

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

**Organisation:** 4WD NSW - ACT Association

**Name:** Mr Craig Thomas

**Date received:** 2/08/2012

---

# Management of public land in New South Wales (Inquiry)

**This submission is on behalf of the 4WD NSW – ACT Association.**

Craig Thomas | Vice-President Lands – 4WD NSW & ACT Inc. | Tel: 0438 120 657  
Email: [vice.president-lands@4wdnow.com](mailto:vice.president-lands@4wdnow.com)



## **This submission is on behalf of the 4WD NSW – ACT Association.**

### **General Overview;**

Over the years our members have seen the areas that they have been able to access for camping and other recreation activities reduced to levels that just cannot be sustained. State Forests and Crown land offer pretty much unrestricted camping, once these areas are turned over to National Parks the camping is restricted to small condensed areas, this in turns puts pressure onto these areas and then these areas have to be closed so they can regenerate which puts more pressure onto other areas. With forests groups tend to move around and not over love one area.

As for driving tracks, forest and crown land are pretty much free range so people have the opportunity to drive different tracks thus spreading the load around, once NP take over tracks that would have been used for logging and fire use are gated and closed, putting more pressure onto the tracks that are left. NP do not have the funds to keep tracks open so they are gated for management use only, but now they are having trouble even maintain these.

Different problems occur in different areas, as an example areas around heavily populated urban areas, mainly on the coast, you have lots of families who want to experience the beauty of our great country and in the past have been able to take advantage of the State Forest that most of these towns grew from, but as they are converted to NP they ability to do this is severely restricted. This drives the families further away and adds extra costs and time to a simple camping weekend, but it also puts more pressure on these areas and then the greens tell us that we have to save these areas and it goes on.

### **Terms of Reference areas;**

#### **River Red Gum State Forests in the Southern Riverina;**

For our members this area was one that was used for its isolation and beauty, but mainly by local people, members from outside the area would use it for a stopover on the way to some other location with the odd one staying for a couple of nights. Now that it is a NP and the camping has been severely restricted and condensed it has lost its sense of isolation and could really be just a campsite anywhere. The outcome is that it will be visited less now than before.

In researching the area it is also apparent from our members that the forests themselves are now struggling under the care of NP and they are now seeking permission to manage the forest the same way that the State Forests did in the past, they are just calling it something different to make it sound green. This is an area that has been managed by State Forests for decades to world best practice and now is under threat from being over loved and poor legislation.

This area has been managed extremely well over the centuries by Aboriginals and later by State Forests and was never really under threat from the management practices, maybe drought but not from the management. No one believes that one day it was under threat and the next day just because a sign was changed out the front that it is pristine woodland and has to be preserved from the evils of world's best practice logging.

### **Yanga Station in the Balranald Shire;**

Pretty much the same story as the River Red gum areas, except it has destroyed the community, with the removal of jobs from the two areas and the removal of the rates to the area, there is not much left. The government has promised to inject funds into the area and have done so but the jobs that are being created are not the traditional bread winner jobs, more the second wage earner or casual student jobs. Nothing has been done to replace the trade jobs that have been taken from the area.

Future income from increased tourism will not happen as the area is too isolated to attract families from other areas and even if an eco-lodge was to be built it would have to be financed by a large corporation to afford to be able to build anything in a NP with the amount of restrictions that will be put on it. This means any money made from it will not go back into the community with the only real workforce need will be some seasonal casual work.

### **Native Hardwood State Forests in Northern NSW;**

This area has caused the most angst in our members, with huge areas converted to NP with very little gain to the environment, our members visit these areas because they love, respect and know the areas better than the majority of people and cannot understand the thinking behind the closure of the State Forests that have managed these areas for generations again to world best practice.

There has been no real increase in tourism as the areas to visit have been decimated and restricted to almost nothing compared to what was available in the past. It should have increased with the amount of people wanting to enjoy this type of experience and having the access to vehicles capable of doing so, yet it is just not happening.

If this area was to have a lot more access it may attract more people, but the costs to do this will be high and with the current low level of funding to NP it just won't happen.

## **Toorale Station in Bourke Shire;**

No matter how much research we did on this place we could find no good reason to make it a NP, in fact we could not even find a bad reason, so we are totally confused why it was even considered.

We understand the water requirement but it did not need to be made a NP, why there is no grazing on the station right now is almost criminal, we have nothing more to say on this property.

## **Summary;**

As an association we are increasingly frustrated with the short sighted and narrow view of the green movement, we believe there has to be a much wider view of how we do things instead of concentrating on one individual area without working out how this will impact on other areas and certainly there is not enough consideration given to the consequence of these actions. The State Forests have been looking after our resources for a long time and have done it to world's best practice, as a country we use wood, if we don't grow and harvest it here we cannot guarantee the credentials of what is imported into Australia from overseas.

In researching these areas we looked at a lot of the original submissions and were amazed how the facts have been distorted and only parts of studies have been used and the bits they don't like just not mentioned. It was also disturbing that the people making the decisions appear not to know anything about the areas or even visit them.

We need to be more responsible with our conservation efforts and not so short sighted, as an example; the greens in Tasmania are calling the closure of a paper mill a huge success, this is far from true, the plant was sold, gutted and moved overseas, commissioned without the water treatment plant so now it just pollutes the water supply of a country that has no control. If it was still here it would be working to a standard second to none, we would be providing jobs and we would be buying the same paper with the knowledge that it was done to a standard second to none.

Our members volunteer many hours to help NP and have enjoyed a great working relationship with them, we also support the concept of NP, but at the moment think without a massive increase in funding they will never be utilised to their fullest. Another method of thinking is desperately needed to find a balance between total conservation and managing areas for the future, some areas defiantly should have maximum protection, but these areas are usually only a very small part of a park and there is no room in the current system to allow for varying degrees of protection. The majority of NP should just be for recreation, this would open up a lot of areas and help increase the visitation to the areas, they could also then allow a level of commercial operation on these areas.

Closing an area off to the community or commercial operators just moves them somewhere else, this has to stop.

Thirty years ago the green movement started with the cry that if they did not save our lands then the only way our children would see them would be in a book, today the only way the majority of our children can see these areas is in a book, because they have closed them off to the average family, this needs to be reversed, a better balance has to be found.