

**Submission
No 67**

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

Name: Mr Martin Chalk

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The Terms of Reference have a bias away from the current achievements that pertain to the management of public lands - particularly those managed as national parks and like areas.

My submission make recommendations to remove this bias.

COMMENTS ON THE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE INQUIRY INTO MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LAND – MARTIN CHALK

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Terms of Reference (TOR) for this important enquiry. At a time when the sustainability of our national lifestyle is being examined in many ways it is important to emphasize that those public lands that are set aside for conservation perform significant roles in facilitating that sustainability. Accordingly, the TOR need to recognize this contribution.

TOR1

TOR1 contains an implied assumption that land turned over to conservation has little or no economic or operational value. Quite apart from the mineral exploration and extraction rights that attach to SCAs, other forms of conserved land have value, but not in a conventionally measurable economic sense.

It is a sad fact that as a society we do not understand well the contribution to our welfare that accrues to natural areas. But at a qualitative level, it is generally accepted that water quality, soil stability and health, bio-diversity and air quality are directly linked to a healthy natural environment. At an ethical level, it's unconscionable to argue that our needs (personal and societal) are greater than those of the species that inhabit natural areas. In NSW it is public land that, to a great extent, preserves these natural areas.

Therefore, I believe that TOR 1b should be reworded to remove the idea that conservation land has 'an impact' on other forms of activity. The TOR would be less loaded if referred to '*...social and environmental outcomes after conservation...*'.

The case studies listed under TOR1c are recent additions to the reserved land estate and their long term value is yet to be demonstrated. Suggest that more established examples also be included in the list such as Brindabella National Park (1996) or Livingstone National Park and SCA (2001).

TOR2

Again, this TOR supports a biased outcome. It contains an overt assumption that land management on public land is less competent than that on private land. Such a starting point cannot support a valid and true outcome.

In my personal experience of travelling through both public and private land over the last 21 years I have observed that a fence between a national park and private land commonly marks a discontinuity between a well vegetated area and one picked clean. And any lack of weeds in the latter is attributable to the action of stock rather than a genuinely healthy environment.

In my term as a member of a Regional Advisory Committee for the NPWS, I can vouch for the coordinated action between NPWS and private landholders in the development

of wild dog control plans and with land holders and the RFS for the development and implementation fire management plans.

I believe that this TOR should focus on the extent to which management practices between private and public lands are coordinated with an objective to identify the best practices from each.

TOR3

For this TOR to produce any meaningful outcome, the term 'sustainable use' needs to be defined. Short of perpetual motion and free, limitless power, all activities have their limits and sustainability is no exception with our current technology. Therefore, I suggest that this TOR should be couched in terms of 'best practice'.

Furthermore, if conservation land is to be in the limelight, I also suggest that the practices used on public land be compared with those used on private land that is similarly managed for conservation.

TOR4

The idea behind TOR is to confine an activity to relevant areas and to maintain its focus. Should the TOR prove too limiting it's normal practice for the activity to seek precisely defined extensions. To provide *carte blanche*, as is proposed with TOR4, merely invites an undisciplined pursuit of fancy.

Martin Chalk

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