

**Submission
No 89**

INQUIRY INTO THE CONTINUED PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF SNOWY HYDRO LIMITED

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Theme:

Summary

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Inquiry in to the continued public ownership off Snowy Hydro Select Committee on the continued public ownership of Snowy Hydro Ltd

Chair Dr Gordon Moyes MLC

SNOWY HYDRO SUBMISSION
June 2006

HERITAGE & ECOLOGY
SECURITY & SUSTAINABILTY OF SNOWY WATER

What has happened to the Snowy region since it has become 'water catchment' is a scandal of international proportions. Snowy bled dry by greed and indolence.

The pristine water run off was a legacy of Mega Fauna grazing shaping our vegetation, superseded by Aboriginal dog control and traditional pre emptive fire, natural fire, followed by the return of large animal grazing on European settlement plus better dog control, (wildlife recovery better protected and fed to afford a mixed species grazing viable seed distribution, nutrient recycling, vegetation structuring, hydrology), weed control, continuation of cool traditional fire, build up of soil fertility for better ground cover, reliable run off support for biodiversity *retention of the open forest suppressed woody understorey scattered grassland in good faith* with what European families found on settlement. Sweet clean herbal infused water fit for a National Capital on Federation. Then we needed irrigated food fit for a National Capital. While everyone amused with a couple of world wars, rabbit plague, a economic depression or two the bureaucrats came and claimed Snowy as their own. In their wisdom? they also decided to remove the large grazing animals first in case they poohed in the water before it syphoned off to flush the toilets of Canberra.

Taken too were the people that knew how Snowy water came to be, be they black white or brindle, removed the stockmen, removed the stockmen's cool fire, removed the stockman's weed and pest control, fed the recovered populations of wild grazing animals to packs of mongrel dogs, allowed the scrub to become a thicket, the rotting gum leaves piled up to kill off the grasses and wildflowers, the blackberries to kill off the ferny creeks. Any fire became too hot, too big ripping off soil. No one understood traditional fire and could not be told. The regulators and control jockeys assumed control and expertise beyond their station over turning the traditional continuum that produced Snowy water! Snowy was set on a suicide mission. To exacerbate Snowy's demise wild dogs were harboured to get rid of wildlife like never before. Scrub blackberries dogs pigs rabbits foxes cats struggled for supremacy. The dream was no animals in the water supply! Botanists were hired to pass comment on ecology! They worked within the terms of reference of their funding!

Science fiction commissioned by bureaucrats for bureaucrats justified this neglect as *good for the water catchment values???* Those that sit beside what was our beautiful Snowy feared the abomination it has become as the wild dogs poured out, the wildlife and wildflowers disappeared under the toxic rotting gum leaves and shaded out by thick scrub, the creeks flowed intermittently, bitter black compost tea. The big fire through the chronically neglected abandoned vegetation, fuel conserved maximally for decades masqueraded as preserving biodiversity as the wildlife went to the dogs or starved in the neglect out there in the wilderness. The bush died waiting to be rescued. The rainfall disappeared in the dead and dying vegetation, dysfunctional thicket. The general public were banished to keep secret the neglect and for fear they would light a fire in the chaos. In 2003 a dry lightning storm lit the dead water filter the full length of the mountains a repeat of the 1939 situation stockmen knew would reoccur and no one heeded their warnings Snowy was not prepared for fire other than a BIG one. The Big Bang Theory of water catchment management was imposed on Snowy. Stockmen's horror had arrived.

The paying public way off in Bondi now fed old surveys on wildlife and biodiversity from the 1970s, 80s, 90s in current draft park management plans! An attempt perhaps to deceive the paying public that biodiversity has survived decades of abandonment and deprivation. The massive destruction of the 2003 inferno! Deprived pest control, grazing and cool frequent fire as preparation for that fire fuel maximised to burdens of 30, 80, 240t/ha on ground to mobilise the entire forest as fuel. The tangle of blackberries scrub candle bark massive increase in tree density. Nutrient recycling prevented through banishment of grazing animals and cool fire. Species not allowed to go through their life cycles, the vegetation lost the ideal open structure. Biodiversity surveyed was that which had previously lived on the legacy of past community management. What biodiversity Snowy supported, from the effects of large animal grazing, cool fire and no dogs, began to disappear. The water too disappeared in the scrub, compost pit and blackberry infestations. Just think what would happen to the average suburban garden after 60y of abandonment. Tree roots through the sewer, branches through the eaves, crashing down powerlines, scrubs over shadow flower gardens, litter killing off the grass. Yes this was what happened to once beautiful Snowy all in the name of biodiversity and water farming.

The inevitable big fire in the cheap dead water filter came eventually in 2003 burnt to bed rock 2M ha in a thing archaeologists will one day refer to as *bureaucratic induced biota readjustment*. Snowy deprived of not only cool fire, grazing animals, pest control but its people that knew her and loved her, knew how to preserve her eternal youth and regenerative bounty. A 70 000y continuum straddling the demise of indigenous mega fauna grazers replaced by indigenous sympathetic pre emptive fire until Africa's and Europe's mega grazers had assisted passage to replace the vacated ecological niche of large animal grazers welcomed by ancient soils thirsty for alternative means other than cool small area superficial fire to recycle nutrients. The wildlife too enjoy the invigorated ecology provided by large animal activity building soil. Cut off in their prime were those multicultural families and horses that fought and died for Snowy in the most pitiful wars when the bureaucrats made their move to set her on a suicide track ecologically. The ultimate colonial exploitation and pommy ignorance!

We have had the first big fire in 2003 after many smaller warnings unheeded. 20 000ha 60 000ha of bureaucratic dieback in our forests now we have killed forests over Millions of hectares. Millions of tonnes of soil nutrient ripped off into the stratosphere or washed down into our reservoirs acting as silt traps! The only rivers not gurgling soot, silt, subsoil unrelenting sheet erosion are those protected by large animal grazing and remnants of the legacy of past management before the Big Bang Theory of water catchment management was installed with all the necessary pomp and arrogance. The Gungahlin, Upper Murrumbidgee and Upper Kiewa rivers survived the best all the atom bombs worth of fuel could shower embers across the region. The carefully conserved cheap dead water filter! to preserve the water reservoirs from siltation it was said. How naïve to think a fire could be kept out indefinitely. How moral to think biodiversity expendable for cheap water. Those of us wonder at the stable soils and water reservoir integrity seeing the heat blown rock and rubble making its way towards the water reservoirs washed into the scoured out water ways burnt to a crisp by blackberry infestation working as a wick during the inferno. These water ways used to be ferny glades grazed green by wildlife and natural fire safe havens for soil wildlife and many plants insects frogs entire ecologies filtering our water! Bushmen could not envisage the most exploitive rabbit plague achieving the same impact on the regions soils, forests, water ways as bureaucratic burn off in maximised fuel as if by accident in the dead water filter carefully conserved and deprived for decades overseen on full public wages from some remote air conditioned office, where tap water laid on. According to the experts that water needing little water treatment sifted through dead gum leaves no soot, no silt, no fire tracks, no grazing animals. Until the Big Bang! This neglect is called 'ecoservices' and according to Minister Stanhope in his forward to the Namadgi National Park Draft management plan is worth \$100M pa to Canberra water users! Our wildlife birds wildflowers forests rainfall are dying for city water and power!

Yes then, with indecent haste after the big fire was the sale of Snowy hydro to plicate party politics. Down in big town the party pollies are going through the public assets to pay for their junkets. Telstra, super funds, insurance, community banks, cashed up to pay for the extravagances of poor governance. If a public owned instrumentality is doing well hedging for future advancement someone gets greedy and wants it liquidated to pay for party politics. Similar greed as saving a few dollars on pest weed fuel control in the water catchment. Save a few dollars on water treatment by no land management for as long as the luck holds out. Suck the water out and sell it. Public water acquired cheap on the legacy of past management sucked out and sold, public assets cashed up to pay for bad accounting 'party' politics buying votes, glitter and junkets saving rainbows, expanding bureaucracies, micro managing the demise of schools, hospitals, railways, roads, industry, farming, forestry, fishing shut down for some esoteric tourist monopoly likely not in existence. Cheap city water! Irrigators water allocations now being stripped off them to shunt water into cities because the water catchment either clogged with dysfunctional deprived vegetation or burnt to bedrock and recovery very uncertain. Water catchment big bang is not sustainable long term to save a few short term dollars for party time!

Snowy Hydro is the asset of the people their water and as it tumbles down the hill to irrigate the worlds best food supply it generates electricity 70% of the nations non polluting alternate energy. Instant peak power. Perfect system for which the communities of the Snowy have made sacrifices to make happen. 130 people paid for Snowy Hydro with their lives in construction. Many thousands fought and died for Snowy in 2 bloody world wars as a young Federated nation for which Snowy was dedicated for Canberra's water & electricity. Stockmen's runs and drought aid ripped off on a pseudo conservation agenda to feed to the dogs and burn. Our water, our power, our sacrifice, our Snowy Hydro! It is not negotiable as a pawn chip for any electricity or water global monopoly. Not negotiable because successive State Governments have over spent on the 'party'. Wound down our schools hospitals communications roads because they have frittered the publics money away on more junkets and good times planning, regulating, taxing, legislating but not getting around to doing much else. Justifying doing nothing in the water catchment. The *assets* in Snowy during the fire were the resorts, the infrastructure not the land, the water, the soil, seed, wildlife, wildflowers! This sent a clear message to stockmen trying to save their farms, the rivers, their soil, animals domestic and native. We were on our own!

Ecologically Snowy needs to be saved from the present mentality that nothing goes on its water catchment. Doing nothing but breed dogs on wildlife, put out fires, write reports on shonky science fiction is unsustainable neglect and negligence long term for any land. If Snowy is to be secure in producing water for the long term, grazing animals and cool fire must be put back on the agenda to maintain that secure run off without massive bushfire a man made inferno that burns off every living thing for huge areas. Seed soil gone, Birds animals gone. Forests killed beyond recovery. Snowy Hydro is part of our national inheritance. It is the water, the electricity but the land management must change that yields that water and electricity. Water catchment management is neither benign or sustainable long term in its present form and ***I will be willing to talk to your committee on how our bushmen believe it needs to be fixed as a matter of urgency to save what has been left to us as Snowy communities.*** We are not prepared to put our people through another fiasco like 2003. An international scandal of wonton neglect.

Snowy or Snowy Hydro is not for sale now or ever and legislation needs to be put in place to that effect as a matter of urgency. We also set about setting the standard for sustainable water catchment management as a matter of urgency. Legislation has sort exemption of the crown from accountability in many land management acts built on shonky assumptions built on doing the minimum on public wages and little to do with the reality of outcomes long term once neglect has banished the legacy of past community management. Getting people in who know about managing land not those office jockeys that only have an opinion! Snowy Hydro and the Snowy are interrelated and nothing is going to change that. Neither are for sale or destruction!

N Franklin

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I have been researching intensively for at least 10y the scientific and cultural basis of how Snowy has been run and what parameters should be reinstated if Snowy water is to be secured into the future.