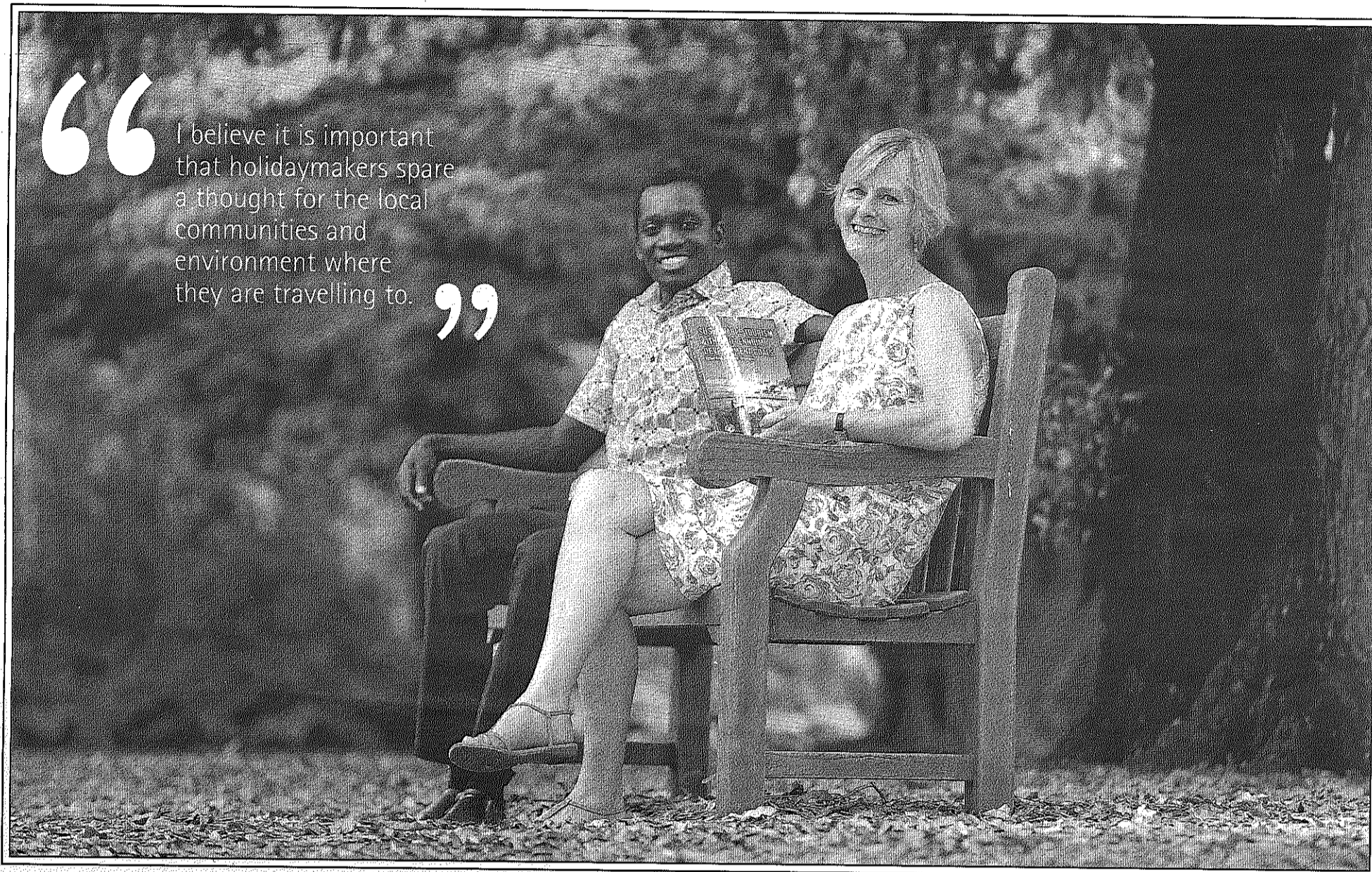


## SUSTAINABILITY



“ I believe it is important that holidaymakers spare a thought for the local communities and environment where they are travelling to. ”

# The conscious traveller

Tourists can leave a damaging footprint on the landscape but with a little thought your travels can enrich lives, writes **SUE WALLACE**.

**B**EFORE booking your next holiday, Rosemary Black wants to encourage Australians to think about sustainable tourism and ask some questions.

The Charles Sturt University senior lecturer and social researcher hopes to encourage travellers to delve into the background of resorts and tours before paying for a five-star lodge or gourmet trek through villages.

“I would like to think holidaymakers would inquire about what a resort or tour gives back to the surrounding community and find out if it has good environmental management,” Dr Black says.

“I believe it is important that holidaymakers spare a thought for the local communities and environment where they are travelling to.”

Dr Black, a researcher with CSU's Institute for Land, Water and Society, has recently co-edited a new text book, *Sustainable Tourism and the Millennium Development Goals*, which she worked on for more than two years.

The book looks at how people liv-

ing in developing countries, including the Pacific Islands, benefit from a sustainable tourism industry.

“Tourism is a major source of foreign exchange for many developing countries and has the potential to be a significant driver for economic growth in these countries,” she says.

“While tourism can have some detrimental impacts on the local environment and communities, it can also provide benefits.”

Dr Black's book includes case studies from Vanuatu, Fiji, Indonesia, Nepal, Costa Rica and the Caribbean Islands that illustrate how tourism can benefit the social and environmental situation of local people as well as its positive economic impacts.

“The case studies are from a variety of people from different backgrounds, not just academics, and we approached tourism industry experts for their input,” she says.

The publication has an important message for tourists from developed countries such as Australia who travel overseas to enjoy the different culture and environment of a developing country.

“I believe the average person can make sure their holidays are sustainable and that they can minimise their impacts on the environment and local people — and they don't need to stay in expensive 'eco-lodges' in the Amazon,” she says.

“For a sustainable tourism experience, the first thing you can ask as a tourist is 'Am I contributing to the local community?'”

Dr Black says travel can be much more than simply visiting places, taking pictures and buying souvenirs.

“Travel can inspire cultural awareness, tolerance and commitment to environmental responsibility,” she says.

She advises when planning a trip, be careful to minimise impacts on communities and the environment.

“Your journey to becoming a responsible tourist starts with awareness that you are a vital part of the global tourism industry, and that you can help transform the way the world travels,” she says.

“By asking a travel agent or doing research you can find out if the resort has been constructed in harmony with the local environment and culture and if they provide employment for local people and education and training opportunities.”

She says it is little things like buying souvenirs that are made locally not imported that can make a difference to a local village.

Dr Black says staying in a village with a local family can provide a greater insight into the culture than staying at a resort down the road.

“Buying clothes and jewellery made by local women also provides enormous spin-offs for the community — they are little things but they help a lot,” she says.

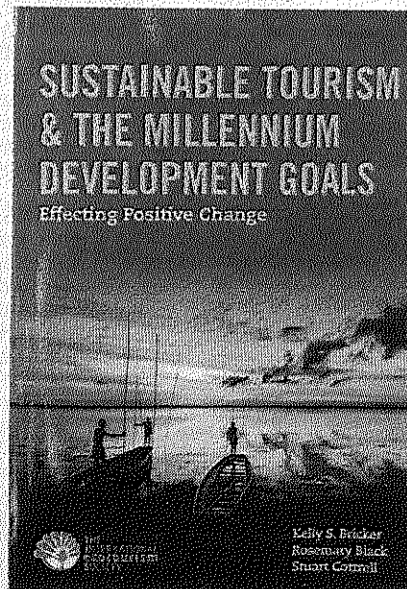
The book highlights how sustainable tourism can help meet and support the Millennium Development Goals announced by the United Nations in 2000.

“Tourism can support the health and well-being of local

**ABOVE: CSU lecturer and social researcher Dr Rosemary Black with one of her PhD students Patrick Cobbinah, from Ghana in Africa, who is examining how eco-tourism is helping change lives in his community.**

Picture: JOHN RUSSELL

**BELOW: The book, co-edited by Dr Black, on sustainable travelling.**



people, assist biodiversity conservation efforts, and preserve local cultural heritage, while it also assists in education, equal opportunities for women and basic human rights,” she says.

The text also takes a historical perspective looking at the development of ecotourism and sustainable tourism during the past 20 years, from where The International Ecotourism Society and other associations started. It also looks at the key landmarks and events that have brought ecotourism and sustainable tourism to the present day.

CSU PhD student Patrick Cobbinah, from Ghana in Africa, is one of Dr Black's research students and is currently investigating the impact of ecotourism on human poverty in one of Ghana's national parks.

Dr Black says Patrick's studies show how the development of eco-tourism is improving the quality of life for those involved in the national park program.

Mr Cobbinah, who has been studying at CSU for the past 18 months, says he can see eco-tourism has had many positive influences in his homeland. “It has assisted with employment, income, cultural preservation and protection of minority groups and that's a great thing,” he says.

When Dr Black travels she enjoys the satisfaction of knowing the tourism dollars she spends will help local people through employment and protect the environment.