

1st August 2025

Select Committee on Access Restrictions to Public Lands and Waterways

Email: publiclandaccess@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Inquiry into access restrictions to public lands and waterways

Animal Care Australia is a national incorporated association established to consult with government in advocating for real animal welfare by those who keep, breed and care for animals. Our goal is to promote and encourage high standards in all interactions with the animals in our care.

Animal Care Australia would like to thank the Select Committee on access restrictions to public lands and waterways for the opportunity to provide this submission and welcome the opportunity to testify at this Inquiry.

Animal Care Australia's core focus is on pet ownership and how that is interfered with or restricted on public land, and accordingly this submission will primarily respond to the relevant aspects of the Terms of Reference and also includes general comments to others where our members have been affected by particular restrictions imposed.

Primary recommendations:

- Review all state-wide existing and proposed access restrictions with clear, evidence-based community and stakeholder input
- Legislate consultation processes, ensuring outcome transparency and requiring engagement with recreational users, local and Indigenous communities, and other stakeholders.
- Increase investment in infrastructure and education to promote responsible behaviour and to reduce environmental impacts rather than adopting 'cancel culture' restrictions.

Additionally, following this Inquiry Animal Care Australia would support an in-depth investigation into the National Parks and Wildlife Service as well as the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, including its agencies such as Environment and Heritage.

Should you require further details please do not hesitate to reach out.

This submission can be publicly listed.

Kind regards,



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About Animal Care Australia

As a nationally recognised animal welfare organisation, Animal Care Australia encourages continued development of animal welfare standards and Codes of Practice for animal husbandry, breeding, training, sale, and sporting exhibitions for a wide range of animal species, including pets, animals used for educational or entertainment purposes or kept for conservation, and in particular native birds, reptiles, and mammals.

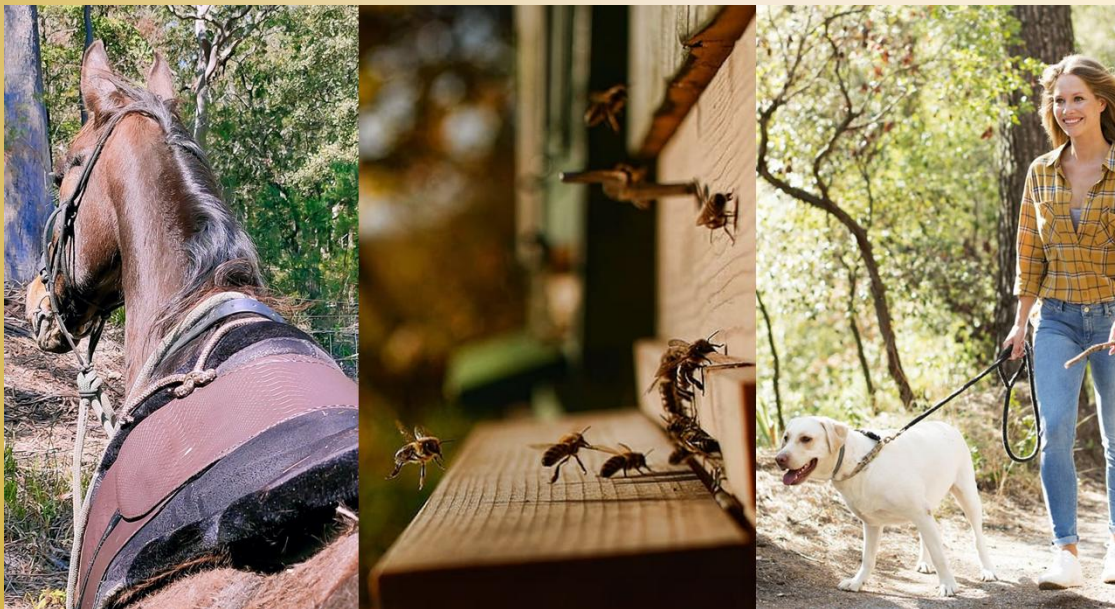
Animal Care Australia was founded in early 2018 to establish an organisation run solely by volunteers to lobby for real animal welfare. With extreme animal rights and animal liberationist ideologies influencing government legislation, regulation, and policy at our expense and to the detriment of our animals and pets, it has become necessary to provide government with a balancing voice.

By uniting the broad spectrum of animal groups, collectively we offer an experienced, sensible approach to animal welfare.

By educating our members and the public about the importance of treating animals with kindness and respect for their needs and promoting the humane treatment of animals to improve animal welfare outcomes, Animal Care Australia is in the unique position of lobbying and advocating for all animals within our care.

Animal Care Australia provides priority to the following:

- advocating for stronger welfare outcomes
- advocating to increase education of the public in animal welfare and best care techniques
- educate the public on handling their animals with kindness & respect and the importance of their needs
- educate the public in the differences between animal welfare and animal rights



Inquiry into access restrictions to public lands and waterways

“Animal welfare is animal care”

Approved: 1st August 2025

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This submission has been developed in consultation with a range of members of Animal Care Australia.

This submission provides a broad perspective across all species of pets and companion animals.

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ACA Background

Animal Care Australia Inc. (ACA) represents the interests of all hobbyist and pet animal keepers nationally. Our members are comprised of most major animal keeping representative bodies including those representing dogs, cats, birds, horses, small mammals, reptiles fish, insects and exhibited animals. Our Advisory Group members also work in the rescue, training, veterinary, care and rehabilitation sectors.

Opening statement

Animal Care Australia would like to thank the Select Committee on access restrictions to public lands and waterways for the opportunity to provide this submission and welcome the opportunity to testify at this Inquiry.

As a nationally recognised animal welfare organisation, Animal Care Australia continues to oppose the overreach of restrictions placed by government departments and local councils on the access to public land and the activities community can enjoy while on that land.



The NSW Public Spaces Charter (2021) ¹ **supports everyone in NSW** to have access to high-quality public space that allows them to enjoy and participate in public life, through 10 best practice principles for quality public space.

While a large portion of the Charter is focused on city and suburban public spaces, Public Lands and Waterways are included in the Charter. The 10 principles of the Charter is a sound basis for considerations of how public spaces outside of cities should be accessed and utilised by the public with consideration given to the protection of the natural environment.

Access is important to give the community a reason to care about the environment. Out of sight is out of mind, and the more the

¹ [NSW Public Spaces Charter](#)

community is attached to a place, the better it is cared for.

The 10 principles

The charter identifies 10 principles for quality public space, to support all those who advocate on behalf of, provide advice on, make decisions about, or plan, design, manage and activate public spaces in NSW.

Animal Care Australia recognises there is a need to protect certain elements on public land however, there is clearly a narcissistic monopoly being employed by certain departments and local councils in restricting public land use, access, and activity.

Recognising there are several departments responsible for public spaces, for the purpose of this submission Animal Care Australia will focus on local councils and the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS).

Animal Care Australia again raises concern with the manner in which consultation with the community and/or other key stakeholders is conducted by both state departments and local government. It is with this in mind that we seek a recommendation of a greater requirement for promotion of and transparency of consultations. Simply placing an announcement on a website is neither promoting nor providing an appropriate mechanism for awareness of a consultation.

Animal Care Australia's core focus is on pet ownership and how that is interfered with or restricted on public land, and accordingly this submission will primarily respond to the relevant aspects of the Terms of Reference and also includes general comments to others where our members have been affected by particular restrictions imposed.

Responses to the Terms of reference

(a) the current and projected extent and rationale of access restrictions across public lands, including the balance between environmental protection, cultural heritage preservation and public access

Environmental/conservation protected spaces

In recent decades, it has become clear that NPWS believes that conservation is achieved through neglect.

Australia is one of the few countries in the world that does not strategically manage native/natural lands. Pockets are cared for, usually through exclusion and limited access by environmentalists (and in many instances this is completely appropriate), however we are seeing increasingly large areas are simply being fenced off and totally neglected, often in the name of vague "environmental protections" but without any clear reason and without a long term plan. The continued rise in numbers of feral animals and plants/weeds is testament to the ongoing and expanding neglect by NPWS.

While it should not be necessary to state the obvious, it is clear the NPWS need to be reminded: ***Neglect is not caring for the environment.***

Accessibility and inclusion are key to better outcomes. Increasingly, we see spaces such as national parks, crown reserves, state conservation areas, fire trails, foreshores and other similar spaces being fenced off from the community, and additional unnecessary restrictions applied to recreation, animal owners and those with mobility limitations.

When beekeepers, horses riders, dog walkers and other recreational users are frequenting our natural spaces, those eyes on the ground help identify problem areas, keep trails clear for emergency services and rescuers/rehabilitators, as well as keep the community connected to that environment, to care about its future.

Regular users recognise changes that one-off visitors and land managers do not notice. Keeping the community involved benefits everyone.

Banning photography

The most mind-boggling restrictions highlight the level that the NPWS believes it can govern itself – and the truth of the matter is – it does. At least until the community becomes aware of it doing so. This is highlighted by the signage erected during the aerial culling of brumbies. At first glance one ‘might’ understand the top sign banning photography of staff, until you are reminded of what those staff are doing, and that is where the true reason kicks in – the sign below it. NPWS claim the ban is to protect their staff from harassment. The truth is clear – they do not want the rest of the world seeing what they are doing. Photographing the cull and those animals that have been shot would draw out examples of excessively shot animals, animals potentially still suffering, and of course, you cannot encourage tourism if mass carcasses are photographed strewn all over the world-renowned national park.

Ironically, NPWS staff are walking around filming everything wearing body cameras.² So they can



² [ABC article: NSW National Parks rangers trial body cameras as feral horse control programs prompt threats](#)

film the public for their safety but the public cannot film them for our (or our animals) safety?

Additionally, Kosciusko appears to be the only national park where casual/recreational photographers are not permitted without expressed permits.³

A search on the NPWS information website for ‘photography’ provides a lengthy list of Parks and photography tours⁴ so it is just where they are doing something that could lead to ‘trouble’ for them that restrictions are placed.

Local parks and reserves

The ongoing housing crisis has resulted in a different approach of housing development. The growth in the number of high-rise housing and the shrinking of, or total obliteration of backyards means those of us who look to walk our pets is on the increase, and yet the provision of spaces in which we can do this continues to be controversial within our local councils.

Local councils particularly continue to restrict access for dogs – even on a lead/leash. The Companion Animals Act 1998 Section 13⁵ requires dogs to be on leads at all times – unless within a designated off-leash areas, and yet some councils do not provide spaces for either activity while there is no legislative requirement for councils to implement dog parks or designated off-leash areas.

(b) the social, economic, and recreational impacts of access restrictions on local communities, recreational users and industries such as tourism, forestry, and agriculture

Restricting access to public lands has significant economic implications, particularly on regional areas who rely heavily on tourism and outdoor recreation. Accessible public spaces will drive stronger economic benefits, supporting local businesses and creating jobs, encouraging a greater appreciation of the environment while enhancing community wellbeing.

Horses:

The recently reviewed Horse Riding Management Plan for Wollemi National Park⁶ is a good example of how public access trails are being quietly closed or restricted.

The Final Plan made exclusive accommodations for three equestrian organisations and their members, at the expense of the more frequent users of the park, the local horse riders, who are now being completely excluded, but for a handful of disjointed one-way trails. Many public access routes into the park were closed, which meant that the open trails were inaccessible

³ [Kosciusko NP information](#)

⁴ [NPWS photography search](#)

⁵ [NSW Companion Animals Act – Section 13](#)

⁶ [Horse Riding Management Plan – South-east Wollemi NP](#)

without prior arrangement to obtain permission/keys or to drive a long way to the only accessible entry/parking area.

During the ‘so-called’ consultation process, Animal Care Australia ⁷ also held discussions with local Council during which we were assured “*while some trails will close, more trails will be opened,*” but this was simply not the case. Not surprisingly, the report ⁸ outlining the content of submissions received for that consultation highlighted two major points of concern relating to the actual consultation process.

- 1) **Lack of community engagement and consultation.** Resulting in a revised Plan that required further consultation
- 2) **The draft plan should not have been exhibited over the Christmas period.** Resulting in an extension of time.

Clearly there was a perceived intention to engage as little as possible with the community that was to be most directly affected.

It is worth noting within the report that the majority of submissions opposed the proposed changes and these were rejected by NPWS on the basis of their own internal policies. Policies that were not consulted with the community but rather their own specialist consultants.

This is not the first time policies have been developed by internal specialists. Animal Care Australia has experienced these policies in other areas within the department, including native wildlife licensing, the aerial-culling in Kosciusko National Park and the attempt to prevent or restrict animal expos being run by animal-keeping associations.

This approach of determining what consultation they want to adopt regardless of the actual public sentiment is common practice within this department.

The passive aggressive method of just making public access routes less accessible to ensure that people find it too inconvenient to bother anymore, then justifies additional closures in the future. This is the opposite of the 10 principles outlined in the NSW Public Spaces Charter (2021) and should not be allowed to happen.

Notably a similar attempt to reduce horse riding was made in 2023 with the Blue Mountains National Park and Kanangra-Boyd National Park Draft Plan of Management.⁹

Horse riders and carriage drivers are often unfairly targeted for exclusion. In Victoria, Animal Care Australia was successful in our campaign ¹⁰ to have horse riders recognised as vulnerable

⁷ [ACA submission to horse riding consultation for South-east Wollemi NP](#)

⁸ [Summary Report of consultation for South-east Wollemi NP](#)

⁹ [ACA submission to the Blue Mountains National Park and Kanangra-Boyd National Park Draft Plan of Management](#)

¹⁰ [ACA submission to the Inquiry into the impact of road safety behaviours on vulnerable road users](#)

road users ¹¹ and yet the NPWS in NSW appears hell-bent on demonizing horse riding, despite the many benefits of maintaining clear trails, and one of the least impacting recreational activities that are conducted within national parks.

Horse riding is often perceived to be an elitist activity. People feel – quite literally - looked down on by riders, keeping horses is an expensive hobby, and the flash outfits and expensive gear seen at Olympic levels and the races reinforce this misconception. The average equestrian is not elitist, nor even rich – they are normal, everyday people, including children, with a passion for horses. Riding on public roads has become increasingly unsafe, therefore riders are increasingly looking for safe off-road trails to exercise their horses and enjoying the beauty of the Australian environment.

At the same time, national parks, state forests, crown reserves, fire trails and other reserves are increasingly locking their gates and banning access to horse riders and drivers. There is no reason for this except for biased discrimination for a small and vulnerable community of mostly women who are easily targeted and bullied. Forcing a vulnerable road using group into danger on the roads when suitable off-road trails are available is shameful. If suitable access does not exist, it should be created.

Any trail that is open to both pedestrians and cyclists should be open to horse riders. Horse owners stay to cleared trails, help keep them clear for other users, and do not cause any more damage than pedestrians or cyclists. As stated above, The NSW Public Spaces Charter (2021) supports everyone in NSW to have access to high-quality public space that allows them to enjoy and participate in public life. Everyone is fully inclusive and does not mean everyone except horse riders.

The public enjoy seeing horses when they visit trails and parks with their families. Our modern lifestyles rarely allow for opportunities for interactions with horses. This increases the disconnect between horses and the general public and leads to less educated pedestrians and drivers behaving inappropriately when they do encounter horses on the roads. The less of a divide we create between community groups such as horse riders, bushwalkers, cyclists, and children, the safer everyone is, and the more considerate everyone becomes towards each other. This is important for educating the community to be more tolerant of each other, encourage engagement and interaction in safe spaces.

Horse riding and carriage tours are a popular tourism activity that is almost banned from our public lands and waterways. Animal Rights Extremism and extremist conservationists contribute to misinformation and disinformation about horses in public spaces, and this needs to be countered with sound science based public education.

¹¹ [Vic Govt final report into vulnerable road users](#)

Animal based tourism is a critical tool to help educate the public on animal care and conservation. When people engage with animals, they care about those animals. This is simply something that looking at a screen or textbook cannot emulate.

Bees and Apiary:

The over-control and restriction of beekeeping within national parks is highlighted by the first clause in their policy for permitting an apiary within a Park.

Policy¹²

1. *Beekeeping is generally allowed in parks when it is recognised as an existing interest (that is, it was being carried out before the land became a park). Existing beekeeping operations have usually been allowed to continue when a state forest or Crown land has been reserved as a park under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NPW Act).*

Animal Care Australia acknowledges the Department of Primary Industries website ¹³ states there are some 6200 commercial apiarists that are located on public lands with approximately 32% of those that sit within the national parks service and 63% within the state forestry commission controlled areas. We also note the website refers a beekeeper to the BPASS website ¹⁴ to view areas available for permit to establish an apiary or to apply to take over a vacated space. Our search indicated there were no available (vacant) sites within NPWS – while Local Land Services and Forestry Commission listed several.

While it is accepted and acknowledged that the European Honeybee is a threat to our native bees and their capacity to pollinate our native plants, the inclusion of apiculture in public lands has the following advantages:

1. Pollination Support for Native Plants

- Honeybees can help pollinate native flora, especially in areas where native pollinators have declined.
- Enhanced pollination can improve plant biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems.

2. Restoration and Conservation Aid

- In restoration projects (e.g., after fires or habitat loss), beekeeping can temporarily support pollination until native pollinators recover.
- Beekeepers can be allies in monitoring floral health since bees are sensitive to ecosystem changes.

¹² [NSW National Parks Beekeeping Policy](#)

¹³ [NSW DPI- Commercial apiary on public lands](#)

¹⁴ [BPASS map](#)

3. Educational Opportunities

- Beekeeping in parks can support environmental education programs, helping visitors understand:
 - o The role of pollinators
 - o Threats to bee populations
 - o Ecosystem interdependence

4. Promoting Biodiversity Awareness

- Bees are microfauna—they attract attention and can serve as a gateway species for conservation education for schools and communities.
- Showcasing apiaries may raise public support for broader biodiversity efforts.

5. Economic and Community Engagement

- Responsible, small-scale beekeeping could offer:
 - o Local honey production
 - o Employment or volunteer opportunities tied to conservation
 - o Potential collaboration with Indigenous or local communities

Despite all of the above, local councils also place restrictions on beekeeping – even on private property.

The CSIRO have developed fantastic ways in which the community can help to protect and grow our native bee populations.¹⁵ Perhaps ‘community science’ style projects should be encouraged by government on public lands. These could then be monitored and assist the CSIRO's need for greater research opportunities and benefit our native flora and fauna – the true meaning of ‘environment protection and conservation.’

(c) the adequacy of government investment in maintaining and improving public access and infrastructure on public lands

In rural public spaces, this is clearly decreasing as local councils try to save money. NPWS simply shut access gates and leave the land to neglect.

In many cases, simply opening the existing trails to the public, including horse riders, drivers and leashed pet walkers will ensure trails are maintained and kept clear – regular users will often pull weeds and fill potholes themselves. This reduces the amount of money councils and other land managers need to invest, not forgetting to increase the ability of fire-fighting access when needed.

Simply engaging the public and making the trails open and welcoming, as per the NSW Public Spaces Charter (2021) will ensure those trails are cared for and issues are more likely to be

¹⁵ [CSIRO – native bees projects](#)

detected, reported and therefore responded to.

(d) the legislative and regulatory frameworks governing access restrictions, including any inconsistencies, gaps, or areas for improvement

Fire trails are increasingly being locked by private landowners. While many fire trails cross private land, all fire trails should be legislated as public rights of way. Landowners currently have the right to lock access but also have an obligation to keep fire trails clear, but this is simply not happening. When fire trucks need access, they report that the trails are overgrown or blocked with fallen trees, and inaccessible, preventing fire fighter access to prevent and stop fires. Those same landowners then complain about the Rural Fire Service not saving their property.

By making all fire trails public rights of way, these issues will be reported and addressed more frequently, long before fire fighters are urgently racing to an inaccessible scene.

When beekeepers, horses riders, dog walkers and other recreational users are frequenting local fire trails and spaces, those eyes on the ground help identify problem areas, keep trails clear for emergency services and rescuers/rehabilitators, as well as keep the community connected to that environment and in doing so, they are encouraged to care about its future. Regular users recognise changes that one-off visitors and land managers do not notice. Keeping the community involved means keeping governing organisations informed which in turn benefits everyone.

Where there are genuine concerns to protect waterways, or sensitive areas of flora or fauna habitat, diversion trails, bridges or concreting should be invested in. Clear, well-maintained trails keep users away from protected areas.

The public is also seeing more areas surrounding National Parks being rezoned as Conservation areas or State Reserves. The issue (and why its intentionally done) here is to block horse rider access to legal trails. Horses (including while travelling in a horse float) are not legally permitted inside these areas, so even though legal horse-riding trails are available in the National Park, the access is completely blocked. Sometimes these areas only expand by a few hundred metres. We are not talking about large conservation areas, just a small section of road where horse floats will be fined for crossing. This again flies in the face of the NSW Public Spaces Charter (2021) and deliberately discriminates against horse owners, isolating them from the rest of the community. This is harmful to the horse riders, the horses, and the public and is unproductive. It is incredibly deceitful and extremely effective.

There are only 4 legal horse accessible beaches in all of Australia. This is a blanket ban that needs to be addressed. Any dog friendly beach has the potential to be a horse friendly beach. There is no sensible reason for this ban. Horses are under more direct control than dogs are on beaches (many beaches permit dogs off-leash) and should have safe access areas to use.

(e) suitable alternatives or models for managing public land access that balance conservation objectives with public access, including examples from other jurisdictions

Rewilding is a European concept that actively manages former farmland into conservation land. The programs are environment based – to improve biodiversity, increase native vegetation, and trees, restoring past land clearing and former “pasture improvement” aimed at cattle. Rewilding utilises semi wild herds of horses that are grazed in dedicated areas to be a link restoring former farmland into native landscape. Horses are uniquely suited to this purpose. There are several successful programs in the UK and the Netherlands.

Animal Care Australia is not suggesting this method is suitable in all re-claimed land areas but these systems have differing approaches that are a successful alternative to the lock-it-up-and-neglect-it approach that is popular here in Australia and are suitable for adaptation here. The programs are managed by conservationists, focused on protecting local species of fauna and flora, and heavily involve local Indigenous communities.

The success comes from welcoming the public to oversee its progress, holding the programs accountable. The funding generated through providing tours, easy accessibility (often through clear trails/boardwalks/ or driving routes through the rewilding areas), as well as education programs improves public relations and generates care for the environment.

The key to successful natural land management is opening the land to public accountability.

(f) the impact of restrictions on diverse user groups, including people with disabilities, Aboriginal communities, and rural populations

A lot of this is already covered in our responses to a) b) c) and d).

Animal Care Australia would like to advocate for disabled horse riders and drivers in public spaces. Horse riders are only slightly less discriminated against than carriage drivers, who are often former horse riders who now carriage drive due to some level of disability. This is incredibly common amongst carriage drivers. Disabled drivers (and passengers) are given the freedom to enjoy our open spaces through the help of their horses.

However, most horse accessible gateways are not accessible by carriage drivers (they often require the same access width as a car). Often barricades stretched across the access point are installed. These are designed to be stepped over or have narrow access either side but cannot be ‘driven or ridden’ over. Also, disabled drivers, who cannot easily dismount to open gates etc. find all of the current methods of blocking particularly problematic.

Europe has an abundance of cleverly engineered solutions to make horse and carriage accessible gateways that can be used by cyclists and pedestrians that should be adopted here.

As we have already stated – any trail that is accessible to both pedestrians and cyclists should be accessible to horse riders and drivers as well.

(g) consultation processes and the level of community engagement undertaken when implementing or reviewing access restrictions

As highlighted in our Opening Statement, Animal Care Australia has concern with the manner in which consultation with the community and/or other key stakeholders is conducted by both state departments and local government. It is with this in mind that we seek a recommendation of a greater requirement for promotion of and transparency of consultations. Simply placing an announcement on a website is neither promoting or providing an appropriate mechanism for awareness of a consultation.

A criterion for consultation must be legislated. This must include a requirement for transparency of the submissions received for all consultations. Provisions can be made for personal or identifying information to be redacted before public listing, however the intent and statements of each submission should be available for reference.

The need for this has been highlighted on numerous occasions in matters relating to the aerial culling, but also Animal Care Australia has continually found consultations conducted by NPWS, wildlife licensing sections and local councils implementing pet restrictions are not forthcoming with the actual submissions or feedback received, with some only providing a brief ‘overview’ of what it claimed to have received.

(h) the role of state and local government authorities and any other relevant entities, in managing and enforcing access restrictions on public lands

Animal Care Australia have noticed an increase in policy-based evidence-making, instead of evidence-based policy making by State and Local government authorities in all areas of animal keeping, care, public access, tourism, and conservation efforts.

The evidence is cherry picked to fit the policy, instead of the policy being developed by collating the available evidence.

Perhaps this is how government has always worked – protecting special interest groups and political donors - but it has become more evident in this misinformation and disinformation age of technology to support or perpetrate the ‘cancel culture’ of current society. In particular, there is a lot of disinformation often coming from political parties and then shared on social media by well meaning, but misinformed supporters.

Legislation that is carefully worded to support science-based policies that can adapt as new information is peer-reviewed would be helpful going forward.

(i) any other related matter.

Animal Care Australia would support an in-depth investigation into the National Parks and Wildlife Service as well as the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, including its agencies such as Environment and Heritage.

In addition to the concerns raised within this submission Animal Care Australia would like Parliament and the public to be provided with the opportunity to further examine the relationship between these government agencies, the RSPCA NSW, and WIRES.

For far too long these organisations have heavily backed each other's policy-based evidence-making, while ignoring all independent research and community feedback.

There are a range of matters related to the NPWS that have raised concern with Animal Care Australia members in recent years. These matters indicate that management of NPWS is not receiving sufficient oversight from the parliament, either via legislation or through the Minister.

Increasing restrictions on access to our national parks is a symptom of a larger management problem within NPWS. Essentially, NPWS is acting as if they make the law because the law in many areas is not sufficiently detailed to curtail rogue elements within the service.

Some examples.

- As highlighted in this submission - Kosciuszko National Park signage stating that photography was not permitted. Quite apart from the obvious intent to restrict transparency, it is obviously absurd to prevent photography in a national park. It is one of the primary reasons many of our members visit national parks.
- Licensing of native animal keepers in NSW is currently a complete disaster due to poor NPWS management decisions. This 'review' has been continuing since the release of a report in 2014 calling for changes that brought about the Biodiversity Conservation Act **2016**. Yes, you are reading that correctly – 2016. During this decade long process, there has been a direct bias in favour of the above-mentioned organisations with little to no transparency in the decision-making process. This has led to multi-million dollar reports and recommendations being "filed" as they did not fit the narrative of certain NPWS management. In its place are currently inept systems and ad hoc decisions on individual cases that simply make no sense.
- Access to national parks has a range of issues. It is disappointing to learn that regulated hunting of feral animals in national parks is not under consideration. We understand many new and remote national parks when in private hands, had their feral animal populations managed by hunters and that this free service will no longer be permitted. Animal Care Australia and our members are skeptical that NPWS has the resources to manage feral populations in these remote parks, especially in a manner that places animal welfare front and centre. A blanket ban on hunting in national parks has little to do with sound park management and more to do with curtailing to animal rights extremism and the need for NPWS to control rather than manage the parks.

National parks and native animals are for the people of NSW to enjoy. There are numerous differing ways in which we do this, and all should be respected and included.

Of course, we need regulation and controls to ensure the environment is preserved and parks are safe for visitors, however the default must return to a presumption that access for all purposes is permitted.

Additional recommendations:

- Review all state-wide existing and proposed access restrictions with clear, evidence-based community and stakeholder input
- As previously stated, legislate consultation processes, ensuring outcome transparency and requiring engagement with recreational users, local and Indigenous communities, and other stakeholders.
- Increase investment in infrastructure and education to promote responsible behaviour and to reduce environmental impacts rather than adopting 'cancel culture' restrictions.

Animal Care Australia welcomes any questions you may have as you continue to finalise this Inquiry. We welcome the opportunity to testify at this Inquiry.

This submission can be publicly listed.

On behalf of the Animal Care Australia Committee,



Michael Donnelly
President
Animal Care Australia