

Submission
No 171

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

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The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Sir/Madam

INQUIRY INTO MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LAND IN NSW

I am writing this submission to state my extreme concern at the potentially biased outcomes that this Inquiry is very likely to have, given the trade-offs that the current Liberal O'Farrell Government has already perpetrated against the people of NSW. As you are aware these trade-offs and give-aways, have been provided to high impact minority users of our national estate. Ie allowing horse riding into even more national parks, legislating to allow shooters under the guise of feral animal control, and also allowing horse riding in wilderness areas, while at the same time reducing the staffing and resources of the NPWS.

The role of Government was, and should still be, for the greater good of the people of a State, Territory or country. National parks and other public lands were established, many over a century ago, for the use, enjoyment and perpetuity for the people, and more importantly to protect valuable and declining areas for biodiversity, water catchment, areas of natural beauty and wilderness. Recently I saw Richard Attenborough on ABC TV say 'that wilderness areas are becoming increasingly difficult to find'. Why are we throwing these areas away? Why is there no responsibility these days for Government to preserve and protect them for the future, to actually demonstratively do something positive that will stop their declining values.

We now have governments with impoverished outlooks. The people of NSW will be shocked when they realise what they have unleashed and what they will loose in the long term. The TOR raise issues in relation to the acquisition of river red gum lands, both from Forestry and from private sellers. How can anyone not realise that these are threatened areas. I would expect that a significant amount of the funding for some, if not particular parcels of land (ie Toorale Station) has come from the Commonwealth Government. These acquisitions are of huge benefit to NSW, and will bring much needed tourism and enjoyment to visitors to those outback areas. Yanga so close to Balranald is a prime example.

Further the purchase of Yanga, Toorale and other properties, bring with them major water rights and are major relatively undamaged wetlands and water catchment sources. I believe we need more properties like these, and the forests around Narranderra and other river red come areas. I see them as a win win for public to have them as national parks with access for all and enjoyment and for the much broader good of a health of our Murray Darling River system.

Strange when these properties were in private hands there was no public access, so why the issue now?

I agree the loss of land rates to Shires is a long time issue that Governments should address. Basically public lands are for all Australians and overseas visitors, and their cost, including some loss of rating should be subsidised by State or Federal Governments. On other hand, national parks and reserves, provide major tourism attractions to towns and regions, and are a major employer of staff, plus contractors plus tourism related initiatives and employment.

Park managers undertake, together with Forests, Shire Councils and the Livestock Health and Pest Authority, major fire, weed and pest control work. Usually far more than was historically and currently undertaken either by Forestry or private land owners in isolation. This benefit should not be overlooked.

My experience in the acquisition of Crown Land, State Forests and agricultural land into the National Park Estate and other conservation areas since 2000 in NSW, has very clearly, and repeatedly demonstrated that almost all neighbours are happy with the acquisition and that over time the relationship with Parks has improved further. Again there are always exceptions, but it is usual to note that these persons either have a grievance with existing neighbours and government, or at some time may have had a legitimate case, but they have long memories and do not move on.

Overall I have major concern about impartiality of the Chair, Hon Robert Brown, MLC. The outcome is likely to already be determined. What a waste of time and public money again.

The record already shows, that Robert Brown and the Shooters party have already received major concessions from the O'Farrell Government. Concessions that threaten the safety of park users, and particularly that may threaten and disrupt existing pest management control programs that have been practically and scientifically designed. I am not denying more needs to be done to protect this country from pests, but there is only counter-evidence that the fact is volunteer shooters contribute little or nothing and can exacerbate a situation, particularly with the dispersment of animals into neighbouring properties. A couple of well-run programs with Parks in SA and Victoria are the exceptions.

The real question that should be put to Mr Brown and his team, is why haven't they targeted a real and uncontrolled pest? That pest is feral horses. The answer to that is that another vocal minority lobby group will object!!!! This is another example of control by a few, with outcomes that threaten rather than protect our public lands. There is no doubt that the O'Farrell, and other Governments too, provide for government by a vocal minority with no further vision than a 3-4 year election cycle in

mind. There is no visionary amongst them, and no planning for 20 – 50 or more years ahead.

Frankly I see this submission process largely as a waste of time, despite what may be the best endeavours of the other members of the Inquiry.

Our parks are under threat, and this is just another attack. The agenda today is to allow even more access to national parks for hunting, and the Shooters Party and this Government will continue to look at any way to progress that end. There is not one word in the TOR that addresses protection, responsible management, future generations, advantages today for the health of people and parks, and certainly not the long term social and economic benefits. It is just a straight out negative approach, designed to give a preset outcome.

What a loss.

Yours faithfully

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