

# CHAPTER 23: Potential of a Wartime Tourism Industry for PNG

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## Preamble

Wartime tourism is unique because it unites people who were once divided. It provides an avenue for the establishment of empathetic relationships between trekkers and tourists of various nationalities and subsistence villagers who are the guardians of sites sacred to Australia, the United States and Japan.

The potential of the Kokoda trekking industry and the benefits that will accrue to local villagers along the trail is currently limited by the lack of a professional management authority supported by appropriate legislation.

The potential of a wartime tourism industry is limited by an effective strategy supported by an appropriate organisational structure.

The most relevant guide to the potential of a wartime tourism industry in PNG is the continued growth in Australians making the pilgrimage to Gallipoli.

Each year up to 9,000 Australians visit the Dawn Service at Anzac Cove. Thousands more visit it at other times of the year. It is now becoming a pilgrimage for more than a million Turkish people also visiting Gallipoli each year.

Papua New Guinea has the potential to be a world class adventure-tourism destination but it has to address negative perceptions in regard to safety and reliability - particularly after the ‘Black Cat Track’ murders. This will require a focused investment in national marketing and support for the development of niche adventures such as wartime pilgrimages, eco-trekking, diving, surfing, fishing, white-water rafting, caving, bird-watching, and culture.

People who participate in these niche adventure activities are generally more aware of the sensitivities of culture and environment and do not expect 5-star accommodation and service. They are also more tolerant of ‘surprises’ that are often experienced in the ‘land of the unexpected’.

Recent interest in wartime tourism indicates that it has great potential as a niche industry for PNG tourism. This is evident by the rapid increase in the number of trekkers since the 50th anniversary of the Kokoda campaign in 1992 – more than 50,000 Australians have trekked Kokoda over the past

decade. Currently there is no mechanism for capturing their personal details to allow PNG Tourism to market other adventure destinations in PNG – this equates to 50,000 lost opportunities.

‘Kokoda’ is almost the complete adventure experience for Australian baby-boomers and young adventurers. It requires physical stamina and mental tenacity. The wartime history evokes strong emotions. The unconditional care and support of local PNG guides and villagers is humbling. The environment is rugged, remote and pristine.

Many trekkers have invited their PNG guides to Australia to meet families and friends after they return. Many more are willing to contribute to agricultural, health and education initiatives to assist local villages as demonstrated in the attached report.

**Beyond Kokoda are wartime adventures in Rabaul, Milne Bay, Buna, Gona, Salamaua, Nadzab, Lae, Finchafen, the Finisterre Ranges, Death Valley, Shaggy Ridge, Madang and Wewak. These are not only different battlesites – they are inhabited by different cultures with different traditions that create an adventurous smorgasbord.**

**Wartime tourism is not restricted to trekkers. It has the capacity for wartime cruises to Port Moresby, Milne Bay, Lae, Madang, Wewak, Aitape, Manus, Rabaul, Bougainville and the Solomon’s. Imagine an Anzac Dawn Service at Owers Corner; a showcase of PNG culture along Ela Beach; a ‘Beating-of-the-Retreat’ at Bomana War Cemetery followed by a 7-day Pacific War Cruise to each of the significant coastal/island battlesites.**

The most important challenge for PNG is to develop a sustainable model that can be applied to each area. The development of the Kokoda trekking industry provides a timely opportunity for a case study as the basis for developing such a model for wartime tourism.

#### [PNG National Wartime Tourism Corporation \(NWTC\)](#)

A PNG National Wartime Tourism Corporation (NWTC) established under the Companies Act would provide a national framework for such an industry. It could operate as a business entity under the auspices of the Independent Public Business Corporation (IPBC) supported by a PNG Military Heritage Act.

A Kokoda Trail Management Company model owned by ILGs along the trail could be a precursor to the establishment of special business units owned by local communities being developed to manage each particular area – the Kokoda Trail, Black Cat Track, Shaggy Ridge, Buna-Gona-Sanananda, Lark Force, etc.

The NWTC should be run as a commercial business with ILGs as shareholders with profits returned for local community development. Joint Agreements for Commemoration could be developed with governments from Australia, the United States and Japan to develop, fund and maintain interpretative memorials for each area of military historical significance. They would also contribute specialist personnel familiar with Melanesian culture and the necessary infrastructure to support access to such sites as the demand for pilgrimages develops.

The long-term benefits of wartime tourism extend far beyond the tourism industry. These include the protection of our shared wartime heritage; a sustainable source of income for local landowners; and an empathetic gateway for a better understanding of our cultural differences.

## Government to Government Structure

The Australian Government should consider rationalising responsibility for the Kokoda Trail and the broader Owen Stanley Ranges between the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Environment. Both agencies should work through the Australian High Commission in Port Moresby

The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) should be the lead agency for the Kokoda Trail and other significant areas of interest to our future generations. This is not a radical realignment as DVA is already the lead agency responsible for Gallipoli and the recent development of a Remembrance Trail on the Western Front in France and Belgium.

The DVA website advises that the Remembrance Trail was developed:

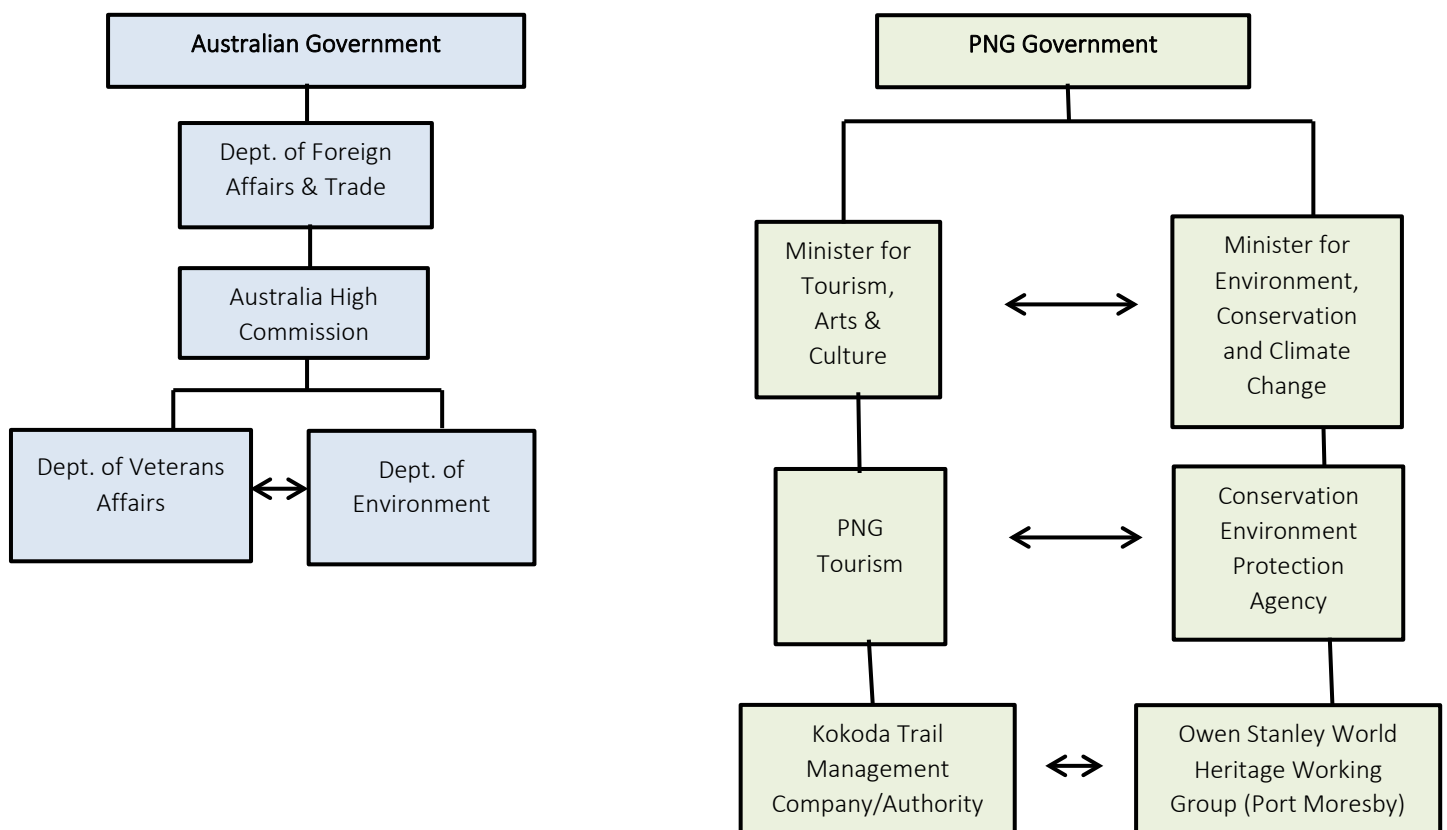
*'To inform and guide visitors of all ages, levels of fitness, and amounts of travel time. Visitors can view key locations at which Australians fought, and visit high quality interpretive centres that present Australian material, while also visiting related sites of Australian interest.'*

*'The interpretive materials assume no prior knowledge of military history and are available in a mix of traditional and digital media formats. The Australian Remembrance Trail and associated materials provide ample opportunity for contemplative reflection.'*

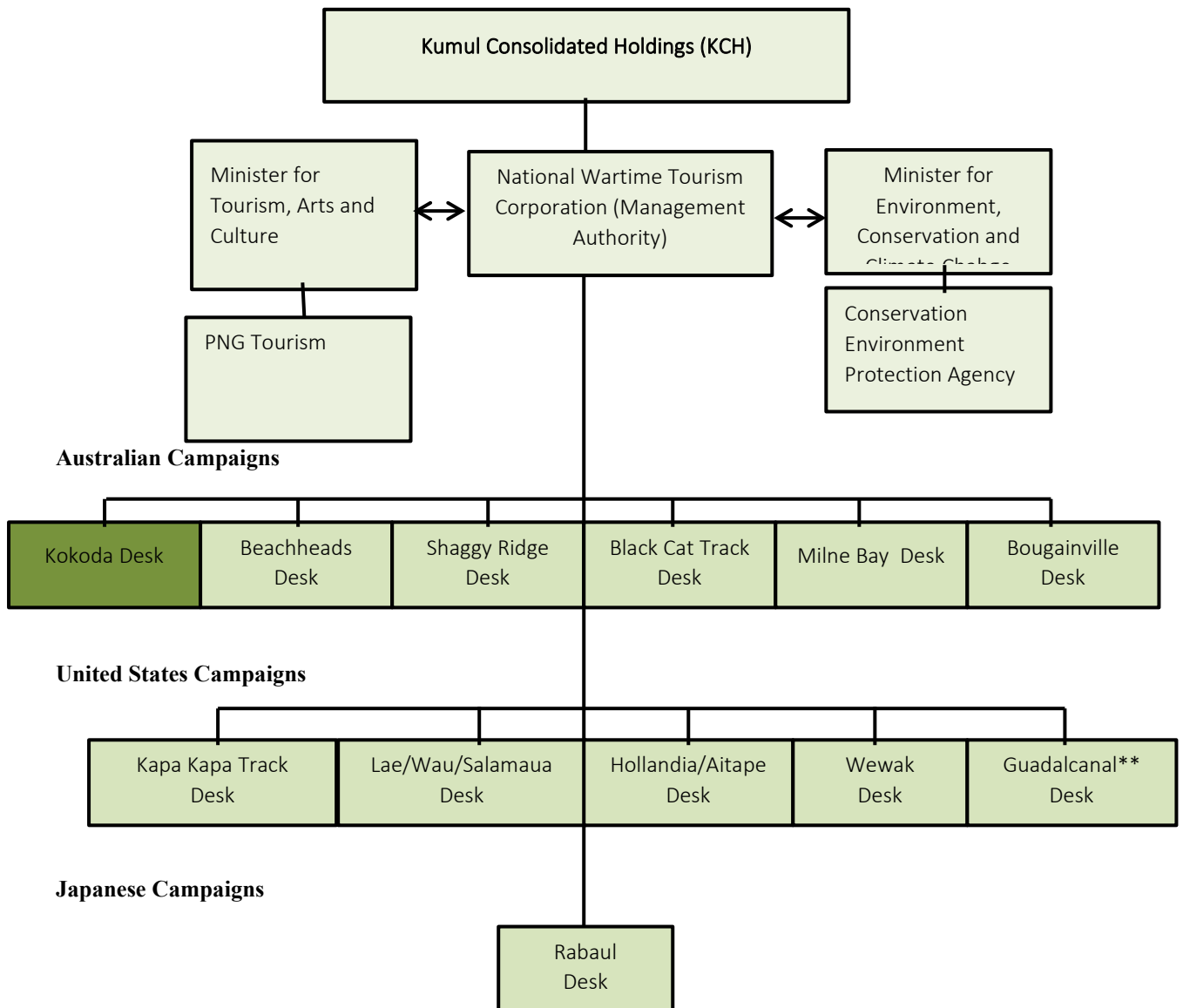
**If DVA can develop such an interpretive trail for WW1 on the Western Front in Europe could it not develop a similar WW2 interpretive trail along the Kokoda Trail in PNG?**

The Department of Environment should be the lead agency for the Owen Stanley World Heritage Working Group and should work in close collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs; the PNG Department of Environment and Conservation; the PNG Office of Tourism, Arts and Culture and associated bodies.

## Proposed Government to Government Structure



## Proposed Management Structure for a PNG National Wartime Tourism Corporation (NWTTC)



A review of the growth of wartime tourism in Gallipoli and the Western Front indicates that the future of the Kokoda trekking industry is assured. In the first instance the growth of the industry will depend on the professionalism of the management structure; the development of a master plan reflecting our shared wartime heritage of the Kokoda campaign as a model; a free enterprise system for the income generators for the industry i.e. trek and tour operators who invest their own capital in research, marketing, sales, operations and logistics; ownership of management companies by ILGs; and a community development plan to ensure villagers receive shared benefits from the industry.

A revised Kokoda Trail management body would be an effective model for other areas of military historical significance.