

**Submission
No 358**

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

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I am against any relaxation of laws protecting National Parks and Nature Reserves from activities such as four wheel driving, motor bikes, trail and horse riding and any other destructive pursuits including timber getting, shooting or collection of native plants and animals for any purpose other than scientific research by qualified scientists conducting approved research.

Submission to the NSW Government Inquiry into the Management of Public Lands

I am writing this submission to express my deep concern regarding the above mentioned 'inquiry' into the Management of NSW Public Lands. Having a member of the Shooters Party as head of the enquiry can only be viewed with extreme cynicism.

The Shooters Party have consistently shown they are only interested in furthering their own selfish aims at the expense of preserving the national estate and system of parks and reserves for our future generations and the protection of our extremely important biodiversity.

Our National Park and Nature Reserve system is extremely important for a number of reasons. They should be set aside and protected from the ravages of people as far as possible. There is certainly no place for destructive or polluting practices in such places. I am strongly opposed to opening up such places to shooting, 4 wheel driving, motor cross bikes and horse or trail riding. They should continue to be free of domestic animals as much as is humanly possible. Our National Parks are places where our flora and fauna should be allowed to exist in a pristine environment protected from such disturbing activities. Our park system only represents a very small proportion of the state of NSW and as such should be set aside to provide a safe refuge where examples of our unique habitat and biodiversity can be allowed to continue to evolve and exist without extreme disturbance. These places have intrinsic value for these reasons.

National Parks are places where citizens of our state and visitors can go to practice sustainable, non-destructive and safe pursuits such as bushwalking, photography, nature study, birdwatching, and camping. They are also areas where sustainable eco-tourism operators can take visitors to our country to view our unique wildlife. This is a multi-million dollar industry which will be placed in severe jeopardy if the laws protecting our parks are relaxed to allow groups of self-serving extreme and blood sport enthusiasts access to our National Park system. Allowing other more destructive and polluting practices in these places is anathema to the very reason for existence of National Parks.

Australia has signed the International Convention on Biodiversity and as such our politicians and public servants have a legal and moral responsibility to uphold this obligation. Setting aside areas for protection under existing NSW National Park and other preservation laws is the way to uphold this very important obligation. The World's natural environments are under increasing pressure from exploding human population which is driving habitat destruction on a massive scale in many parts of the World. As such it is more important in the 21st Century that we set aside places for protection from destructive practices, not weaken existing laws and protections!

The protection of our unique biodiversity is severely hampered by restrictive budgets and successive State governments have abrogated their responsibilities in this regard. Instead of looking at ways to further weaken the protection of our environment we should be increasing the existing protection provided by our National Parks estate. National Park workers are a dedicated group of professionals who deserve the loyalty and support of our elected politicians. Not to be undermined by a group of self-serving interest groups and their representatives and lobby groups.

Our system of National Parks and Nature Reserves also provide an extremely important place where our scientists can study and increase our knowledge base of our unique flora and fauna. There is great value in increasing knowledge of our planet's systems and interactions. We are all dependent upon the survival of our flora and fauna and protecting these areas so that future study can be undertaken can only be of benefit to future generations. I am also strongly against the use of National Parks, Nature Reserves and State Forests for the collection of flora and fauna for any other purpose than approved scientific research by qualified environmental scientists. The collection of firewood and destruction of dead standing or fallen timber is also responsible for the destruction of extremely important habitat and as such should not be allowed in our Parks and Reserves. Many Australian birds and animals depend on such places for shelter and breeding.

I have been a regular user of National Parks since childhood for bushwalking, kayaking, caving, and photography and am an amateur naturalist with an interest in the preservation of our environment for future generations. These places provide a peaceful, quiet, natural environment where the many local and International visitors interested in similar pursuits can escape the rigours of today's busy, loud, urban environments. As such it is extremely important that National Parks be kept insulated from the noisy, destructive pursuits of motor vehicle enthusiasts, trail riders and shooters. I am vehemently opposed to allowing amateur shooting in our parks. As a retired military officer I think weapons have no place in the hands of amateurs, extremists or people who have not undergone any form of psychological screening. It is dangerous to the public and unnecessary. To be actively promoting a gun culture in today's society should be viewed with extreme suspicion and made illegal.

In summary, I strongly believe that our National Park and Nature Reserve system should be protected from the ravages of modern society as much as possible. They only represent a very small percentage of the State's land mass and as such the followers of more destructive and polluting pursuits have plenty of other options available to continue participating in their activities without opening up our National Park system to such non-sustainable pursuits as four wheel driving, shooting, motor bikes, horse and trail riding.

We all benefit economically and socially from having a system of National Parks and Nature Reserves that protect our natural environment. They are essential to our health and wellbeing and I urge the NSW State Government to continue to provide protection of these places from the ravages of destructive pastimes and pursuits. I also urge the NSW Government to stop placing so much power and emphasis in eth hands of a few representatives of the shooters fraternity in this State. They represent a very small proportion of extremists in our population and as such should not be given a voice which is inconsistent with their support base. This 'Inquiry' is seen as yet another cynical exercise by the Shooters Party to open up our Reserves and Parks for their exclusive use and the advancement of their destructive gun culture.