

**Submission
No 347**

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

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Inquiry into the Management of Public Lands in NSW

There are rapidly increasing resource demands in NSW caused by the continuing growth in our human population and personal financial wealth. It is essential that public land management policy development leads to the implementation of management practices that ensure the long term viability and health of all public lands. Public land usage can be broadly classified into five categories: land reserved for urban development, mining, forestry and other agricultural activities, recreation, and conservation.

The variety of activities carried out on public lands requires a range of management practices that are not necessarily compatible with each other. Attempting to implement incompatible management practices on the one parcel of land is financially wasteful and results in land degradation. Cost effective management that maintains the long term viability of the land is only possible where each parcel of land has a designated prime purpose. Other activities should only be allowed where it can be demonstrated from research that such additional activities will have no or minimal impact on the prime use.

The outdoor recreational industry is a new growing industry. There are increased recreational demands for 4 wheel driving, mountain biking, horse riding, trail bike riding, hunting, boating as well as bush walking and camping. The operators of a number of new businesses based on these activities are pushing for increased access to public lands. Recent policy directions by the previous government and the current government have taken a short sighted approach to this by simply attempting to impose these activities within the national parks and state forests. This is not sustainable and will be very costly in the long term.

Traditionally, in this state we have paid for our recreation. If a person is interested in film or music they pay for the opportunity to attend a concert, or to watch a movie in theatre or hire a movie. There are many other examples where we pay for the costs of our recreation, at the same time creating employment. The same principle should apply to people who wish to participate in the new outdoor recreational activities. A new public land type should be introduced called a Recreational Park where people enjoy and pay for recreational activities. National Parks should be renamed as Conservation Parks.

The current Wilderness Areas and most of the remaining areas of our current National Parks would become Conservation Parks. These can be managed with the prime aim of conserving the natural

biological and geological features contained in the park. Also more Conservation Parks should be made and some existing parks expanded so that there are significant representations of all the natural bioregions of our state. To ensure their long term viability there should be no forestry or other agricultural activity, mining, and limited recreation. Generally, no recreation involving machines of any type or animals should be allowed, although bikes could be ridden along maintenance tracks. Walking tracks need to be carefully planned to minimize impact, such as the use of suspended metal steps down slopes etc. The tracks need to be properly maintained and should be limited in number. Feral animal control should be conducted by professionals, including where appropriate, professional shooters.

Recreation Parks, with the prime purpose of recreation, should be established on land of low conservation value. Professional operators should be allowed to take out leases to establish outdoor recreational businesses. Resort and other accommodation providers would be able to build accommodation on leased land. The Government could also consider building and maintaining recreational infrastructure on a user pays basis. A range of sustainable tracks can be built on these lands. For example the construction of sustainable mountain bike track surfaces in ecologically sensitive areas is detrimental to the sustainability of the natural ecology in which they are built. Building them in areas of low conservation value avoids this conflict. The establishment of Recreational Parks in areas that have been open cut mined could also be a possibility in some cases. The monies raised by the leases and other fees charged for facility use should make Recreation Parks financially viable. Recreation Parks will also reduce the environmental stress on and human activity generated maintenance required in Conservation Parks.

I commend to the inquiry, recreation in Recreation Parks and conservation in Conservation Parks.