

THE VALUE OF REGIONAL TOURISM

economic, social, and environmental dimensions

centre for
REGIONAL TOURISM
research

WHY DO THE RESEARCH?

Around 60% of all international and domestic visitor nights in Australia in 1999 were spent outside capital cities, resulting in a range of economic, social, and environmental consequences for the regional communities which shared in this visitation. At the same time, traditional rural industries continued to decline, and tourism was touted as a tool to assist regional development and to sustain regional communities through a shift in their economic base. It was important to understand what value regional communities might derive from entering into tourism, and what potential problems could arise.

WHAT WAS DONE?

The Centre for Regional Tourism Research conducted a meta-analysis of previous and current research into the value of tourism generally, and regional tourism more specifically. Academic, government and industry based studies from Australia and internationally were reviewed, and key themes distilled. The review was then published as a discussion paper.

WHAT WERE THE RESULTS?

Regional tourism generates economic benefits in the form of income and employment. It also promotes regional economic growth more generally by helping to retain young people, and by diversifying regional economies. Existing industries may benefit from tourism through exposure to new markets or the opportunity to value add. Tourism development may also contribute to infrastructure costs.

Communities may benefit from tourism both socially and culturally. Quality of life may be enhanced through the provision of new and improved services and facilities. Tourism may provide an economic justification for the preservation of natural and cultural heritage. Tourism is an avenue for increased social contact for rural and remote communities. Tourism may also present less intrusive land use opportunities, and help educate residents and visitors about the significance of the environment.

HOW CAN THE RESULTS BE USED?

Increased awareness of the potential benefits of tourism may assist regional communities in planning to include tourism in their economic base. It also presents a challenge for researchers and managers to identify what forms of tourism and what forms of tourism management may provide the greatest value for regional communities.

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