

## **INQUIRY INTO TOURISM IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

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I am writing to request that consideration be given to have the Mid-Western Regional Council area, and others in regional NSW, gazetted as Fossicking Districts under the NSW Tourism in Local Communities enquiry.

Why? It is my belief that once an area is defined as a fossicking district, tourists will no longer have to obtain the consent of exploration lease holders to be able to fossick. This condition under NSW regulation is a huge constraint on this activity with many NSW travellers going interstate to Western Australia or Victoria to enjoy their hobby. The big mining companies very rarely give recreational fossicking permission on their exploration lease areas. As an example I have attached two replies received from mining companies with exploration leases in the local area. Practically it is very difficult to identify who these companies are and the areas covered by their leases and even to communicate with them. It can turn ordinary people wanting to try a historic recreational activity as part of a holiday or ongoing hobby into unwitting trespassers. These leases cover vast areas while the actual exploration activities are carried out in relatively small areas within them. They also cover the historically significant mining areas that most tourist/recreational fossickers are interested in. With constraints already in place in National Parks and State Conservation Areas dealing with exploration leases is just another barrier to a hobby enjoyed by possibly hundreds of thousands of people in this state.

Of course you would still be required to obtain the consent of owners of mine leases and mineral claims and obtain permission from relevant land-holders as per the New South Wales Government's comprehensive Fossickers Guide, which is available through the Department of Mineral Resources [http://www.resources.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/363544/A-Guide-to-Fossicking-in-New-South-Wales.PDF](http://www.resources.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/363544/A-Guide-to-Fossicking-in-New-South-Wales.PDF)

Eight NSW shire council have previously done this in an effort to increase tourism, create/maintain jobs and make it easier for keen fossickers to enjoy their pastime. The eight council areas previously gazetted are:

Young Shire  
Cooma-Monaro Shire  
Tallaganda Shire  
Tumbarumba Shire  
Nundle Shire  
Barraba Shire  
Inverell Shire  
Severn Shire

While I have no doubt of the historical significance of the activity in each of these areas the Mid-Western Regional Council area contains some of the most historically significant areas in the state. These areas include towns, villages and other localities such as Gulgong, Windeyer, Hargraves, Home Rule, Maitland Bar etc. The Mid-Western Regional Council area also borders on the famous Hill End and Sofala goldfields. A recent article in the "*Australian Gold, Gem and Treasure magazine May 2013 pg 58*" by renowned Australian prospector and Gold & Relic Sites author, Doug Stone, states "When will the penny drop and local tourism authorities start promoting Edward Hargraves, who 'fathered the golden baby' in one of Australia's most picturesque regions bordered by Mudgee, Orange and Bathurst." In my opinion this promotion would be futile unless these areas are released from the constraints of the current exploration leases.

While I am hoping that the Mid-Western Regional Council area can be gazetted, it is my belief that there are several other areas in NSW that should be considered also. These include Bathurst (Sofala, Hill End, Sunny Corner, Wattle Flat), Orange (Ophir), Oberon, Wellington (Stuart Town) and Upper Lachlan (Tuena). They all contain small villages and towns that are already reliant on or would benefit from an increase in fossicking related tourism.

Large mining companies with exploration leases should not be deciding the right of recreational fossickers to pursue a low impact, historical activity in any of these areas. Solution: Amend the Mining Act to allow recreational mining (fossicking and prospecting) on Exploration Leases as a matter of right or gazette all historical mining areas as fossicking districts.

A small example of small businesses in the Mid-Western Regional Council area alone that would benefit from an increase in fossicking related tourism:

All Mudgee & Gulgong accommodation + other businesses

Nuggets from Downunder <http://www.nuggetsfromdownunder.com/#>

Bushlands Tourist Park <http://www.bushlandstouristpark.com.au/>

Gold & Fleece Hotel Windeyer

Hargraves General Store

Regards

Matt Baskerville