

Submission
No 437

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

Name: Name suppressed
Date received: 31/08/2012

Partially Confidential

31st August 2012

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No 5
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir

**Re: Submission for the Enquiry into the Management of Public Land in New South
Wales**

I would like to make a submission to the above enquiry, and I am one person who has been affected by the transfer of State Forest to National Park on the NSW north coast.

1 (a) My strong belief is that these types of conversions into a more protected title form for the following reasons:

- in order to protect habitat, particularly for threatened species and threatened ecosystems,
- conserve remnant patch size in what is becoming by the day a more and more sparse mosaic patch system in all parts of Australia,
- in the event that strong scientific evidence shows that there are gains for threatened species and ecological communities from increased protection, such as conversion to National Parks or other conservation areas. I myself have contributed to such scientific data in one north coast forest.

(b) As a biologist I am all too aware of the impact that economic and some social impacts will have on the fauna and flora of National Parks, as well as human neighbours:

- Logging and mining activities will have a huge impact, removing habitat, creating a great deal of noise (much more than a rave party), and a massive danger on narrow, winding local roads with timber jinkers and local residential traffic. Logging, particularly the methods that are being used at present, often targets habitat trees for koalas, greater and squirrel gliders, removes trees containing nesting hollows for owls, parrots and cockatoos and does enormous damage to the understorey, assuming that some survive the logging process. I do not disagree with sustainable logging in State Forests and other areas, however, a shortage of logs in 'sustainable' logging areas does not give an excuse to target the timber in National Parks,
 - similarly shooting will sometimes (often?) target the wrong species (including people?), and already a dozen wallabies have been shot at 7 Mile Beach, near Broken Head, and will also create quite unnecessary unpleasant noise for forest inhabitants and neighbours,
 - grazing, if allowed in National Parks and conservation areas was prohibited years ago to prevent further damage to delicate ecosystems, protect threatened flora that may be eaten and prevent further soil compaction that heavy cloven-footed animals cause.
 - The issue of fire in National Parks has been ongoing for many years, and again, this is an issue that should be resolved using strong scientific data, rather than by politicians or by others with vested interests or all too ready to light a match.
- (c) I live in the forests of north-east New South Wales, and I believe that I have answered these criteria in the above (a) and (b) points.

2. My strong belief is that management practices on private land should be subject to the same restrictions and adherences as management practices on public land.

3. I have read the submission by the Australian Environment Foundation, and the Briefing Transcript by Dr Leon Bren. I notice that in the terms of reference 'sustainable use' is in inverted commas, even though there is no definition of the term, or any indication of who will decide what is or is not sustainable use. Let's hope for all our sakes that it is someone with a strong scientific background, rather than a political one.

The first document I found quite disturbing, in its' inherent red-neck attitude better suited to the 19th century popularly described as 'if it moves, shoot it, if it doesn't cut it down'. I think that we could probably add to the last phrase 'or dig it up'. This document was also sorely lacking in any scientific basis, readily seen in the list of references that were all Hansart references, with the exception of the discussion on fire where it is well known that the experts do not always concur with each other. The simplistic and selfish attitude represented by this document that our native forests and lands have to cope with abuses such as logging, mining, grazing, whether or not they are in National Parks could be considered childlike if it was not so blatantly damaging to our fragile and threatened ecosystems. Then they claim that the land is not pristine (possibly due to the abuses that they themselves have heaped upon it), so it should no longer be National Park. Some particular points are as follows:

- p4 - future changes to public tenure will have an adverse impact on nearby rural communities if their local national parks are converted back into the usual 'sustainable natural resource' land.
- p4 - campaigns for expansion of national parks in my experience are driven by naturalists, bushwalkers, local residents, and other people who are aware of the particular unique qualities of the area. I am one of these people, and I live a very long way from any city.
- p4 - not sure where the concerns are coming from regarding the environmental outcomes in national parks. I guess if you regard a good social outcome to being to shoot and fish whatever, wherever and whenever you like then this statement is probably true. What a frightening thought!
- p4 - my understanding is that a national park is formed by the individual and unique characters, species or ecosystems that the area contains, and based upon a large body of scientific evidence. How is this too narrow? If there are national parks that do not fit the criteria, then again, it is up to the top biologists of the country to decide this, not the politicians.
- p6 – if you wish to discuss biodiversity benefits, then surely the obvious step is to ask a knowledgeable biologist!
- p6 – 'growing community disenchantment' is described. Not sure which community the author is discussing.

And so it goes on. If any person takes this document seriously, I am certainly not one of them.

The transcript of Dr Bren answering questions from the panel allowed me to breathe a little easier, however I do not believe that the committee grasped the essential point that water levels are critical for the well being of the red gum forest, and that over-use of this water represents yet another abuse of the ecosystem health. I feel inclined to compare the red-gum forests of inland NSW to the wheatbelt of southern Western Australia, where I worked for several years. I believe that there is less than 1% remaining of the native woodlands in that area, and still being abused. I'm sure some of the residents there would consider that also be 'sustainable use'.

I would welcome a community workshop in this area, since northern forests are one of their targeted areas, and really pray that we will not soon be living in a hell of shooting, logging, mining and grazing all within our precious National Parks, struggling to survive intact as it is now.

Yours faithfully