

**Submission
No 205**

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

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Public land should function as its name describes - for the public. I'm a fisher, bush walker, cyclist and recreational/conservation hunter. I use a 4WD where necessary to access the places to remote to walk or bike to. I fear that access to our many tracts of public land are being unreasonably curtailed - by the lobbying efforts of a few activists who claim to be conservationists.

The mania for banning seems to have infected government at all levels. It has supplanted education and enforcement because it's cheap and garners headlines and easy votes from unwary electors.

The idea of more national parks seems great on the surface. But once locked-up, these often vast and isolated areas become havens for feral animals and exotic flora that breed and grow unchecked - reducing biodiversity and decimating indigenous plant and animal species.

National Parks hasn't the funds, skills or man power to effectively control feral animal populations. But an anti-hunting lobby seems to be succeeding in blocking those who a. have a right to be in these Parks and b. can safely and constructively help remove the feral species.

They seem to be run by those in the sway of idealists rather than science-based administration.

Further, as areas are closed to vehicle access and turned into reserves etc, tracks grow over, lantana etc take hold and the ferals flourish. I've seen walking tracks cut into the hillsides by National Parks at Hat Head National Park for OHAS reasons cause massive erosion. The old game trails used by kangaroos, fishermen and surfers for decades were just fine. Now the park is closed to mountain bikes as well. The gravel strewn tracks are washed out and a haven for weeds. Stupid - and a waste of money.

The Federal Labor Government's attempted land grab at Malabar of the ANZAC Rifle Range is a good example of cynical politics. The target shooters, horse clubs, model plane clubs and many who walked and exercised there were told it was contaminated and the area closed - suddenly after 156 years of continuous use as a military and civilian rifle range. Yes, you'd expect a bit of contamination wouldn't you? It's also next door to a sewage treatment plant. So why the sudden concern for those who used it so harmoniously for so long?

Well, it's clearly a valuable piece of land and Peter Garret and his cohorts were willing to stoop to any pretext to get hold of it.

Fortunately the Supreme Court has partially reversed that decision - probably saving the land from being sold to developers. But most of the rifle clubs who used it are unable to regain access and the Government shows no sign of honouring their agreement to establish a new range elsewhere in the metro area of Sydney.

What happened to live and let live? Australia is big enough for those who want to hunt and those who don't to never run into each other. We can have days for shooting and days for no shooting - this system already works in many of NSW's State forests. There are over 200,000 licensed shooters in NSW. All by definition are law abiding people and we have a right to use public land as well - especially when our purpose is so

environmentally positive. For the record, it's illegal to kill our native animals. Anyone doing so should be prosecuted. My point is we don't need more laws, just better enforcement of the existing ones.

Yet the only time you hear about shooters is when the inner-city based Greens are attacking us. But for what? The animals we hunt are introduced and massively destructive. Feral species like foxes and feral cats kill the rare and beautiful birds and marsupials unique to our bush.

Pigs, goats and camels are destroying millions of hectares of native vegetation and competing with kangaroos and wallabies. But hunters are banned from many of the areas they are at their thickest. National Parks and other public land areas become sanctuaries for the ferals rather than the native animals - a terrible irony indeed.

It's an indisputable fact that feral animals are causing the harm to our native animals not hunters - despite the alarmist lies of the anti-shooting lobby.

Conservation hunters and the Greens actually have a common cause. But there seems to be no tolerance of difference. They hate guns and that's that. I find this ironic and sad. But perhaps it's because the Greens have so little to do with real conservation any more. Their agenda now seems broad and urban-centric.

Let's share more, judge less and base our land management decisions on science not ideology, emotion and fear-mongering.

We all want to preserve the places we enjoy, but we need to be able to get to them first!