

**Submission
No 283**

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

Name: Mr Graeme Barwick

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GRAEME BARWICK

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GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO.5.

HON. ROBERT BROWN MLC.

DEAR SIR,

I WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO ADD TO YOUR INQUIRY INTO THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS IN NEW SOUTH WALES.

THE DECISION TO CREATE REDGUM NATIONAL PARKS IN THE RIVERINA WAS MADE WITH WHAT MOST PEOPLE IN THE RIVERINA SUSPECT, AND EVEN CITY POLITICAL WRITERS BELIEVE, ~~THE~~ THE MAIN OBJECTIVE WAS TO SECURE GREEN PREFERENCES FOR THE STATE ELECTION. THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD STATE POLITICAL EDITOR WROTE ON AUGUST 15 2009: "THE POLICY IS AN ATTEMPT BY THE PREMIER, NATHAN REES, TO WIN BACK SOME OF THE GREEN MOVEMENT AND HOPEFULLY SECURE GREEN'S PREFERENCES FOR THE STATE ELECTION - THE GREENS VOTE IS EXPECTED TO BE VERY HIGH AMID DISCONTENT OVER BOTH MAJOR PARTIES -." ~~THE~~ THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT HAD CREATED NEW REDGUM PARKS AND ENVIRONMENT GROUPS WERE CALLING FOR NSW TO DO THE SAME. IF THE PROJECT

WAS REALLY ABOUT SAVING REDGUM FORESTS WHY DID PREMIER, NATHAN REES, ANNOUNCE HE WOULD DECLARE THE MILLEWA GROUP OF REDGUM FORESTS AS NATIONAL PARK BEFORE THE NRC ASSESSMENT WAS COMPLETE. THE "VEAR" INQUIRY INTO REDGUM FOREST IN VICTORIA HAD TAKEN OVER THREE YEARS. WHY HAD THE NSW GOVERNMENT ONLY GIVEN THE NRC AROUND FOUR MONTHS TO COMPLETE A TASK OF SUCH MAGNITUDE? THE LIKELY ANSWER IS THE LABOR GOVERNMENT NEEDED TO CREATE NATIONAL PARKS BEFORE THE NEXT STATE ELECTION TO SECURE GREEN PREFERENCES. ANY ~~DOUBT~~ DOUBT OF THE NSW GOVERNMENT'S REAL INTENTIONS WAS REMOVED WHEN FRANK SARTOR DECLARED AT A MEETING AT THE GULPA SAWMILL - "LET ME GIVE YOU A LESSON IN POLITICS. THE GREENS HOLD 15% OF THE VOTE. IF WE ARE TO STAY IN POWER, WE MUST HOLD THEIR PREFERENCES TO MAINTAIN CITY SEATS. THEY WANT A SIGNIFICANT NATIONAL PARK IN REDGUM." YOU MUST WONDER IF THE FORMER NSW LABOR GOVERNMENT REALLY CARED ABOUT THE ~~WELFARE~~ WELFARE OF REDGUM FORESTS OR THE COMMUNITIES THAT RELIED ON THEM.

THE NSW GOVERNMENT SEEMED TO SHOW LITTLE CONSIDERATION FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES. WHEN THE 5 YEAR TRANSITION PERIOD WAS ABANDONED AND ALL OF MILLEWA FOREST BECAME NATIONAL PARK ON JULY 1, 2010 THE EXTRA \$17 MILLION TO COMPENSATE WAS SIMPLY NOT

ENOUGH AS NSW FOREST PRODUCTS ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RUSS AWLEY CAREFULLY POINTED OUT, THE RIVERINA AND MURRAY REGIONAL ORGANISATION OF COUNCILS CLAIMED THAT THE IMPACT OF NATIONAL PARKS ON THE TIMBER INDUSTRY WOULD COST MORE THAN 1000 DIRECT AND INDIRECT JOBS. RAMROC ALSO CLAIMED THE \$80 MILLION WORTH OF FUNDING WAS INADEQUATE AND ONLY EQUATED TO ABOUT ONE YEARS ECONOMIC VALUE OF THE REDGUM TIMBER INDUSTRY TO THE REGION. ANOTHER REPORT FOUND RIVERINA COMMUNITIES WOULD SUFFER AN ECONOMIC LOSS OF \$105 MILLION A YEAR. WHY DID THE FORMER NSW GOVERNMENT INSIST THESE NEW PARKS WOULD ATTRACT SO MANY VISITORS DESPITE OTHER PARKS CONTINUALLY FAILING TO MEET EXPECTATIONS? THE NRC ESTIMATED THAT THE TIMBER INDUSTRY IN STATE FORESTS CONTRIBUTED ABOUT \$48 MILLION TO THE REGIONAL ECONOMY, A REPORT BY ECONOMICS CONSULTANTS DIANNA GIBBS AND ASSOCIATES CALCULATED THAT ALMOST TWO MILLION EXTRA VISITORS A YEAR ~~TO REPLACE~~ WERE NEEDED TO REPLACE THE TIMBER INDUSTRY, THIS FIGURE IS ALMOST TOTALLY UNACHIEVABLE WHEN YOU CONSIDER YANGA NATIONAL PARK HAD ONLY 1500 TOURISTS A YEAR (2009).

IN DECEMBER 2009 MINISTER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE ENVIRONMENT FRANK SARTOR CLAIMED IT WAS CLEAR FROM THE NRC REPORT THAT TIMBER HARVESTING

YIELDS WOULD HAVE TO BE VIRTUALLY HALVED TO PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY AND USED THE REPORT TO JUSTIFY THE GOVERNMENT DECISION TO PLACE 70% OF FORESTS INTO RESERVE. JUST TWO WEEKS LATER ON MARCH 19 THE NRC WAS FORCED TO REVEAL THE ESTIMATES WERE 40% TO 60% UNDERSTATED AND WOULD POSSIBLY SUSTAIN 16200 CUBIC METRES PER YEAR OF SAWLOGS. THE NRC STILL FAILED TO INCLUDE 21000 HA. OF FOREST IN ITS ASSESSMENT WHICH FELL WELL SHORT OF FORESTS NSW ESTIMATED 17000 m³/YEAR FROM CENTRAL MURRAY FORESTS. THERE IS CERTAINLY A VAST DIFFERENCE BETWEEN 17000 m³/YEAR AND THE ORIGINAL NRC REPORT OF BETWEEN 6300 TO 13600 m³/YEAR OF QUOTA SAWLOGS AS LONG TERM SUSTAINABLE YIELD. ONE MUST WONDER IF THE NRC COULD NOT OBTAIN A FEW FIGURES FROM A GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT AND PLACE THEM CORRECTLY IN A REPORT HOW THE NRC REPORT COULD HAVE ANY CREDIBILITY AT ALL. ONE MUST ALSO WONDER IF EITHER THE NRC OR THE FORMER GOVERNMENT WERE BEING DECEITFUL TO MAKE THE PATHWAY TO CREATING NATIONAL PARKS EASIER. NRC'S SCIENTIFIC REVIEW PANEL CHAIRMAN PROFESSOR PETER KANOWSKI SAID THE COMMISSION'S SCIENTIFIC DATA SHOWED THE REDGUMS ~~ARE~~ WERE STRESSED AND DYING. "IF WE CONTINUED TO RECOMMEND FORESTRY

WORK IN MILLEWA, YOU WOULD ONLY HAVE 50% OF THE CURRENT WORK," HE SAID. WELL I SUGGEST HE HAS ANOTHER LOOK NOW!

A FURTHER REPORT BY PROFESSOR CHRIS BLACK FOUND FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY FIGURES COULD BE UP TO 80% HIGHER THAN THOSE IN THE NRC REPORT. PROFESSOR BLACK FOUND THE NRC REPORT DID NOT TAKE CURRENT AND FUTURE WATER AVAILABILITY INTO ACCOUNT. HE FOUND THE SEVERE DROUGHT OF 2001 TO 2007 AS AN INFLUENCING FACTOR AND BASING FUTURE YIELDS ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT CURRENT SEVERE WATER RESTRICTIONS WOULD CONTINUE WOULD NOT GIVE AN ACCURATE PREDICTION. FLOODING OVER THE LAST 2 YEARS AND PROMISE OF MORE WATER UNDER THE MURRAY DARLING BASIN PLAN WOULD ADD MUCH CREDIBILITY TO PROFESSOR BLACK'S REPORT. LONE TREES IN PADDOCKS AND ALONG ROADSIDES SURVIVE ON JUST RAINFALL AND IT IS LIKELY THAT MUCH OF THE STRESS ON FOREST TREES IS DUE TO OVERCROWDING.

TODAYS REDGUM FOREST ARE VASTLY DIFFERENT FROM THOSE SEEN BY EARLY SETTLERS. THESE FORESTS ARE A PRODUCT OF RIVER REGULATION, CATTLE GRAZING, AND TIMBER HARVESTING AND NEED CONSTANT ACTIVE MANAGEMENT. BARMAN - MILLEWA FORESTS NOW CONTAIN OVER 200 SPECIES OF INTRODUCED FLORA MOST OF WHICH ARE FAR MORE FREE SEEDING AND HAVE A

SHORTER LIFE CYCLE THAN MOST OF THE NATIVE FLORA. THE INTRODUCED SPECIES HAVE FAR MORE CAPACITY TO SPREAD AND MULTIPLY IF LEFT ~~AND~~ UNCONTROLLED THAN THE NATIVE SPECIES. LOCKING FORESTS UP IN NATIONAL PARKS WILL DO FAR MORE TO PROTECT THE INTRODUCED SPECIES THAN IT WILL THE NATIVE SPECIES. A RECENTLY RELEASED REPORT ESTIMATED THAT NOXIOUS WEEDS EFFECT 91% OF NSW NATIONAL PARKS. IT FOUND BARMAN-MILLEWA WAS 50% WEED INFESTED WHICH WAS TWICE THE AVERAGE OF OTHER NATIONAL PARKS. IT SEEMS NATIONAL PARKS ARE PROTECTING BI-DIVERSITY BUT UNFORTUNATELY MOST OF IT SEEMS TO BE IMPORTED FROM EUROPE!

A STUDY LED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND FOUND THAT AUSTRALIA'S 9000-PLUS NATIONAL AND MARINE PARKS, NATURE RESERVES AND INDIGENOUS PROTECTED AREAS FAILED TO ADEQUATELY PROTECT MORE THAN 80% OF THE 1320 NATIONALLY-LISTED THREATENED SPECIES. IT CONCLUDED THAT CREATING LARGE AREAS OF PARKS AND RESERVES WAS NOT THE BEST WAY OF PROTECTING THREATENED SPECIES.

FROM MY EXPERIENCES STATE AND NATIONAL PARKS HAVE CREATED LITTLE EXCEPT FOR PERHAPS CHARCOAL AND SMOKE AND SAFE HAVENS FOR FERAL ANIMALS AND NOXIOUS WEEDS. IT SEEMS THE ONLY THING THESE NEW REDGUM PARKS ARE REALLY PROTECTING

ARE GREEN'S PREFERENCE VOTES.

INTRODUCED GRASSES GROW RAPIDLY IN THE SPRING AND SOON BECOME RANK AND KANGAROOS DO NOT GRAZE THEM THUS LEAVING THEM TO BECOME FIRE FUEL. FIRES WHICH HAVE ESCAPED FROM NSW. FORESTS HAVE IN THE PAST JUMPED THE MURRAY RIVER AND DESTROYED MANY HA. OF VICTORIAN FORESTS AND HUNDREDS OF HA. OF PRIVATE FARMLAND. NORTHERN VICTORIANS DID NOT WANT TO HAVE TO LIVE NEXT TO MISMANAGED VICTORIAN NATIONAL PARKS AND ARE NOT LOOKING FORWARD TO LIVING ACROSS THE RIVER FROM LOCKED UP REDGUM FORESTS IN NSW. NATIONAL PARKS ARE COMMONLY KNOWN "AS THE NEIGHBOURS FROM HELL" AND HAVE TRULY EARNED THE NICKNAME.

BUSHFIRES ARE BY FAR THE BIGGEST THREAT TO REDGUM FORESTS AND COULD EASILY WIPE OUT ENTIRE FORESTS IN ONE OR TWO DAYS. WHEN NATIONAL PARKS ARE CREATED MANAGERS TEND TO CLOSE TRACKS, FAIL TO REPLACE BRIDGES AND LEAVE LARGE AREAS OF FOREST WITHOUT ACCESS. CLOSE TRACKS LIMIT ACCESS TO WATER AND LENGTHEN RESPONSE TIMES WHEN FIRES DO START. RAPID RESPONSE IS OFTEN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A FIRE WHICH BURNS 2 HA. OR ONE WHICH BURNS 200 HA. FUEL REDUCTION BURNS HAVE BEEN TRIED IN VICTORIAN REDGUM FORESTS SINCE GRAZING HAS BEEN BANNED. IT HAS PROVEN TO BE EXTREMELY TIME CONSUMING AND EXPENSIVE AND IS

CLEARLY NOT SUITABLE FOR LARGE AREAS OF REDGUM FORESTS.

WITH THE CREATION OF REDGUM NATIONAL PARKS SOUTHERN NSW AND NORTHERN VICTORIAN RESIDENTS ARE FINDING IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN FIREWOOD. MANY RESIDENTS HAVE NO ACCESS TO NATURAL GAS, IF SUFFICIENT FIREWOOD IS NOT MADE AVAILABLE IT MAY CAUSE SEVERE HARDSHIP FOR PENSIONERS AND LOW INCOME EARNERS. MANY PEOPLE USE FIREWOOD FOR BOTH HEATING AND COOKING AND SOME HOT WATER SERVICES WORK SOLELY THROUGH WOOD STOVES. MANY FAMILIES WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO AFFORD THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS NEEDED TO BUY AND INSTALL NEW GAS OR ELECTRIC HEATERS, STOVES AND HOTWATER SERVICES.

NATIONAL PARK STATUS ON MAPS MAY ONCE HAVE ATTRACTED VISITORS BUT THERE ARE SO MANY PARKS IT NO LONGER WORKS.

THE GROWING NUMBERS OF PARKS DOES NOT SEEM TO REFLECT THE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES OR THE AMOUNT OF FUNDING.

PERHAPS NATIONAL PARKS SHOULD BE RENAMED EX CLUDED PARKS AS MOST PEOPLE ARE LOCKED OUT OR RESTRICTED.

HOPEFULLY THIS INQUIRY MAY RETURN SOME SENSEABLE MANAGEMENT TO REDGUM FORESTS.

YOURS SINCERELY

GRAEME BARWICK.