

Our reference : DOC06/11018



Dr Jacqueline Dewar
Inquiry Secretary
Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology
and the Arts References Committee
Department of the Senate
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Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

**NSW
NATIONAL
PARKS AND
WILDLIFE
SERVICE**

NPWS is part of
the Department of
Environment and
Conservation

ABN 30 841 387 271

Dear Dr Dewar,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide evidence to the Senate Inquiry on Australia's national parks, conservation reserves and marine protected areas in Sydney on the 12th May.

At this hearing I undertook to provide some extra information to the Inquiry regarding the management of parks in NSW. Please find this attached. If you require further copies of any of the reports or brochures, please contact Louisa Clark on 02 9585 6001.

Yours sincerely

DR TONY FLEMING
Deputy Director General
Head - National Parks and Wildlife

26/5/06

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Responses to extra questions raised by the Senate Inquiry Hearing

ECITA 9

Dr Fleming: That paragraph refers to fire suppression costs, which relate to the scale of the fire season. The other more substantial costs relate to fire management generally – that is, the costs associated with hazard reduction burning, fire trail maintenance, preparation of fire plans and the like.

Senator RONALDSON: What has been spent on those things over the last three years?

Dr Fleming: I will see whether I can find the figures here; otherwise, I will get them to you separately. The costs is in the order of \$4 1/2 million if I recall correctly.

Senator RONALDSON: I am interested because, with the dramatically increased reserve system that you have, I would like to see what the direct farm* management funding allocation is.

Response

* It is assumed that this is an error in transcription and it is supposed to read fire management.

NSW Parks and Wildlife Division expenditure on fire mitigation

Estimated Fire Expenditure, including salary, operating and Insurance

Year	Total \$
2004 – 2005	Approx \$27 million
2003 - 2002	Approx \$42 million
2002 - 2003	Approx \$39 million

* Includes fire management, policy and training; *excludes wildfire suppression*

In the 2004/2005 financial year the Parks & Wildlife Division of the Department of Environment and Conservation incurred direct operational costs of \$4.6m for Fire management activities. Indirect costs for the same year include \$22.5m being apportioned employee related costs of staff indirectly involved with fire management, policy and training activities.

ECITA 9

Dr Fleming: ... Rangers and field officers, who do hands-on management, are bureaucrats; they're public servants.

Senator RONALDSON: How many bureaucrats, to use your expression, did you have on the ground in 1996 and how many do you have now?

Response:

As at 30/6	Rangers	Field Officers/ Tradespeople
2005	256	570
1997	185	477

ECITA 11

Senator WORTLEY: What sort of impact is climate change having on the alpine region?

Dr Fleming: ... If you are interested, I can send you some papers from our ecologist which will tell you something about changes in the reproductive patterns of some species.

Response:

The following papers written by Ken Green, Alpine Ecologist with NSW Department of Environment and Conservation are at attachment A. Roger Good was also a staff member of the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation in 2004.

Green K. and Pickering C. M. (2002) A scenario for mammal and bird diversity in the Australian Snowy Mountains in relation to climate change. pp241-249 in: C. Koerner and E.M. Spehn (eds) *Mountain Biodiversity: a Global Assessment*. Parthenon Publishing, London.

Pickering, C.M., Good, R. and Green, K. (2004) *Potential effects of global warming on the biota of the Australian Alps*. Australian Greenhouse Office, Canberra.

Green, K. (2002) Impacts of global warming on the Snowy Mountains. pp35-36 in: M. Howden, L. Hughes, M. Dunlop, I. Zethoven, D. Hilbert, C. Chilcott (eds) *Climate change impacts on biodiversity in Australia*. CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems, Canberra.

Another reference that may be of interest is

Green, K (ed). (1998) *Snow: a natural history; an uncertain future*. Australian Alps Liaison Committee.

ECITA 17

CHAIR: Would you be able to provide the committee with a copy of that state of the park report that you have mentioned?

Dr Fleming: Yes, I can do that. I will organise that.

Response:

State of the Parks Report is at attachment B.

ECITA 18

Dr Fleming: ... People can enter into voluntary conservation agreements, which are legislated and attach a covenant to the title of the land so it runs with the title of the land for conservation. We also have a category called 'wildlife refuges', which is noted on the title. It does not impose as high a degree of management obligation on the parties to it. But they are growing in New South Wales.

Senator RONALDSON: Does that include the NRS?

Dr Fleming: Are they included in the reporting on the NRS? I do not think they are.

Senator RONALDSON: Could you double-check that? I would be interested to know.

Response:

Wildlife Refuges and Voluntary Conservation Agreements are not included in reporting on the NRS. There is no NRS funding that goes towards these types of conservation areas, they are entirely funded by the state government.

ECITA 19

CHAIR: I just have a final question on back on the issue of weeds that comes up regularly wherever we go. There are obviously a lot of resources being put into managing, containing, controlling and trying to eliminate weeds where possible. One of the queries is: what more needs to be done on the preventative side of things, the obvious example being nurseries that can still sell plants or shops that can sell fish that become pests? What things are being done at state level here? It seems to be one of those ones where the different responsibilities at Commonwealth and state level –

Senator RONALDSON: And local government level.

CHAIR: mean things are not moving as fast as they could.

Dr Fleming: I would need to take some advice from other agencies to be able to give you a decent response to that questions, which I am happy to do. But it is probably best if I gather that information and send it to you.

Response:

There are a number of measures that are being undertaken by the NSW Government to prevent further incursions of weeds. DEC is involved in a three staged strategic approach to weed management by identifying significant environmental weeds, ascertaining the biodiversity that is threatened by the most important weeds, and then developing and implementing a strategic approach to protect biodiversity that is most at risk. This strategic approach involves species based threat abatement plans for some weeds, and also regional plans that cover all the important weeds in an area. These regional plans are being developed with Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs).

As part of targeting the weeds that threaten biodiversity, the NSW Government is working to prevent the escape of weeds from gardens. Escaped invasive garden plants form 70% of Australia's weed flora and 64% of the weeds that pose a threat to NSW biodiversity. One of the methods used in NSW to prevent further weed incursions by escaped invasive garden plants is to ban them from sale. This is done by listing under the NSW *Noxious Weeds Act 1993* under Control Class 5. Many

species have already been banned for sale in NSW through this process, including all of the Weeds of National Significance. Listing these plants is the responsibility of the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI). DPI routinely reviews the list of plants declared under the NSW Noxious Weeds Act (including proposed additions to Control Class 5)

DEC is working with DPI and other agencies to determine those high-risk species which should be banned from sale and ensure that they are listed under Control Class 5. DEC is involved in research identifying the biodiversity that is threatened by weeds and prioritising garden escape species.

The problem of garden escapes is not restricted to NSW. For example, some plants banned for sale in NSW can still be purchased in other states. DEC is working with other agencies nationally to help address this problem.

In addition to banning plants from sale, initiatives like the 'Bushland Nursery Scheme' and 'Grow me instead' have been developed in NSW to educate the community by identifying non-invasive garden plants that should be planted in preference to species that are a known or potential threat to biodiversity.

Bushland Nursery Scheme

NSW North Coast Weeds Advisory Committee (of which DEC is an active member) has initiated a Bushland Friendly Nursery Scheme. Under this joint initiative, sixteen local councils along the north coast of NSW have agreed to prevent the planting of environmental weeds in new developments, or in landscaping projects conducted by councils. Participating nurseries have also agreed to cease the local sale, propagation or distribution of environmental weeds. The committee has produced a booklet identifying such weeds, and suggesting native alternatives for planting in gardens.

Grow Me Instead

A similar initiative in the Greater Sydney District which encourages gardeners to plant native or non-invasive plants. It is hoped that such initiatives will reduce the likelihood of serious weed outbreaks in the future. The NSW Government provided funding for this program through the Environmental Trust. See attached brochure 'Grow Me Instead'.