

## THE FITZGERALD RIVER RESERVE IN THE WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS.

In order to consider the role of a particular resource, such as the Fitzgerald River Reserve, it is helpful to review the world and Australian situations in regard to various types of resources.

### RESOURCES FOR PRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT.

One of the most important features of our time is the tremendous rate at which technology is changing our lives. For example, Platt (1969) states, "In the last century, we have increased our speeds of communication by a factor of  $10^7$ ; of travel by  $10^2$ ; of data handling by  $10^6$ ; our energy resources by  $10^3$ ; our power of weapons by  $10^6$ ; our ability to control diseases by something like  $10^2$ ; and our rate of population growth to  $10^3$  times what it was a few thousand years ago".

Graphically this may be represented as in Diagram 1. It is not known when the curve will flatten out. At present, in many areas, technology is increasing the available resources faster than demand for them. Thus many countries, including Australia, are faced with over-production of agricultural products.

It is most unlikely that any of the natural resources used in production will become limiting factors in the foreseeable future; e.g. Jarrett (1966). Where some doubt exists recycling of material is possible, but the use of this technique is likely to spring instead from the pressure of waste disposal problems.

### PERISHABLE RESOURCES.

Resources which have not increased with the technology boom are those which make up the natural environment, landscape fauna and flora.

Jarret (1966) states: "For the next generation - and probably longer - there are few indications of widespread and persistent shortages of materials. Instead, the most troublesome questions are likely to concern the cleanliness of air and water; the effects of heavy use of pesticides upon soil and water; availability of suitable surroundings for outdoor recreation; the beauty of the countryside; and the effects of urban living on the human body".

The situation is represented graphically in Diagram 2.

### CRISIS DEVELOPMENT.

In a nutshell, while the world population and the ability to house, clothe and feed it is on the increase, the quality of the environment is deteriorating in many instances, and the quantity of natural environment is being depleted.

Platt (1969) has tabulated the types of crises likely to develop in the world over the next fifty years. He lists the ecological balance of the environment as likely to develop as a crisis in the next 5 to 20 years if no effort is made to find a solution.

That efforts are being made to avert such a crisis is evidenced by the numerous reports of anti-pollution and conservation

measures by various governments.

In 1970, the Secretary General of the United Nations, U - Thant, stated that the deterioration that is taking place in the environment probably represents the greatest threat that mankind as a whole has ever faced.

Boyden (1970) listed the following steps being taken in response to a realisation of the environmental crisis.

"(1) The recent establishment (December, 1969) of a Standing Royal Commission in the United Kingdom to report to the Government on problems relating to the deteriorating environment.

(2) The establishment by President Nixon of the Environmental Quality Council and the Citizens Advisory Committee of Environmental Quality.

(3) The proposal from the Swedish Government that the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights be extended to include a declaration of human environmental rights.

(4) The holding of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Conference of Experts on the Scientific Basis for Rational Use and Conservation of the Resources of the Biosphere in September, 1968 (often referred to as the Biosphere Conference).

(5) The planning of the United Nations Intergovernmental Conference to be held in 1972 on "The Human Environment".

In discussing the responsibility of governments, Boyden (1970) suggests that countries with high rates of literacy, political stability and relatively few pollution problems should lead the world in attempting to avert the environmental crisis. He concludes that "in Australia we are in an especially favourable position to make a unique and most important contribution to the environmental problem".

#### DEMAND FOR RECREATION.

The reductions in natural environment already discussed are made more serious by the increasing demands in the world for outdoor recreation. Clawson and Knetsch (1966) have made a study of the economics of outdoor recreation. They estimate that the number of man-hours spent in some form of outdoor recreation by people in the United States rose by a factor of 700 times between 1900 and 1960. A further 40 to 50 fold increase was considered by no means unlikely by 2000 A.D.

Numerous studies of patronage of national parks and other resorts have been made in the United States. Clawson and Knetsch have reviewed the studies and conclude that, "by and large, the growth in the use of major kinds of outdoor areas is 10 per cent per year,...." Over the period considered population growth was about 2 per cent per year, indication that much of the increase was due to an increase in demand.

The four major factors affecting demand for outdoor recreation in the United States were found by Clawson and Knetsch to be population,

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income, transport and leisure. It was found that all four of these were increasing at rates which "Could easily mean that expenditures for outdoor recreation in 2000 will be eight times those of today".

Recent studies conducted for the Australian Tourist Commission by overseas consultants, Harris, Kerr and Forster (1969a & b) have revealed increased demands for tourist facilities and national parks in Australia. Visitors to Ayers Rock - Mt. Olga National Park increased as follows:

1960-61 4300 visitors

1967-68 21,500 visitors

despite mediocre facilities and 280 miles of unsealed road. The following figures were given for overseas arrivals in Australia, (excluding U.S. soldiers on R. & R.):

1959 68,120

1968 299,889

Projected for 1980 850,000 approx.

Of the people who arrive in Australia from overseas, an increasing proportion is coming for holidays.

Year	Total Arrivals	Holidays	Percentage
1964	147,878	72,206	49
1968	299,899	190,826	63

The majority of people arriving in Australia from overseas alight at Sydney. However, they often either arrive via Perth or Darwin. Hobart, Adelaide, Brisbane and Melbourne have very few overseas arrivals, or on route stoppages. It was not thought by the consultants that the establishment of Tullamarine airport would appreciably alter this situation, Harris, Kerr and Forster, (1969). The possibility therefore exists of bypassing some of the overseas holiday visitors to Western Australian attractions.

It is unfortunate that the main information available for Western Australia is a recent detailed report on the tourist potential of the north of the State. Information on patronage and demand for established national parks in the southwest of the State, relatively near the international airport, and accessible by sealed roads is extremely short. Details of patronage are incomplete because of inadequate staffing to obtain them, but there are indications of a pressing demand, in some cases to the point of overuse.

Figures of interest are the following extracted from the Statistical Register for Western Australia:

	Sales of Sporting and Travel Goods	Population
1956-57	\$809,000	695,234
1961-62	\$2,632,000	765,715

The report on Travel and Tourism in Western Australia's North-West and the Kimberley's, 1968-69, by Western Research Services



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indicated that for the period under study, \$3.2 million was spent by persons visiting the area for business and \$1.8 million by tourists. Of the people who went to several towns, and gave a reply concerning the reason for their visit, the following replies were received:

Attraction	per cent of Visitors
Scenery and flowers	72
Progress and potential	12
Friendly people	9
Climate	7
Industry and mining	6

#### THE ROLE OF FITZGERALD RIVER RESERVE:

There can be no doubt that the State, National and World demands for natural environment areas are increasing dramatically. There are many unique features in the Western Australian flora, fauna and landscape which may bring the State a rich return in perpetuity if appropriately managed and protected. The Fitzgerald River Reserve is a most impressive area in this respect.

Studies of tourist potential similar to those conducted for Central Australia and North-Western Australia may well show that a Fitzgerald River National Park would be a use superior to any other for this part of the State.

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DIAGRAM 1

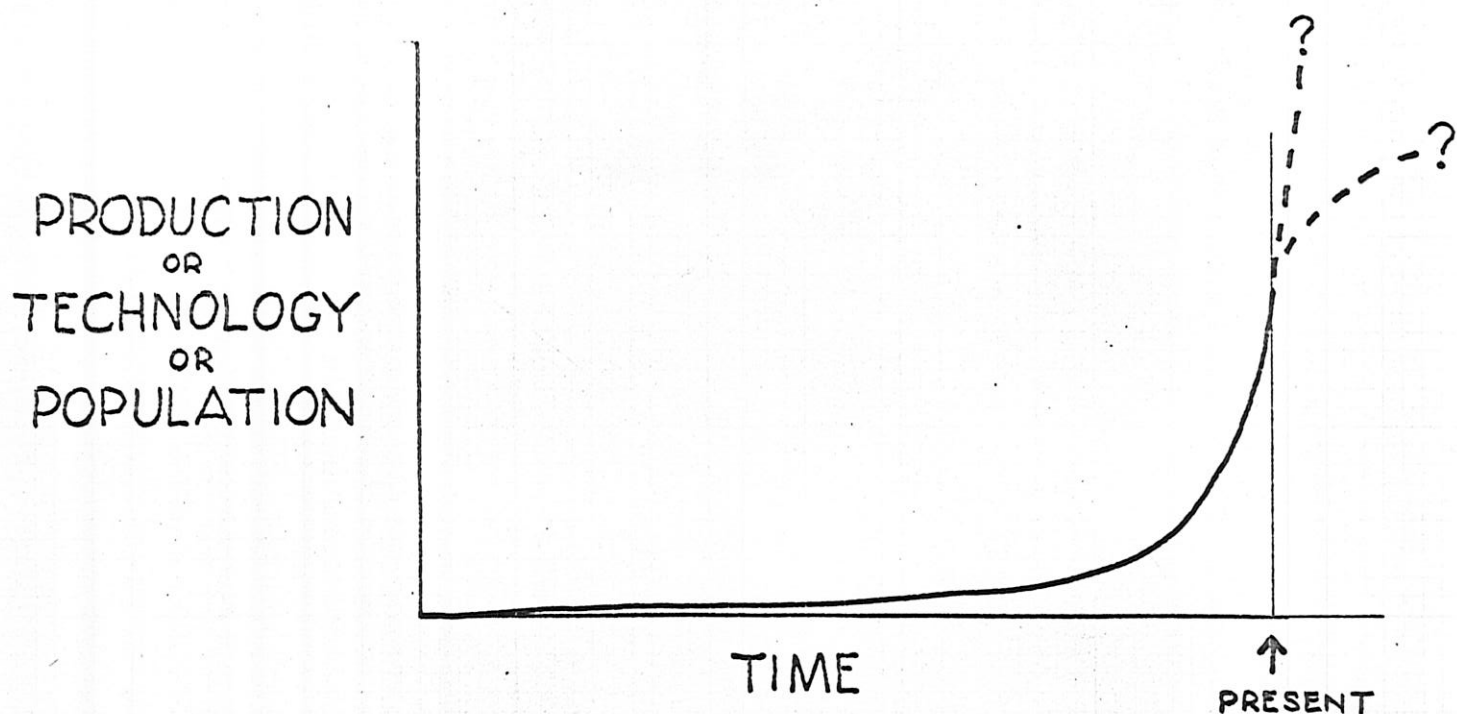


DIAGRAM 2

