

**Submission
No 18**

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

Name: Mr Rhys Glenn

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The Director,
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5,
Parliament House, Macquarie St,
Sydney, NSW, 2000

Re: Inquiry into the management of public lands in New South Wales.

Dear Sir,

Congratulations on agreeing to examine the process which led to the destruction of our local timber industry and the creation of a National Park that should never have been declared.

I have had a life-long association with the Millewa group of forests beginning with mustering my uncle's cattle on a forest lease as a boy, to serving as a member of the Barmah-Millewa Forum (which advised government on environmental management) for about 12 years, to fighting fires as a volunteer in the forest area.

Recent research in the historical record shows that the forests were not here when the first white men arrived in this area. So we have a National Park that reserves a forest which has been manipulated and harvested by man since it started growing. Why?

The National Park was the creation of a government in complete disarray which had lost all credibility with the electorate and was desperate to hold onto power.

What did they achieve?

1. Almost total loss of the red gum timber industry. Arche Consulting, contracted by the NRC, found that the region had 274 direct, full time jobs in the timber industry. Mathoura's figure of 31 represented a disproportionately high 14% of all local employment and although this seems a small number, this is a very small community. The NRC report assessed the gross value of output (turnover) of the timber industry of the region as being about \$48 million plus \$39 million in value-adding. Most of that is now lost.
2. Loss of income for other local businesses and their suppliers (the flow-on effect). This is a

slow process which continues to impact and multiply for years, affecting local services like education, health and retailing.

3. A considerable added burden on taxpayers with millions of dollars already budgeted for the management of what was previously a self-funding resource asset.
4. A decrease in visitor numbers to the area. Many of those who holidayed near Mathoura came because it was not a national park.
5. Poor forest management creating a huge fire risk area. Long grass is everywhere. There is a deliberate build up in fallen timber adding to the fuel load.
6. Within just two years, a crisis in the supply of firewood for local families which have relied on this source of fuel for generations. It is now greatly restricted in area and in the time of year it may be collected.

Where do we go from here? The most sensible solution would be to scrap the National Park and return to sustainable, selective harvesting in good timber areas.

Divide the forest into three categories.

1. Reserve the traditional wetland areas (Ramsar sites) and water them three years out of five. These could remain under the control of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.
2. Flood adjacent good timber areas three years in ten with the aim of producing mill logs.
3. The balance of the area (about 50% of the total) could be watered once in 15 years.

I thank you for the opportunity of providing some input into your inquiry and hope my suggestions will assist.

Yours faithfully,

Rhys Glenn