

CHAPTER FOUR

'IT'S NOT DIFFICULT TO BE A SAVANNAH GUIDE' (Guide 14, male, Tour Operator, Savannah Guide).

For all its apparent simplicity, 'guiding' is a complex concept: and while there are many different types of guiding, some of this complexity also marks the tourist guide (Cohen 1985: 6).

The occupation of tour guiding has frequently been perceived as a romantic profession. Tour guides are to be found in antiquity when they guided tourists and informed for them, similar to the activities the guides of today perform. Tour guiding, for the participants in this study, is believed to be a relatively easy job to carry out. However, the literature of experts in the tour guide field (Cohen 1985; Cohen 1982; Crick 1994; Crick 1992; Crick 1989; Holloway 1981; Schmidt 1979), suggests that tour guiding is a complex and intricate occupation, with many facets and unique scenarios to be supplied and accommodated.

This chapter confronts a twofold problem regarding the notion of the tour guide. The problem is that, although the guides in this study perceive the occupation of the ecotour guide as being an easy profession to enter, what they do as relatively easy work that almost anyone can do. On the

other hand, sociological theorists such as Cohen (1985) believe tour guiding is a complex phenomenon, and a difficult concept to understand. However, working as an ecotour guide requires a certain temperament and disposition. As Cohen (1985) notes, guiding is an intricate and multifaceted subject, and there are many irregularities within the employment. Guides utilise emotional labour in an attempt to bring about a feeling of 'at-oneness' in the tourists. Tourists desire and expect this feeling of holistic well-being to emerge as part of the ecotour encounter. However, every tour must be orchestrated to constraints of time, tourist agendas, weather and financial considerations.

This chapter also introduces the group of individuals who comprise the umbrella organisation known as the Savannah Guides. Their membership and individual qualities are inextricably linked to the formation of the overarching association and the analysis is contextualised within an examination of this relationship. Initially, I discuss the formation and background of the umbrella guiding group. The traits of the associated individuals serve to create a 'snapshot' of the backgrounds of members and their attitudes and alliances that have been marked out as a result of the length of time they have been connected to the organisation. The quality and intricacy of membership of the main group is relevant to the number of small family businesses that make up that bond of membership.

The choice of a group of ecotour guides as a subject for research investigation is indicative of the escalating concern about the care of the environment. Ecotourism is not new. Urry (1990) suggests that the currently popular forms of tourism started with the rise of modernism, when rapid forms of growth saw an increase in alienation from labour, communities and from nature (Urry 1990: 2). Tour guide clients insist upon culturally and environmentally responsible tourism (Blamey 1995: 9). Succinctly, an understanding of the Savannah Guides facilitates a deeper understanding of the interactions between the guides, ecotourism, ecotour operators and ecotour interpretation.

The examination of the umbrella group focuses on a descriptive analysis of individuals who make up the membership ranks. It also includes a discussion of what the individuals perceive as the qualities and skills required to attain a position within the group. The quality of family life and interactions between group members is also analysed. For a number of individuals in this study, family/business interaction is a constant precarious balancing act between the responsibilities of family life and a full time job.

Joining the Savannah Guides

The Savannah Guides are now an established organisation, which developed from a perceived need throughout the Gulf of Carpentaria region for an organisation such as this. This organisation has been able to sustain itself for more than ten years and it is still able to attract new members and to

stimulate interest and enthusiasm wherever it is encountered. The reasons people join the Savannah Guides are various and innumerable. Some of the reasons include friendship of individuals engaged in similar work, a shared affinity with the environment and the need to network their product and their ecobusinesses.

The Savannah Guide organisation was formed in 1988 by a small number of men, the majority of whom are still active within the organisation today. One has resigned due to ill health, but has been awarded a lifetime membership. The member (Guide 22) who thought up the original concept is still in active contact with the Guides to this day.

I was one of the founding members and, I think, that goes back to 1988. It was our first tentative foray into forming it (Guide 4, male, Tour Operator, Savannah Guide).

I was involved with the local authority, Etheridge [Shire Council], as a Councillor, and we were members of the Gulf Local Authorities Development Association [GLADA]. So, I was involved in the formative years of pulling the concepts together (Guide 14, male, Tour Operator, Savannah Guide).

Since the initial formation of the association, membership has slowly risen to include between forty to sixty individual members and twelve enterprise operations. Two tour businesses, both Savannah Guide Sites, and all the guides working there, except for one who has gained employment in an external environmental organisation, have left the group. The membership ranks and numbers are constantly shifting and changing.

The Savannah Guides is an umbrella organisation that fosters membership from ecotour operators and their employees. Guides who work for an ecotourism operator who is a member of the Savannah Guide network are encouraged to seek individual guide status within the overarching group.

I joined SGL [Savannah Guides Limited] as a requirement of my work. It was seen as a level of advancement at [names business], you were recognised for your ability to do longer and more specialised tours. But, you were under no obligation to join SGL from [the business where you were employed] (Guide 10, male, Employee, Savannah Guide).

At the start, it [joining the Savannah Guides] became a recognition of guiding practices, whether it be a standard, or just better guiding practices, which led me to it (Guide 15, male, Employee, Roving Interpreter).

Common values were one of the reasons individuals sought out membership of the group. Guide 1 joined the Savannah Guides because she liked the convictions of the group and she felt that this particular system of beliefs was a worthwhile set of values to strive for. Her son's partner also gave similar reasons for wanting to become affiliated with the group.

When we were just starting our business in 1996 - 1997, I was doing a business plan and was trying to find similar tourism products so I could do visitor number projections for our place. The only similar product I could think of was [names another Savannah Guide Station], and I contacted [names Savannah Guide] to see if he would share their visitor numbers with me. Not only was he very generous with information, but invited us to the next Savannah Guide School at Hells Gate in April 1997, as he felt it was an organisation that may interest us (Guide 8, female, Tour Operator, Site Interpreter).

Interestingly, these particular guides appear to be adopting a language that is at odds with ecotourism, in the sense that ecotourism eschews 'commodification'. They use language that indicates that they perceive ecotourism as the same as mass tourism. The words are not congruent with the discourse of ecotourism.

Savannah Guide membership identifies itself as a position of exclusive status. Restricted and selective membership is part of the marketing perspective of the group and could be seen as a position of exclusivity and dominance, according to the guides. Rules connected with organisational codes of conduct are mechanisms that keep the guides subservient to the discipline and practice of the organisation. They must comply with the standards or risk being excluded from the group.

There appear to be two clear and distinct themes in the representation of Savannah Guides. The original, or founding members, believed that when they began the group, they would be educating the tourists and showing them 'authentic' ecotour sites and the flora and fauna of their businesses and associated areas. The second theme has emanated from the notions of Savannah Guides as an identifiable ecotourism commodity; recognition is shown by badges, levels of advancement and national accreditation. Recognition as an identifiable product has slowly become the newer ideal of the group since the implementation of a more regimented and 'McDonalised'

form of direction (Ritzer 1998). The guides use professionalisation as a means to legitimate themselves and their group in a competitive tourism sector. This rationalised process has become more evident in recent times. The immediate past president of the guides appears to be the instigator of this drive for recognition within the ecotourism sector. However, since the election of a new president the move towards a more managerial form of guidance may very well shift direction once more.

Well, our company [names ecotourism business] saw that Savannah Guides was a means for us to improve our standards, to have better environmental awareness, better staff training. It was really a corporate decision and, as an individual, both as a guide and as part of the management team of that company, I saw it as a very positive step, and so, that was where ... it came from the enterprise motivation, really (Guide 34, male, Employee, Savannah Guide).

The conversion to a more regimented and supposedly more marketable type of tourism has presented problems for a number of the original members, who believe that people with 'bush' backgrounds should have the opportunity to be inducted into the Savannah Guides. A few of the initial members have embraced the newer form of Savannah Guide ideology and have appropriated the terminology of this thinking. They use marketing and management words such as: best practice, stakeholders, sustainability and win-win situation. Some of the original members are opposed to the rationalisation process of the newer regime and would prefer a return to the 'old days' of the organisation and the Schools, where formalisation and regimentation was not such an inherent part. In those days, the ideals were about mateship and sharing similar experiences.

Many of the guides had been searching for an opportunity to become part of an organisation that would benefit their ecotourism businesses and their personal goals. Guide 33 from the Northern Territory, heard of the group about twelve years ago. He met some of the Savannah Guides and held various conversations with them about the organisation. Later, he learnt more about the group from others who had been involved from its inception, as well as learning about the Gulf Local Authorities Development Association (GLADA).

This guide has also been instrumental in raising Savannah Guides' standards of accreditation both within the field and within the profession. He has been a member of State tourism authorities and is on the board of a government-funded organisation that researches specific areas in the Australian landscape and its usage. He has undertaken these tasks for the past fourteen years, since he has been an ecotour guide.

In recent times it seems that the Savannah Guide organisation has taken that [the challenge to raise standards of accreditation] up and embraced it more seriously. It first really became clear to me when I went over to the Normanton School, about eighteen months ago, how far they'd advanced. And, that they'd broadened out to include tour operators rather than being a mixture of clubs and a few Stations in the Gulf. So, given that, and also, I suppose another really broad motivator, and in fact, it was probably the catalyst: the calibre of people I met when I went to the Normanton-Croydon School, the sort of people, you know, [he names them] who are those sort of guides you can respect. You don't see many of them in Kakadu anymore. But, I thought it was a good organisation to be associated with, for myself and for my staff (Guide 33, male, Tour Operator, Savannah Guide).

Similarly, another guide comments about the rationale behind his joining the group.

I went down to Mataranka as an observer, became enamoured with the whole deal. The main thing that struck me, and still does, is the fact that it's a guide based/operator based organisation. It's very light on, as far as bureaucracy's concerned (Guide 28, male, Tour Operator, Site Interpreter).

The apparent low levels of bureaucracy within the association have been part of the attraction for some guides. However, the rigid standards set for training and wearing of the uniform reflect a strict and inflexible set of group norms which may offset the mild forms of bureaucratic engagement for some members. Thus, each member must ascertain if this calibre of organisation offers them goals and aspirations complimentary to their own standards and forms of business arrangements. That is, can they and their businesses demonstrate and maintain adherence to group norms and expectations?

Many individuals join Savannah Guides to convey the impression of high guiding standards. Guide 22 stated that, throughout his experience, he has seen 'some very high and very low standards of guiding'. He now believes he has found an organisation which will lead him to a higher standard than he would otherwise achieve.

To become a Savannah Guide will promote to the people that I'm taking on tour, or propose to take on tour, that I've achieved a high standard of guiding. My business will also become accredited with

Savannah Guides, and again, I think that puts a very definite stamp of approval on the sort of operation I have because, without it, if it doesn't meet the standard it won't be accredited. It's as simple as that (Guide 22, male, Tour Operator, Roving Interpreter).

National recognition is important to the Savannah Guides who see themselves as having reached the highest pinnacle in their profession by providing a superlative ecotourism experience. They have sought to gain accreditation standardisation from the Ecotourism Association of Australia (EAA), but have decided that they should be able to accredit themselves. The exclusivity and feelings of superiority of those in this select group became a finding and an identifiable group trait that emerged throughout the research.

The standards set by the guides frequently surpass the expectations of the tourists and can be witnessed in the profuse appreciation received by guides at the completion of a tour. Sometimes, generous tips and impromptu group approval, such as applause, can consolidate this approval.

We've had some very good experiences, actually. We get a lot of "Thank you's". A lot of people give donations or write in our book how wonderful it [the tour] was. A lot of people join [names their organisation]. We have over five hundred members (Guide 16, female, Tour Operator, Site Interpreter).

Many tourists are surprised by the standard of education and social background of the guides, and find this contradicts their stereotypical images of the occupation. Tourists expect guides to include personalities such as the Australian bush stockman, roustabout, or sheep shearer; cowboys from the

rodeo circuit; or other more famous figures such as the Bushtucker Man, Crocodile Dundee, the Barefoot Bushman or the Crocodile Hunter.

The tourist industry, perhaps to a greater extent than other industries, focuses almost exclusively on its customers and is dependent upon employees who can deliver a high standard of service and who can communicate with varied members of tour groups with high levels of skill (Black, Ham and Weiler 2001: 150).

On occasion, the task of guiding will involve conflict between the actor's self and his role. The need to identify oneself in large groups can embarrass guides, especially early in their guiding career. Their occupation is an exceptionally visible one, and the guides are embarrassed by the need to conduct their parties through areas where they may be seen by personal acquaintances (Holloway 1981: 390 - 391).

As guides' develop their individual guiding styles, embarrassment easily gives way to confidence and command of their knowledge area. Tourists admire guides who provide full information of their subject and fulfill the 'idealised performance' function of the guide. This idealised performance is sustained by the role veneer of the performer (Goffman 1959): badges, uniforms, stance and language models supply the hints for the tourists. Role play is important, in spite of the fact that many guides have to speak to tourists in rapidly moving vehicles or lead them over rugged land at tourist sites (Holloway 1981: 390).

Another motive for guiding is to teach tourists information about the background of a particular site prior to the area being deemed a pristine location and in need of protection. Guide 13 has long held an interest in history and the historical background of her local area. She reports that her historical knowledge enhances and benefits her attraction to, and enjoyment of, the Australian bush.

There was an ad in the paper. I've got the ad at home. There was an advertisement for here [names employing organisation]. I can deal with the historical side of things. ... When you tell the history of this place, you need to tell it right. So, if you don't get the history of around here right, it's not worth it. So, my interest was the history and to get it right. I love the bush I love the animals (Guide 13, female, Employee, Site Interpreter).

The circulation of legitimate and precise information is considered the mainstay of the guide's role. The guide is an 'information giver and fount of knowledge' and a 'teacher and instructor': in fact, guides themselves have a tendency to 'perceive their prime role to be that of information giver' (Holloway 1981: 385-386). They frequently have inspiring information about the sites on their tours and are enthusiastic about demonstrating their ability to interpret these for the tourists (Cohen 1985: 15; Holloway 1981: 387).

According to the literature on environmental interpretation (Black, Ham and Weiler 2001; Fine and Haskell Speer 1985; Geva and Goldman 1991; Grinder and McCoy 1985; Gurung, Simmons, and Devlin, P 1996; Howard 1998; Muhlhauser and Peace, 2001; Shanahan, Pelstring and McComas 1999; Shephard and Royston-Airey 2000; Weiler and Ham 2001;

Weiler and Davis 1993), characteristics or capabilities needed for interpretation are mostly communication skills, eagerness, a sense of humour, self-confidence, affability and integrity. A nature-based tour guide with such capabilities can play an important role in controlling both on-site tourist behaviour and tourist attitudes (and consequently, long term tourist behaviour) regarding the environment (Weiler and Davis 1993: 94).

The importance of the interpretive element increases with the growing artificiality of the 'staged' tourist attractions: in the extreme, it may turn into fabrication. The major professional dilemma of the Professional Guide, indeed, is that while he [sic] takes pride in his [sic] interpretive skills, through which he [sic] dramatises the presentation of the attractions, thereby enhancing their impact on his [sic] party, he [sic] should not willfully slip into fabrication. He [sic] thus frequently finds himself [sic] treading the narrow path between interpretive keying and outright fabrication (Cohen 1985: 20).

To avoid the danger of fabrication, Savannah Guide protocol emphasises precise information being imparted to the tourists as part of their ethos. Correct information, together with both Latin and common names for flora and fauna form part of the Savannah Guide training norms (Field notes 16.04.99). High standards of interpretation and guiding are expected and maintained within the ranks of this association. To offer badly informed interpretation to tourists would be to flaunt the principles of best practice and leave oneself vulnerable and open to criticism and attack from other members of the group. It could, if repeated, also end in exclusion and expulsion from the organisation.

The reasons for seeking membership of an organisation or with a group of ecotourism guides are complex. For some guides, solidarity and comradeship is vital to this type of identifiable ecotour group. The feeling of belonging and of being in touch with people of the same mind-set and with the same values and concerns confirms group solidarity and provokes initial contact with the organisation itself. A recognised form of accreditation within the ecotourism industry is also important to the guides. Striving for higher levels of recognition that are superior to ordinary and mundane types of both general and environmental tourist operations is also an important aspect of group cohesion and affiliation.

These salient issues are indicative of the both the types of people who have joined Savannah Guides and, more importantly, the rationale behind their joining the umbrella organisation. The background to the reasons for becoming a member helps to provide and illustrate a more comprehensive view of the disposition of the individuals involved and demonstrates their diversity at both personal and business levels. Also highlighted is the fact that this is a very diverse and interesting collection of people and that they have wide ranging and multitudinous levels of experience and expertise.

Attributes of a Savannah Guide

Although from varied backgrounds the members of the Savannah Guides all have a knowledge and a love of the Australian bush and savanna country,

exhibit friendliness, and demonstrate the ability to get along with a range of personalities and nationalities, including the capacity to be a jack-of-all-trades. This list is representative and by no means exhaustive. The overarching group presents each individual member with the opportunity to communicate and reinforce 'like-minded' ideals and perceptions.

Savannah Guides believe there are personal skills and qualities essential to successful guiding. According to one of the participants, these important instinctive skills include good effective public speaking and self-discipline. The basic requirements for being a tourist guide are enthusiasm in guiding tourists, interpreting sites and objects for the tourists and the ability to control the tour group and the situation.

Motivation is a key element in the criteria for a Savannah Guide. Guide 18 points out that an ecotour guide has to be really keen. With the series of levels, particularly within the structure of the Savannah Guides, level and badging achievement is not actually something you can study for. Guides are actively involved as interpreters and ecotour leaders to gain recognition for their standards of guiding. Their personal levels of motivation help them to achieve recognition both inside and outside the organisation. So, they are dedicated to the overall concept of what the Savannah Guides represent. The individuals would not be members of the group if they did not all have the same goals. Guide 18 also calls this a

particular mind set, only applicable to Savannah Guides and to those who have achieved recognition within their group.

To be a Savannah Guide ... means that you have achieved or been recognised as being at the top of your field. A Savannah Guide must have the knowledge and integrity to honour this position (Guide 10, male, Employee, Savannah Guide).

One participant believes that good personal skills and the ability to communicate freely are essentials. He also contends that his work relies heavily on commentaries and interpretation. He believes the basic essentials are a willingness and appreciation of the people and environment involved and the ability to be able to put factual evidence forward.

The way you approach people and speak to people is your trademark. If you can't relay to those people what you are trying to say, if you are difficult to understand, you are not in the business. If you can't relay what you are trying to say, well, you might as well forget it. Because if you can't talk to people, you can't be in tourism (Guide 12, male, Tour Operator, Site Interpreter).

Another participant believes that people skills and interpretive skills are the most important. He believes that an ecotour guide can gain the knowledge base required of them quite easily, as long as the guide is prepared to put in the preparation and time to gain this level and type of knowledge.

... the tour leader needs to be knowledgeable about ecological and conservation principles, and skilful in environmental interpretation. The latter is a process by which visitors learn about the environment. More specifically, environmental interpretation is an educational, illustrative and entertaining activity which aims at providing the visitor with an insight into the inter relationships of the various resources and systems comprising the natural environment by first hand experiences (Weiler and Davis 1993: 93-94).

The position of Savannah Guide encompasses a plethora of 'roles' (Goffman 1959) to be acquired and applied to various situations. Guide 17 explicates many of the attributes required to guide ecotourists.

You have got to be patient, you have to be an excellent communicator. You have to be a psychologist. You have to be alert to every person's nuances. You've got to be slow speaking, and by slow speaking I mean slower than when you would talk to your friend. Because, if you have a group from overseas that do not understand the Australianisms, you have got to keep those Australianisms out. You've got to make sure that you don't use any language that you would use out on the street. You've got to be a father, a mother, a doctor a nurse, and when it comes down to it, probably a padre. Because, you are it! When you are in charge of the group, you are the guide. So, you have got to have all those attributes. And that, I guess, makes it a very difficult job to do. Because, you have to be knowledgeable, and you have to keep going, and you can't believe that you are the only person in the world that knows all this stuff, you don't know everything either. So, an educator, yes. But, also a student (Guide 17, male, Freelance Guide, Savannah Guide).

Leading a group of tourists on a tour is obviously more involved than just learning some information and repeating it to the group. This guide has also underlined the fact that it is difficult work, and that it takes a special type of person to become involved in this industry.

The guides in this study all have diverse backgrounds. Guide 39 told me that she had been an assistant manager of an environmental park for three years. Before that she worked in the rainforest for two years. She also has share-farmed vegetables, managed orchards and run her own mixed business and caravan park. Guide 8 told me that she had previously worked in tourism as a guide and an in-bound tourism agent. Her partner had

completed the Heritage and Interpretive Tourism course at TAFE. Prior to this she had worked in archaeological and museum conservation, while her partner was involved in the boat building industry. Guide 34 told me he had been a school teacher, and then a guide. The one thing that all these individuals have in common is that they all turned to tourism as an alternative form of employment. In turning to ecotourism as a source of employment, they have all displayed entrepreneurial tendencies and further, a high level of motivation. Some of them recognised that there is a niche within the tourist industry for ecobased tourism and they have exploited the opportunity to their advantage.

Many of the Savannah Guides had previously been in the tourism industry in one capacity or another. Guide 32 was previously employed at Uluru, as the resident astronomer. He undertook no tour guiding duties as such, his only work involved interpreting the stars for the tourists. Some of the guides had come to the vocation of ecotour guide by working in other forms of employment at tourist sites.

Many of the guides found that although they were in jobs connected with the welfare and comfort of tourists, they would have rather been employed as an information provider and a guide. Guide 24 had started out at her place of employment as the housekeeper. She decided, after a while, that there was more to life than making beds and cleaning toilets. From

there, she started to help identify a few of the local vegetation species and became interested in flora. She commenced guiding tours shortly thereafter. Initially, she conducted a few tours and then returned to housekeeping for a few days. She held down both jobs for approximately six months. She then took up guiding as a full time profession and has been involved ever since. This guide's love of the environment and the bush drew her towards the occupation of the tourist guide. She felt she had more to offer the tourists by interpreting for them instead of looking after their comfort levels.

Various forms of employment are to be found in the tourism industry but guiding tourists has its attractions for many individuals. Guide 17 talked about the fact that his work had always been connected to the tourism industry. He had held down many jobs that involved a degree of guiding. Before he began his job at one of the Savannah Guide Stations, he had been involved in rainforest interpretation with tourists. He had also been involved in marine cruising, out on the Great Barrier Reef, off the coast of Cairns. He has also been a naturalist and a tour operator, on the tip of Cape York, where he had run safari tours. These tours included a trip through Cairns, across to Broome and down through the deserts of Western Australia, to Perth. He has also been involved in running tours throughout the Brisbane area, around O'Reilly's Guesthouse, Mount Glorious and out as far as Mount Girraween National Park. He has also had experience running

tours in Victoria. This guide has a similar background to other guides which explains their common experiences in the tourist industry.

Other people involved in the ecotour guiding business have been in jobs associated with 'the land' for many years. Previously, Guide 9 had been employed in nature-based resorts and the nature-based tour businesses for twenty years. He had also worked in property management. Immediately prior to our interview, he had had the position of Resort Manager at Undara. At the time of his interview with me, he had been seconded to Kingfisher Bay Resort and Village, on Fraser Island, as an ecotour guide. His position was to train other guides in the art of ecotourism and interpretation.

One of the guides has also been involved with tour guiding for a long time and previously as a tradesperson.

I was a tour guide and I had been a tour guide since 1988, when I was working with a tour guide organisation that did tours to Cape York Peninsula. Also, across the top of Australia. I've been in tourism ever since then. Before that, I was involved in television, as an electrician (Guide 18, male, Employee, Savannah Guide).

Guide 15 has also had experience at a number of diverse occupations mostly within the ecotourism area; he is a qualified zoo keeper and has spent eight years looking after Australian native animals. He worked for five years in the Northern Territory, at a wildlife park at Berri Springs, outside Darwin. He has worked with a vast array of native animals, including many endangered species. At one stage, he ran a lawn mowing business near

Brunswick Heads, in northern New South Wales, for about eighteen months. In his time as an ecotour guide and a member of Savannah Guides, he has also spent time working at Cobbold Gorge and Hells Gate.

Three other guides had come from large grazing businesses into the ecotourism field. One told me that he had been a grazier, 'a cattle man'. Another had also been at work on the land. He had worked on properties, farming and cattle grazing together with property management. He had also spent time as a jackaroo. A third guide had always worked on stations, handling cattle and sheep, but had always believed he would, one day, start up a business of his own. He had his first grounding working at Undara Experience for the Collins family. Guide 35 too, had 'come from the land', and had begun his involvement that way.

Working on the family cattle property. I was involved for about four years as an earth moving contractor and living on and off at home. But, mainly on the run all the time, working machinery in the local area and I did a couple of years working with kids, and in mining. But, involved in the land, pretty much all the time (Guide 35, male, Tour Operator, Savannah Guide).

Other members of the group had previous experience in different fields and professions. Guide 22 had spent thirty-eight years in engineering. Guide 25 was a fitter in a railway workshop. He worked at this job for about twelve years. He was given the opportunity to run the Gulflander railway tour because of his working background. He also has an engineering trade certificate. His job with the railway was initially to relieve someone who had

gone on holiday. He went out to do the job and has never left. He has been there six years.

Employment for some of these guides began in the bush and shifted to a slightly new focus on tourism when a perceived need was apparent and available for development. Guide 11 had always worked for the Croydon Shire Council. He began as a plant operator and truck driver. From there, he was able to continue working for the Council but as a tour guide and information officer.

A few of the guides had always worked on the land but from the perspective of environmentalists. One had worked in environmental education and scientific field research. Some had also come from a hospitality background, but had always lived in the bush and wanted to work in tourism businesses in the outback. Guide 12 became interested in working in the bush when he was employed by the Normanton Shire Council as a cost clerk and then an Engineer Support Officer. He had always been an outdoor type of person and could see the need for a tour operation to be implemented in his local area.

Nearly all the previous occupations of the guides involved manual and physical labour. Most of the guides did not work in offices or hold down desk jobs. The guides' previous work was in occupations dealing with

people. The three defining features of work as a tour guide are: the work is done in the outdoors, the work involves looking after other people, and the work also entails informing and educating others about nature, animals and environmental awareness.

Some of the members of the Savannah Guides have always been in the tourist industry, while others have created their own employment within tourism and some discovered the sector through working for others. Many of them have had 'hands on' experience and demonstrate a diverse knowledge of the environment they work in. Others have had a broad experience of life 'on the land' and have come to ecotourism through that connection.

Educational Levels of Guides

The conflict of the two schools of thought within the Savannah Guides, the old school and rationalists, is also apparent with regard to levels of education in the group. The old school cohort believes in 'the university of life' approach, while the rationalist cohort believe university degrees and high levels of certification to be very important, if not mandatory. Guide 4 considers that undertaking a number of courses does not necessarily help guides in the bush. He thinks that sort of education is not applicable to the kind of scenarios one encounters in the outback. This attitude is consistent with the 'old school' group within the guides and indeed, this guide was an

original member. His thinking is at odds with the newer cohort who believe in rationalisation. This guide has also had experience doing, but never completing, parts of First Aid courses. He sees this type of training as a waste of time. Because, as he further points out, basic first aid, once you've lived in the bush for a little while, becomes 'acquired knowledge'. From his point of view, formal recognition of achievements does not make for accomplishment.

Nevertheless, a lack of first aid knowledge could place the tour operator or guide at risk of being sued under public liability insurance. In addition, a first aid qualification is now a requirement of the Savannah Guides organisation before formal recognition and induction into the group can proceed. This was not the case in the initial stages of formation, as is obvious from the remarks and thoughts of Guide 4.

Many of the Savannah Guides have university degrees such as a Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Environmental Science, Bachelor of Arts and geology degrees. Rather than a specific university degree such as a B.A., guides often have numerous, different qualifications and certificates. This difference reflects the multi-faceted nature of this occupation.

I have a degree in Outdoor Education. I have a Diploma of Leadership. I have a qualification for teaching at TAFE, which is in instructional skills. I have a number of short course proficiencies. I am a Workplace Health and Safety Officer. I am a Work Rehabilitation Officer. I am a canoe instructor. I am a rock climbing, abseiling instructor. A lot of that comes from the outdoor

education courses. So, as you go through the courses, you start to learn. I am also a camp supervisor, and I have set up a large number of courses for schools in Australia (Guide 17, male, Freelance Guide, Savannah Guide).

Others have an Ecotourism Certificate from TAFE, First Aid Certificates and Aussie Host ¹ accreditation. Many of the guides have also completed units and, in some cases, the entire Heritage and Interpretive Tourism (HIT) course offered through TAFE colleges throughout Queensland.

As might be expected, the educational background, experience and training profiles ... are quite variable. Many of the guides are ex-graziers, a number are small business operators, some are ex-defence personnel, others have degrees in Botany and Environmental Science, and an increasing number have TAFE qualifications, eg, the Certificate in Heritage and Interpretive Tourism (HIT) (Hynes 1999: 5).

A few of the other guides had no formal qualifications, which they did not see as detrimental to their career prospects. Rather, they seemed more pleased than anything that they were still valuable as an ecotour guide even though their academic capabilities were not formally recognised.

Both educational level and maturity influence guides' attitudes. First, many of the older, founding group, had very basic or little schooling: a result reflective of their bush backgrounds and perhaps a consequent cause of ideals for a less conformist type of organisation.

¹ Aussie Host is based on an internationally recognised customer service training program originally developed in Canada. It focuses on interpersonal communication, customer relations and customer service.

The newer and more regimented section of the organisation have much higher levels of education, including tertiary degrees. Second, in some cases, a number of the guides have served more than twenty years in some form of military organisation.

I was twenty-two years in the Queensland Police Force. I joined the police cadets when I was sixteen. I did a short time out west. When I was nineteen, I became a police officer. I got to know the bush pretty well when I was in the police force. I spent about eight months of every year relieving, in this country, out through the Gulf [of Carpentaria] country and the Cape [York]. So, I got to know it pretty well and, I love the bush (Guide 7, male, Freelance Guide, Savannah Guide).

I was an officer in the Australian Army for twenty-two years. I had the rank of Major (Guide 36, male, Employee, Savannah Guide).

I did five years in the Army Reserve. I worked on mining machinery in Weipa, and at Townsville. Been in the SES [State Emergency Service] since 1988 (Guide 27, male, Employee, Site Interpreter).

Cohen (1985) notes that guides' knowledge is acquired from their personal experiences of the location. For example, through being stationed at a locale while employed by the military or the police; or through learning by example and informally from other more experienced guides (Cohen 1985: 17).

The research and data collection for this study, clearly showed that some of the Savannah Guides had previously been employed in quasi-militaristic jobs in the Australian Defence Forces; mainly in the Army. If the guides had not been employed full time in the Army, they had belonged to

PLATE 4.1

Savannah Guide in Uniform in a Lagoon Near Normanton



the Army Reserve, or similar organisations, such as the State Emergency Service [SES]. Quasi-militaristic can be defined as taking on the apparent spirit and traditions of military life. The quasi-militaristic tendencies of the group are mostly represented by the newer, more managerial cohort. Marketing of guides who have attained expertise and survival skills in the Army are thought by some managers to be an additional marketing 'hook' and a significant advantage as part of managerial and group management training. Some militaristic tendencies may be observed in guide habits; the

Savannah Guides adhere to a standard uniform and award badges, as do the Army and the Boy Scouts, to indicate levels of competency and attainment of higher levels of recognition in the organisation.

Some tour operators believe that on-site training is more important than educationally acquired knowledge. Most people are capable of being trained to achieve particular levels of competence within a specific field of employment. Tertiary or secondary qualifications do not necessarily produce a smarter person. Opportunities for employment are main considerations relevant to commencing work as an ecotour guide. Some of the guides believe that they do not need university degrees. Abilities such as these guides possess come from long hours spent in the outback. For example, Guide 29 believes that people are employed as guides because they have

... been around for a while. If you've been around for a while, you must be good. Well, that might be right too. I get my guides trained up to what I want, to my standard; the tours go out at the proper standard that meets the requirements for guiding (Guide 29, male, Tour Operator, Site Interpreter).

'To managers, guide training is vital since, in their experience, trained guides have performed better than their untrained colleagues' (Gurung, Simmons and Devlin 1996: 121). Throughout the course of this research it became evident that the tour operators interviewed preferred their guides to be trained in a certain way and have them gain certain competency levels before commencing to guide tourists on ecotours.

Typical educational qualifications were science qualifications (eg botanist, geologist, zoologist, ecologist, PhD, and so on) while typical experiential qualifications were 'local or bush knowledge or experience', 'environmental knowledge' and 'environmental interpretation' (Weiler and Davis 1993: 94).

Training in interpretative skills is a good way to increase the effectiveness of guides, especially for unskilled or trainee staff. Gurung, Simmons and Devlin (1996) believe that many unique characteristics such as communication skills, cross cultural understandings, interpretation and knowledge are necessary for a guide to make the link between various locations (Gurung, Simmons and Devlin 1996: 113).

Moreover, the appropriate skills required for public speaking or professional entertaining can be developed over a period of time. These skills can be developed through the observation of others who are adept at communicating with tourists (Grinder and McCoy 1985: 6).

Pearce suggests that personal contact has a significance in modifying tourist conduct (Pearce 1984). Such contact can help the guides to moderate and improve tourist behaviour to ensure that it is environmentally and socially reliable (Gurung, Simmons and Devlin 1996: 115).

Gurung, Simmons and Devlin (1996) argue that it is worthwhile to concede that different levels and types of training are required for different guides to meet the needs of various interest groups. Although it is probable

that any training will not be able to please the needs of all tourists, there will be broad variations across cohorts because individual tourists vary greatly in knowledge. Some of these areas are architectural and historical understanding, biological features, environmental concerns and knowledge of cultural values (Gurung, Simmons and Devlin 1996: 113).

The area is also home to many gifted people who, either through academic study or practical experience, have an in depth knowledge of the area and its natural history and ecology (Shephard and Royston-Airey 2000: 324).

The participants who felt that some type of training was beneficial also indicated that good communication skills, leadership skills, previous guiding experience and first aid certificates were all essential for good guiding. So they approve of this on-the-job training and supplementary certificates. But some recognised that formal university degrees were necessary. The most common position was that both forms of education are necessary.

Guiding As a Vocation

There are three qualities that the guides must demonstrate in the undertaking of their position as tour interpreter and educator. First, according to Guide 19, each guide has to have a vast and varied amount of knowledge which has to be delivered in such a way that it does not sound as if it is scripted. Second, the notions of authenticity and emotional labour, where performance and facts become part of the ritual of speech delivery are employed to deliver the message to the ecotourists. Third, ecotour guiding is

part of the service industry. In fact, the profession of guiding is little different to that of being a waiter, bank teller, airline steward or bar tender. All of these are occupations which 'serve' customers, and being a tour guide is no different to others because the needs of the customer are the main focus in the execution of the job (Anderson 1993; Ashforth and Humphrey 1993; Leidner 1999; Leidner 1993; Mann 1997; Morris and Feldman 1997; Shuler and Davenport Sypher 2000; Smith 1992; Tolich 1993).

The work of the ecotour guide involves long sessions of verbal interaction with the tourists. To find the distinction between lecturing the tourists and imparting information in a friendly and understandable manner is a challenge for some guides. To keep the tourists focused on the information being delivered and not allowing them to become distracted is often a daunting task for newer guides.

Talking 'with' visitors is more helpful as an educational strategy than talking 'at' visitors. When adults must listen to lectures that they do not understand, they will simply stop listening and pay attention to distractions. Some may stray away from the guide (Grinder and McCoy 1985: 62).

Information about the environment, which is presented in a narrative format, tends to hold tourists' attention for longer spans than that presented in a traditional lecture format (Shanahan, Pelstring and McComas 1999: 409).

Grinder and McCoy (1985) state that lecture tours are frequently too long; tourists stop listening to speakers after twenty minutes unless they find

the subject interesting; forty minutes may be the absolute maximum. The structured lecture format is the least practical way to bestow information to tourists. Lamentably, it is also the format used by numerous interpreters (Grinder and McCoy 1985: 62). The guides I interviewed used many different forms of delivery to interpret sites and flora and fauna for the tourists².

Sensitivity to what bores and what interests a particular group or person can enhance knowledge delivery. Boredom is overcome by trying to appeal to all members of the group, and by varying activities and information so as not to become monotonous. Guide 19 also believed it is important to be personable and interact with visitors, rather than just talk 'at' them. In other words, the guides have to be aware that they are not giving a sermon, or a lecture, to their clients. Rather, they are educating and informing them of sites, people and animals within the outback region.

... I found the quality of the tour guide to be a crucial variable; his or her presentation could make or break the tour. Others have indicated that because of an experience with a monotonous guide, they may never take a similar tour again (Schmidt 1979: 446).

One of the problems of delivering information is that it is possible to become vulnerable to the tour group by contradicting what was said previously. Guide 30 explains that a guide must often take a stand on particular issues.

² I refer to this method of information delivery as 'informed authoritative interpretation' and I deal extensively with this theme in Chapter Five

He believes a good guide will know when to back out and when to make a point: 'Just stand your own ground and be a Savannah Guide ... Don't let your ego get in the way'.

Balancing Work and Family Relationships

Today, many find it difficult to begin or expand a small business, or to pass it on to children. Many small business owners find that the bureaucratic pressures and governmental restrictions have made it almost impossible to generate business and sales. Individuals' enterprise, imagination and tenacity are being constrained by bureaucratic laws and regulations are unreasonable or difficult to implement. However, some with independent spirit, are able to utilise their enthusiasm and skill to commence or extend their family enterprises by appealing to an ever-increasing market sector and by targeting a specific section of the market overall (Scase and Goffee 1980: 12).

Quite a few of the ecotour guides have young families and it is difficult to find care for them when they are away on a long tour across the Gulf or up into the Cape or 'across the top' to Broome. Guide 16 said that it is very difficult to operate when the children are not at school, on weekends and during the holiday period.

A small number of the guides are women, some with small children, who must endure the classic 'double burden' (Hochschild 1983) of juggling both work and domestic responsibilities. Great organisational skills come to the fore here, both professionally and domestically.

Motherhood is the foremost consideration for Guide 31. She also talked about housework and the difficulty of fitting that in around her guiding duties. In other words, family duties took her away from her work as a guide and guiding duties took her away from her ties to her family, especially her children. Time spent with family, however, was considered important for bringing balance to her life. As a guide she is a public figure with responsibilities to present herself and her position in the Savannah Guides with integrity and high standards of interpretive ability. However, at home she can return to her private self, re-negotiate her position in the family and go about her everyday work as a mother.

Similar to mainstream tourism-based businesses, ecotours require frequent absences from home. Many of the guides reported that running an ecotour business, like any other business, takes a lot of time and involves being absent a great deal. Sometimes, many of the guides are only home two or three times a month. Guide 14 recounts how, many times, family commitments took second place to work.

After we sold [names location], it meant that my place of work was two and a half hours drive from home. Although I flew an

aeroplane in those days, it was still difficult to find time to get home with the pressures of work. Sometimes I'd only be home two or three times a month. But, having reversed the position and gone into marketing three years ago, I'm now lucky if I get to Undara two or three times a month [laughter]. I count myself very lucky. But, it had placed pressures on other family members involved in the business. With a wife and a young family and the demands of an ecotourism business, the need to get out there and market, you've just got to market your backside off, or if you don't get people through the place, that's it. You know, sometimes you need to do a bit of work as well. The amount of time you put in, not only to your own enterprises but to the Savannah Guide thing, really does demand a lot of your time. The amount of time that the Joongai [Savannah Guide Executive Management Committee] put in, even on a weekly basis, is amazing. But, I guess most of the guides that have been in the guiding organisation for a while know what it is to go the extra mile (Guide 14, male, Tour Operator, Savannah Guide).

Similarly, other guides commented about the pressures of working commitments and lack of time with family members. Guide 37, a member of the executive management committee, the Joongai, also spends a lot of time away from his family:

You are always striving for quality, that is, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. You live, work and breathe it. There is no rest at all. No five o'clock finishing time, no weekends. You put your heart and soul into it (Guide 37, male, Tour Operator, Savannah Guide).

Numerous small ecotourism businesses are owned and run by an individual family. Thus, they face not only the basic business problems encountered by all operators, but they must also face intricate emotional demands and requirements too (McKercher and Robbins 1998: 176). Vast amounts of extra effort must be utilised in order to get each business 'up and running'.

During the early stages of business growth, for instance, the only assets may consist of the proprietor's own labour, unpaid family

assistance and the use of domestic items such as the telephone [and] car ... (Scase and Goffee 1980: 20).

Many times work commitments took priority over quality family time in the initial stages of business development. Guide 25 felt his tour business prevented him having time for a family holiday. Although he always takes time off to attend a family get together, at Christmas, which means travelling to Townsville, he and his family would prefer to be able to go to Darwin on a 'real' holiday. He also would like to visit, and thus patronise, some of the other Savannah Guide Stations and Sites like Undara and Cobbold Gorge because then he could recommend them to tourists interested in visiting other ecotourism and Savannah Guide ventures. His main complaint was the fact that he received very minimal holidays.

In order to create a viable ecobusiness, guides must spend a very minimal amount of time on family oriented activities. Guide 6 believes that any ecotourism business is hard on a family and would prefer to stay home and watch his children grow up. However, as he pointed out, the ecotourist industry is about keeping up with the latest trends and doing everything necessary to keep your business viable. Business growth involves running the enterprise in a concerted effort to make enough money to keep the business going and to support your family. This guide believes that missing out on family time is one of the sacrifices he has to make if he wants to be in

tourism. In addition, he believes that any work that takes you away from your family is hard emotionally.

Conversely, Guide 30 says his family is fully involved in his ecotourism business. His daughter accompanied a group of us on one of his tours down the Katherine River. But he believes his family would really like the idea of him having a nine to five job and coming home at a 'normal' time. He reports that his children have a good future now because currently the family is financially secure. The children are learning the intricacies of the business and how to conduct the tours.

Other guides find that their entire working day is split between business and domestic responsibilities. Guide 35 talks about the many difficulties he faces with trying to juggle his business, the family cattle property, the children, his staff and helping his wife with her duties. He also alludes to the sacrifices he must make in order to keep his business viable.

Being on site, all the time, for the season is really difficult. Sometimes I wish I didn't have a cattle property and other times I wish I didn't have a tourism business [laughter]. I just get caught up between so many things happening, and you've got to just weigh it up and just take the best detour, I suppose. And it's mainly, especially with the two kids, when ... our babysitter has just left. She didn't work out well for us. Sort of, do we have another one, or do we just battle on and try and cope. Because [his wife] has a really big workload. She does all the cooking. Works the kiosk, takes all the bookings and tries to look after two kids while I am out on tour. It does get pretty hectic and it's a bit dangerous for the kids, especially when cars are around. And, they don't get a lot of personal time with us, and that's what we miss out on, and that's what they miss out on, each other's time. You do get on edge at

times. Because if you have had a bad day and someone gets on your neck, you know, it makes it a bit hard. And, while you're out on tour there, at the back of your mind, there's a hundred things going around. Something is cropping up all the time. Because you're out there all the time, and you can't get away. You get a little bit peeved off. You keep thinking about things and get behind. Just get your act together and keep plugging along, I suppose. That's the best you can do. It is a bit hard if you're trying to wear so many hats. You're trying to do your own marketing. You're trying to do your own tours. Trying to do your own mechanics on your trucks. Service the generator, you name it. Clean the boats, collect firewood, clean the toilets. The bloody list just goes on and on. You try to fit it all in. [The Savannah Guide Site Interpreter] is a great person. She does a tremendous amount here. She does a lot of the tours as well. Then, you've got to keep thinking, "Well, I've got to give [names Site Interpreter] days off, can't let her get sick of the job, or she'll wear thin". And then, you're back on your own again, and it all builds up. But, it is hard (Guide 35, male, Tour Operator, Savannah Guide).

Business dominates this guide's life and is similar to the argument Schor (1992) makes about professionals in the workforce where they work extended hours in multi-skilled positions for minimal return and lack of recognition. This tour guide has to have the ability to turn his emotional labour off and on as required. His position is similar to the feminist dilemma of being able to 'have it all' and trying to work out if that is at all possible (Scutt 1985).

Time spent away from the family is often utilised to promote the guides' businesses. Guide 12 said that the balance between family life and livelihood is incredibly hard to achieve.

It's not easy. It's not easy to keep everybody happy, particularly at home. Because, you've got to spend time away from home. You've got to do PR runs. You've got to do the promotions. The family

doesn't appreciate that a lot of the time. Sometimes you start work at four o'clock in the morning and you finish at eight or nine o'clock at night. For some of these other operators, it's probably worse. I dunno. Quite often I start work at four o'clock in the morning and I get home, I might have two beers and I'm stuffed. I'm asleep. The bookings for the next day are just laid out in front of me (Guide 12, male, Tour Operator, Site Interpreter).

Savannah Guides would all prefer to modify their guiding commitments and work hours when a change in family situations or size occurs. During the research, the wife of one of the male guides gave birth to a baby girl. The guide believes that life will be a little bit different for them, now they are a family. He knows it is going to be very difficult for him to be away for twelve or sixteen days at a time. However, he has made the commitment to the job and to the ecotour company where he is employed and wants to gain better job opportunities and job recognition.

Inclusion of the young members of their families has been a point of discussion for the Savannah Guides at some of the Schools I attended. The Savannah Guides have talked at length about starting a 'Junior Savannah Guides' group. The group would be run in conjunction with each Savannah Guide School and would be conducted in a similar fashion to the Boy Scouts or the Girl Guides. Providing children's activities at each Savannah Guide School would be a way of integrating their families into their business lives and would provide each family member with a common interest.

Finally, one of the guides reported on different ideas about how family considerations can be accommodated into working arrangements and time frames. Guide 34 actually does not 'guide' tours anymore, as he works full time, delivering the Heritage and Interpretive Tourism (HIT) course at a local TAFE. When his wife was expecting their first child, he approached his employer, who is also his father-in-law, and asked how he could spend less time doing tours. His request was considered, because his employer was a small, family-business man and understood the problem. This is just one example of how business relationships are probably more flexible because of the family relationships.

Apart from the problems that confront guides with families in the ecotourism industry, married couples and partners have some particular problems when they work together night and day at a Savannah Guide Site. Guide 3 and Guide 8 felt they began to mirror each other's thoughts on the quality of their work because they both do the same thing every day. Their concern was that guiding was becoming their whole life and perhaps making them insulated and rather limited in their view of the outside world. They had recognised the time constraints of twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week that other Savannah Guides complained about. These guides believed they had a 'tunnel vision' approach to their work and their lives, and that they also had a narrow vision of their employment and their future. They

felt this narrowness was detrimental to their well-being. But, they also had something positive to say about running a Savannah Guide Site together:

Being in the business together as a couple is wonderful. There is a real closeness that develops from growing the business together and sharing all the highs and lows (Guide 3, male, Tour Operator, Site Interpreter and Guide 8, female, Tour Operator, Site Interpreter).

Some guides saw promotion of their businesses as an entity that used massive amounts of their time and the difficulties of separating home life from business life. Guide 30 wants his business to be secondary to his life, but he operates from home, as do most of the Savannah Guide operations and collectively, this has proved very difficult for all of them.

The ecotour companies in this study are small and so they suffer from the limitations of being a small business. There are two main difficulties to be overcome by these small companies. First, they are small establishments and it takes them some time to develop and grow. Second, some of their customers are fastidious and the businesses have to learn to be adaptable. Some of the operators commented that it took a number of years to achieve the 'right' results with their tour 'products'. Even today, their tours are still 'evolving'.

Most ecotour operations are small companies, often run by the founder. They range in size from tiny firms that specialise in a few countries and customise all their tours to ones that offer a mix of packaged and customised tours to those that sell only their own carefully compiled tours (Honey 1999a: 68).

Ecotours are specifically designed to cater for various needs and requirements across the sector. Ecotourism attractions, as well as ecotour businesses, offer tour products that appeal to a wide variety of tourists who have contrasting needs and expectations. The challenge lies in developing ecotourist products to cater for an expansive array of skills and levels such as only directing people on walks and sight seeing tours that reflect their capabilities of age and physical condition, while still providing high quality outcomes each time, and simultaneously minimising environmental degradation or ecovandalism. Developing the right ecoproduct includes an expansive range of considerations, from the basics of having tourists 'in the right place, at the right time', to the quality of the ecotour provided (McKercher and Robbins 1998: 181).

Gender and Race

Gender and race are important categories for the sociological researcher to examine. Both have been seminal categories for investigation and examination at all sociological levels. During the interviewing phase of the research, implicit issues about the women in the group began to emerge. These gender issues were also apparent in the data as coding was undertaken. I mention both these categories here, not because they make up a large portion of the research, but because they are significant in the determination of who the Savannah Guides are and what they represent.

Women, even when not mothers, have some particular problems working as guides. Most female guides are also wives and mothers and have full time employment. Second, the number of women who are members of Savannah Guides are a minority. The low levels of women in the overarching organisation is a reminder of the patriarchal basis of the organisation and the elitist position of its members. Gender inequity remains, and the unfair sexual division of labour was apparent at all the Guide Schools I attended, because the women are the ones who do the washing up, set the tables and act as secretaries. The women appear to be granted equal status with the males, so they too, can become Savannah Guides. But, it is a case of the women having to fit in with the men, and not the other way around. All the women, with the exception of one who wears culottes, wear the male standard of uniform (even though there is a female version). I believe that this female guide wants to remain as close as possible to the ideal of the male membership, and the alternative of culottes allows her to dress as closely as possible to the males, while still retaining her position as a female within the association's ranks. There has never been a female president although, at the time of my research, the secretary was a female. The Management Committee, the Joongai, does attract many female participants. But, at the time of writing, there was only one female who was, once again, the secretary. Also, the Savannah Guide badge does not reflect the fact that women are permitted to join the group. I have been present when this has been discussed at meetings. One female guide asked why

women were not depicted on the Savannah Guide badge (see Plate 4.2). She was told that the badge is a representation of all the organisation's members. Symbolically, the badge only serves to represent the patriarchy by depicting exclusively the white, male members of the group. The badge shows only a single male and suggests by omission that this organisation is male oriented and dominated. The Savannah Guides often refer to the badge by its nickname of 'the phantom'.

PLATE 4.2

Savannah Guide Badge



Race was another category that was underlined during the research and data collection phases. The lack of Aboriginal guides and Aboriginal discourse and expertise in conducting ecotours was evident throughout the research stage. Many ecotourists wish to be guided by an indigenous person, as they perceive that indigenous guides lend a more authentic quality to the

construction of facts, legends, myth and story telling about Australia and its native flora, fauna and population.

As noted previously, the Savannah Guide badge depicts only a white male, with the shadow of the colour black, supposedly representing indigenous persons or guides, outlined behind the main, white dominant male. The badge (the phantom) is an elitist representation of a male dominated, patriarchal organisation that has no awareness of inclusive gender practices or anti-sexist behaviour. There are a few indigenous members, and their lack of visibility is symbolically represented in the depiction of them on the badge as merely a shadow, deprived of individuality and substance. They have been visually obliterated from the origin and likeness of the Savannah Guides. Despite the indigenous absence from the official representation, all tour operators claim they want to employ indigenous guides because it gives credibility to the Savannah Guides ecotours, it provides an authenticity centred around 'native' narratives and in many cases, tourists expect to be guided by an indigenous person. Many ecotourists wish to be guided by an indigenous tour guide because of their implicit knowledge of the native flora and fauna. Other tourists prefer indigenous guides because they interpret for the tourists from the perspective of places being indigenous land zones or sacred sites.

Conclusion

The occupation of a Savannah Guide is an evolving concept. The job requires that each member of the association display a willingness and suitability to fit in with the group and this requires certain personal and familial sacrifices of each constituent. The Savannah Guides has a growing membership. The standardisation of their organisation has led to a newer, more militaristic looking regime. The participants share a collective sense of identity and this has been enhanced by the historical beginnings of the older, more pragmatic section of the group, rather than by the more regimented, newer cohort. This chapter explains why individuals are attracted to the organisation and how the organisation is based on the 'identification' of their guiding product and issues of quasi-militarism.

Many of the guides display attitudes of entrepreneurship and motivation in their businesses or as employers. They all have a love of the environment and extensive knowledge and experience of the savannas and outback areas of Australia. The guides strive for recognition of their standard of guiding, both nationally and internationally. They are trying to create an identifiable product and to market it globally. With this recognition and professionalisation comes rationalisation.

Conducting guided tours involves a large degree of emotional labour. Despite the attraction of working in the bush, the job can be difficult, hard

and only feasible during the 'dry' season. The guides in this research are performing a balancing act, where family, work and individual priorities have to be managed, similar to working in any other occupation. They are always searching for extra time to maintain and carry out other pressing tasks.

Gender and race are not considered important by this white, male dominated, patriarchal association. To be a Savannah Guide each individual must be prepared to be 'one of the boys' and dress, act and guide ecotours with this gender and race perspective in mind.

Therefore, it is difficult to become a Savannah Guide. Guiding is a complex occupation. Each individual must manage time, emotions and relationships. They must also be aware of the rationalisation of their product as they strive to achieve high standards of professionalism. These guides are, in fact, no different from the working professionals within any organisation. They are always watching the clock and calculating time against money. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, is the measurement they use for calculating how long and hard they work. The positioning of the association as a group of professionals within the ecotourism sector has led to it being perceived as a professional organisation. This positioning has also brought legitimacy to the organisation as a superlative ecotour guide

association. These important interconnecting issues are considered in the rest of the dissertation.