

**Submission
No 429**

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

Organisation: Cummeragunja Local Aboriginal Land Council

Name: Mr John Atkinson

Date received: 30/08/2012

CUMMERAGUNJA LOCAL ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

ABN 71 459 172 253
PO BOX 99, MOAMA, NSW, 2731
EMAIL: cummera@mcmedia.com.au

PH: 03 58693372
03 58693401
FAX: 03 58693348

27th August 2012

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30 AUG 2012

GPSC's

General Purpose Standing Committee No.5
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney, NSW, 2000

Dear The Hon. Robert Brown,

My Name is John (Sandy) Atkinson AM, Bangerang Elder, I was born at Cummeragunja, 9th March 1932, and I am the 3rd generation of my family that was born at Cummeragunja which was established in 1881. I have 200 years of Ancestral Atkinson lineage and an Aboriginal lineage dating back to the Dreamtime. My people the Bangerang lived in the Murray Goulburn area, our country covered from near Shepparton across to Echuca and up to Deniliquin back across to Finley down to Katandra, finishing back at Shepparton. The Bangerang Nation consisted of the Moirathban, Toolinyagan, Wolithiga, Kailthban, Ngarrimowro, Angootheraban and the Pikkolatpan tribes. We do not acknowledge the Governments view that the Yorta Yorta should be our representative spokesperson, the Yorta Yorta were only established in 1984 and the majority have no connection with Bangerang Land.

Yorta Yorta formed in 1984 previously to that unknown by me or my family a lot of the members are not even from this area; they claim to represent all local groups. From what I am aware there has never been any evidence of that, they were not elected and therefore are not recognised by the Bangerang people who always have and continue to live in these areas. We have built a great repour with the European community over many years and through the government's negotiations with the Yorta Yorta, we are seeing a rift developing in our Community, potentially destroying generations of friendship and replacing it with racism. This is something that we are deeply concerned about.

My grandfather Clarence Atkinson described to me these open park like forests with vast expanses of grass lands, my grandfather's first association with early European settlers was with Governor Rice dating back to the 1840's who created a fishing company that fished in partnership with Bangerang people, they then commenced duck and swan egg collecting to supply the miners of the Bendigo Goldfields. Soon after, they collected leaches to be exported back to England for medical use.

Many Bangerang people worked in partnership with the early settlers in the Red Gum Forest Timber Industries and as farm hands. These forests then became part of the local communities' culture as they are part of the Bangerang Culture.

The Bangerang people consider that these forests have a much higher population of trees per hectare now than at any time in the past, these were managed by the timber industry to produce timber, and these forests were well managed in a sustainable manner by our local communities prior to the declaration of National Parks.

Since the declaration of Parks and the loss of the grazing and timber industries from our local communities there has been significant pressure brought about by the removal of industry and youth from the region.

Tourism has suffered with the Parks being closed and gates locked for long periods, it is the Bangerang peoples view that as part of the local community we would like to see these forests again managed in a multi-use sustainable way.

The Bangerang people would like to see our forests returned to the Local Community to love and look after, it troubles me that the Weria Forest has been recognised as being part of the Traditional Owners Land and they have received recognition and been given a role in its management, but we the Bangerang people have again been ignored, can your committee explain this to me? If we had a role in management we would like to see fuel reduction carried out as in the past with grazing to prevent bushfires and support the farmers. We would like to see trees thinned to promote growth by our timber industry to employ local youth and sponsor local organizations and sporting clubs. We feel that hunting to control feral animals is a legitimate use of these forests as long as it conducted in a lawful controlled manna. This would again provide the youth on the community with recreational activities, also boosting the local economy as result of the visiting hunters to the area. We would like to see locals collecting firewood in the company of their dog, stopping for a billy of tea and enjoying the beauty of our magnificent forests.

We believe that the Governments decision supported by the Yorta Yorta to make the Red Gum Forest a National Parks has been detrimental to the Bangerang people, the Local Communities and the Forest. We implore the members of the Land Management Committee to again make the Red Gum Forest multi-use for the sake of the forests health and the long term sustainability of the forest and the Local Communities. Leaving them in their current status will in the future mean the end of both these magnificent Red Gum Forests and our small rural communities.

I look forward to hearing your respond on this matter.

Yours Sincerely,

John (Sandy) Atkinson
Elder of the Bangerang Nation
Deputy Chairperson – Cummeragunja LALC