

Owers Corner: the start of the Kokoda Trail

# The case for a Visitor Centre



Over the past decade more than 40,000 Australians  
have trekked Kokoda.

This has generated approximately K50 million  
into village economies via fees, wages & local purchases.

A further K60 million has been generated within the PNG economy via hotel accommodation, charter aircraft & purchases.

Total GST revenue between Australia and PNG is in the region of K40 million.

Approximately 3,500 trekkers cross the Kokoda Trail each year, which generates a total spend of K32 million per annum in Australian and PNG.

The increase in trekkers from 76 in 2001 to a peak of 5,621 in 2008 transformed the Kokoda Trail into Papua New Guinea's premier tourism location.

This was achieved by private enterprise as independent trek operators developed the market... independently of Government intervention.

During the period 2004 – 2008 trekker numbers increased by 255% from 1,584 to 5,621.

During this time the management staff of the KTA comprised one full time CEO on a PNG salary of K25,000 p/a and one part-time secretarial assistant.

However....

In 2009 the Australian Government assumed control of the Kokoda Track Authority.

An Australian CEO was appointed on a salary of K360,000 plus allowances – it was his first time in PNG.

There was a 10-fold increase in staff...



Since then trekker numbers declined by 44%  
from 5,621 to 3,156...

despite an injection of  
K115 million of aid funding into the Kokoda Initiative.

Papua New Guinea needs to reclaim the Kokoda Trail, manage the Trail and maximise its tourism potential for the benefit of the tourism industry and the villages within the footprint of the Kokoda Trail.

This will also need a full appreciation of the wartime tourism market.

For instance:

Approximately 9000 Australians visit Gallipoli each year  
and pay between an average of  
K18,000 for the pilgrimage.

PNG is closer, safer, cheaper and more significant to the current and future generations of Australians because:

*‘at Gallipoli we fought for Britain and lost –  
at Kokoda we fought for Australia and won!’*

Owers Corner has the potential to become the most visited tourism destination in Papua New Guinea because of its wartime historical significance and its road access to the nation's capital.

The name '*Kokoda*' now shares equal billing with '*Anzac*' and '*Gallipoli*' in Australia.

The Kokoda Trail is currently accessible to less than 0.01 per cent of the Australian population because of the lack of transport infrastructure.

There is an increasing interest in wartime history in Australia. In 2015 1.4 million people visited the Australian War Memorial in Canberra – an increase of 21% on the previous year.



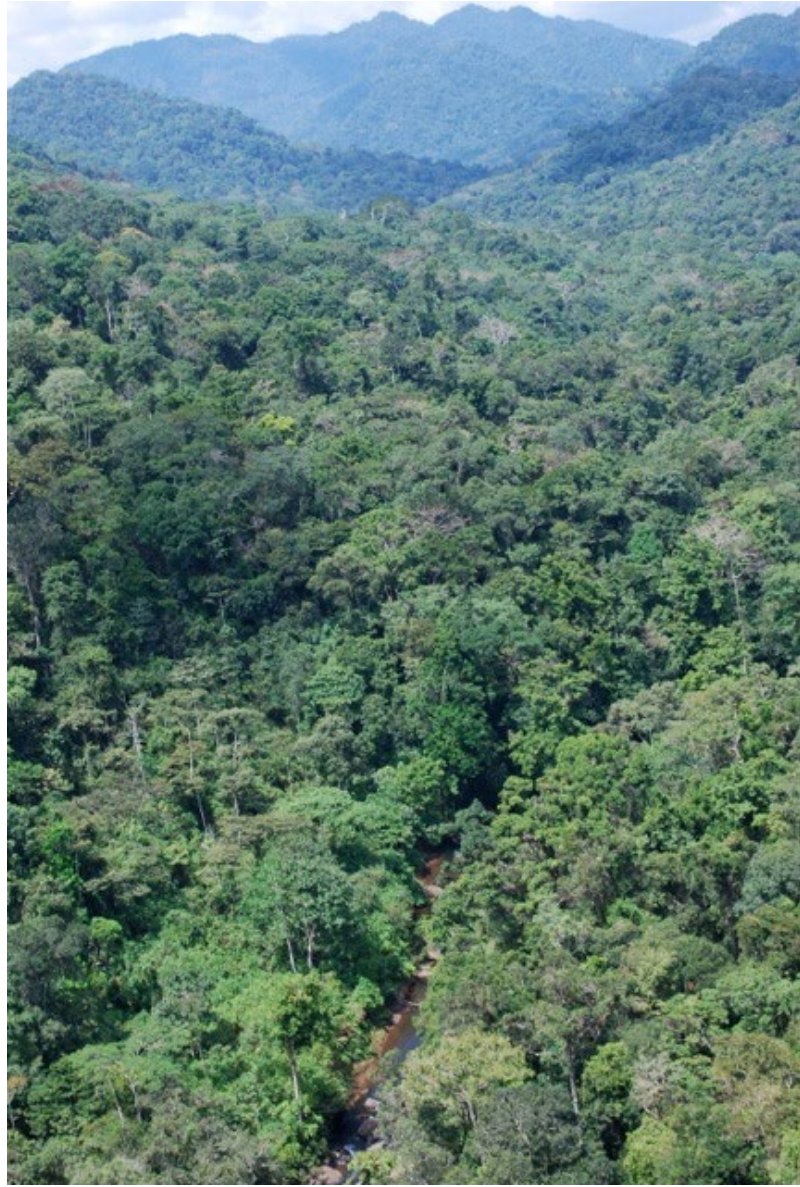
The extension of a sealed road from  
Sogeri to Owers Corner would make it  
accessible to 99% of Australia's population.

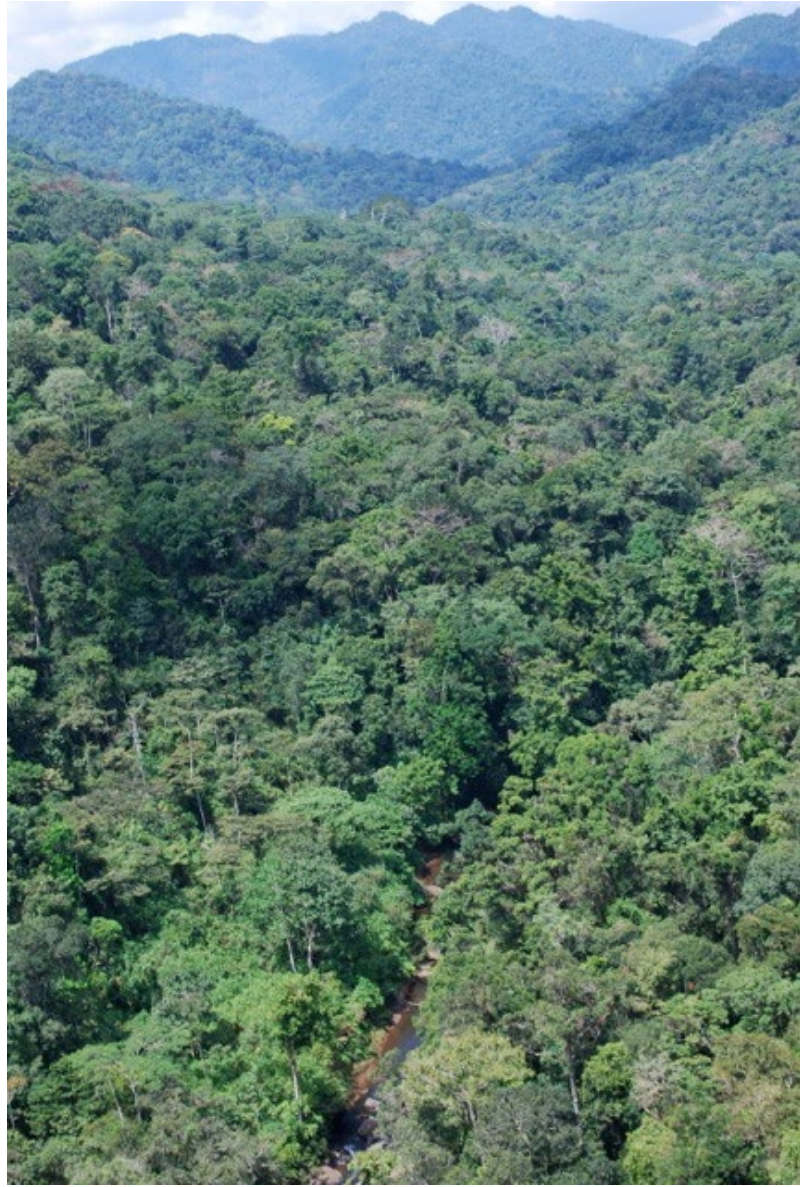
Papua New Guinea is experiencing a steady growth in visits from Cruise ships. Day visits to Owers Corner would be an attractive proposition if the road was sealed and there was a visitor's centre reflecting the historical-cultural values of the place.

The Owers Corner Visitors Centre would include a building with a research centre for PNG history graduates; a theatre for the showing of historical documentaries; a diorama on the Kokoda campaign; a reading room with historical books and magazines; an arts and crafts shop and a coffee lounge.

The building would offer expansive views across the Owen Stanley Ranges.





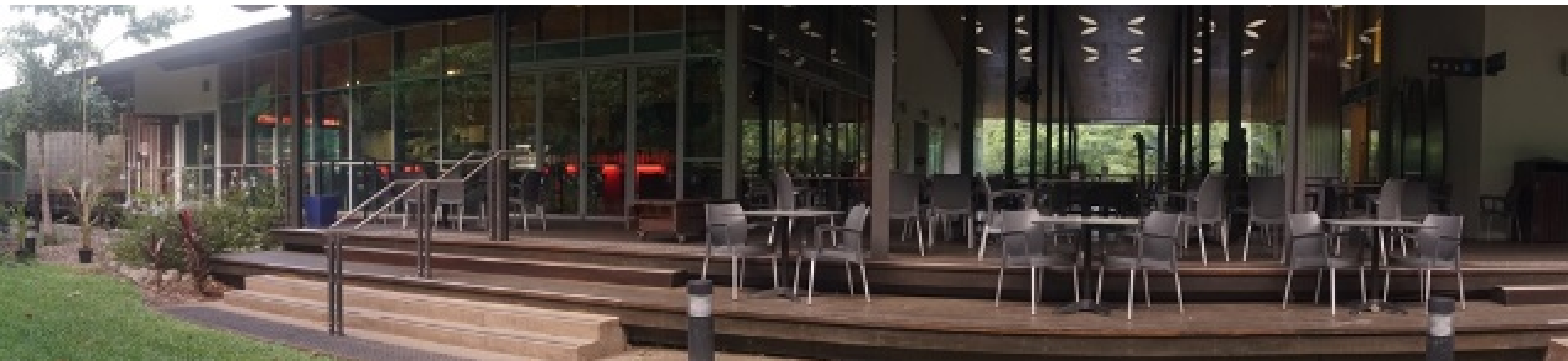


The centre could be modelled on the  
Indigenous Visitors Centre  
at  
Mossman Gorge in far North Queensland, Australia.











Mossman Gorge  
Visitor Centre



The precinct could include a replica village featuring Koiari tree-houses and an outside theatre for the performance of traditional dances.

Such a development would see the establishment of a sustainable day-trekking industry with short guided treks down to the Goldie River and/or up to Imita Ridge and back.

As well as day trips for the less adventurous, school excursions and the frail.

Now more people could say they visited  
the famous Kokoda Trail.

*Thank you!*