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The Executive Officer
Rural and Regional Committee
Parliament House
MELBOURNE VIC 3002

RURAL AND REGIONAL COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENT - INQUIRY INTO RURAL AND REGIONAL
TOURISM

SUBMISSION - MT BUFFALO NATIONAL PARK

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission to the Inquiry into Rural and Regional Tourism by the Rural and Regional Committee of Parliament.

Mt Buffalo has unique and outstanding natural, heritage and cultural values of the Park and the contribution that visitation to the Park makes to the local tourism industry and economic activity in north east Victoria.

For a number of years, the commercial viability of leased facilities at Mt Buffalo has been diminished by a culmination of factors, including poor snow seasons but also changing visitation patterns and demographics and management difficulties encountered by lessees.

Climate changes is also having a significant impact on Mt Buffalo, with two major bush fires in the last four years, which has deterred potential visitors and left sections of the Park inaccessible during popular visitor periods.

We remain concerned at the negative publicity stemming from the bushfires and the popular perception that the Park is not open to the public. While the Chalet remains closed, the remainder of the Park is open for visitors and still offers a wide range of nature based activities, with about 90% of walking tracks now re-opened by Parks Victoria.

We urge the local community, Government agencies, Ministers and MPs as well as media outlets to make every effort to promote the fact that the Park is in fact open to the public.

There is no doubt that commercial lease holders within the Park have confronted a challenging operating environment with high operating overheads and the steadily deteriorating condition of the Chalet.

While past lessees may have been unrealistic about the prospects of making the facilities commercially viable in the past, however, the reference group believes that if some of the infrastructure impediments can be alleviated through Government investment and a lease term made available that would attract private sector investment, the prospect of the leased facilities within the Park becoming a commercially viable proposition would be significantly enhanced.

We have been heartened by the efforts made to date by the State Government in conjunction with local government to assist local communities recover from the last summer's bushfires.

We believe that continued efforts need to be made, in the form of an integrated marketing strategy to better promote in bound and domestic tourism to Victoria's alpine areas and Mt Buffalo.

We would welcome the opportunity to make a public submission to a hearing of the committee when hearings are held in the High Country in August this year.

We look forward to meeting with the Committee and help with your important work in further strengthening the tourism industry in rural and regional Victoria.

Yours sincerely,

Wayne Phillips
President
Bright & District Chamber of Commerce
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