

**Submission  
No 56**

**INQUIRY INTO THE CONTINUED PUBLIC OWNERSHIP  
OF SNOWY HYDRO LIMITED**

Organisation:

Name: Dr Geoff Mosley

Telephone:

Date Received: 21/06/2006

---

Theme:

Summary

**From:** Geoff Mosley / Liz Nettleton  
**To:** <snowyhydro@parliament.nsw.gov.au>  
**Date:** 21/06/2006 4:11 pm  
**Subject:** Submission to inquiry into continued public ownership of Snowy Hydro Limited

The Director  
Committee Secretariat  
Snowy Hydro Inquiry

Please find attached my submission to the above inquiry.

Dr Geoff Mosley

## SUBMISSION TO SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO CONTINUED PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF SNOWY HYDRO LIMITED

### INTRODUCTION

1. First may I say that I believe it is very sensible at this juncture to stand back and consider the long term factors relevant to continued public ownership. The decision of the three Governments to withdraw from the sale was a landmark event which makes apposite the consideration of the future.
2. No doubt many of the submissions will deal with financial matters including the future capital expenditure needs of Snowy Hydro but my submission is concerned with an aspect which should at least be of equal importance – the changing land use context of the future operations.
3. My submission is concerned with the heritage aspects (1f) and the closely related matter of control of water regulation (1c). The fundamental issue to be considered from this standpoint is the relationship of Snowy Hydro to heritage protection in the likely event of the area being included on the World Heritage List.
4. My involvement with heritage protection and planning in the Snowy Mountains dates back to the early 1960s. Since that time I have been involved with many aspects of decision making including, in part, through my work as an officer of the Australian Conservation Foundation (I was CEO of the ACF from 1973 to 1986). I have written several books and papers dealing with the conservation, heritage values and history of Snowy Mountains. Included in my past experience has been a considerable amount of effort with regard to identifying the area's world heritage values and developing and explaining the proposal for listing. I am currently the co-convenor of the Alps and Eucalypt Forests Working Group based in Sydney.

### CONSERVATION OF THE NATURAL HERITAGE VALUES OF THE SNOWY MOUNTAINS

5. The development of the Snowy Mountains Scheme and the concurrent putting in place of heritage protection measures was mutually beneficial in terms of the realisation of the different objectives but also involved major compromises. The details can be found in my book *Battle for the Bush The Blue Mountains, The Australian Alps and the Origin of the Wilderness Movement* (1999). In essence the history can be summarised as follows: a) the desire to protect the catchment of the future scheme was one of the main justifications for the Kosciusko State Park in 1944; b) the completion of the removal of grazing in 1969 served the interests of both the Scheme and the National Park c) the price paid by heritage protection included major interference with the stream and river systems of the Park and major engineering works and roads, most notably the diversion of the main flow of the Upper Snowy River westwards; c) the proposed Scheme was modified in the highest area to protect heritage values (primitive area decision of

1963); d) while there were compromises on both sides heritage conservation undoubtedly came out second best.

6. As for the future, the fact that the area has been identified in official studies as having world heritage values means that the protection of these should be a significant consideration in all future land use decisions. The area has already been nominated for its natural values for the National Heritage List. Too much ground was given to the hydro scheme in the past and this will need to be redressed in the future. There needs to be two main types of action re this: a) no expansion of the hydro scheme in a manner which threatens the heritage values; and b) some adjustments to overcome the excessive impacts of the Scheme in the past.

#### LIMITATIONS ON FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCHEME

7. There are a number of possible expansions of the Scheme which need to be resisted to avoid damage to internationally significant heritage values. One is the development of pumped storage schemes to maximise peak energy production. These would adversely affect both stream and river flow and cause damage through further engineering works.

#### ADJUSTMENTS NEEDED TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF THE SCHEME ON HERITAGE VALUES

8. Protection of the area's world heritage values would benefit from a number of adjustments aimed at obtaining a better balance between the two interests than that achieved in the past. They include: a) restoration of the Snowy River flow to at least half its natural flow (this diversion would not have been approved if it had been proposed today; and b) the removal of stream diversions on the left and right bank of the upper Snowy River, on the streams flowing down the western flank of the Main Range and elsewhere.

#### CONCLUSION

9. The decision to maintain Snowy Hydro Limited in public ownership was a good one because it will make it easier for the two Governments to intervene to control future development and make the adjustments necessary to optimise world heritage values. If the Committee would like me to expand on these points please do not hesitate to ask.

Dr Geoff Mosley