

**Submission  
No 457**

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

**Name:** Mrs Morna Knight

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## SUBMISSION TO

### Management of public land in New South Wales Inquiry

#### **Background**

I own a property that is now bounded by National Park along one side and a National Park access road on another side. It was State Forest up to approx three years ago. Part of my property is on the floodplain of the Murrumbidgee River and its tributaries. A creek offshoot of the Murrumbidgee river flows through my property.

#### **Rates**

Public land managers should pay land rates (even if at a reduced rate). We are told that National Parks increase tourism in an area. Tourists in regional Australia all drive to National Parks which increases wear and tear on local government roads. Our local government is expected to maintain roads to/or through National Parks with no monies provided to local government by the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS).

Likewise local governments are expected to maintain roads and bridges around State Forests with no monies from State Forests. Logging trucks rapidly increase road deterioration which has to be repaired by Local Government.

#### **Feral Animal Control**

Public land managers should have to control feral animals (as responsible land managers) just like all other land owners. Feral animals include cats, foxes, rabbits, goats and wild dogs. As the largest land owner in some areas the Public Land Manager should be the one to coordinate the wild dog baiting as well as fox baiting. This rarely happens. The science has shown that baiting large areas has a far greater impact on feral animal reduction than baiting many small areas.

Very little or no feral animal control is conducted in the National Park that borders my property. There certainly has been no coordinated baiting program to my knowledge.

### **Fire Management**

There is very limited hazard reduction burning being conducted in National Parks and State Forests in the Murray Darling Basin. After the floods of December 2010 and March 2012 hazard reduction burns are more important than ever.

There has been a huge number of river red gum seeds germinate. At the current density of these young trees they will only grow approx 4.5 m tall and be very thin as they crowd each other out. Historically forest wild fires would thin these young trees by killing a large percentage of them and thus allow the surviving trees to grow into large trees. It is the large trees that develop holes and hollows for marsupials and nesting birds. These large trees also have the bark suitable for a lot of beneficial insects thus helping to maintain the biodiversity of our forests.

Under State Forest management, harvesting operations with an aim to reducing the tree density was carried out. This allowed the remaining trees to grow to their potential. A lot of State Forest area has now become National Parks in the Murray Darling basin.

Under current NPWS land management practices wild fires are quickly extinguished and thus the heat from the fire kills minimal trees. The current hazard reduction practice is to have low intensity burns. Low intensity burns do not kill trees over approx 3 m tall. I do agree with the reasoning behind low intensity burns however it is extremely important to have hazard reduction burns within two years of a flooding event (flooding causes the most river red gum seed germination). Low intensity burns will kill a good percentage of these very young trees.

Without low intensity burns thinning the small river red gum tree, density on the floodplains becomes very high. During the next flood event after the trees are over 3 m tall all these trees act similar to a dam wall. These trees slow the water down which in turns raises the water level upstream from the trees just like any other obstruction to the water flow. The trees will also keep the water height near its peak for a longer period of time as the water slowly travels through these high density trees on the flood plain.

Poor public land fire management will negatively impact on local government infrastructure and individual infrastructure as water heights are raised by the high density trees.

## **Fire Breaks**

On properties where grass fires are the normal rather than forests fire it is good practice for land owners to plough along boundary fence lines to provide a fire break. If both neighbours do this then there is a good wide area between properties with minimal fuel loads.

Three advantages of this ploughed area are:

The provision of a firebreak,

Kills small trees and regrowth preventing them from falling on fences when the trees get bigger, and

It provides a clear access track for emergency vehicles along the boundary of the National Park.

## **Road and Bridge Maintenance**

Public land managers should budget for road maintenance throughout the year, in particular the National Parks in the Murray Darling Basin. After heavy rain gravel entry roads need maintenance even if the road was graded just before the heavy rain.

I border a National Park and a National Park access road borders another side of my property. After rain I regularly have people come to my house to ask when will there be road access to the National Park.

## **Noxious Weed Management**

Public land managers should be maintaining the land they manage the same as every other land holder. State Forest pine plantations in the Tumut region have ten blackberry plants for every pine tree. It normally follows that there are many rabbits and foxes as well as they use the blackberries as a harbor. Science has proven that both rabbits and foxes have a negative impact on our native fauna.

Many public lands do not have a budgeted noxious weed management plan. Noxious weed control should be coordinated with the neighbouring properties. This rarely happens. After the floods it is normal for property owners to see unusual weed infestations on their property. Weed seeds have been carried in by the flood water. If this weed infestation is ignored by the land owner then it can become established. To contain or eradicate this weed can come at a great cost to all landowners nearby.

## **Fencing**

I am responsible for removing trees that fall over the fence from the National Park. Also for repairing fences due to fallen timber or damage caused by native animals such as kangaroos. In some areas I know that wombats wreck havoc on fences as well.

This is a shared fence line. I am happy to repair fences damaged by my livestock or trees growing on my property. It is a time and financial impost on me to make me responsible for damage caused by National Park flora and fauna.

The ploughing of a firebreak on the National Park side of the fence line will help reduce damage to fences caused by falling limbs.

## **Conclusion**

To date National Park & Wildlife Service have been very poor neighbours. Due to poor or no feral animal control, minimal or no noxious weed control and poor fire prevention strategies.

The NPWS are also very poor at communication and consultation. The land bordering my property changed from State Forest management to NPWS management over three years ago. To date I have not seen or been invited to have any input to their draft management plan for this new National Park.

The NPWS can become good neighbours by conducting noxious weed control, feral animal control and good fire strategic programs. Also by communicating regularly with property owners bordering National Parks.

The way to measure the success of management strategies in National Parks is whether biodiversity is maintained or increasing. To that end I would like to have a copy of the benchmarking that took place on the flora, fauna (including aquatic) and insects present when the National Park was established.