

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 5

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

At Bourke on Tuesday 25 September 2012

The Committee met at 5.30 p.m.

PRESENT

The Hon. R. L. Brown (Chair)

The Hon. R. H. Colless

The Hon. C. M. Faehrmann

The Hon. L. Foley

The Hon. S. MacDonald

The Hon. Dr P. R. Phelps

The Hon. P. T. Primrose

CHAIR: Welcome to the fifth public hearing of the inquiry by General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 into the management of public lands in New South Wales. The inquiry is examining the operational, economic, social and environmental impacts of converting Crown lands, State forests and agricultural land into the national park estate and other matters related to Crown land. Before I commence I acknowledge the Ngemba people, who are the traditional custodians of this land. I also pay respect to the elders, past and present, of the Ngemba nation and extend that respect to other Aboriginal people present.

This evening we will hear from Mr David Boyd, formerly of Clyde Agriculture Limited, and from representatives of the Inland Fishers Association. In addition to tonight's hearing the Committee will hold another public hearing here in Bourke tomorrow morning as well as a hearing in Coonabarabran on Thursday. We will hold further hearings at Port Macquarie and Grafton as well as in Parliament House in Sydney.

Before I commence I will briefly explain the procedures for tonight's hearing. Copies of the Committee's broadcasting guidelines are available from the Committee secretariat. Under these guidelines, while members of the media may film or record Committee members and witnesses, people in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photography. I also remind media representatives that they must take responsibility for what they publish about the Committee's proceedings. It is important to remember that parliamentary privilege does not apply to what witnesses may say outside of their evidence in the hearing, either before or after giving their evidence. I urge witnesses to be careful about any comments they may make to the media or to others after they complete their evidence, or before they give their evidence, as such comments would not be protected by parliamentary privilege if someone were to take umbrage and take action for defamation, for example.

Witnesses are advised that any messages should be delivered to Committee members through the Committee staff. If they wish to table any documents they should just say so and the Committee staff will take the documents off them. A full transcript of what is said during tonight's hearing will be prepared by our Hansard reporters. The transcript will be available on the Committee's website in the next few days. I ask everybody to turn off their mobile phones or leave the room.

JAMES DAVID OSMAN BOYD, Former Chairman, Clyde Agricultural Limited, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: We received a submission from you, as brief as it was. Before we proceed, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr BOYD: If I may, chairman.

CHAIR: Please proceed.

Mr BOYD: I thank the Committee for giving me this opportunity and particularly the opportunity to appear before you back at my home base and close to my heart and particular interest, being Toorale Station. For nearly 20 years up to the end of the 2007 I was the managing director and then chairman and chief executive officer of Clyde Agriculture, a privately owned company which, amongst other things, held the lease of Toorale. At its peak Clyde was Australia's largest wool grower, its fourth-largest cotton grower, seventh-largest wheat producer and one of New South Wales' largest beef producers.

Clyde held country from Longreach in central Queensland, to Quilpie and Cunnamulla in south-west Queensland and across northern New South Wales from Bourke to Warren and Coonamble and as far east as Walcha. Clyde was an irrigator, a grazier, including large areas of floodplain grazing, and a dryland farmer. The company concentrated on minimising bureaucracy and red tape. As chief executive I was very hands on and with the help of a light aircraft was a frequent visitor to the cotton farms and stations. Our administrative headquarters was at Bourke. Within Clyde there was a natural tension at Toorale over the use of Warrego water when the conditions allowing diversions were met. The cotton people wanted to ensure a full Ross' Billabong for irrigation supply whilst the grazing people wanted to beneficially flood as much of the western Warrego flood plain as possible. I personally took control of this tension to ensure the best outcome for the overall company and thus developed a firsthand knowledge of the Warrego and—I emphasise—the State control conditions, which allowed diversions or extractions of water from the Darling.

During part of this time I was appointed to an extracurricular role as chairman of the Darling Matilda Way Sustainable Region. This region covered all of western New South Wales and much of western Queensland almost as far north as Mt Isa. The sustainable regions under the auspicious of the Commonwealth Department of Regional Services were charged with stimulating economic activity in what were regarded as depressed areas. This experience highlighted in my mind the central importance of sustainable economic activity and the provision of jobs, particularly in remote areas.

I wish to make three broad points. The negative socio-economic and environmental impact on communities, as a consequence of converting productive enterprises to national parks, needs to be spelt out. Toorale Station is a classic example. As arguably the Bourke district's most productive property, its loss is greatly resented by the Bourke community. It contributed 4 per cent of the shire's rate income and has been estimated to contribute 10 per cent of the shire's gross domestic product. The assumption that there is a conflict between good economic and good environmental outcomes needs to be challenged. Toorale is an excellent test case. If you stock responsibly, if you look after the assets generally, including control of feral animals, control of weeds, I do not see any conflict between protection of environmental values and commercial results.

Secondly, as I have just referred to, there is a need for economic activity, particularly in disadvantaged and remote areas, If we care about people, if we care about communities, then we need economic activity. Furthermore, as a nation we have a moral responsibility, in my view, to sustainably maximise production. The depth of feeling by Bourke residents in the loss of Toorale as a commercial enterprise is very deep. When opening the Bourke Show in May this year the current mayor said that in the last decade Bourke had suffered three really tough hits. The first one he mentioned was the death of the former mayor in the previous week, Wayne O'Malley. The second one he mentioned was the seven years of drought. Bourke was drought declared in August 2001, and that declaration was not lifted until March 2008. It was a very tough period. The third thing he mentioned was the loss of Toorale. That puts into context the depth of local feeling of what they see as the loss—and I agree it is a very deep commercial loss—of Toorale as a productive property. I do not think I need to add more to that and take up too much of your time at the beginning, but that is where I am coming from.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: How did the drought affect Bourke, Mr Boyd? You were living at Toorale during that time, were you?

Mr BOYD: No, I have always remained resident in Sydney. But I was a frequent visitor.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: So, you live in Sydney and manage the property remotely?

Mr BOYD: I lived in Sydney and I managed the company Clyde Agriculture. But the operational headquarters, our accountants, and our agronomists, were all here in Bourke. I was a frequent visitor to Bourke.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: You mentioned Toorale at its peak and you had various statistics. What year was that peak?

Mr BOYD: No, that was Clyde at its peak, the whole company.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: So Toorale Station at its peak, when do you think that period was? Do you know the history of it?

Mr BOYD: Yes I do, I know the history. I suppose its peak was in about 1890, when the late Sir Samuel McCaughey owned Toorale, Fort Bourke and Dunlop—three million acres—and he shored 250,000 sheep I think at Toorale at the time. It was substantially larger than it is now. When Clyde took control of Clyde Agriculture in 1988, Toorale was its biggest rural holding and it was an area of 127,000 acres. We aggregated, we bought, three additional properties, add-ons to it, and I think it was about 240,000 acres about the beginning of the drought. So, from a more recent year's perspective its peak was probably about 2001.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Did you have any association or involvement with the sale?

Mr BOYD: Yes and no. I was still on the board of Clyde Agriculture when a decision was made to sell most of the western bases, principally sheep properties, of which Toorale was one. I have to say I was opposed to that decision and believed it was a mistake and that we were doing ourselves out of the recovery which, with all humility, I can say proved to be correct. Yes, I was a director at the time the decision was made to sell a number of properties, including Toorale.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Why was the decision made? I assume it was made by the board rather than the family, the way these decisions are made?

Mr BOYD: I do not know that that is a reasonable assumption.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Well, tell me how the decision was made.

Mr BOYD: The board is more a board of advice. It is a privately owned company. One hundred per cent of the shares are owned by the Swire private company back in London, and the real power lay with the family and the Swire executives who recommended that Clyde should reduce its investment in livestock and increase its investment in grain. It was against the background of that decision, that philosophy, that strategy, that the decision was made to sell Clyde and Toorale and a number of other properties.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: I understand that Toorale sold for \$23.75 million—that is including the water licences?

Mr BOYD: Yes.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Why was the decision made to sell Toorale? Are you the sole person associated with that sale or on the board who was not happy with the decision?

Mr BOYD: I do not know that I should comment on that from a board point of view. But I certainly was opposed to it. That is by the way. The decision was made by the board and by the owners of the company to sell the western sheep properties of which Toorale was only one.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: Thank you for coming to give evidence today. So we are clear, you are here in a private capacity today, not as a representative of Clyde?

Mr BOYD: Yes, absolutely.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: And the decision that was taken to sell was a voluntary one taken by the company at the time?

Mr BOYD: Absolutely, yes. The owners of the company decided they wanted to change their strategy and deemphasise their dependence on livestock, sheep in particular, and to reapply those funds to grain production.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: They put the property on the market?

Mr BOYD: They did. It was on the market.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: And the Commonwealth came along and lodged a bid?

Mr BOYD: The Commonwealth did a deal the night before the scheduled auction. When I say Commonwealth, I use that term loosely. I think New South Wales Government people were acting with Commonwealth backing. I understand they said they could not operate at auction and they made an offer and the decision was made that that offer should be accepted. So the property did not go to auction.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: If I could ask you about the future. One of the things our inquiry is grappling with is what recommendations to make to the State Government about issues of public land management. We heard from some local government representatives from the north-west of the State a couple of weeks ago in Sydney. They put to us that where councils lose significant rate revenue, as was the case here, that the council should be compensated by the State Government for the loss. Is that a view you would share?

Mr BOYD: Yes, I would share that view, but I guess I would like to take a step back from that and argue what was the purpose of losing another enterprise.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: I take your point but this was not a nationalisation, it was a willing seller and a willing buyer and a deal, as you said, was done. We cannot revisit that, can we?

Mr BOYD: No, that is history but for the future in terms of policy—what I said at the beginning—I question the wisdom, both from an environmental and a socioeconomic point of view, of converting commercial properties, particularly in the remote areas—and I am particularly thinking of the likes of the Willandra, Yanga, Hunthawang and Toorale, which are iconic, on average profitable—in agriculture we all know the variability—and successful properties. I question whether the environmental outcomes are better when they are designated as national parks than if in fact they are continuing as commercial property.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: But surely when there is an owner willing to sell and voluntarily free through negotiations to sell there is not much we can do about that, is there?

Mr BOYD: I would have thought a government having a policy to acquire those sorts of properties as national parks is the policy that I am suggesting should be investigated.

CHAIR: The people from National Parks and Wildlife Service told us roughly what the overall purchase price was and they divided that up into the Commonwealth's purchase of the water and their contribution towards the purchase of the land. The figure quoted for the purchase of the water was many times that of the actual purchase of the land. Technically or legally at the time of the sale was it possible to separate the water entitlements from the land or not?

Mr BOYD: I think on the Darling it was not possible.

CHAIR: So it had to be sold—

Mr BOYD: I am not sure that it is still possible but the intent is that it will be and, of course, in many areas it now is. But I think I am right in saying on the Darling, where the water sharing plan had not been completed, that it was not possible.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: You stated a few moments ago that Clyde was divesting itself of its western grazing properties. What other properties did Clyde or the Swire group in general hold in the Bourke district besides Toorale?

Mr BOYD: We held the Rumleigh cotton farm just upstream of Brewarrina; Beemery Station, between Bourke and Brewarrina, which included a cotton farm; we had the Longmeadows-Latoka cotton farm here close to Bourke; on the other side of the river we had Janbeth and Ferguson farms—two cotton farms—and, of course, there was the cotton farm within Toorale itself.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Does Clyde hold any of those properties currently?

Mr BOYD: Clyde still holds all of the cotton farms, except Toorale, which are on the market and they have been endeavouring to sell, and it holds one large grazing property at Walcha, which is also on the market, but all the other properties have been sold.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Are you aware of Clyde has had any other offers to buy water by the Federal Government?

Mr BOYD: I am not aware but I may not be aware. I left the board a couple of years ago so I would not necessarily be aware, but not as far as I know.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: You made a comment a few moments ago that running these big properties as agricultural properties was providing a good environmental outcome. Am I correct that west of the Darling is all Western Lands lease?

Mr BOYD: The Western Division is basically all Western Lands lease.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: So Toorale is all Western Lands lease?

Mr BOYD: I believe so. I hesitate a little bit on the cotton farms. We did have a push to convert some of those, and we were able to freehold some of them, but I do not think Toorale was—but I could stand corrected on that.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: The areas that were predominantly sheep grazing definitely were Western Lands lease?

Mr BOYD: Definitely Western Lands lease, yes.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Within that Western Lands lease are their conditions placed on you as a Western Lands lessee to ensure that you do manage that land for environmental sustainability?

Mr BOYD: I am not an expert—I probably should be—on all the amendments made to the Western Lands Act over the years, but there certainly were. I mean there was a time when livestock numbers were strictly controlled and where price you could sell at was controlled; a lot of that was eased in more recent years.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Since Clyde sold Toorale there has been a run of pretty good seasons resulting in prolific pasture growth on that particular property—we saw evidence of that this morning when the Committee was there. It appeared as though there had been a minimal grazing on that area either by domesticated animals or native animals and the result is that there is a huge amount of dry matter present on that property now. What sort of fire risk does that constitute and what is the best way to reduce that risk?

Mr BOYD: I must say it always seems somewhat ironic to me, clearly the three major issues that arise, and where there is lots of at least anecdotal evidence in terms of environmental negatives on national parks, are feral animals, weeds and fire risk. The fire risk is generally controlled by control burning; it seems strange to me why we do not do it with control grazing and get some commercial benefits. I often cite the situation with wild pigs in controlling feral animals. On a commercial breeding property like Toorale we found that our lambing percentages on the lignum country—the floodplain country—were always lower than the other paddocks and we developed a practice of having a pig shoot prior to lambing and lambing percentages immediately went up. My purpose in mentioning that is that there is a commercial reason to justify controlling feral animals on a commercial property. If you are going to do it as a national park then I presume that has got to be a taxpayer cost.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Do you think that the dry matter presently on Toorale could be reduced to a manageable level from a fire point of view by grazing without doing any further damage to the environment?

Mr BOYD: Absolutely.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: You spoke about the importance of Toorale to the local economy. We were told when it was taken over there was only the equivalent of six or seven full-time staff. What sort of downstream economic benefit did Toorale provide as a commercial operation?

Mr BOYD: Let us just deal with the staff issue first. As I inferred in my opening comment, we always separated our cotton business as a separate division to the grazing. On the grazing side we had a manager, an overseer, nearly always a couple of jackaroo's and a fair few contractors, so there was probably at least five equivalents in the general staff plus, of course, your shearing contractors and your lamb marking contractors—so there are a lot of additions to the five that you are talking about. On the cotton farm the permanent staffing manager, overseer, probably as a minimum four and at peak seasons up to 10 or 12 depending on what was happening. A lot of contractors are brought in to supplement harvesting in the days were we used to have to do picking—

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Chipping.

Mr BOYD: Thank you, I was searching for the word. In the days were we used to have to do chipping. The other important factor is that all of the production, the sale of surplus sheep, the sale of wool, cotton is a wonderful industry particularly in these remote areas because, first of all there is enormous demand for the Australian cotton growth around the world. We have seen the Australian cotton crop go down in the drought to 600,000 bales and to return last year to five million bales—it is now substantially bigger than wool—and all of that five million bales is readily saleable on the world market. The Australian growth is sought after. It is all processed locally—we have got two cotton gins in Bourke. So cotton is a crop that you can grow in quantity, it is processed locally, it is non-perishable and I must say that the Australian cotton industry, with all the cotton industry around the world, by whatever measure you like to nominate, would be the leader. It is the most efficient user of water, we get the best yields, there is terrific innovation with technology in terms of plants and management practices. I have just been at the cotton conference that is held every two years—I have not been for six years—and I just came away so impressed with the way that the scientists and the growers talk to each other and the innovative nature of this industry. The marketing system, thanks to New York futures, although many growers do not use futures but the merchants do, and there is always someone in the market for cotton and the growers try to sell on the spikes and presumably the mills sell on the downs and all those lovely American speculators take up the differences. So it is a great industry particularly in the western area.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: When Toorale was sold presumably the thought was at the time to sell it as an ongoing commercial operation. Do you believe that could have been sustained into the future given potential water restrictions, water buybacks?

Mr BOYD: Yes, I do. I mean there has been a constant improvement in efficiencies of use of water. The cap that is currently being talked about for the Barwon-Darling for all irrigators from Mungindi down to Menindee sounds a terribly low figure to me but most of the growers that I talk to believe they can live with it.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: Do you have an idea of the turnover of Toorale prior to its sale?

Mr BOYD: Not off the top of my head but I could soon dig that out for you.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: Would you be able to take that on notice?

Mr BOYD: Absolutely.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: The issue of feral animals, what was the level of feral animal problems when it was run as a commercial operation?

Mr BOYD: I mentioned the pig issue, and I believe we had them well under control. The use of goats during the drought—of course, goats were an economic backbone of a lot of the country west of Bourke—and

we did a little bit of that, not much but we did put a few goats "behind wire" is the local term that they used, and I would have said that feral animals were well under control.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: Did you find that there was a level of feral penetration from neighbouring properties?

Mr BOYD: There was an element of that on one end of Toorale but not significant.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: Prior to the handover did you get visits from the CMA or the Office of Environment and Heritage or anyone coming along telling you that you had threatened species or what you were doing was degrading the environment?

Mr BOYD: Never to my knowledge. I mean part of Toorale was a declared wildlife refuge, which we were proud of. I was not aware of there being any suggestion of that.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Which part of Toorale was that wildlife refuge?

Mr BOYD: It is new information to me; I thought it was the whole of the property. I have now heard more recently that it was maybe the eastern side. But it did not change our management of the property. I think the important thing with these grazing properties is to take a long-term view. Anyone who overstocks degrades a property and is commercially degrading their future.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: Of this 90,000-plus hectares Parks say there is 1,000 hectares high conservation value and 3,000 hectares of wetland. If they had come to Clyde and said, "We really want this part because it is a vanishing woodland" or whatever, would that have been a possibility?

Mr BOYD: Yes. I mean if they had come and said, "We want the Warrego floodplain" I think we would not have been attracted by that proposal but we actually had on Beemery a conservation area, which was part of the deal for the building of the Beemery water storage—a designated development. Part of the deal there was that we did put an area aside at the junction of the Bogan into Barwon and that area was made a nature conservation area.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: To be really clear, no-one from the Office of Environment and Heritage, no-one from the catchment management authority, the Western Lands Division or any other government agency came along and said, "What you are doing here is unsustainable, you are degrading the environment, there are threatened species in trouble and if you keep going they will be in greater trouble"?

Mr BOYD: Not to my knowledge.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: I return to a point that the Hon. Rick Colless raised. Did you ever find there was a difficulty in managing the property via a western lands lease as opposed to freehold?

Mr BOYD: I am glad you asked me that. I would say no. But then I am very conscious that if you are on unrestricted freehold land—which has always been regarded as the best title you can have on New South Wales land—you cannot plough a paddock without government permission if it has not been ploughed in the past 10 years.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: But you have similar restrictions under vegetation laws.

Mr BOYD: That is what I am saying. Therefore, whether it is a western lands lease or unrestricted freehold, governments are very powerful things.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: So is there a need for western lands leases given the restrictions of freehold?

Mr BOYD: I am sure there would be people who would disagree with me and some of them might be sitting behind me. I wrote a submission to the Kerin inquiry some years ago and asked why they did not make the inquiry different from every other damned inquiry there has been into the western division and freehold—the whole lot. Governments have that power. Why complicate the world by having all these different titles?

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: I think you have agreement from some on this Committee.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: You said that in your opinion cattle do not have an environmental impact; in fact, you were emphatic about that. What is your evidence? Where has it come from?

Mr BOYD: I am not sure I said "cattle".

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Grazing.

Mr BOYD: I think the evidence is before us. Toorale has been run successfully as a commercial property for 150 years. I suppose you would argue that prior to the federation drought—back in the late 1890s and early 1900s—the sheep numbers in western New South Wales were massively high. I think that at that time people over estimated the carrying capacity. It was that which led to the Western Lands Act, establishment of the Western Lands Commission and the imposition of stocking controls. What are one's values in terms of the environment? From a commercial point of view, there has been no discernable reduction in my opinion in Toorale's carrying capacity.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: So you are seeing environmental impact through a commercial lens? You asked why we do not have grazing, for example, on Toorale rather than controlled burns, but you are seeing the environmental impact through a commercial lens. Do you have any experience in ecology or biodiversity? I do not know your background or expertise.

Mr BOYD: That is a good question. I am inclined to look at things through an economic lens. However, again, it is a matter of one's values and philosophy.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: It is.

Mr BOYD: If we care about people and communities, we need jobs.

CHAIR: We apologise for delaying the start of the inquiry.

(The witness withdrew)

STEVE ALEXANDER, President, Inland Fishers' Association, and

JASON JOHN RIVETT, Inland Fishers' Association, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: I understand you may have some documents you wish to table at the appropriate time. Before we commence questions, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr ALEXANDER: The inland commercial fishery has been denied access to national parks for more than a decade despite the fact that we were guaranteed access. The only reason I have not put in a submission is tardiness with regard to freedom of information. We are trying to get information. I have been told that it should be done in a certain timeframe, but it has not happened. I have some evidence that I want to put forward, but I cannot until the information we have requested under the freedom of information process is provided. That will determine exactly where we are going to go and what we will do. Jason has put in a submission and he also has some evidence that he wants to give today. I will help him. If anyone wants to ask any questions, that is fine because I am the third generation in my family involved in this fishery. Our focus as far as this goes is taking away the Crown roads and so forth—that will be detrimental to our access through national parks to our fishery. At the moment it is impossible.

CHAIR: How big an area are we talking about? Where do you go to get your fish?

Mr ALEXANDER: We can go anywhere inland on this side of the Divide.

CHAIR: And you would probably need to do that to make a profit or to have a commercial enterprise?

Mr ALEXANDER: It is just the way our fishery is. We are nomads; we go to where the fish are. That is just how we work. As far as the national parks go, there is not a lot that I have not fished. I have been a nomad, especially in my younger days—we fished everywhere.

CHAIR: I advise members that the document has not been vetted yet and it contains some names. Names should be avoided when questioning witnesses. Mr Rivett, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr RIVETT: The information that I brought today includes some photos of my cook room and my business. It also includes letters of denial from the National Parks and Wildlife Service, some draft permits, conditions for entry to Toorale and Yanga National Park and a vehicle access permit. There is no consistency from the National Parks and Wildlife Service about vehicle access permits.

CHAIR: Is most of your fishing done in riverine systems or empowerments?

Mr RIVETT: Lakes, creeks and rivers.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: Thank you for appearing before the Committee. We met in Balranald.

Mr RIVETT: Yes, that is right.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: I want to understand; I know nothing about inland fishing. If you had access, you would be under licence and you would have a quota. Is that correct?

Mr RIVETT: There is no quota on yabbies or carp. We are only allowed to catch yabbies and carp. Class A and class B licences cover yabbies and carp. There is no native fish.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: You are not allowed to catch native fish?

Mr RIVETT: We are not allowed to catch native fish under our endorsement.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: What is your normal commercial catch?

Mr RIVETT: Yabbies and carp. At the moment we are catching yabbies. As the carp become abundant—which they are about to—we will start targeting them.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: When you catch the carp you obviously destroy them.

Mr RIVETT: They go to the Sydney and Melbourne markets.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: I know nothing about inland fishing. So they go to those markets and they are sold.

Mr RIVETT: They are sold. They do not fetch a high price, but they are a saleable item.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: So for you it is a volume thing. You have to get a big volume to make it worthwhile.

Mr RIVETT: That is correct.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: So, if we take you out of the system, how does the Office of Environment and Heritage control this feral pest?

Mr RIVETT: There is no control in the lake areas. On the river system, where there are weirs and locks, they have fish cages. They are going through now and installing fish ladders. They run up into cages on those systems.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: What sort of quantity of carp did you used to take out of the system?

Mr RIVETT: Say 500 kilograms a day of carp.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: Is that everybody?

Mr RIVETT: No. There are 21 commercial fishermen.

Mr ALEXANDER: I would like to make one thing clear. At the moment inland commercial fishers are not allowed to catch carp. We put in for a permit to catch carp and we are not allowed to catch them. That is factual at the moment. We have all put in for permits and we have all been denied access.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: This is a feral pest?

Mr ALEXANDER: Correct.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: And you are not allowed to catch them?

Mr ALEXANDER: No.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: What is the rationale for that?

Mr ALEXANDER: What comes back on our forms is there is a detrimental impact on native fin fish. That is what comes back on the form.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: So, we have a feral pest and you are not allowed to catch them?

Mr ALEXANDER: No.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: What is the reason?

Mr ALEXANDER: Because the department, the culture in the department has run through from 2001. Basically, we had a restructure in 2001—

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: Is there an unintended consequence? You catch native fish when you catch carp, maybe?

Mr RIVETT: Yes.

Mr ALEXANDER: There is no scientific proof that if we catch a native fish in a net and release it within the time frames that we have done, that there is any impact on those fisheries. I have never ever seen the science, and I have asked for it at a high level. At the moment we are not allowed to catch carp but that is not what this is about today. We would like to think we are allowed to catch carp into the future. Surely that is going to sort itself out shortly because inland commercial fishers are going to be pushing forward with that over the next few months and try to sort some of that out. It has just come to my attention that the department is going to hand out new licences. That is what I was told when I was in Sydney last week.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: That is the Department of Primary Industries?

Mr ALEXANDER: Correct. It is going to hand out new licences, new commercial fishing licences, for fishers to harvest the carp out of these cages in the lochs.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: Not on the lakes, not on the Paroo?

Mr ALEXANDER: No. The problem I have with that is there are 21 commercial fishers here. That would guarantee exclusive access to carp and yabbies in the restructure in 2001 when we had our livelihoods taken off us with corrupt science. It is corrupt science; it has been discredited since then. I am saying we had our livelihoods taken off us and we are still here and we still cannot catch carp.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: What has happened to carp numbers? I realise they have gone up and down with floods and seasons and whatever, but as a general statement you guys are out of the equation, what has happened to the carp numbers?

Mr RIVETT: They exploded.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: So, terrific for the environment?

Mr ALEXANDER: I am just saying it is ridiculous.

Mr RIVETT: They go up the creek or into a 'bong to spawn and then they just explode.

Mr ALEXANDER: In saying that, all the fish species have exploded.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: You said earlier in your testimony that you believe you had a guarantee of access?

Mr ALEXANDER: Yes. I cannot tell you what year it was, but Eddie Obeid said that on the floor of Parliament. We have always had a problem with a permit. We had a licence, and we ended up with a permit. I will never get over that. I am a third-generation fisherman. We were discriminated against. I still disagree with it. We had a perfectly good licence taken off us with discredited science and basically we ended up with a permit. We were guaranteed that because of this permit system we did not need to panic, and we had problems because the Minister at any day could just sign a piece of paper and get rid of us. Or, on any day the Minister could say the yabbies and carp are looking good, we will put out another 20 licences. Where does that go for licence security and for people who are spending money on infrastructure? We are probably getting off the track a little bit.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: No, this is important. You believe you were guaranteed access to national parks, to rivers in national parks?

Mr ALEXANDER: Yes. That is on the record somewhere.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: I take it from your testimony that occasionally you net fish for carp?

Mr ALEXANDER: We have done trials but it has been a very contentious issue since 2001, at that stage, the Government bringing in new carp catches to discredit the inland commercial fishers who have done it

for generations. Even though those two or three new permits have come in to discredit the inland fishery, it has never been done.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: In your net fishing you would presumably pick up native fish as well. What is your procedure? Do you suddenly find there are half a dozen yellow belly in your catch? What do you do?

Mr RIVETT: You chuck those back.

Mr ALEXANDER: As we did with George Davies, when he came out with us and was overwhelmed—he was director general at the time. He was honourable enough—I did not think he would actually send through the photos, because it was not for this ongoing victimisation. It was against what they had been trying to say had been happening for nearly a decade. He sent me the photos, but we just released the fish and the fish all swam off and everything was fine. We dealt in hundreds of native fish because the lakes are full of the things, and they all swam off. There was no effect. No fish died.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: Do you believe there is a culture within Environment and Heritage to close the fishers?

Mr ALEXANDER: I do not believe there is a culture—I know there is a culture.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: Is it just inland fishers or do you believe it is against all commercial activity?

Mr ALEXANDER: Because we fought so hard and we went to a disallowance motion and lost by such a small margin and we fought it for so many years—you are talking 2001 or 1997. I am still here. We are getting to the stage where there are not a lot of us left, but I will not walk away from it. My father had a licence, my grandfather had a licence and they fished these properties that have been taken over by National Parks.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: Just on that point, though, while they are big properties, they are still relatively small in the bigger scheme of things in western New South Wales, or are they? Are you saying that the properties that have been taken over had particularly good fishing?

Mr ALEXANDER: They are not picking the worst properties. They are picking the best properties. That is fair enough. At the end of the day I can see some major problems. I am not against national parks.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: Mr Alexander, one of the arguments that will be used, no doubt, is that you are just complaining, there is still a massive number of lakes and rivers in which you can fish in western New South Wales, these are just tiny areas.

Mr ALEXANDER: If you say that, we will go to Nearie Lake. Nearie Lake was our residential address when I was a kid. That is where we lived. My grandfather fished it, my father fished it, I have fished it. The National Parks have come along and said get. We have no compensation. We have not even been consulted with. I have never been contacted and asked, "Steve, have you got an existing interest in Nearie Lake?" I have a letter that has denied me access to that lake. We have not just had a five-minute existence.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Mr Alexander, you said a few moments ago that you are not allowed to catch carp. Does that apply to all waters?

Mr ALEXANDER: Everywhere. I do not care where you go, we will not get one through. That is the department, with his vendetta against the inland. We have had this new panel put in place—

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: So, no fishermen are allowed to catch carp in any waters?

Mr ALEXANDER: No inland commercial fishers. There are a couple of carp catchers—

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Yes, I will get to them in a minute.

Mr ALEXANDER: No, I will stand corrected but I know there are a couple of tiny ones that have tried, but everyone I have spoken to, once again, I asked for the history. There is no history, absolutely zero.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Those new permits that have been granted to the people to catch them in the cages of the loch—

Mr ALEXANDER: I am not sure that is through yet. I spoke to—

Mr RIVETT: I spoke to Belinda on Thursday and she said they were not through as yet. They put a submission in.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: So at this stage it is only a proposal—

Mr RIVETT: That is right.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: —it has not been approved?

Mr ALEXANDER: I spoke with Doug Ferrell at the meeting in Sydney. Doug said to me at that stage that he was going to grant these licences—I would not be quoted on exactly the wording.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Are those permits being granted from the 21 permit holders now?

Mr ALEXANDER: No.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Are they new permits?

Mr ALEXANDER: They are brand-new commercial fishing licences.

CHAIR: Are Belinda and Doug, the two people you have just mentioned, employees of the Department of Primary Industries?

Mr ALEXANDER: Belinda Lucas is our manager as the inlands manager and Doug Ferrell is a senior manager.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Having outlined the problems you face, what are you looking for to give some security back to your industry?

Mr ALEXANDER: Straight out I would like to come up with some form of an inland lake fishery to take everything out of it.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: When you say "lake" fishery, does that mean you are prepared to forgo the rivers?

Mr RIVETT: That is right.

Mr ALEXANDER: Yes, the Murray River. In saying that it is something we would have to put back to the members and get an official vote on but the consensus I have had with all the people that I talk to, for instance, we would concede the Murray River for yabbies and fishing of any description. In return we would be go back into the lakes, like the Menindee Lakes, that are traditional fishing areas—only the lakes, not the rivers—and we would be able to return to our native fish as in the two species: pygmy and golden perch. At the moment there is a drying lakes policy in place so all these lakes will go dry.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Will you explain that drying lakes policy for the benefit of the Committee?

Mr ALEXANDER: Once these lakes go down—all these lakes will go dry; it is inevitable. It happened numerous times in the last century and it will happen numerous times in the next century. It is just what happens. At the moment if the water gets back to a metre then the department will let the fishers come in—

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: You are talking about the water depth?

Mr ALEXANDER: Yes. If the water depth gets back to a metre the department will let us come in there and wallow around like pigs and take fish that are not fit for human consumption.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Why are they not fit for human consumption at that stage?

Mr ALEXANDER: It is just because you have got a million pelicans there mate and they do not all walk out on to the bank and go to the toilet.

Mr RIVETT: Oxygen levels and the water temperature.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Could you explain what you mean by that? Does it affect the quality of the flesh of the fish as far as eating goes?

Mr ALEXANDER: I have never had the fish tested to be truthful with you.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: What about flavour?

Mr ALEXANDER: They definitely go weedy; there is no doubt about that. They are definitely not as nice as they are when there is more water in the lake. That is what I am saying. It is just ridiculous that it is going to go dry. Why not utilise that resource?

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: How would you propose to catch those fish in the lake? With a net?

Mr ALEXANDER: Exactly the same as we did in the past. It was really disappointing today that we could not have had 15 minutes of the panel's time out there to show the panel the small operation that we run, the little boats and how we work. It is not a trawler.

Mr RIVETT: The boat in the picture there is the boat that we use. It is a tinnie.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: How do you determine what size fish you take?

Mr ALEXANDER: Probably from science right the way through this is the most important thing that you could ever have. We fished areas for generations with no impact, the reason being because our net size was five inch. So you nearly had to have a fish one kilogram before it would actually be caught in your net. So at least he had had the chance to breed a couple of times and he just went straight through, like all the smaller fish just went straight through.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: What species was that?

Mr ALEXANDER: That was golden perch. I would like to make it very clear that the inland commercial fishers are against—like I said, I would have to go back to our members but from the consensus I have got—catching cod. We would much rather be in a position where we have some sort of agreement where we would put cod back into the river if they got caught in these lakes. In 2001 we actually put that proposal to the department and they laughed at us. I have dealt in live cod, it is not that hard.

Mr RIVETT: It is revenue that New South Wales are missing out on. They go through to South Australia and South Australia has got a lake fishery, a viable fishery.

Mr ALEXANDER: It is MSC certified and it is exactly the same fishery that ours could be.

CHAIR: Have you fished in South Australia?

Mr ALEXANDER: I have not personally actually done any fishing. I have got two fishing licenses. We had to diversify. In 2001 we lost everything; we nearly went bankrupt because of the drought so we had major problems with that. All that I could do was that we shifted out of the State but I have never ever lost where I come from.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: Commercial fishing licences are handed out in New South Wales by the Department of Primary Industries, are they not?

Mr ALEXANDER: Yes.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: The Department of Primary Industries, not the Office of Environment and Heritage?

Mr RIVETT: No, that is the way I understand it.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: The particular concern that you are bringing to the attention of the Committee today is losing access to lakes and rivers in the national park estate?

Mr RIVETT: That is exactly right.

Mr ALEXANDER: We just want to be treated like the coast. The coast has a permit system in place where fishers can access points. I have got denials and Jason has got denials; we are not allowed to access traditional fishing grounds.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: Is your beef with the Department of Primary Industries or with the Office of Environment and Heritage or both?

Mr ALEXANDER: Here today I would have to say that it is National Parks—that is who I have got it with. We have never got any help from our department so we do not expect it any more. We have never got any help. We have had a recreational manager since 2001 in our restructure for most of the time. Can you imagine a recreational manager managing a commercial fishery? It sounds pretty workable to me.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: You have succeeded in getting some access to some national parks, have you not?

Mr RIVETT: You are absolutely right.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: So it is not a blanket ban?

Mr RIVETT: No but the conditions and the timeframes to get into the national parks are a huge problem.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: One problem is being denied access to some lakes and rivers?

Mr RIVETT: Yes.

Mr ALEXANDER: The only thing I will say there is that the access that we get is because of Crown roads—for instance, Nearie Lake, where I have had a blatant no way José because there are no Crown roads going into it. You cannot go back to Toorale; it is still running under a Western Lands lease.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: I am just trying to get the problems you have clear.

Mr RIVETT: Personally I have got access into Toorale National Park.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: You do.

Mr RIVETT: Yes.

Mr ALEXANDER: Limited access.

Mr RIVETT: It is an access permit into Toorale National Park but there are more and more conditions getting put on the permit. The permit condition runs for three months—it is not a 12 month permit. It will run for three months and then you will have to get another extension of three months and then another extension of three months and then another extension. In the meantime there is a bird breeding event so that is a new condition to be put on the permit—a vehicle access permit. So there is another new condition is put on there.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: Your problem with Toorale is not that you are denied access but it is the red tape around the access you are granted, is that right?

Mr RIVETT: That is exactly right.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: What about Yanga? Have you could access there?

Mr RIVETT: No, that is a draft access condition. Now the problem with Yanga is that there are exclusion zones so where we want to be there is exclusion zones over that area.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: The permit you have presented to the Committee suggests that you will be given access to Yanga National Park and Lachlan Valley State Conservation Area?

Mr RIVETT: That is exactly right but you will see in the map in that permit condition they have got exclusion zones over there.

Mr ALEXANDER: They have no right to but they are trying to say that you cannot fish in certain areas.

Mr RIVETT: They hold no jurisdiction over a commercial fisherman once he is on the water.

Mr ALEXANDER: It is not in National Parks jurisdiction; it is back in DPI's jurisdiction once you are on the water. For instance, Yanga has got a huge amount of Crown roads going into it.

Mr RIVETT: If they revoke those—there is one going straight into the Piggery where there is an exclusion zone over that you could use now, it is an unmade Crown road. But you want to work in with Parks—well personally I do—and I have said to them that I want to work in with them and then they put this exclusion zone over Piggery Lake.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I have had a quick look through your submission and a list of recommendations would be really useful. Perhaps you could take this question on notice. We have already heard some of your concerns but the next step is the sorts of things you want to see happen. For instance, imagine Premier O'Farrell sitting here in front of you and you saying to him, "I want you to do this, this and this." The Committee has already got a number of them but I would urge you to put in another supplementary submission specifically detailing what your recommendations are. Mr Alexander, I noted at the beginning that you mentioned that you could not put a submission in because you are still waiting for some information to come through under freedom of information. It would probably be worth sending what those requests were to the Committee as well because the Committee might be in a position to also ask for that information.

Mr ALEXANDER: Okay, I will definitely do that.

CHAIR: I will note that as a question on notice. First, you will supply to the Committee a copy of your freedom of information application. Second, you will supply a supplementary submission detailing point by point what you would like the Committee to do, what recommendations you seek, which will help to guide the Committee more.

Mr ALEXANDER: Okay.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Your organisation is the peak body representative of the 21 of the 26 commercial fisher operators—

Mr ALEXANDER: Sorry, we do not acknowledge or we have nothing to do with the other carp catchers. They did not forfeit—up to five generations we have got fishers involved in the inland fisheries. That is huge. They should be pinning a medal on him; not treating him like a second class citizen.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: When you say "him", who is that?

Mr ALEXANDER: That is Henry Davies. He is five generations. Just to give you an idea—this is National Parks, and once again I am not against National Parks—they actually bulldozed his camp on Crown road on Yanga, all his avocado trees and that. He had been there with his forefathers and they bulldozed it. I am not in a position to financially help him but if I had a few bob—it was just wrong what they did. To answer your question, yes, I am president of the Inland Commercial Fishers' Association, which represents inland commercial fishers.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: I understand in terms of inland commercial fishery operators that the decision was made not to commercially fish any native fin fish around 1988 or 1989.

Mr ALEXANDER: Yes the infamous David Harris? Hang on, was it David Harris? I have just forgotten his name because I never wanted to hear his name again.

CHAIR: It is probably better if you do not mention other individuals in relation to actions that may have happened with them without them necessarily being here.

Mr ALEXANDER: Okay, sorry about that.

CHAIR: Just say "a fisherman I know".

Mr ALEXANDER: Sorry about that. I said a fisherman but I was asked who.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: I understand that a number of inland commercial fishery operators were bought out during that structural adjustment?

Mr ALEXANDER: That is right, we were given no choice. You know, you have got old fishers there and they were told to take up a carp or yabby licence or take one year's income over an average of the last three. There were some fishers that could not go on.

Mr RIVETT: At one stage there were 300 commercial fishermen and it slowly dropped off.

Mr ALEXANDER: I have said it so many times; there were 41 or 43. I can send that information to the Committee. We have a history of our fishery and how successful it was.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: I think 19 fishers surrendered and received the ex gratia payments.

Mr ALEXANDER: That is probably about right.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: That is the information on the website.

Mr ALEXANDER: It was \$800,000. It is in writing somewhere that I offered \$2 million.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: I refer to the fin fish operation. Mr Alexander, you said that the science was discredited. Why was native fin fishing stopped?

Mr ALEXANDER: There was a push at around that time. The coast got a shake up and the inland fell in and there was a sunset clause in place. There were a couple of lobbyist groups. At that stage the inland commercial fishery did not have an association. We had no voice; we were just fishers. We had no input at all.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: You said that there were 300 and that went down to 41.

Mr ALEXANDER: It was 44.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Was there a peak time when there were heaps of fish?

Mr ALEXANDER: No, there was a sunset clause. With the sunset clause it could wind down, but there were no new licences being handed out. I think we got down to 44 when Dr John Glaister came out. He told my dad—who had had a licence for 50 years—that he was a dead duck, and I have never got over it.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Do you follow what the government or departmental researchers are doing in relation to carp control? Obviously it has been recognised for a long time as an incredibly damaging species to the native environment and native fish. Do you follow what they are doing in terms of different methods of control?

Mr ALEXANDER: Only what we see on the web.

Mr RIVETT: We know about the fish ladders on the weirs, yes. But we are not aware of their other methods of targeting carp.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: I am interested in how the drought affects inland commercial fishers.

Mr ALEXANDER: All the fish die. I can send the Committee some photos.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: We heard today about the seven or eight years of drought and then the big flood. I take it that your income and profit are seasonal, that you have boom times and busts?

Mr RIVETT: Yes, it is boom and bust.

Mr ALEXANDER: In saying that, if we fell into a drought today, there are hundreds of lakes in inland New South Wales full of water. Most of those lakes run for about four, five or six years. Those lakes will go dry. If there was a fully fledged drought today, and we were allowed to access the fin fish—that is, the golden perch—before it got to a metre it would be okay. The drought does not affect the inland quite as much until we get past that four or five years and until the lakes go completely dry. It does not affect us as much.

Mr RIVETT: With the buy-back of water and better management of water than has happened in the past 10 to 20 years I believe a lake fishery is sustainable.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: The last document you provided refers to western lands leases and access. This letter outlines problems with access everywhere, I think—to travelling stock reserves, Crown land and so on. It also says that you must get permission from all leaseholders.

Mr RIVETT: That is correct. Some leaseholders are fine and some do not want to give you the time of day. But generally they are pretty good.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: There is a lot of paperwork; you have to write a lot of letters to get access.

Mr RIVETT: It is terrible. It is shocking to try to create an income and go backwards and forwards with letters. We get knockbacks from the National Parks and Wildlife Service. I have a solicitor.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: It is very different from what it was 40 or 50 years ago in terms of the paperwork required to get access to those rivers.

Mr RIVETT: Yes. But it is not only that; selling produce requires more paperwork. It is all or nothing.

CHAIR: You are both professional fishermen and you have been in the industry and you know people who have been in the industry for a long time. Do you believe that given the current number of licences issued in New South Wales an inland fishery is sustainable?

Mr RIVETT: Without a doubt.

CHAIR: Economically and environmentally sustainable?

Mr RIVETT: Without a doubt.

Mr ALEXANDER: You have to ask that with regard to the way it stands or as a restructured industry. As it stands, when we run into a dry spell down the track we will have all sorts of problems again unless we have a lake fishery.

Mr RIVETT: I thought you meant as a lake fishery.

CHAIR: In any form.

Mr ALEXANDER: If you have a lake fishery the fish will die anyway. Have a look at the menu at dinner tonight and see whether there is any fresh fish on offer.

Mr RIVETT: That is the problem. We are buying produce from overseas and we have our own produce here that can be sustainable. We have strict scrutiny by the Department of Primary Industries. It can be sustainable and you can have local produce.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: Are any of the Crown roads paper roads? There is a program involving selling the paper roads.

Mr ALEXANDER: There will not be a paper road there next week.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: Is there a risk that you could wake up one day and that road is no longer a Crown road? Are you notified?

Mr ALEXANDER: We are not. The only people who are notified are at the Department of Primary Industries. Alistair McBurnie handles all that even though he is with the recreational trust. We get a little bit of a kick from that because Crown roads need to be kept for the recreational sector as well.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: Is there no risk for your industry that a Crown road will disappear tomorrow?

Mr ALEXANDER: Yes.

Mr RIVETT: For sure.

Mr ALEXANDER: I got a phone call while I was coming here today telling me that 28 have just been bought back. I do not know where they are yet; I cannot find out. I find it hard to believe that we have an inquiry going on at the moment and 28 Crown roads have been bought back just recently.

CHAIR: Have you written to the Minister for Lands about the sale of paper roads?

Mr RIVETT: No.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: The Deputy Premier would be the person to contact.

CHAIR: I suggest that you do. Members have put some questions on notice. You may not get an answer to the questions you asked under the freedom of information legislation. We will endeavour to get those answers and we will share them with you. We would appreciate the supplementary submission within 21 days.

Mr RIVETT: Certainly.

CHAIR: Thank you for appearing before the Committee.

(The witnesses withdrew)

The Committee adjourned at 7.00 p.m.