

**Submission
No 249**

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

Name: Mr James Tedder

Date received: 1/08/2012

SUBMISSION TO UPPER HOUSE INQUIRY INTO MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LAND

There is a tendency that if accountants cannot place a money value on a resource then it has no value.

This is now acknowledged as a serious omission on assessing the wealth of a nation which consists of more than what can be placed in the market place.

Recent studies as shown in the recent Soil Conference in Sydney revealed that our soils are in serious decline. In Australia our soils are very old and poor and as it takes something of the order of 1,000 years to form 25mm of top soil we cannot expect to have a continuous supply readily available when soils are eroded.

There have been various estimates of the tonnage of soil lost for every tonne of wheat grown due to erosion of wind or water but they are considerable.

The other resource which is now being valued is water. The over allocation of water licences throughout the State indicated that the authorities considered if there was water flowing then it could be taken and used in farming activities. Little regard was given to the fact that another economic activity ,that is fishing , depended on water flow in the rivers.

There has been a short sighted and narrow approach to how we use our natural resources with the result that we are now in problems with soils, water , native flora and fauna .

The role of help that fauna play in our agricultural industries is still not sufficiently appreciated. This is particularly so with birds and many insects.

The NSW Government was a signatory to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment whereby Governments agreed to establish a comprehensive ,adequate and representative system of protected areas. These areas were to cover the many biogeographic regions in the State. This State has done quite well in this regard but there are regions still unrepresented. One of the last regions was the area covered by the Red Gum forests. These trees have been threatened by drought and over allocation of water to irrigators plus heavy harvesting. The importance of Toorale Station is that this particular bioregion had very poor conserved areas and the protection of these flood plains was particularly important for the biodiversity of the area

Not only are the Red Gums a national icon but they provide ,when old , the nesting hollows for many of our threatened species of fauna. There is also the important role these forests play in storing carbon. While Australia pays other countries to protect their forests as carbon stores we allow heavy logging in our forests including these Red Gum forests .Often the end product is firewood and rail sleepers .There is no need to point out the very poor record of this State in protecting our fauna with many extinctions.

Science has pointed out for years that the most effective way to conserve our fauna and flora is to establish protected areas. State Forests did have a vital role to play in protecting biodiversity ,water catchments ,and erosion but once the accountants began

insisting that logging become intensive and we began to export woodchips much of this value has been lost.

To overcome these problems the CAR reserves system was established in the National Forest Policy signed by the Commonwealth and all States except Tasmania in 1992. This Policy set out the aims of the eventual Regional Forest Agreements which not only set aside large areas of forest in NE NSW but set rules for managing the State Forests and private native forests.

Unfortunately the NSW Government then signed long term agreements with large timber extraction firms to supply logs that were not available. As a result the NSW forests particularly in the northeast are being devastated.

In 2009, the NSW Auditor General conducted a Performance Audit of Forests NSW operations in NSW. The audit examined 'whether FNSW manages the supply of hardwood to meet wood supply commitments and sustain our native forests'.

The Audit concluded that 'FNSW faces difficulties managing supply especially for large, high quality sawlogs'. The Auditor-General wrote that:

"To meet wood supply commitments, the native forest managed by Forests NSW on the north coast is being cut faster than it is growing back. This is especially the case for the blackbutt species. This does not mean that the forest will not regrow but there will be a reduction in yield in the future.

After the current agreements cease, Forests NSW plans to fill the shortfall on the north coast with plantation hardwood. However, we found it is currently sourcing significantly more from plantations than anticipated to meet its commitments, which may place this strategy at risk. Forests NSW continue to look for new sources of hardwood timber to meet existing commitments including private property and leasehold land. As timber haulage distances increase and yields decrease, the overall cost of production will rise. These additional costs will have to be borne by both Forest NSW and the industry.

Given that native forest operations ran at loss of \$14.4 million in 2007-08, this raises concerns about how much worse this financial burden may get".

Further the

The Auditor-General stated in the Performance Audit report of 2009 that *"There is no clause in current wood supply agreements for high quality large sawlogs on the north coast that allows for a non compensable reduction in commitment following a review of available timber resources"*

To attribute the poor performance of the timber industry of the north east to the allocation of forest to Reserves is to ignore the other values of the forests which are essential for water supply, erosion control on the often very steep ranges of the north east and unlike the normal industries are sustainable eg tourism attractions . Various studies have been done on the value of National Parks to the local economy. That done for the Dorrigo area in 1988 by the Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education showed an estimated expenditure in the area of \$173 million . In another study prepared in 1998 by the University of New England the business were very nearly unanimous in declaring tourism's value to Dorrigo . There have been no recent study but this was the town predicted to collapse when National Parks were declared over forested areas.

It is frequently claimed by people who are not aware of all the facts that the park estate is poorly managed. The Park Service personnel are highly trained and are very committed to protecting fauna and flora. They are very systematic in the methods of pest control and the idea of recreational hunters being brought in to eradicate certain pests which will mean a disruption of the carefully planned schemes drawn up with neighbours is a cause of great concern to the Park workers.

The main problem is that the Park Service has been starved of funds for more pest control over the years. They have also been constrained by political pressure not to target some pests such as horses which are doing incredible damage in parts of Kosciuszko Park and at one stage in Guy Fawkes National Parks where horses were starving but political pressure prevented the shooting. Did the opponents prefer the horses to die a slow death rather than a quick one? As the horses were starving they were doing much damage to native vegetation including threatened species and of course competing with native grass eaters.

James L.O.Tedder
1 August 2012