

**Submission
No 275**

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

Organisation: Murray Valley Water Diverters Advisory Association (NSW)

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Inquiry into the Management of Public Land in NSW

1. Creation of National Parks & Community Consultation Fiasco

The recent process of conversion of Red Gum State Forests along the Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers to National Parks, has been an absolute insult to the people involved in the Australian Timber Industry and to the dependent communities of the regions.

Both, in Victoria first and NSW more recently, the '*lip-service*' of community consultation and eliciting of submissions was a total sham.

The final agenda was pre-determined! The Timber Industry and River Communities were totally duped into believing *their input* was being given serious consideration; when in fact it was being totally ignored.

The same scandalous process is being played out again with these same communities with the fraudulent MDBA 'Basin Plan' process.

2. Exclusion of productive management of renewable resources:

The operational impacts, on the remaining Timber Industry mills and cutlers is grave, as the process has left them with uncertainty; in light of the 'green' push to turn productive, sustainable, renewable Red gum forests into 'locked-up' National Parks.

In a world, where it is in our interest that renewable timber is harvested sustainably, it is short sighted of Australians to 'lock-up' our heavily regulated and controlled industry, and yet still be willing to import timber from neighbouring countries where 'clear-felling' of forests and all fauna habitat is conducted – unregulated.

3. National Parks – the unwanted neighbour:

The impacts, on neighbours of National Parks is well documented. Public Land National Parks are seen as bad neighbours who fail to control feral pests, noxious weeds and then often expect local voluntary fire brigades to fight their fires!

The National Parks are now potential infernos, with a lack of fuel load reduction management programs being applied. In the past the Forest Commission had the equipment, expertise and local knowledge to handle such fire events.

4. Public Lands – exempt from Local Government Rates:

The impact on Local Governments can be adverse, like when the largest landholder Yanga Station in the Wakool Shire became a National Park and therefore exempt for Shire Rates.

This effectively meant the \$50,000 Annual Shire rates collected was now an additional burden on all other ratepayers. As well as the loss of rateable income, it also has terminated direct employment created from productive properties within a region.

The same scenario, has been played out when the Federal Minister Penny Wong, instigated purchase of Toorale Station and the 'phantom' water purchase. This very productive Station employed many and was a large Shire Rate contributor in the Bourke Shire. The much acclaimed tourist activity that was supposed to economically compensate is all but non-existent!

This is typical of 'green' decisions being inflicted upon communities, by those in power who are not actually directly affected, as they do not live there. And often to catch urban electoral votes and great financial cost to local communities.

5. Australian Forests – a Natural Survival study:

River Red Gum State Forests in the Southern Riverina have been harvested sustainably for over 150 years. Red Gum trees will NOT die out - they have suffered in the recent drought, as has been the case in previous droughts; but as drought ends, with flooding rains trees regenerate very quickly & profusely.

The real need is a program of tree thinning to enable trees to grow and survive in drier periods. This was successfully done with the State Forest policy & agenda that regulated forest harvesting in rotational coup programs.

The possible conversion of the State Forest areas to National Parks will only lead to a wildfire inferno that will ultimately destroy the forest due to the excessive heat and endanger adjoining properties. I expect a similar scenario is being played out with the Native Hardwood Forests in Northern NSW.

Conclusion:

As is the developing trend, well intentioned educated theorists with NO practical experience or local long term knowledge, are from afar making decisions about the future management of these forests and properties. Once again, decisions made totally ignoring the 150 years of accumulated practical experience of the foresters and landholders who actually care for the long term sustainability of their local forestry environment and properties.

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