

**Submission
No 413**

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

Name: Mrs Jan Harris

Date received: 31/08/2012

After visiting the Yanga Woolshed recently after a 12 months break, I was very disappointed to see that there is still no evidence to show a concerted effort at preservation, protection, conservation, nor any respect for our immediate heritage.

SUBMISSION TO:

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 5

INQUIRY INTO THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES

CHAired BY: The Hon Robert Brown MLC

FOCUS OF THIS SUBMISSION:

MISMANAGEMENT OF THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF YANGA WOOLSHED



RESEARCHED AND PREPARED BY:

JAN HARRIS

Yanga National Park signage at the front entry is an excellent start to the venture into the heritage site of the woolshed, but it does not indicate that this is the woolshed site, and is not indicative of the rest of the experience.



When forming National Parks, one of the more vocal arguments was that, although local communities were losing their asset, tourists would make up any shortfall by creating local jobs and building the local economy. This large, empty park is a good indication of the numbers of tourists who do not come!



Yanga Woolshed has a large storage area to pen sheep for the next days' shearing. Sheep must be dry with their bellies emptied prior to shearing, so penning the day before ensures this. A floor plan is included in the Interpretive Display, but a flow through plan of the sheep and the wool would be highly beneficial in educating visitors to the site. Mustering of the sheep would also be interesting, as there is a skill required for men, dogs, and horses, not widely appreciated beyond the industry.



Sheep are moved through the centre of the shed, past gates which open various ways to channel the sheep so that they are in the pens next to the shearing board, ready for the shearers to catch for shearing. This area of the shed is supposedly under works in progress although these works are not readily visible.



smooth, and clean .

Flooring (grating) in a sheep shed is different to a normal shed in that the boards are set apart to allow air flow. But the actual board where the shearers work, 20 per side in this large shed, is

It is a pity that no signage has been erected to educate the visitor - laminated sheets are all that are needed in each area to explain the process of shearing, the shearers job, how the sheep are shorn to a plan, the handpieces,

combs and cutters, shed hands, the day structured religiously to the clock. A visitor to this area of the shed learns nothing!

A great opportunity missed!



After shearing sheep are slipped out the half door behind the shearer into counting out pens. Shearers are paid per sheep, so it is important to keep a good tally, also for the owner of the sheep, it gives an accurate tally of sheep stocked and shorn.

In a large shed such as this there is an 'expert' who grinds and sharpens the combs and cutters for the shearer's handpieces. These lose their sharpness quickly and need to be sharpened every day. They are put into a dicky hole with the shearers' number, so there is no chance to get them messed with another shearer. Shearers are meticulous about their tools of trade. Unfortunately this area of the shed had not been looked after well and in the 12 months between visits some items, including handpieces appear to have walked.



Combs & Cutters and Experts Room



Also in the 'experts room nonchalantly thrown or left on the bench are the stencils to label the finished bales, plus some handpieces in disrepair.



The wool table is where the fleece is thrown to be trimmed of dags before being rolled into a ball and put into the wool bins in the

appropriate bin for the class (fineness and quality) of the wool.



The chalked AAA at the top of this bin indicates the wool quality. It will be baled with like wools.



Like any business, records must be kept and this work bench was where the recorded the bales of wool their weight and any other important details. One of the few areas that have been documented well is the wool press, the wool packs and the clips used on the bales.



These scales are important because wool is sold at auction by weight and by quality, so each bale must be weighed before being shipped by trucks.

The dags etc are sorted on this thinner table and while not as high a quality financially can still be sold.



With a calendar left on the wall and in use at the time of leaving the woolshed, there is no reason why the woolshed needs to be restored using old implements, it only needs to be restored to current time usage, not overlaid with an old heritage listing, which would take it back to the period before.





Both these interpretive boards at the woolshed show snapshots, BUT they are nearly 100 years ago; where are the snapshots for 1950's good years and for the last monstrous drought – where is the recent story? Surely heritage includes the current and more recent cultural activities?



Other buildings, such as the kitchen and dining room cannot be entered. The sense of disrepair here is strong. Food larders, meat storage areas, cooking and eating areas are all covered in dust, and deteriorating. There is no reference as to what each building was used for.

A woolshed does not run isolated, it is a part of a social situation, shearers live close by, and even if they don't they are fed at the shed. Smoko is 9.30am and 3.00pm, lunch is a cooked meal at noon.

A class structure ensures that the classers and experts live in better quarters than the rest. Their quarters below are deteriorating rapidly.



The toilets and wash rooms are home to vermin.



Even the sign from National Parks is in a bedraggled state





Small up-keeping works such as this verandah disintegration are not being done.

Restoration works are apparently being planned, but the focus still appears to be on research, planning, consulting, collaboration, meetings and heritage concerns, making huge plans for the long-term, before applying for funding. But as this funding is on a park by park basis and not assured, then what are the chances for this shed to be still standing after this bureaucratic process is expired??

So as the consultants do their thing, and the bureaucrats aim for a heritage that is out of date, the current finance available is consumed on these wasteful practices. Our forebears who built this concentrated on the doing not the planning and consulting, and would have had it up and running by now. So maybe the heritage area could be looking at past practices to apply, rather than trying to work out what tools were used in the initial construction of a building that was being used less than 10 years ago using modern tools, including electricity.

In the meantime the buildings go backwards, sheds at the homestead are almost tumbling down, staff when spoken to say their numbers are being cut, as is the funding.

There is no evidence at the Yanga Woolshed to show preservation, protection, nor even respect for our immediate heritage.

This sort of protection is a sure way to destroy, as leaving any building alone does not preserve it, it actually hastens its destruction through decay.

This is our heritage – treat it with respect by acknowledging it, rather than denying the last near on 100 years, and the impact of wool (a naturally sustainable, renewable product) on not only this area, but Australia as a whole, economically, culturally and as a world player.

If the NSW Government is not prepared to fund parks fully, nor to provide sufficient staff to maintain the heritage, then it must pull back; say no more parks; divest itself of many it has recently made; and ensure that those remaining are funded and staff applied to maintain them all in an efficient manner to ensure the long-term survival of our natural and cultural heritage.

By declaring National Parks and handing Management to the NSW Department of Environment and Heritage, the Government has made very poor choices in its selection of these custodians of our Natural and Cultural Heritage.