

**Submission
No 178**

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

Organisation: Access For All Inc.

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The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No.5
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000.

1st August 2012.

Dear Sir,

Submission.-Inquiry into the management of public land in New South Wales.

Unfortunately we became aware of this inquiry too late to prepare a more detailed submission. We hope that we will have a further opportunity to contribute before the committee makes its final submission to Parliament.

Access For All Inc. currently has over 500 members. It was established in 1999 in response to the then proposed extension of declared wilderness by the Labor Government of the day. Our chief concern was loss of access to public lands, loss of heritage and concerns for management of those lands. We now believe that as it has turned out, our worst fears have become reality.

Large areas of National Park were declared 'Wilderness' and by interpretation this meant access for self reliant bush walkers only; no access by horse riders, 4 wheel drives, motor bikes and therefore no access or the elderly, disabled, young and average families; no fishing and no camping. As most of the new wilderness areas were already National Park with appropriate environmental protection, the lock out of the majority was excessive. The only advantage being for National Park's management, as wilderness requires reduced management and this ultimately results in an increase in feral animal population and spread of weeds.

Access For All believes there should be a complete review of declared wilderness areas, or at least a re-interpretation of the definition of wilderness to allow access in some form to all of the above.

Whilst we have a broad view of the inappropriate declaration of wilderness and the adverse affect on the majority of Australians, we have more specific concern about the loss of historic bridle tracks caused by the more recent wilderness declarations. We will confine the majority of our submission to the tracks of South Coast and Tablelands, because this is the area we know the best. However, the same argument would apply to other areas of the state.

The south coast and adjoining tablelands are linked and criss-crossed by a magnificent network of bridle tracks and pack tracks. These served the area before the invention of motorized transport. Most followed traditional Aboriginal paths and were then used by the early European pioneers to settle the country; bring in supplies; export produce; transport gold and other minerals; move stock and generally maintain communications.

With the development of roads and motorized vehicles these historic supply lines were forgotten by most, but fortunately were still used by some locals as the shortest route between places and for moving stock. In later days they became a favourite recreational utility for local horse riding groups, who were able to enjoy the pleasures of the great Australian bush and for many of the current generation of older families, who were able to enjoy re-discovering their bush heritage.

The declaration of wilderness of the early 2000s had a dramatic impact on horse riding in our area. Not because all tracks were affected, as only some were, but because there was a lack of understanding and no consideration given to the heritage value of the tracks and the fact they are not just individual tracks but a network of tracks. Once one track is cut by wilderness and horse access is denied on a particular track, the whole network is damaged.

In the north there is the Wog Wog Track, which links the Clyde River with tablelands and on to Braidwood (It is cut by wilderness). From Braidwood there is access to the Corn Trail which descends to Bolaro and onto the port of Nelligen on the Clyde (still open to riders). It joins to the Shoebridge Track which was a link between Araluen and Nelligen (cut by wilderness). The Shoebridge joins the Deua River Track which follows the Deua River south to Bendethera and on the way links with many tracks such as Wyanbene Creek Track, Zig Zag Track and Blanchard's Track to the upper Shoalhaven. From Bendethera there is the George's Pack Track back to Moruya (cut by wilderness). Also from Bendethera is a track leading to the Belowra Valley (cut by wilderness). From the Belowra Valley there is the W.D. Tarlinton Track which links the upper Shoalhaven and Monaro (cut by wilderness). It also links to Cobargo and Bodalla.

It follows that before wilderness declarations, with some approvals by private land owners, horse riders could travel from the near the Clyde River to near Braidwood or Araluen or Bendethera, back to Moruya or onto Belowra, up the Shoalhaven or the Monaro, to the Tuross at Cadgee or onto Cobargo. This network involves the shires of Shoalhaven, Eurobodalla and Bega. It was a magnificent network of historic tracks which should be restored without delay and not subject to an assessment in another area with different environmental sensitivities, as proposed by the recent draft strategic plan for horse riding in NSW national parks and reserves.

Access For All have continued to work with NPWS to maintain the bridle tracks of the south east, even though recreational horse riding access has been denied. We have been preparing for the day when common sense would once again prevail.

We trust that time has come.

Yours faithfully,

Peter C Smith
Access For All Inc.