

**Submission  
No 293**

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

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22 August 2012  
The Director  
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5  
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Dear Sir

## INQUIRY INTO THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES

I write particularly in support of national parks and nature reserves as I am a regular user of national parks and choose to take most of my holidays in NSW because of these parks, spending my money in areas around such parks. However, I also support the need for and value of protecting state forestry and water catchment lands while ensuring their on-going management in line with the purposes for which they were created. NSW should provide a range of habitats that ensures a comprehensive network exists for the benefit and preservation of all creatures and vegetation, as well as for everyone who wishes to visit and quietly enjoy these environments and to provide a better world for future generations.

Our conservation areas are important for biodiversity protection, for freshwater catchment protection, for the preservation of the landscape, our heritage and objects of significance to the indigenous people's cultural values. Suggestions supporting shooting, logging, mining, grazing, horse riding and further commercial development in any national park, nature reserve, state forest or catchment lands reduces the value and unique character of these areas and the benefits they provide to everyone. I have no objection to the use of water storage lands for picnicking, fishing, camping or other quite and passive recreations.

As a signatory to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment the NSW Government undertook to establish a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of protected areas yet many biogeographic subregions remain under represented whilst there are competing pressures to limit their conservation values. There is much scientific evidence that protected areas are the most effective way of conserving biodiversity and the opportunities for everyone to experience nature's true effects.

The State's national parks and other reserves provide local communities throughout NSW with opportunities to benefit economically and socially; there are many instances but most inland townships situated close to national parks or other reserves clearly benefit from the staff of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, State Forests, State Water and employees of similar bodies who live in those communities and whose work is based in townships. Here on the Coffs Coast, for example, there are staff employed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and State Forests who live and work from cities such as Coffs Harbour and Grafton. Those people and their employers, provide significant economic benefits, directly and indirectly, to this region's communities. In the case of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, each office is also supported by a large number of community volunteers who take pride in ensuring these special areas are maintained and protected. In addition, the National Parks and Wildlife Service has

considerable expertise in feral animal control, invasive weed management and fire management. It may be that such expertise as is presently missing should be considered for State Forests and water authorities.

The effective management of national parks for conservation is hampered by budgetary pressures and demands to manage and provide infrastructure for an increasing number of recreational activities. More resources (in terms of qualified skilled personnel, equipment and money) need to be provided to ensure this Service is able to effectively manage our community's interests and estates. A simple example is the locked gate to Sherwood NR, near Woolgoolga. The gate is supposed to be opened (unlocked) at 7.30AM each morning but it seems that the additional cost of even doing this simple task is constrained by the local office's budget. I understand too that there is some consideration being given to reducing the number of Threatened Species Officers, yet I know that these people already experience huge constraints on the time in trying to undertake all the demands placed on them. More staff, not less, are needed to undertake this work. I also understand that many Threatened Species Officers simply lack access to the equipment and vehicles to fulfill their roles – how can threatened species assessments be made if budget limitations prevent these staff from undertaking site inspections?

It also concerns me that the views of the majority of the committee appear to be contrary to sound conservation principles in relation to the protection of National Park and other state-managed areas, for example the Committee Chair, who should be seen to be unbiased, has publically opposed the establishment of new National Parks and supports shooting in reserves by members of the general public. Similarly, the Committee's terms of reference seem biased towards economic values and disregard the professionalism of the National Parks and Wildlife Service experts. The case studies chosen by the committee are new additions to the national park estate and do not provide examples of the long term benefits of national parks to local communities.

Yours sincerely

Richard M Cooper