

SUBMISSION RE : SENATE INQUIRY INTO AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL PARKS, CONSERVATION RESERVES AND MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

My experience in NSW is that the state government is not adequately resourcing our NPWS to allow efficient management to reach conservation goals nor to provide satisfactory visitor facilities in National Parks and conservation reserves.

One has only to visit national parks in other states to be aware that visitor facilities are far superior there. In W.A. and Tas. recently we remarked upon the excellent interpretive signage; impressive new visitor centres in many locations; ready availability of free maps and brochures; well-maintained tracks, walkways and lookout platforms; clean and modern toilet facilities etc. etc. In NSW these are often in a poor condition or lacking altogether.

NSW has a vast national parks estate but, it would seem, too few staff on the ground to manage it. In National parks and conservation reserves, around Sydney in particular, rangers are rarely seen and all sorts of illegal activity occurs because people know they're unlikely to be caught. So trail bike riding, bush rock collecting, tree felling for firewood etc., rubbish dumping, hunting, removal of protected flora etc. etc. all occur routinely because there are not enough rangers patrolling, especially on weekends.

NSW has a good record on creating national parks etc. but not a good record in managing them, due to persistent under-funding. This under-funding also leads to demoralisation of the workforce in the NPWS. This is obvious whenever you talk to rangers who complain of a chronic lack of resources to do the job.

A serious threat to the objectives and management of national parks etc. is the trend to make these areas pay for themselves. Thus there is pressure to allow commercial activities in parks to make them more self-sufficient. This has the potential to compromise the objectives of national parks etc. One example is the Quarantine Station on Sydney's North Head which has been leased to private interests. Another is the increase in accommodation areas on the snowfields of Kosciusko N.P.

Yours faithfully,
Julie A. Sheppard