were conducted.

The kangaroo was found to be one of the world’s best-recognised tourism icons and to generate positive responses among Americans; yet it is apparently under-utilised in overseas travel brochures designed to attract international tourists to Australia. The use of kangaroos in tourism is already widespread, with over 190 tourism enterprises including kangaroo viewing, and with the kangaroo featuring in organised wildlife tourism more frequently than any other type of animal. However kangaroos are generally just one component of a broader tourism experience. While 18.4% of international visitors are motivated to visit Australia partly because of its native animals, there are very few who would not come otherwise. Kangaroos and koalas (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) are by far the most popular animals with international visitors. Most visitors who wished to do so, succeeded in seeing kangaroos during their visit, and most expressed high levels of satisfaction with their wildlife experiences. The most satisfying kangaroo viewing experiences are likely to involve the relatively large, social species of open habitats. However areas where these species are most likely to be abundant mostly score poorly in terms of feasibility of tourism. Tourism is one significant management option for Australia’s kangaroos, and its potential deserves further investigation.

Key words: kangaroo; Macropodoidea; Australia; tourism; wildlife; management.

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THE superfamily Macropodoidea (kangaroos, wallabies, potoroos, bettongs and rat-kangaroos) is one of Australia’s best known faunal groups, and the 20 million or so kangaroos in Australia (Pople and McLeod 2000) comprise some of the world’s most abundant large terrestrial mammals. These larger macropods are widely viewed as ‘overabundant’ pests or as a resource for commercial harvesting (Pople and Grigg 1998). Generally absent from the debate on how Australia should approach management of its kangaroos is discussion of their role in tourism. This is surprising given the recognised economic significance of nature-based tourism in Australia (Blamey and Hatch 1998) and the potential of tourism to foster appreciation and understanding of wildlife and nature (Moscardo et al. 2001). Meanwhile, populations of terrestrial herbivores on Africa’s plains are perceived as a ‘wildlife spectacle’, attracting millions of tourists each year and comprising a major source of foreign revenue (Eltringham 1984; Davies 1990; Heath 1992). While the Australian situation provides a number of constraints not applicable to the African situation, it also provides a number of competitive
advantages that perhaps could be built upon to attract a very large international market (Higginbottom et al. 2001a; Green et al. 2001).

This paper examines the role that kangaroos currently play in Australian tourism, synthesising the findings of four related projects undertaken recently by the Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism. The study deals with tourism involving any member of the superfamily Macropodoidea, including not only those few species correctly referred to as kangaroos, but any extant species of kangaroo, wallaby (family Macropodidae), rat-kangaroo or potoroo (family Potoroidea). For convenience all these species are generally referred to henceforth as kangaroos.

In recent decades, non-consumptive use of wildlife around the world has attracted increasing numbers of recreational users and created substantial economic activity through tourism (Vickerman 1988; McNeilage 1996; Shackley 1996). Wildlife viewing has proved more economically valuable than primary production in some regions (e.g., Muir 1987). It has been estimated to be worth US$400 million to the Kenyan economy in 1998 (WTO and UNEP 1992), while USA residents have been estimated to spend US$38.4 billion on wildlife related trips and equipment (US Department of the Interior et al. 2002). In Australia, total expenditure by nature-based tourists in 1995 was estimated at $6.6 billion (Blamey and Hatch 1998). While there has been no comprehensive valuation, the annual economic benefits of wildlife to Australia have been estimated as $1.8 - $3.5 billion from inbound tourism alone (Hundloe and Hamilton 1997). There are some indications that tourism based on free-ranging animal populations has significant growth potential in Australia, although given a lack of relevant research this cannot be quantified (Higginbottom et al. 2001a; Higginbottom and Buckley 2003).

In assessing the role of kangaroos in Australian tourism, one needs to consider both their role in attracting international tourists to Australia and their direct involvement in tourism products. One also needs to consider both demand and supply side issues, in relation to both existing tourism and potential future developments.

A key strategy in promoting a tourist destination is to establish a unique position in the market (Moutinho 1995), often making use of particular icons that are strongly and positively associated with that destination. Common icons used for this purpose include landscapes, structures, people and wildlife, with the latter including China’s giant panda (Ailuropoda melanoleuca), New Zealand’s kiwis (Apterygidae) and Australia’s kangaroos (Macropodoidea). The impact and use of the kangaroo image and textual references in advertising material is also important when considering the value of using the kangaroo to promote Australian tourism. Thus the first aim of this study was to assess the importance of kangaroos in tourism marketing. This component is described in more detail by Hill et al. (2000).

It is commonly believed that Australia’s wildlife is a major drawcard for many international tourists, and claims have also been made about increasing levels of demand for wildlife tourism experiences in various parts of the world (Vickerman 1988; Shackley 1996; Roe et al. 1997). However, there is little evidence to support claims that there is a sustained increase in demand, and where visitation data exist, they usually relate to only part of the wildlife product rather than the entire phenomenon (Moscardo et al. 2001). Hence, there is a need to quantify the demand for wildlife tourism experiences, including those involving kangaroos. It is well-established that tourists are not usually homogeneous in the way they respond to different types of tourism experiences (Duffus and Dearden 1990), and a common approach is to divide the market into different segments (see Moscardo et al. 2001). The second component of this research thus aimed to determine key issues relating to the demand for kangaroo viewing experiences. This included determining the level and nature of demand from international visitors for kangaroo encounters in Australia, establishing a typology of kangaroo tourists, and determining visitor satisfaction associated with kangaroo encounters. These issues are addressed in more detail by Fredline and Faulkner (2001) and Higginbottom et al. (2002).

The third component of this study aimed to describe the current provision of kangaroo tourism enterprises and activities in Australia, with a view to improving existing enterprises and stimulating appropriate practices to be promoted by new enterprises (detailed by Higginbottom et al. 2002, with some updated information included in the present paper). Another important aspect of kangaroo tourism is that involving unguided encounters with kangaroos by independent travellers, but research on this aspect was not feasible given the limited resources for this study.

In addition to existing organised tourism involving kangaroos, there is in theory potential for development of further sites for kangaroo-based tourism within protected areas and on private lands. The effort to document the macropodoid fauna across Australia has largely been to assess conservation status and, for some species, the sustainability of commercial harvests (e.g., ANPWS 1988). Little or
no attention has been paid to defining the tourism potential of macropod populations. The final component of this study aimed to identify various locations in Australia where tourists can have direct experiences of diverse, abundant, easily viewed populations of kangaroos in their natural habitats, and to assess the expected quality of such experiences (Croft and Leiper 2001). This component also involved assessing selected sites for feasibility of developing 'kangaroo tourism' based on factors known to affect tourism potential.

METHODS

Role of kangaroos in tourism imagery

To assess recognition of the kangaroo as an Australian icon, 200 American adults were presented with a survey instrument comprising 21 silhouetted images of animals, people and structures that are considered well-known tourist attractions around the world, including one of a kangaroo. The subjects were randomly chosen from ten sites in the Washington DC area, selected to provide a representative socio-economic range. Respondents were asked to identify the country of origin for each image and to report their degree of certainty for the response given.

To assess the effects of the use of kangaroos in tourism advertising on perceptions of potential tourists, 285 USA university students were asked to read one of a set of full colour mock-advertisements for Australian tourism and then complete a questionnaire. The research used an experimental design to test the effects of kangaroo imagery, human imagery, kangaroo textual references and wildlife textual references. Other questions were included to determine respondents' interest in wildlife and their overseas travel history.

To determine the role of kangaroos in overseas advertising of Australia as a tourism destination, the presence of kangaroo imagery and text was evaluated in 41 current travel brochures from the USA and the UK. These brochures were thought to comprise a representative sample of brochures used to promote tour packages in these countries.

Visitor demand and responses to kangaroo tourism

Supplementary questions were added to the International Visitor Survey (IVS), administered by the Bureau of Tourism Research at the departure lounges of international airports. The sample comprised 3880 people who lived overseas, were aged 15 years or over and had stayed in Australia for less than 12 months. In order to obtain representative data, IVS samples are based on a quota for each country of residence group for each airport in each month. The survey was administered through personal interviews primarily in English, although interviewers were available to conduct the survey in other languages including German, Japanese, Indonesian/Malay, Korean, and Mandarin.

The supplement contained 13 questions which addressed (among other issues): the importance of Australian animals and kangaroos in attracting visitors to Australia; the types of animals that visitors most wanted to see, actually saw, and most enjoyed seeing; the types of situation in which the animals were seen; and levels of satisfaction with their experience of Australian native wildlife and their visit to Australia. In keeping with the style of the IVS, most of the questions were either prompted or unprompted multiple response questions which essentially return dichotomous data (the options representing yes and no responses). When analysed in conjunction with the main IVS data, these data provided a profile of the ways in which visitors interact with animals during their stay in Australia. Chi-squared analyses were used to compare characteristics of tourists who had encounters with captive kangaroos with those who encountered them only in free-ranging situations.

In addition, 183 visitor surveys were self-completed across a sample of 15 tourism enterprises providing viewing of free-ranging kangaroos (part of the sample described below). These included questions on levels of interest in kangaroos as well as levels of satisfaction and perceptions of importance associated with different aspects of the viewing experience.

Description and evaluation of ‘kangaroo tourism’

A survey of advertising material was conducted to describe the scope of tourism enterprises that stated that they include wildlife as part of the experience provided. Sources of information included operator promotional brochures, regional and sectoral guides, specialist magazines and word-of-mouth information from staff of state tourism and conservation agencies and kangaroo researchers. Information was recorded on type of activity or attraction, and type of animals featured (individual species were often not named).

The resources available for this study did not permit evaluation of a large random sample of kangaroo tourism operators. Instead, 20 enterprises around Australia were selected on the basis that: i) free-ranging kangaroos constituted a significant part of the tourist experience provided; ii) interpretation on kangaroos was provided to visitors; iii) the business had been operating for at least three years (indicating some degree of financial viability) and
iv) the operators showed evidence of environmental awareness (based on a number of sources). Phone interviews, and site visits to ten of these, were used to collect information on business management, nature of kangaroo encounters, impacts of tourism activities on kangaroos, environmental (especially kangaroo) interpretation and environmental management. These latter enterprises were selected on the basis that they stated that their guests could be sure of seeing kangaroos and that they had a substantial interpretative component. Thus the sample was not expected to be representative of kangaroo tourism, but rather was selected on the basis that it would provide case studies of the ‘best’ enterprises available, thus hopefully providing useful models to other operators. These enterprises were then evaluated against established best practice principles, with the idea of extracting lessons on what approaches are currently working well and what could be done better. Thus any shortcomings applicable to this sample are expected to be more widely applicable.

**Opportunities for future development of tourism based on free-ranging macropods**

To identify key potential kangaroo-viewing sites in Australia, a postal survey was sent to 75 individuals with a professional interest in studying Australian fauna, especially kangaroos. The subjects were asked to list sites they had visited where opportunities for viewing macropods were available and to rank these sites by the quality of the kangaroo viewing experience they provide. An index of the ‘tourism quality’ of each macropodoid species was obtained by summing the mean ratings assigned by professionals to its abundance, sightability and habituation across the sites where it was present. Independently of this, alternative indices were calculated based on aspects of morphology, ecology, and behaviour considered likely to influence the perceived quality of the viewing experience.

Distributions of each macropodoid species were recorded onto a GIS database at the scale of 1:250,000 map-sheets. These were then used to generate GIS maps illustrating indices of the likely quality of the kangaroo viewing experience, calculated in two alternative ways. The first approach was to sum the tourism quality scores (derived from the professionals’ ratings) for each map-sheet across all species present. This approach generates the highest values for sites where there is a high macropodoid species richness. The second approach was to average the tourism quality scores for each of the species present, which generates the highest values for sites where the ‘high quality’ species are present.

The tourism potential of a subset of sites judged to provide good kangaroo viewing experiences was then assessed. This was based on key factors known to be important in attracting tourists to a region: number of visitors and visitor nights per year, country of origin of the tourist population, extent of industrialised tourism, proximity to major transit routes, and presence of other tourist attractions.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Role of kangaroos in tourism imagery**

In the study designed to assess icon recognition, the kangaroo was correctly identified as Australian by 98.3% of the USA sample. The only better-recognised icon was the Statue of Liberty, which 100% of the sample recognised as American. The kangaroo outscored such standard tourism icons as the Eiffel Tower (94.9% correct), the koala (91.0% correct), the Leaning Tower of Pisa (80.8% correct), and the kiwi (6.2% correct).

When subjects were experimentally exposed to mock advertisements, a picture of a kangaroo was found to enhance the perception of value for a trip to Australia, but only for those subjects who had an interest in wildlife tourism. The inclusion of a person in the picture along with a kangaroo had a detrimental effect on those with no interest in wildlife tourism. The mention of kangaroos in the text of an advertisement led to a higher perception of safety in a trip to Australia, greater sightseeing opportunities and greater novelty in a trip to Australia.

Kangaroo imagery was rarely used in the sample of travel brochures examined, and was used less frequently than imagery of other Australian icons, such as the Opera House, Uluru (Ayers Rock), and the koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*). The most frequent pictorial representation of kangaroos was on road signs.

**Visitor demand and responses to kangaroo tourism**

According to IVS results, 18.4% of international visitors come to Australia partly “to experience native animals”, though very few (0.8%) would not come otherwise. For 85.4% of these visitors, this was “an important reason” or “no more important than any other reason”. Kangaroos and koalas were much more popular than any other types of animals, with 43.2% of all international tourists wanting to see a kangaroo during their visit (and 44% wanting to see a koala).

Tourists who have encounters with kangaroos in Australia could be divided into two somewhat distinct segments based on the IVS results (Table 1).
HIGGINBOTTOM ET AL.: KANGAROOS IN AUSTRALIAN TOURISM 27

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Captive kangaroo tourist</th>
<th>Free-ranging kangaroo tourist</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country of origin</td>
<td>Japan, Korea, China, Taiwan</td>
<td>Mainland Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travel pattern</td>
<td>Cities</td>
<td>Regions</td>
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<td>Group</td>
<td>Group tour, in family</td>
<td>Visiting friends and relatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Times visited</td>
<td>First time</td>
<td>Visited before</td>
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<td>Age</td>
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Table 1. Differences between captive and free-range segments of international visitors who have encounters with kangaroos in Australia. Source: Fredline and Faulkner (2001).

The first segment consisted of visitors who had experienced kangaroos only in captivity, and were more likely to be from South-East Asia, first time visitors, and on group tours. The second segment consisted of visitors who had experienced kangaroos only in free-ranging situations, and were more likely to be from mainland Europe and on a second or subsequent trip to Australia.

The IVS results also showed that most visitors (81.1%) who wanted to see a kangaroo while in Australia were successful in doing so. Visitors expressed high levels of satisfaction with their wildlife encounters, although not as high as their levels of satisfaction with their experience overall (Fig. 1).

Based on the surveys conducted at kangaroo tourism sites, most visitors to these sites (82%) had a generalised interest in nature rather than a specific interest in wildlife or kangaroos. These visitors were predominantly international (71%). The features of the experience which were rated as very important by the greatest numbers of visitors were naturalness of their wildlife experience (68% of visitors) and provision of information and knowledgeable staff/guides (66% of visitors). As found in the IVS study, levels of satisfaction with their overall experience were high (74% of the sample reported being very satisfied), although lower for visitors from English-speaking overseas countries than for those from other countries. However overall satisfaction levels were related to the number of kangaroos seen and the distance at which they were seen, and less than half of the sample were very satisfied with these aspects of the experience.

**Description and evaluation of ‘kangaroo tourism’**

There are currently at least 192 tourism enterprises in Australia that include opportunities for kangaroo viewing. An estimated 80% of these enterprises involve mainly free-ranging (rather than captive) wildlife. The survey of advertising material showed that kangaroos feature in wildlife tourism enterprises more frequently than any other type of wildlife, with kangaroos featuring in 65% of captive wildlife tourism enterprises and 41% of those involving free-ranging experiences.

About half (52%) of all tourism activities featuring kangaroos are tours in which the wildlife (including kangaroos) comprise only one component of a broader experience (although the number of general tours may be underestimated). The remainder comprise predominantly (in descending order of frequency): zoos and wildlife parks, farmstays,
Tourism activities offered by wildlife tourism enterprises that feature kangaroos \((n = 214)\). Note that one tourism enterprise may include more than one activity. Source: Higgimhottom et al. (2002).

Although the issue was not addressed directly, it seems that currently active management of free-ranging kangaroos for the primary purpose of facilitating tourism is rare. However, a number of private tourism operators maintain areas of short pasture at least partly with the aim of encouraging kangaroos; at least one is experimenting with manipulation of waterholes for this purpose; and some have made deliberate attempts to habituate kangaroos to human presence. Two operators stated that they saw killing of kangaroos as incompatible with tourism, since it tends to make the animals more flighty and is viewed negatively by international visitors. Again however, this issue was outside the direct scope of the research.

Organised kangaroo viewing experiences occur in a wide range of habitats, are widely spread across Australia, and involve a wide range of species. Most of the enterprises involved are apparently small businesses.

Even though the kangaroo tourism enterprises studied in detail were selected as most likely to exemplify best practice, significant weaknesses were identified in their operation. A number of concerns related to business planning, market research, and general environmental management practices and are common problems among small tourism businesses in Australia. Several issues, however, were specific to this type of enterprise. Several of the operators reported that certain practices and policies employed by protected area management agencies had negative financial effects on their operation. Probably the major concern was lack of security of access. Secondly, although information provided to visitors during interpretation was generally accurate, very few of the studied enterprises had coordinated interpretive programs, and guides made only limited use of recognised principles of best practice interpretation. This gives rise to concerns about the educational effectiveness of the interpretation. Finally, most of the operators studied did not have detailed knowledge of the habits of their local kangaroos. This meant that they were often not able to provide their guests with predictable, high quality viewing experiences and associated detailed interpretation.

**Opportunities for future development of tourism based on free-ranging macropods**

Wildlife professionals identified a total of 113 sites that they judged to provide a high-quality experience with kangaroos. The sites covered all states and territories, and occurred mostly in national parks or other protected areas. The species ranked most highly by these professionals in terms of quality of the viewing experience were (in descending order): Tasmanian pademelon \((Thyllogale billardierii)\), quokka \((Setonix brachyurus)\), red kangaroo \((Macropus rufus)\), antilopine wallaroo \((Macropus antilopinus)\), western grey kangaroo \((Macropus fuliginosus)\), agile wallaby \((Macropus agilis)\) and eastern grey kangaroo \((Macropus giganteus)\). These rankings were significantly correlated with those obtained through the authors’ independent ranking of species by behavioural and ecological characters \((r = 0.41, p = 0.02)\), with the top-ranking species in this case being (in descending order): red kangaroo, eastern grey kangaroo, western grey kangaroo, antilopine wallaroo, common wallaroo \((Macropus robustus)\), agile wallaby and whiptail wallaby \((Macropus parryi)\).

Based on summing the tourism quality scores of macropodid species present for each map-sheet, the best viewing areas occur in the forests of northern New South Wales (NSW), tropical Queensland, the wet-dry tropics of Northern Territory and Western Australia and the forests of south-western Western Australia (Fig. 3). Based on averaging the tourism quality scores, various outback areas offer the best experiences, especially in the pastoral zones of Queensland, NSW and South Australia (Fig. 4).
Sites judged to provide high-quality macropod viewing mostly scored poorly on criteria relating to tourism potential, mainly because they are distant from centres of high visitation or off preferred routes of travel. They may also lack other attractions that would encourage tourism activity. The highest scoring site, Euroka Clearing, in the Blue Mountains National Park (NSW), may be unable to meet any increased visitor pressure without adverse effects on the environment and kangaroos.

**Limitations of the study**

There are a number of important limitations of this study, due to its aims and the few resources that were available, which constrain the ability to generalise and draw definitive conclusions. The two
experiments relating to the importance of tourism imagery apply only to American subjects, although the USA is an important market for nature-based tourism in Australia. The assessment of travel brochures and the on-site visitor surveys were based on small samples and while indicative would need to be expanded to draw definitive conclusions. The IVS results are limited to one survey during one season and are restricted to international visitors; thus we are unable to provide an assessment of the demand from domestic tourists. Further, unlike the majority of papers in this volume, this research was not designed to address kangaroo management issues, although Higginbottom et al. (2002) do provide a discussion of some potential implications of kangaroo tourism relating to fencing, habituation, artificial feeding, manipulation of population numbers and habitats, and impacts on kangaroos.

**Implications for management and development of kangaroo tourism**

The kangaroo can be a useful image to use in marketing communications when there is a need to communicate immediately and quickly that the message is about Australia and to generate positive responses. The high recognisability of the kangaroo as an Australian icon overseas (or at least among Americans) suggests that it is a high profile animal that could be important as part of tourism products and in terms of potential to affect Australia’s image overseas.

Appropriate use of kangaroos in marketing imagery requires an understanding of the complex factors influencing consumer reactions. Findings of this study indicate that when kangaroos are mentioned in the text of an advertisement for Australia, photographs of people should not be simultaneously used. Pictures of kangaroos may be particularly useful to include in advertisements that are targeted at market segments with an interest in wildlife tourism. Although the kangaroo image is regularly used in major overseas promotions, there may be scope for greater use in some media such as brochures designed to sell tour packages.

It appears that for most international tourists, the opportunity to see a kangaroo (and wildlife in general) is a pleasant additional element of the Australian tourism product but certainly not the only element that motivates them to travel to Australia. Kangaroos are part of much broader tourism experiences and ‘kangaroo tourism’ cannot be seen in isolation. While there may be a market for specialised kangaroo tourism experiences, it is likely to be small.

Tourism operators who provide opportunities for kangaroo experiences should design their products and conduct their marketing to target the relevant market segment. In particular this study showed that European visitors were more likely than Asian visitors to seek encounters with free-ranging animals. However, although European visitors to Australia expressed a preference for seeing animals in their natural environment, the former group are less likely to travel outside international gateways, so suitable sites may need to be developed in or close to major cities in order to meet this apparent demand. More detailed research on the extent, nature and segmentation of demand is needed to better inform planning. It can be expected that quite different strategies of tourism development will be needed for international and domestic visitors.

Although international visitors to Australia who wish to see kangaroos generally succeed in doing so and are reasonably satisfied with their wildlife experiences, greater opportunities for close encounters with large numbers of kangaroos could be provided. This would be expected to increase the probability of a satisfactory viewing experience. In cases where large populations of kangaroos are not easily accessible, the expectations of the visitors should be modified to ensure they understand the uncertainty of viewing wildlife in a natural setting. Quality interpretation is a means of enhancing visitor satisfaction, particularly when close encounters are not possible, and should be encouraged. Interpretation also has the potential to foster appreciation and understanding of kangaroo natural history and conservation issues.

Although the use of kangaroos in Australian tourism is widespread, the evaluation of selected kangaroo tourism enterprises in Australia revealed that there is probably substantial room for improvement. As has often been recommended for Australian nature-based and wildlife tourism operators in general, there is a need to improve general business practices (e.g., McKercher 1998), to build stronger cooperative links between protected area agencies and tourism operators (e.g., Moore and Carter 1993), and to improve the quality of environmental/wildlife interpretation (e.g., Moscardo et al. 2001). Various initiatives supported by governments and industry associations, particularly the Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program (NEAPWG 2000), have been initiated to address such needs. In addition, operators may benefit from information and/or training to build their wildlife-related skills and knowledge. The practicality of this proposal would however need to be considered in the context of the limited time available to most operators.
The emphasis of kangaroo tourism development should be to provide high quality experiences that are as ‘natural’ as possible through the enhancement of existing experiences rather than the establishment of new enterprises. There is currently insufficient evidence of unmet demand to justify significant investment in new kangaroo tourism enterprises. A detailed list of best practice guidelines for wildlife (kangaroo) tourism enterprises has been developed by Higginbottom et al. (2002) and could be further developed to provide support to the industry. In relation to private commercial kangaroo tourism, there should be a focus on enhancing the use of kangaroos within broader nature-based tours, as these comprise the largest number of businesses involved in kangaroo tourism. In order to expose the greatest number of visitors to positive kangaroo experiences, the emphasis of efforts to develop kangaroo tourism should probably be on protected areas, although research is needed on their role in wildlife tourism. The tourism industry and protected area authorities should cooperate to improve sustainability of kangaroo tourism and develop more secure access to protected areas by environmentally responsible tour operators.

To improve the opportunities for kangaroo based tourism in the future, there may be scope for development of several high quality sites close to major urban centres, particularly those with high species richness, abundance and accessibility to travel routes. There may also be potential for well-placed landholders, especially around the most easily accessible cities to tourists, to exploit their kangaroo populations as a valuable tourism attraction rather than an unwelcome pest. The larger, more gregarious macropodoid species of open habitats are likely to provide the greatest potential for tourism in terms of ease of viewing and abundance.

Overall, kangaroos are important to the tourism industry in Australia and are a well-recognised icon with overseas visitors. The use of kangaroos in tourism is already widespread and many tourists are highly satisfied with their encounters with kangaroos. However there is considerable scope for improving the quality of experiences and improving availability of sites for viewing of free-ranging kangaroos around major urban centres. Tourism based on kangaroos should not be viewed in isolation; any planning should take full cognisance of broader issues involved in issues pertaining to tourism involving wildlife and tourism in general (see Higginbottom et al. 2001a for a review).

While tourism will never provide the management solution for all of Australia’s kangaroos, it is one management option that should be considered. Further research is required to investigate to what extent and under what conditions nature-based tourism - including the viewing of kangaroos - can provide an economically viable alternative land use in areas where legal killing of kangaroos currently occurs.

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