

**Submission  
No 482**

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

**Name:** Hon Ian Cohen

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Hon Robert Brown  
GPSC 5  
Inquiry into the Management of Public Land in NSW  
I wish to contribute to the submission process.

The direction of the Inquiry is in line with the direction undertaken by the recently elected O'Farrell government and in line with the political realities of the numbers residing with the Shooters and Fishers Party. Perhaps I am wasting my time but I do wish to place on the record my opposition and stand ready to act in defence of ecosystems that were presumed to be protected in the past through their inclusion into the national parks estate.

I am not despairing in fact there is always a silver lining to be found. Might I suggest to the committee chair that he organise a recreational shoot in a national park in my area to test the comparative bush skills of shooters and conservationists. I look forward to meeting you in a forest somewhere.

I write as one with a history of 16 years involvement as a Green MLC but far more importantly as a long term conservationist with a history of involvement in the protection of the many ecosystems now under scrutiny.

My work with Forest protection goes back to the early eighties when the current chair of the Committee was wearing a Kaftan and playing in a band. We all change but my commitment to conservation remains consistent. The protection of the rainforests and later Old Growth forest campaigns have achieved historic conservation milestones in line with international conventions and placed Australia as a world leader in conservation.

This current government with its self serving political allies flies in the face of international commitment to biodiversity protection. It was clear when world scientists wrote to the then Premier Wran in 1981 about saving our rainforests what was needed. The same is true of our many threatened forest ecosystems today. We have forged protection through representative reserve systems. The underlying direction of this inquiry flies in the face of any sense of effective conservation

Science is clear that protected areas are the most effective way to maintain viable habitat for threatened species, catchment management protection and the preservation of Aboriginal cultural values.

The management of National Parks by scientists and experts has been a success despite the ill informed complaints by the ignorant and self interested. Weed, fire and feral animal management has been undertaken in a professional manner. Any relaxation of these time proven protections will further degrade our protected areas.

It is a tragic political mistake to allow unskilled recreational hunters into these sensitive areas. We are already seeing the spinoffs of this new culture of recreational hunting being given legitimacy for political payback with for example the illegal shooting of seven wallabies in a beach area near my home on the North Coast. There is a culture of brutality developing which will have impact on our environment into the future despite the ascendancy of such interest groups destined to be relatively short lived. Shooters and recreational land users are a threatening process within the borders of national parks. Other damaging impacts will be generated by other recreational users such as four wheel

drivers, off road motor bikers and horse riders. This greatly concerns those interested in conservation and will increase with a further relaxation of conservation controls.

If I have learned anything in my time in Parliament power gained is generally not used respectfully and hence is short lived.

I look forward to the end of this reign of terror on the environment ably assisted by the Premier who worked hard to gain a green veneer prior to the last election. I remember well his sensitive weeding on Lord Howe Island and the hypocrisy of his current political stand.

I have been involved with the River Redgums and the native hardwood forests of Northern NSW both were great conservation wins and in the case of the Redgums one only had to look across the Murray to see at the time the vibrant community benefitting from conservation compared to the depressed community in NSW. Conservation has great benefits but to dilute the conservation values will erode their attraction in the long term.

Of course the issue of public lands extends beyond national parks as such and there is considerable controversy regarding the management of caravan parks on public lands and here the direction of government seeking to profit from community assets is directly affecting the wellbeing and lifestyle of many vulnerable members of our community as well as a loss of amenity to long term traditional users. This is a particularly hot issue on the North Coast.

Given the number of Public Land reserves on the north coast and an interested community I suggest that there be adequate hearings held in this region.

I would also be pleased to personally appear before the committee to expand on the views touched upon in my written submission.

Verdantly

Hon Ian Cohen