

ECOTOURISM AS A MEANS OF  
ENCOURAGING ECOLOGICAL RECOVERY  
IN THE FLINDERS RANGES,  
SOUTH AUSTRALIA

By

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## ABSTRACT

Some of Australia's most pressing conservation problems are found in the arid and semi-arid rangelands where the traditional major land-use is extensive pastoralism. Yet with the emergence of a change in resource values, the rangelands of Australia have started to move away from a strict production land-use towards a multifunctional land-use where pastoralism, tourism and the environment have an influence on one another. With the present mixture of consumption and protection values in the rangelands, ecotourism represents a model for achieving a symbiotic relationship between tourism activity and conservation in a pastoral setting.

This study develops a theoretical framework for understanding the relationships between ecotourism, pastoralism and ecological recovery efforts in the Flinders Ranges through employing mixed qualitative and quantitative research techniques to examine the perceptions and practices of tourism operators, local landholders and visitors to the study site. The study finds that while pastoralism and its level of success often remain variable, the strength and stability of tourism is increasing. Because economics is a central component of the concept of sustainability, and because we must manage the environment while accommodating tourists, ecotourism is one way to help reach rangeland sustainability goals, provided that there are adequate levels of agreement amongst the local community and other land users.

The results indicate that the vast majority of stakeholders are currently in a state of co-existence with each other rather than one of conflict, suggesting ecotourism has the potential to assist ecological recovery. However, many landholders are constrained in their ability to integrate ecotourism operations and conservation due to economic difficulties and market barriers. There are also conflicting results among visitors who claim to be interested in ecotourism but do not necessarily act accordingly, highlighting the need for a greater focus on environmental education. Ecotourism should be incorporated into a regional sustainability plan where the public are able to assist decision makers through collaborative planning.

The thesis concludes that when well-managed, ecotourism can be a business supporting conservation in the Flinders Ranges. It contributes to knowledge of the role that ecotourism can play in encouraging ecological recovery in the rangelands and explores the complex interrelationships involved through consultation with the primary stakeholders of landholders, tourism operators and visitors.



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## DECLARATION

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

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SIGNED:

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