

Submission
No 199

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

Name: Name suppressed
Date received: 1/08/2012

Partially Confidential

For over 35 years I have utilised state forests and National Parks for camping, bike riding and recreational four wheel driving; and have noticed a staggering number of public lands and existing trails being closed to public use. This has dramatically limited my ability to access and enjoy an 'outdoors' lifestyle and has seen the few remaining places left open, placed under undue stress with the numerous responsible users forced to concentrate their activities in smaller areas.

It is logical that by forcing all recreational patrons into fewer and smaller areas, we will see an increase in damage to those areas due to overuse. The policy of shutting responsible outdoor recreation enthusiasts out of all but a very small percentage of available bushland is very short-sighted and I believe is pandering to a very vocal, yet extremist, minority.

Sadly, various 'green' groups and government bodies make unfounded claims that four wheel drive vehicles and offroad motorcycles are seriously damaging the natural environment. I believe this to be the main reason behind the closure of public land and tracks.

These groups have convinced the NSW government to disallow it's own people from responsibly enjoying our own public land. Sadly, this policy has increased the very thing it was misguidedly trying to achieve by forcing the volume of users into small concentrated areas leading to overuse and overcrowding.

Ironically, I remember a time when these areas had no limitations on their use and there was far less damage than is evident in some areas today. As a family we camped, road dirt bikes and went four wheel driving in some of the most beautiful places imaginable and never experienced any damage by motor vehicles as the areas were never overused. It has been tragic to watch the closure of so many of these majestic destinations only to see them ravaged by bush-fires thanks to the lack of maintained fire-trails and the neglectful fire management practices of the 'green' driven policies.

The simple fact is: the reasons cited for the need to close these areas, i.e. motor-vehicles damaging the environment (mainly noise pollution and erosion); are often severely over-exaggerated, unfounded or simply untrue. Noise pollution might be a problem in small areas on the edge of cities and towns; however; the vast majority of users wish to access remote areas, far from 'civilisation' in order to 'escape the rat-race'.

While the trails used by off-road vehicles do suffer from mild erosion, it is of a small amount in comparison to that created by natural forces. I agree the trails can at times look somewhat eroded due to overuse in some areas, but even this is insignificant compared to the volume of damage over an entire forest caused by natural occurrences such as floods, bush-fires and landslides. In the grand scheme of things, the minuscule area of man made trails leading through the thousands of hectares of bush-land is quite insignificant.

Lastly, I have hiked through areas where fire trails were deliberately destroyed in an effort to stop people using the area, only to find it in a worse state than when it was open to the public. You see, when an area is often populated by responsible users, they use the area in a sustainable manner. I have often cleaned up areas that I have camped in, that irresponsible people have left in poor shape; and I know hundreds of other campers who do the same. When you shut out the responsible people, it is often still frequented by the

irresponsible ones (as they are the ones that ignore the law!) and the damage they cause then goes unchecked.

I employ the government to use some common sense and stop the systematic closing of public lands and trails. By working with the responsible majority who frequent these areas, (rather than pandering to the extremist minority that are never seen in these environments), we can get back to enjoying and protecting the natural beauty of our bush-land in a sustainable manner.

Sincerely,

Partially Confidential