

# An open letter to Tourism Australia

---

Dear Tourism Afghanistan:

Loved the camels in your winning entry for the nothing like A \_\_\_\_\_ campaign. Another marketing triumph for youse Tourism A guys! Here in Australia the Canberra mob gave the Desert Knowledge mob millions of dollars to try and curb the ecological havoc caused by these blighters. They are munching and trampling their way through the most pristine parts of the Outback that had previously never been grazed by livestock. They are even overrunning remote Aboriginal communities and trashing their water supplies. I guess they don't know that you can't get a beer out back any more with the blackfellas!

Anyway love your work. Perhaps you have a piccie of a big fat cane toad sitting on a beach? I'm trying to encourage me mates from down south to visit the Top End and need your marketing genius.

Cheers Baz

PS. Where the bloody hell are you?



We are bemused and somewhat offended that Tourism Australia recently proudly declared the winner of their “Nothing Like Australia” contest to be an image and 25 words about camel riding in Central Australia (see <http://www.nothinglikeaustralia.com/flash.htm#/entries/6363/title>). The image and words may be appealingly crafted but the judgement that this is uniquely Australian (How else does one interpret ‘nothing like’?) and representative of the country is appalling. It represents yet another failure by Tourism Australia to grasp the value of our wildlife (another recent effort was to cage a red kangaroo on a boulevard in Beverly Hills). It is as if the marketing boffins in TA believe a real desert is only one with a camel. Will we have lions in our savannahs next? After all camel riding and trekking on dromedaries is widespread throughout North Africa, Arabia and the Indian sub-continent where the species is native. I’m sure you would have million or more hands shoot up if you asked, from the world of tourists, who sat astride a camel and admired the pyramids in Egypt?

TA’s valuing of the Australian fauna seems so scant that they fail to recognise the irony of the camel image. In the very same region another arm of government is investing \$19 million in camel management and control because of their adverse environmental impacts in our remaining (once) pristine deserts where livestock have never been grazed. They may point to a past history of camels as ‘beasts of burden’ bringing settlement and commerce to the arid lands. But the fact is that once their utility was superseded by motor vehicles, they were abandoned to go feral. Whatever important and at times heroic part they played in early colonial history is now far eclipsed by the ensuing environmental vandalism that emerged from their abandonment<sup>1</sup>. Our generation and the progeny of these camels are left to suffer the consequences in yet one more lesson in unsustainable practices.

There are many native species of animals (and plants) that enrich and define a tourism experience in Australia. Our beloved kangaroos are amongst the flagships. But certainly not camels that represent yet one more environmental and animal welfare issue that past, uncaring generations have imposed on us. TA deserves ridicule (as penned above) though exposure of the irony in their actions and protest at their failure to appropriately represent Australia. A barb directed at the Minister, Martin Ferguson<sup>2</sup>, and the Shadow Minister, Steven Ciobo<sup>3</sup>, to bring TA to heel is well deserved.



Isn't this Australia?



Camel riding at other famous rocks

---

<sup>1</sup> Edwards GP, Zeng B, Saalfeld WK, Vaarzon-Morel P (2010) Evaluation of the impacts of feral camels. *The Rangeland Journal* **32**(1), 43-54.

<sup>2</sup> The Honourable Martin J Ferguson  
159 High Street, Preston Vic 3072  
Tel : (03) 9416 8690, Fax : (03) 9416 7810

E-mail: [Martin.Ferguson.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Martin.Ferguson.MP@aph.gov.au)

<sup>3</sup> Mr Steven M Ciobo  
67 Thomas Drive (PO Box 4922, Gold Coast Mail  
Centre Qld 9726), Chevron Island Qld 4217  
Tel : (07) 5504 6000, Fax : (07) 5504 6944

E-mail: [Steven.Ciobo.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Steven.Ciobo.MP@aph.gov.au)