

**Submission  
No 135**

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

**Name:** Ms Bronwen Scully

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Dear Sir,

General Purpose Standing Committee No 5 (Management of Public Land in NSW)

It is with great concern that I learn that there is to be an Upper House inquiry into the management of public land in NSW, including state forests and the national park estate.

At a time when the environment and conservation are already under threat due to the approval to allow recreational shooters into National Parks, the current discussion on allowing horse riding in to greater areas of National Parks, including wilderness, and the recent decision to greatly reduce the number of NPWS employees, the environment is in a besieged state and needs protection, not suffer further inroads.

As a signatory to the International Convention on Biodiversity, Australia is committed to environmental protection. The NSW government is a signatory to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment and needs to be mindful of this and comply fully in all future actions.

Biodiversity is important as the science makes clear. Without National Parks that biodiversity is put at risk and with it the whole environment. There are many areas where species, both plant and animal, are only just hanging on and to do anything to upset that delicate balance could be disastrous for the whole ecosystem.

Our conservation areas are important not only for biodiversity protection but also for other critical ecosystem services such as fresh water catchment protection and carbon sequestration.

The national estate is not an economic resource to be plundered for the “now” generation but should be held in sacred trust for all future generations. It would be unconscionable were it degraded to the extent where we left an impoverished environment for future generations.

I find it difficult to believe that iconic areas such as River Red Gum State Forests in southern NSW; Tooralee Station near Bourke; Native Hardwood State Forests in northern NSW; and Yanga Station in Balranald Shire are under threat.

It seems to me that a golden opportunity for people in country areas to benefit from tourism is potentially being lost. For example, I believe that the town of Balranald could greatly benefit from ecotourism with people coming to see the iconic river red gums and visit Yanga Station. The environment can be a great benefit to all without having to compromise its natural values. Indeed, it is the very nature of those natural values which are the great attraction.

The most professional management of the national estate by NPWS who take a great deal of pride in what they do and consider it more of a vocation than a job, would be greatly enhanced were they given adequate tools in terms of funding and manpower, with which to carry out their work.

I must add as a final concern the composition of the committee. It looks to me very much like putting the fox in charge of the chicken house. With a chair who has already made it clear that his party wishes even greater access to National Parks for hunting, it certainly does not give a clear message of impartiality.

If the committee is genuine in its approach, it needs to demonstrate clearly and unequivocally that there is a need to change the status quo.

I look forward to your response.

Bronwen Scully