

Submission
No 336

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

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Partially Confidential

Inquiry into Management of Public Lands in NSW

National Parks should provide recreational activities for all Australians not just those fit enough to walk or cycle through these areas. More and more of the areas once used for recreation are being handed over to NPWS. NP's refuses to accept 4WDing and motor bike riding as a legitimate recreational activity and consistently close areas off that have been used for many years for these activities when they were in the control of Forest NSW or Lands.

A recent area in the Hunter has 3 areas that have been used for recreational activities such as 4Wdring and Motor Bike riding these are now combined into one plan of management. Wallaroo and Medowie are areas that have little or no value as quality National Parks yet Medowie will be closed off to both of these activities and Wallaroo will have limited opportunities for 4Wdring. By closing these areas the load on other areas such as NPs, Forestry and other land holdings will increase. All of the challenging tracks in Wallaroo will simply close but between 30 and 50 km of special single track for mountain bikes will be created, good to see our taxes are going to a minority group. Responsible 4Wders through clubs and peak user groups have been helping NP and Forestry for many years by removing rubbish, clearing trails and track maintenance something that NPs do not have the money to do, this is evident by the condition of some of our parks. NPs are gaining land at a rate that they cannot maintain and accepting skilled volunteers to assist makes good sense. 4WD clubs have offered to help in parks and hunters have offered to assist in feral animal control but the Government prefer to spend our taxes on paying to have the same job done.

National Parks have Advisory Committees and an Advisory Council set up to steer the direction of these parks; however, these are loaded with anti-recreational representatives. For these groups to work effectively they should have an equal amount of all groups represented such as fishers, bike riders, motor bike riders, 4Wders, orienteers, horse riders, campers, walkers, bird watchers, etc. Most recreational users will agree that there are some areas that should be shut off but not all open space, let people get inside our parks and enjoy their own experience, not all people enjoy walking or riding a bike through a park.

Many years ago there was a push to create Wilderness areas which had strict stipulations on their creation such as size, more than 1 full days walk from one boundary to the other over it shortest dimension, a pristine environment, endangered or rare flora and/or fauna yet in some of these areas there are roads or trails that were used to traverse the area or for recreation for many years previous to them being declared wilderness. Why can't these areas have these trails through them available so responsible clubs can enter via a locked gate? A similar system called the KAS (Key Access System) was set up in the Hunter area many years ago and was very successful. Clubs could enter these areas using a key provided by the land managers and in doing so would be able to report on the condition of the trails, which are generally used as management trails, ensuring fallen trees are removed from these tracks and minor road repairs are carried out. This would aid in ensuring that when

there is a bushfire the trails would be open and accessible by fire fighting vehicles. This is a function that 4WD clubs affiliated with the peak body 4WDNSW&ACT have carried out in the past and have tried to re-introduce in parks in many areas in recent years. Having a volunteer group with appropriate insurance and a wealth of knowledge and experience seems to be a gift to the Government that they are under using.

Affiliated 4WD Clubs have members qualified to drive 4WD's, recover 4WD's, train drivers to VTAB qualifications and also to classify trails, tracks and roads in Parks and Forests. Responsible 4WD Clubs have a good record for helping in these areas with recovery operations, search and rescue, trail renovation, rubbish clean ups etc. In the 1960's 4WD clubs were responsible for manning fire towers in State Forests to spot fires and report back via CB (citizen Band) radios I would not think there would be many other volunteer organisations with a history like this.

NP's are constantly sourcing new properties from other government departments and private owners to increase their land mass, this I believe is causing problems with the lack of funds to maintain these areas in accordance with NP's policies. If some of these properties were made available for recreational purposes then it would reduce the maintenance costs and reduce the load on existing NP's that are currently over used. If provided to peak bodies for restricted use under direct control of the peak body and monitored by the land manager this would greatly reduce the costs on land managers to maintain. The responsible use of these properties would then be controlled by the peak body or a committee based on the peak bodies involved.

Recreation for all user groups should be the key factor to access to public lands outside the preservation of endangered flora and fauna. Current policy for NPs is to close areas off regardless of the value of the land, each area should be evaluated on its own merit and its use should be determined by its environmental value. The majority of 4WDers look for a challenge when travelling through these areas but they also want trails that will allow them to traverse an area view its beauty and not drive to a dead end and return. With better access to NSW NPs we could increase tourism and attract visitors back to some of our struggling country towns.

ACCESS FOR ALL