

Submission
No 409

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

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

INQUIRY INTO THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Numeralla is located on the Monaro in an area surrounded by farmland, Nature Reserves, State Forrest, and State and National Parks. Many residents regularly enjoy visiting and travelling these areas either for recreation, business or to access other areas such as the South Coast.

The Numeralla and District Activities Incorporated (NDAI) represents, promotes and furthers the needs, welfare and interests of the residents and land-holders within a defined geographic area encompassing Peak View, Countegany, Rose Valley and Numeralla.

The NDAI views with some concerns the Terms of Reference for the General Purpose Standing Committee No 5 "inquire into and report on the management of public land in New South Wales, including State Forests and National Park estate... including [the] process of conversion and the assessment of potential operational, economic, social and environmental impacts etc." The issue is the apparent decision to convert lands regardless of the outcome of the Inquiry. How the land is identified and which Agencies will assume responsibility appears undefined. NDAI can not recall any public discussion on the matter but is aware that various Agencies have traditionally taken a very different approach from outright banning all access to unrestricted access. Unfortunately at the extreme some sectors of Government appear to interpret management of lands as a blanket ban on all access into areas. This is inconsistent with 'management' and does little to allow people to enjoy 'the bush'. In other words the oft-used argument about preserving lands for the future excludes the present.

It is important to acknowledged that citizens around the Numeralla area live, work and access areas that could be reclassified and use restricted. In fact some people regularly use roads through declared forest areas, such as Falcon Road, to reach the coastal areas. Should access be banned the trip would take greater time and effort.

Local residents regularly access forest and bush areas as part of their recreation use. Visit into areas have allowed monitoring of native plant and animal species as well as identification of vulnerable and endangered species such as Koala populations and *Zeiria citriodora*. The likelihood of this happening should access

be restricted or banned is highly unlikely. In addition, regular use of areas assists in identifying problems with roads and fire trails. For example the Falcon Road in the Badja Forest was blocked without reference to local populations and the Rural Fire Service of NSW. Obviously the latter organisation has an interest in being able to deploy resources etc. It is also worth noting that an unannounced barrier was erected by the National Parks and Wildlife Service along the Dangelong Trail. Damage to the barrier has meant that RFS fire crews have difficulty opening the barrier. It is suspected that damage is a result of NPWS closing the trail to users.

When considering the social impact of restricting access into area it should be acknowledged that access by elderly and those with disability can often only be accomplished by vehicle access. Some of these people lived in areas subsequently declared as say State Forests.

In respect of operational, economic, social and environmental impacts after conversion, especially, impacts upon neighbours of public land and upon Local Government. NDAI has received input that some residents expect to be adversely affected should lands be transferred say to NPWS (refer attached John and Jo-Ann Wade). Another resident suggests that management of river corridors is inadequate (Attachment Gratton and Marion WILSON) while Mr Peter Wood has commented that management of Crown Roads is inadequate and difficult to address if there is a problem that needs rectifying.

NDAI considers that based on past experience the transfer of lands to Agencies and especially the NPWS is counterproductive and not in the public interest given that NPWS' approach to management has been more concerned with restricting access into areas. For example the NPWS has shown little appreciation of the responsible use of areas by the majority of users. If there are problems then, the management plan needs to identify the individual aspects and address them, not solve everything by universal application of what is really a public access ban. A blanket ban on access to an area is not responsible management. If problems exist with some users then the particular user needs to be targeted and not the general population.

It is unfortunate that land management is often regarded as reducing access. This has happened in the past where areas have been secured by without consultation. For example in 2001 the Duea fire trail through Pikes Saddle to Dampier was closed for maintenance and never reopened. In addition it is noted that a discussion on access into Firey Creek contained statements on risks without defining what the risks were. While the community received no feedback it was noted that the 'consultation' was ticked.

The NDAI is aware that under the regional forest agreement Mongo was converted into national park and access locked thereby concentrating usage into lesser areas.

In conclusion the NDAI is concerned that 'management of areas is more about reducing the wilderness experience and impacting on the way of life of local

populations rather than a considered approach to land management. In respect of some NSW Agencies land management is not regarded as a shared approach with a view to ensuring people's long term usage, needs and expectations are acknowledged and met.

NDAI is available to comment should the need arise. The appropriate contact is:

Mr Steve Donkers

Secretary

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