

# LITHGOW ENVIRONMENT GROUP

10 March 2006

## **TO: The Senate Enquiry into Australia's national parks, conservation reserves and marine protected areas**

The Lithgow Environment Group (L.E.G.) is a recently formed local environment group. L.E.G. is about viable solutions and outcomes which will benefit people, the environment and generations to come.

L.E.G. advocates for more funding from both Federal and State governments to provide better management and protection of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, national parks and Crown lands of the wider Blue Mountains area which includes Lithgow region.

### **Environmental Protection**

This protection would cover such issues as the effective control of feral animals and weeds, bush fire control; control and management of recreational pursuits such as inappropriate and environmentally destructive activities i.e. hunting, 4WD, and bike riding. Many of these activities are unauthorised and extremely detrimental to the environment ie causing erosion, disturbance to and threatening of native flora and fauna.

L.E.G. realises that it would be next to impossible to prevent the above activities from occurring and we envisage more funding, better control and management to protect people and the environment. This could be done by employing more park rangers. Perhaps some consideration could be given to the possibility of **user pays**. This already occurs in camping areas of National Parks.

If government is seriously interested in ridding our parks and bushland of feral animals it could ensure that hunting should only take place by professionally trained/paid park rangers/hunters. This might then prevent accidents such as recently occurred in the United States.

### **Bushfire Management**

For the protection of the bush, flora, fauna and residents it would make sense to have adequate and well-maintained access/fire trails so that when a bushfire occurs it can be reached with the minimum amount of delay with an emphasis on the safety of firefighters.

These well-maintained access/fire trails could serve the dual purpose of being available for 4WD and bike riders, possibly on a user pays basis.. Hopefully, this would keep 4WD and bike riders from wanting to blaze new trails into the bush. Or, better still, ban 4WD/bikes from vulnerable national park, crown land areas altogether and allow only 4WD/bikes access in such places as Pine Forests or other designated areas that are not so sensitive, with heavy fines for those not abiding by the regulations.

### **Sand Mining**

There is already a sand mine on the Newnes Plateau north of Clarence which abuts the National Park and the GBMWhA and L.E.G. is not impressed with the way this site is looking or its impacts on the environment. It is an ugly eyesore and its difficult to see how this land can be rehabilitated in a satisfactory way.

L.E.G. is against further sand mining leases in this or other Blue Mountains areas as it is a unique and beautiful area which could attract many tourists and, of course, tourist dollars. Apart from this the Newnes Plateau adjoins the National Park and also needs protecting and should be included in the GBMWhA.

There are many problems associated with the current sand mining such as dust clouds, lowering of the watertable to the detriment of not only the residents of Clarence but also the drying up of swamps and water courses.

**Other Important Issues**

L.E.G. has found there is too long a response time to investigate our reports of damage to threatened species of flora and fauna, and ecological communities such as Long Swamp (temperate highland peat swamp), the birth place of the Cox's River.

L.E.G. would like to see more maintenance of tracks and side trails such as Glow Worm Tunnel and the Blackfellow's Hand Trail.

Better signage. A National Park that looks cared for will be cared for.

General widespread illegal dumping of rubbish in bushland i.e.

Newnes Plateau. We would like to see these dumping areas cleaned up and heavy fines imposed on anyone caught dumping illegally.

Improved monitoring of heathlands and swamps affected by long wall mining.

These are some of the many issues which need to be addressed but none of this can happen without adequate funding. L.E.G. fully endorses the need for this funding. We trust we have provided food for thought and possible solutions.

Yours sincerely,

Ariel Elliott  
Co-ordinator