

Submission  
No 310

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

**Name:** Name suppressed  
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## **SUBMISSION TO ENQUIRY INTO THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LAND IN NSW**

Thankyou for the opportunity to make submissions regarding the management of public land in NSW.

Of the main public land managers, being Local Government, Federal Government, Forestry and National Parks I would like to make a submission that relates to Forests NSW and to NPWS in NSW.

It is very good and timely to see an enquiry into management of public land in NSW.

While we do need to manage public land, it should not be over-managed.

It is my hope that this enquiry will facilitate sensible public land management for the people of NSW.

Thankyou.

### **1. Forests NSW:**

State Forestry in NSW has a good reputation with the public.

It is well-liked, especially by those of us who actually go into the forestry areas.

Access is free and unrestricted (except for necessary controls in logging operations).

Long term sustainable forestry use is balanced in conjunction with sensible free public access.

Forests take due care of threatened and endangered species and of habitat in the course of their work.

Tracks and trails are well-defined and are open to use.

Maintenance and condition of trails are not generally an issue.

Main accesses are always good and well managed for logging and for public access.

Use of tracks and trails helps keep them usable which is also advantageous in emergencies.

Bushfire risk management is good (I've served on local Bushfire Management Committees for about 10 years).

Pest and weed management is good.

I feel welcome in state forests.

Some facilities are provided in main camping areas – and these are always welcome, regardless of age and condition.

Forests do, when circumstances become desperate for local properties and local fauna, use poison baits designed specifically for wild dogs and foxes. I would rather poison not be used at all.

Forestry has accepted the role of conservation hunters.

Most people like Forests.

**Recommendation:** My recommendation would be for Forests NSW to continue as it has done, with welcoming and mutually co-operative attitudes and sustainable practices.

### **2. National Parks**

National Parks does not score so well.

Firstly, "National" is really "State".

"Parks" includes National Parks, State Recreation Areas and Conservation Areas – any area controlled by NPWS in NSW.

The idea of Parks is a good idea; the problems come from the way they are managed – from the NPWS organisation.

Now, NPWS workers are good workers, just doing their jobs, like we do (with the exception of some over-zealous rangers). Some NPWS people do good work in research and education.

There is some good work done in management of threatened and endangered species and in management of critical habitat.

However, the organisation appears to have a huge attitude problem and an over-developed sense of supremacy.

The problems must come from higher in the organisation.

From the 1970s, when I worked in the Snowy area, I have seen the rise of the NPWS empire. NPWS appears to have become an increasingly obsessive, self-serving, over-managing organisation.

It appears to have assumed and promoted its own authority without commensurate social responsibility and without accountability to the public for its attitudes and practices.

It is an organisation that is widely disliked in regional NSW.

It has become characterised by obsessions, land-grabs, money-grabs, empire-building and lock-outs.

Among its obsessions are blocking traditional access and preclusion of “domestic pets”.

**Blocking access:** Blocking of traditional access by NPWS is where vehicular access trails that we and our ancestors traditionally formerly enjoyed, with care, have been blocked and locked without good or proper cause.

**Heritage:** NPWS has reportedly even destroyed items of heritage – For example Carters Brush Trail - closed and ripped.

**Land-grabs:** NPWS seems to want to grab every bit of land it can. Local land-grab examples, near Newcastle, are in Barrington Tops, Wattagans, Fraser Park, Wallarah (near Pini Beach South of Swansea) and Stockton Beach.

They cannot even manage the land they have held for decades. I have seen the largest infestations of noxious weeds and feral animals (including huge pigs) in National Parks.

I have seen infestations of noxious weeds in KNP the size of football fields and pigs the height (at the shoulder) of a standard large sedan window-sill.

**Bushfires:** Its Bushfire Risk Management appears dangerously focussed on short term preservation, particularly in remote areas. When wild-fire eventually comes there is widespread devastation, as has been seen in wildfires around KNP and the ACT in recent years. Access trails, having been locked off for years, are of doubtful serviceability in emergencies. (I have served on Bushfire Management Committees for around the past ten years).

**Money-grabs:** It has opportunistically and greedily, imposed fees (large fees in selected popular places such as KNP – NP has a monopoly on snow in NSW) for “park use” – I could not find in the NP&W Act any authority to do that.

**Toward a sell-off:** Another concern relating to fees, particularly to escalating fees, would be that management of such a profitable affair could attract thoughts of a sell-off of management rights.

**Ferals, Natives and Poison:** Another concern is the NPWS frequent use of nasty poisons in their indiscriminate and cruel attempts to destroy feral animals – which also poisons some native animals.

RSPCA and animal rights organisations are conspicuously silent while animals suffer.

No animal should be made to suffer.

Similarly for the reported and now infamous NPWS 2009 shooting and wounding of brumbies from helicopters – disgraceful.

**Undue opportunistic influences:** Of concern also is the possible influence on NPWS by other groups like RSPCA and animal rights groups – when there is an opportunity that suits their purpose.

Also, I include the National Parks Association(s) as an organisation that can have a disproportionately high influence.

I would like to see the make-up of those organisations and their influences on NPWS as part of the review.

I also mention the Wilderness Act as an associated Act that needs review and public accountability.

I also include the proliferation of the so-called Marine Parks and their management as needing thorough and public review.

### **Tracks and Refuse:**

Pre-empting the old cry of “what about track damage and rubbish dumping by undesirables”: There will always be a few idiots in every arena, particularly in areas close to suburbia. Best approach is to clean it up if it happens, accept that it can happen, get over it and not penalise all the good people because of the few idiots.

### **Moratorium:**

There should be immediate moratorium on declaration of any more National Parks, Conservation Areas, State Recreation Areas and Marine Parks, pending the outcome of this Enquiry.

### **Recommendations for Parks:**

- That there be a thorough, open and very public review of National Parks, its areas, its attitudes, its practices, its authority, its accountability, undue influences from outside the organisation, associated Acts and regulations and its funding.
- That National Parks be firmly and permanently placed into proper public control and scrutiny, free for all to use in a co-operative and sustainable way.
- Trails should not be closed except in exceptional weather circumstances – which would be torrential rain events, flood, snow, fire.
- There should be no fees. Access should be entirely free.
- Domestic pets, under control, should not be precluded.
- Conservation Hunters should be able to hunt feral animals in NPs.
- Work with the people, rather than against them.

### **One small recent example:**

One small local example of how the sneaky establishment of a very small area of National Park has had direct and unreasonable impact:

I live at Caves Beach NSW.

An area south of Caves Beach toward Catherine Hill Bay has been the subject of various deals for about the last 15 years. It was originally owned by a coal mining company.

People used to walk along the tracks to various fishing spots, or just walking, often taking their dog.

After some shady deals and failed development proposals the NPWS somehow gained control of a swathe of that land from Pini Beach to the Pacific Highway and toward Lake Macquarie. Then came the gates and the obsessive prohibition of domestic pets.



No longer can we do what we've traditionally been doing for the past thirty (or more) years. The NPWS rangers have been known to be aggressive, obnoxious, threatening and over-zealous in enforcing NPWS obsessions.

**In summary:**

Forestry NSW - a practical and well appreciated organisation, would best continue as it has done, with welcoming and mutually co-operative attitudes and sustainable practices.

National Parks (and associated influencers), while acknowledging goals that are different from Forests, needs to be thoroughly overhauled as discussed in this submission.

There should be immediate moratorium on declaration of any more National Parks, Conservation Areas, State Recreation Areas and Marine Parks, pending the outcome of this Enquiry.

Thankyou for the opportunity to contribute. I do this helps reach a balance.

## SUMMARY OF SUBMISSION TO ENQUIRY INTO THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LAND IN NSW

Thankyou for the opportunity to make submissions regarding the management of public land in NSW.

It is very good and timely to see an enquiry into management of public land in NSW. While we do need to manage public land, it should not be over-managed. It is my hope that this enquiry will facilitate sensible public land management for the people of NSW.

Of the main public land managers, being Local Government, Federal Government, Forestry and National Parks I would like to make a submission that relates to Forests NSW and to NPWS in NSW.

The ideas expressed in this submission are my opinions and the opinions of friends and colleagues, which have been formed over long periods of association with, and observation of, the organisations concerned.

Although the purposes of the two organisations are very different, they do share common principles in management of the land and in relations with the public that they serve.

NPWS has shown grossly deficient land management practices and major attitudes of supremacy over the people. These deficiencies and attitudes, given further detail in the submission, relate to

- Exclusion by blocking traditional access without proper cause.
- Obsessive exclusion of domestic pets – even if under control.
- Heritage and improper practice.
- Expansionist land-grabs when NPWS cannot even manage land that it has controlled for decades.
- Bushfire risk management and preparedness that is inadequate and could even be dangerous.
- Money-grabs where fees have been imposed (possibly without authority) and drastically escalated in selected areas.
- Inappropriate and inadequate management of noxious weeds and feral pests.
- Inhumane destruction of animals.
- Possible undue and disproportionate and opportunistic influence from outside organisations.

We need to bring NPWS back into the control of the people of NSW.

In order to do that it may be necessary to take measures as follow:

- A thorough, open and very public review of National Parks, its areas, its attitudes, its practices, its authority, its accountability, undue influences from outside the organisation, associated Acts and regulations and its funding.
- National Parks, as a new and separate organisation if necessary, be firmly and permanently placed into proper public control and scrutiny, free for all to use in a co-operative and sustainable way.
- Trails should not be closed except in exceptional weather circumstances – which would be torrential rain events, flood, snow, fire.

- There should be no fees. Access should be entirely free.
- Domestic pets, under control, should not be precluded.
- Conservation Hunters should be able to hunt feral animals in NPs.
- Work with the people, rather than against them.

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