

**Submission
No 291**

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

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General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5
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Management of public land in New South Wales (Inquiry)

I would like to provide a brief submission as a government representative of an area affected by the previous government's decision to change the status of State forest managed areas to National Parks.

While I am not an expert on past forestry operations in the Southern Riverina, I hold real concerns about the decision made by the previous government and the recommendations which it used to guide its decision.

As a candidate in 2006, I visited the Moira/Gulpa forests on many occasions. I had not held a view prior to my visits that was pro-logging. After visiting the site of forestry operations that were past and current, it provided me with a clear understanding of the sustainability of those forestry practices.

Unfortunately later as a member of parliament, I was confronted by a government decision that would remove a sustainable industry from my electorate. I think the most disappointing aspect of that decision was that it was made by people who had never visited the forest areas that they intend to change.

The process that created the recommendations relied on a single agency to provide a scientific evaluation of the current industry and its future. Most of the data was applied to what was current at the time. The forest areas had been affected by drought for over four years at the time. Consequently the future yield calculations were based on a low denomination and not the 130 year history of sustainable logging.

The fallout from this decision has left a lot of unanswered questions and unfulfilled expectations. Business that enjoyed partial benefit from the forest economies are now finding that there has been a significant reduction in their overall revenues.

Therefore I put a number of questions to the committee that if answered would provide some solace to the affected communities.

- Are the recommendations to convert the State forests to National Parks based on real science?
- Are the projected yields accurate?
- Did the government of the day carry out an impact statement that accounted for a whole of industry economic change?
- Did the government of the day carry out a social and community impact statement?

- When will the promise of retraining of displaced forestry workers take place?
- The promise was made by Frank Sartor that the increase in tourism in the National Parks will offset the financial loss of the forestry industry; however there is no evidence of this.
- When will the recommendations made by the NRC in regards to thinning be carried out, and can these provide benefits to the industry?
- Has there been any planning carried out by the National Parks to provide tourist access to the forest areas?
- Can the National Parks assure local communities that they won't have an increased threat of bushfires?

I provide the above thoughts as some of the main outstanding issues and I am aware of many more. I would also appreciate the opportunity to give evidence during your public hearings.

Regards,

John Williams MP
Member for Murray-Darling

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