

**Submission
No 417**

**INQUIRY INTO MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LAND IN
NEW SOUTH WALES**

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Submission to the Inquiry into Management of public land in New South Wales

31 August 2012

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the important matter of use of public land.

I am an off road bike rider and I also compete socially in enduro bike races, often held in state forests. I often frequent state forests in a four wheel drive and enjoy camping in State Forests.

We already have the most sensitive parts of our land marked as National Parks that do not allow off road vehicles. I strongly believe that creating more locked out National parks is not warranted.

I would like to object to limiting access to public lands to recreational vehicles. This limits the available space that can be enjoyed by the public while taking part in positive healthy activities.

Activities such as bushwalking, mountain biking, horse riding, trail bike riding, four wheel driving and camping are all legitimate recreational pasttimes. These activities not only provide a release from our working lives but also promote a healthy lifestyle as well as injecting large sums of money into local economies. All of these activities should be encouraged. To do this we need access to public lands.

Riders and four wheel drivers (and others) are being pushed into smaller and smaller areas due to the constant track and park closures. This has an adverse effect on the trails, which park managers then use as justification of shutting more areas down. State Forests and The National Parks are actually making the problem worse by locking people out.

The answer is not shutting areas down. It is opening areas up so individual forests are less frequented and the impact that bikes and four wheel drives have on them is minimised.

The areas most of us utilize are beyond the reach of other non motorised recreational users and motorcycles have very little impact on the forest initially and no impact whatsoever long term. The evidence is how quickly the land regenerates once a tree fall's over the track, within a couple of months the track is gone.

The State Forests are now beginning to stop the use of single tracks in our Forests, this makes no sense, the tracks are usually one metre wide, they are out of the way of other users, cause little or no damage to the park, they keep bikes off the roads (or main tracks) away from other park users and are often utilized at speeds averaging 20-30 kilometres per hour, this is good old fashioned clean fun.

The motorcycle club I belong to (approximately 200 members) is constantly battling tremendous amounts of red tape and bureaucracy some of the main offenders include;

1. The State Forests, who say no you can't use that area of the Forest, then next week logging operations commence which result in complete destruction of an area State Forests then say look your dirt bike put a little mark on the ground. ???

2. Local councils, who now require a DA for a simple one day event. That is a "Development Application", we are not developing anything we are gathering holding a race, one or two days then we pack up and leave, this is crazy and completely unwarranted, it is putting tremendous strain on my club.

3. Of course the National parks who are taking over the Forests and simply closing the gates, no questions asked.

My motorcycle club like most, is run by volunteers those people are heroes for navigating all of the red tape, but the current situation is completely unreasonable and unacceptable, the management of all these bodies needs to be more flexible and easier to get on with, their job is to regulate or oversee not to make trouble for responsible park users.

I want my children to enjoy the great outdoors as I did/do, not restricted to a screen, pod or pad, or whatever, kids are changing these days due to these kinds of actions taken by people who clearly have no idea what fun the great outdoors can be.

I want my kids to have the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors and not become another victim of the obesity epidemic.

The future of our parks and reserves should be up to those who use them. Most bike riders / park users are very protective of all the areas they are still allowed in as it is a place where we spend out leisure time.

Please change the management of these parks to one that is user friendly, talk to the users of the park, so we can all keep in touch with the areas that bring us happiness.

In closing, I submit that public land should be retained for the use of the public for a variety of activities and not simply gated shut and locked away from the vast majority of Australians.

Thank You

Frank Draper