

**Submission  
No 96**

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

**Name:** Mrs Judy Buss

**Date received:** 28/07/2012

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Dear Sir,

It has only come to my attention recently that this committee was accepting submissions about the use & access people are allowed on publicly owned lands. Every week I hear a rumble of complaints about how restricted the outdoors has become & that areas that were once accessible are now blocked. Those areas that still have accessibility are heavily used & because of that they lose their appeal. My husband & I run a metal detector shop in NSW. We supply metal detectors & accessories to people who love the outdoors & love to go prospecting and or treasure hunting on beaches or parks & in the bush etc. It is a widely enjoyed pass time, particularly by people in older age groups & it gives them an activity, an interest & for some it provides a small income which is a blessing for those older Australians on fixed incomes. Those who prospect for little pieces of alluvial gold, much like our forfathers, only want the chance to take their metal detector & hunt up a little gold or find a few lost coins in the gold bearing bushland or on a beach without risk of upsetting some rules & getting into trouble. Gold bearing areas are specialized areas so not any old location will do, but sending everyone to a 500mre desginted fossicking area is silly because after the first few have been over it there is nothing left. Prospectors who use metal detectors do not scar the land, they do not destroy the waterways, they don't kill any plants & they don't hurt any animals. Why then, can they not dig a hole to retrieve a treasure or a nugget then refill it again? Just because a gold bearing area falls inside a "National Park" why then are outdoor loving people penalised & fined (when a wombat digs deeper & further & never fills his holes)? It is the Australian dream to spend ones retirement travelling the country, experiencing the bush or the beach or the desert & if finding a little gold along the way helps to support the adventure well all the better. But there are so many restrictions, rules & fines it is impossible to know where one type of area starts & another ends. For example, the State Forests of NSW are now asking for a \$22 permit to access their land. Every region does their own thing so it is costing every time you travel from one State Forest area to another. That isn't very fair & it is piece meal....they don't really know know their own rules that well. Some national parks can be accessed at a cost & others....well just forget it. It's always money, money, money. We should be able to enjoy a bit of nature, camp out, do a bit of prospecting & cook a damper in a camp fire at night (fire season permitting) without being forced into plastic camp grounds & tethered by layers of restrictions. If there are truely sensitive areas then fence them off but there is so much land that is blocked from us in the name of "National Park".....whose park I ask?? Nobody can go there, camp out, take their dog & kids, so whose park is it really?

We love the outdoors. We have lived simple lives. Our holidays have been camping, our business is providing goods & training for prospectors & treasure hunters who also love the outdoors, our kids were raised doing weekend camps, swimming in the dam, fishing, trips to the beach, riding a horse through a state forest, 4 wheel driving a fire trail. We never leave rubbish behind. We love the bush & we love the outdoors & all the activities that go along with it. I would ask that prospectors & treasure hunters be allowed to fossick & explore areas within parks. I do not support surfacing, dredging, water cannon blasting or anything damaging like this but people using metal detectors & pans create little to no environmental impact & should be allowed to enjoy the bush as our forfathers once did. Yes, there are a few ratbags that ruin nice spots with their litter but most people are nature loving. It is the reality of some humans but perhapse a single permit system which allows people in parks & onto state forests, onto commons & reserves etc will deter those that are not committed to the outdoors & it stops all these government departments double dipping to prop up their budgets. They are funded by tax dollars & then they charge again & again & again....depends where you go. I'm not saying there should not be some management planning for our vast native areas. Heavens knows the

lock it away & do nothing approach of national parks has seen enough significant fires due to combustible fuel build up & inadequate hazard reduction to show that doesn't really work. There does have to be a balance, however. Just shutting people out so nobody can enjoy it is not the answer either. I believe that working with the various interest groups to care for the bush is the best way to educate people with the skills to treat it properly because they have a vested interest. Permits will simplify the access process & stop multiple government departments raiding the piggybank & it will give the administrators a good idea about who & how many people are visiting the bush. Every state has its own set of rules & costs also. It would be nice if there was a simple & standardised system used by all states. I primarily speak for the metal detectorists as a group of outdoor lovers with a special interest & I would like to see this group given access to old gold areas currently locked away in parks etc, freedom to travel about the country & camp out without so much restriction & some kind of fairer system so individual government organization or even different regions within those organizations stop taking advantage of people as cash cows.