

THE OUTDOOR RECREATION PARTY

POLICY SUMMARY

PREAMBLE

The Outdoor Recreation Party (the ORP or the Party) was formed in 1995 in response to indiscriminate exclusion of the vast majority of Australians from publicly owned lands. These lands are mostly under the management of the National Parks and Wildlife, an organisation that has followed a policy of people exclusion.

The Party's prime objective is to represent all recreational users of publicly owned lands and waterways so as to obtain fair access for all responsible users.

However, recognizing that the days of single issue political parties are numbered, the ORP has adopted a set of broad based policies in keeping with the views of its membership.

The Outdoor Recreation Party seeks, in the coming March 2007 elections, to gain seats in the NSW Parliament to represent the interests of the broader base of people who have a love for and participate in outdoor recreation.

The Outdoor Recreation Party aims to:

- Work to ensure that responsible citizens have reasonable, fair and logical access to lands held in the public domain.
- Ensure that this access is used in a way that is in harmony with the preservation of the environment.
- Protect, support and promote the activities and interests of organizations, which support and encourage responsible use of public lands and marine environments, for recreational purposes.
- Encourage Government and other conservational organizations to support science based reasoning and studies when applying for land to be introduced into restrictive conservation categories. These studies should consider economic, strategic, recreational and conservational issues fully and equally.
- Ensure that a balance is struck between recreational use and conservation needs in existing Australian parks.
- Help create a fair, equitable and self reliant Australia

In summary, although recreational access to public lands for all Australians is the ORP's primary focus, we strongly support a scientific, prioritised approach to the very real environmental problems facing both this country and the Planet.

ORP FOCUS ISSUES

Much of NSW's desirable public land has been placed under the management of the NPWS who have proceeded to introduce ever-increasing restrictions on its use.

The denial of access to public land by the more extreme elements of the conservation movement (the Extreme Greens) is becoming a serious issue because of the resentment it is breeding in the citizens of this State. If this situation continues the conservation movement could eventually be discredited and the environment, and the Planet, be the poorer.

Millions of hectares of state forestland have been moved to National Parks over the past two decades. These state forests supported a broad range of recreational activities including camping, bushwalking, forest drives, mountain bike and trail bike riding, hunting, water sports, campfires & BBQs and in addition, permitted large group activities. In NSW only 2 million ha of these natural hardwood forests are left under the control of Forests NSW.

As the population ages more and more people will be seeking a wide variety of recreational facilities, a fair share will have to be provided by NPWS whether they like or not.

However, we now see vast tracts of land moved into so-called parks that have been closed to all public access. In fact some 25% of the forested areas of the dividing range are off limits to most people.

The Extreme Greens have been very successful in selling their story both to the Australian public and to State and Federal Governments. We believe that much of the Extreme Green story is flawed and not supported by sound scientific study and that a viable, logical, science based opposition is now long overdue. We also believe that there is a growing public awareness of the fact that large areas of this great land have been progressively placed off limits for recreational and other uses.

Examples of this lack of balance by the conservative movement is notable in moves that they have both promoted and assisted in bringing to fruition. For example:

- In NSW some 6.4 million ha of public land is now included in National Parks and Reserves and there is pressure to greatly increase this total in the near future. Past and future land inclusions have been made without any consideration to the on going consequences of these moves. An example is the moving of millions of hectares of state forests into the NPWS estate. Forests NSW now controls only 2.16 million ha of native hardwoods and is not in a position to meet local demand for house construction. As a consequence houses are increasingly being built out of metal and other manufactured materials, which add 10.4 tonnes of green house gasses to the atmosphere, for each dwelling constructed. Two final points,

forests provide a valuable and renewable source of building materials and actively growing regrowth forests and plantations take up more carbon dioxide than older mature forests.

- The evidence currently available strongly points to the Aboriginals, who during their 40,000 to 60,000 years of custodianship of Australia, engaged in a practice called fire stick farming (now known as hazard reduction burning). This led to a range of biota highly adapted to frequent low intensity fires. With European settlement this practice was discouraged since, for instance, it led to timber farm fences being burnt down. Now with the Extreme Greens, and consequently the NPWS, opposed to adequate hazard reduction burning we see a massive build up in fuel loads, followed by regular catastrophic crowning wildfires, which destroy everything in their path. This leads to loss of biodiversity. In fact we suspect that research into this matter would show that the greatest danger to Threatened Species in NSW is the reduction of hazard burning in our National Parks estate and elsewhere throughout the State.
- Fresh water is a resource which by its nature is variable in its availability; so when it rains we have a lot and when it's a drought we have little or none - depending on the size of our water container. We are in drought now and our container is looking inadequate, but why are we talking desalination which requires the prodigious use of fossil fuels to produce? The answer is that the potential dam sites are under the control of the NPWS and opposition to further dams is one of the many Extreme Green platforms. How can we take seriously a movement that espouses renewable everything, but rejects solar powered renewable fresh water?

The Outdoor Recreation Party has been formed to give voters a more moderate and reasoned political voice in regard to conservation issues and the very real environmental problems facing this state.

The Director-General of the National Parks and Wildlife Service is required to consider proposals for and additions to the various classes of land holding under his control. The Act lists the factors the Director-General shall consider in making proposals but these do not include the identification of all impacts nor the factors to be considered in the preparation of a plan of management. Furthermore, prescribed lands, being crown land, land of the Crown and acquired land, can be reserved for national park by proclamation in the *Government Gazette*. The proclamation is laid before each house of parliament and comes into effect unless a resolution (notice made within 15 sitting days) disallows the proclamation.

This procedure means that National Parks are created without any regard for the consideration of other, and perhaps higher uses. This has totally distorted planning in NSW. For instance all the pump storage dam sites (needed if a meaningful renewable energy policy is to be implemented, since the sun doesn't shine at night and the wind

doesn't blow continuously) are now locked up in National Parks with no consideration of alternative uses. The same goes for alternative water supply dam sites for Sydney.

What has happened is that only the broad mission of the NPWS has been considered.

In brief the NPWS's mission objectives are:

1. The development of the NSW park system.
2. The management of wild life.
3. The conservation of natural and cultural values within the park system.
4. Fostering public appreciation, understanding and support for conservation.
5. Providing opportunities for public appreciation and enjoyment.

This is unsatisfactory as other potential uses and resources contained in park boundaries are effectively sterilised by the proclamation of the park without due and proper assessment of impacts and consequences. It amounts to the sterilisation of public lands without due consideration and public consultation.

The ORP seeks to have the establishment or extension of a national park or reservation subject to the same environmental assessment procedures as for other developments.

The National Parks impact statement would be required to provide full details of:-

- The detailed proposal.
- Identification of all impacts.
- The management plan.
- Public access.
- Costing and funding.
- Economic justification
- Environmental assessment.
- Fire management, including a hazard reduction programme.
- Public consultation

Changes to the NPWS Act

Public lands, as the name indicates, should be available, to the greatest extent possible for the enjoyment of the public. Access to lands held by Local Government bodies and statutory authorities for particular purposes may, in some instances, need to be restricted (e.g. for safety or security reasons) but in the vast majority of cases, these lands can be made available for recreation on a multi-use basis. The ORP is concerned with the way the NPWS allocates which activities are to be permitted in the various lands under its management. Land managed by the NPWS falls into the following categories:-

- National parks
- Regional parks

- ❑ Nature reserves
- ❑ State Conservation areas (formerly State Recreation areas)
- ❑ Game reserves
- ❑ State Parks
- ❑ Marine parks
- ❑ Aquatic Reserves
- ❑ Karst conservation reserves
- ❑ Wilderness areas
- ❑ Wild and scenic rivers
- ❑ Aboriginal areas
- ❑ Protected archaeological areas
- ❑ Wildlife districts, wildlife refuges and wildlife management areas
- ❑ Land covered by conservation agreements
- ❑ Leased aboriginal land

Of these only Regional Parks have recreational and public enjoyment as their main stated purpose. It is interesting to note Regional Parks represent only 0.08% of the total land under NPWS management.

The State recreation areas and regional parks do not adequately provide for horse trekking or remote camping by four wheel drive vehicles and cross country motorbike riding. The numbers of people taking part in these activities far exceeds the number taking part in extended bushwalks. The facilities provided for this group of bushwalkers under the Wilderness Act demonstrates a total misallocation of resources according to need. This should be addressed by the inclusion in the NPWS Act, wording to the effect that a purpose of national parks is “*remote camping by horse trekking and appropriate vehicles*” and provision for these purposes in management plans. It is recognised that the use of parks for these purposes would need to be controlled by the nomination of areas to be made available and possibly the registration of entrants to the parks.

Wilderness dedications should be re-examined. The Wilderness Act has three identifiers (all to be satisfied) for an area of land to be suitable for wilderness:

- Areas which have not been substantially modified by man or can be restored to such a state;
- Areas of sufficient size to make its maintenance in such a state feasible;
- Areas capable of providing solitude and appropriate self-reliant recreation.

These requirements can be satisfied by the dedication of areas much smaller than the large areas now being set aside for wilderness. Solitude and self-reliant recreation can be gained in the remoter areas of the State and cannot possibly justify the exclusion of other activities from the enormous areas now dedicated for wilderness.

The ORP seeks to achieve a proper balance between the competing demands for use of public lands. Use allocations for lands under NPWS control have been distorted beyond reason in favor of the minority Preservation/Extreme Green lobby. The ORP believes

that the citizens of NSW (that is the vast majority) who have to pay for the protected lands system of this State should have reasonable access to those lands. In most cases, subject lands need not be tied to a single use, rather multi-use activities should be possible, without detriment to the primary purpose.

Another issue concerns the on-ground manpower required to adequately manage the protected lands system which we now have, let alone what that system may become in the future. Over the years, successive governments have proclaimed new National Parks and reserves in NSW while avoiding allocating additional funds for management. World Conservation Union figures show the average field staffing levels for parks in developed countries are one person per 3,600 ha. The NPWS in NSW averages one person per 23,000 ha!!

The ORP has long believed that there will never be enough public money to pay for the on-ground manpower required for land management and that the only solution is the recruitment of volunteer groups. To this end, Dr. Jon Jenkins the ORP's sitting Upper House member, in 2006 put up a private members Bill (the National Parks Volunteers Bill). Although appearing to have bipartisan support the Bill failed to pass in the Upper House due to a Greens filibuster on the last sitting day of the parliamentary year, with the tacit support of the Labor government. This basically because the Greens fundamentally oppose anyone having a proprietary interest in lands managed by the NPWS, except of course, the membership of their own support groups, as outlined in a Total Environment Centre letter to the Minister opposing his support for the Bill.

Changes sought to the National Parks and Wildlife Act and the Wilderness Act are:

- A requirement that the dedication of areas under either Act be subject to the provisions of the Environmental Protection & Assessment Act (1979) requiring the preparation of environmental impact statements, the quantification of all impacts and the proper assessment of those impacts after the required public consultation process have been completed.
- Provision within the Act for consideration of multi-purpose use of the lands within National Parks. There is no reason why other activities cannot be carried out without detriment to the primary objectives. Examples would be carefully controlled forestry operations, the installation of water supply headworks and transfer systems etc. Multi purpose activities are undertaken in National parks in many other countries without detriment to park values.
- The inclusion in the NPWS Act of a statement of purposes for national parks that includes "*remote camping by motorized and non-motorized modes of transportation*" as a legitimate activity.

- Incorporate parallel provisions to that contained in the Wilderness Act for the consideration of wilderness proposals for the revocation of areas from parks and changes to management plans.
- That a programme of hazard reduction burning be mandatory for lands under NPWS control, included those currently exempt from the practice; e.g. Wilderness Areas which alone comprise about 37% of the area of all National Parks.

OVERVIEW ON THE ENVIRONMENT

The ORP believes in a rational, prioritized and science based approach to the very real environmental challenges facing both Australia and Planet Earth. We acknowledge that 50 years ago there was only limited environmental awareness in the community at large and the Conservation Movement, to their great credit, has brought about a change in public perceptions, which was both essential and long overdue.

However we also believe that, perhaps as a result of the difficulties involved in bringing about a greater public awareness of environmental issues, there has been a tendency for people with extreme views to "hijack" the Movement.

This has led to dogma oft replacing logic in the environmental debate and a "*The end justifies the means*" approach by some Green groups holding what, by community standards, would be considered extreme views; hence the emergence of the Extreme Greens. Their extreme views have distorted the debate on the environment.

To reiterate, what is urgently required is return to a rational, scientific and prioritised approach to tackling the World's environmental problems.

Unfortunately, this concept is anathema to the Extreme Greens and indeed many in the Conservation Movement; they wish to reserve the right to skip from issue to issue and to place greatest emphasis where they can generate the greatest degree of emotive support, regardless of the scientific evidence and the particular issue's true significance.

From this perspective it is easier and more effective to push global warming as the greatest problem currently facing mankind, whilst ignoring the real problem; that is population growth.

However Mankind really does need to give focus to the more important environmental issues facing Planet Earth and the problems facing particular societies/countries, since two countries may face widely differing challenges. The peoples of the earth need to decide upon the greatest environmental problems facing Planet Earth, in priority order, and countries need to do the same, since environmental challenges will vary country to country.

Effort and funds would be then allocated to tackling these problems in priority order.

The ORP considers that the major environmental problems facing Planet Earth and Australia are:

For Planet Earth 1. Population

For Australia

- 1. Land degradation**
- 2. Water**
- 3. Hazard Reduction Burning**

These issues we carried into the 1999 State Election and in the same order. Considering them in order:

Planet Earth And Population Stabilisation

Contrary to popular opinion the ORP sees population growth as the major environmental problem facing Planet Earth. It is obvious that population growth has placed severe pressure on issues such as land clearing, water and water quality, all forms of pollution, land degradation, land ownership and bio-diversity to name a few. In fact the concept of Sustainable Development is nonsense, without a stable population.

Even if the fundamental tenets on global warming held by the bulk of the Conservation Movement (e.g. industrial man burning fossil fuels and creating green house gases is the cause of global warming) are correct (and they are not) overall population stabilisation has to be the major part of the problem and the solution. Global population growth is an issue that environmental groups shy away from because it is difficult to address and still stay popular. Simply put the earth's population cannot double every 40 years without severe damage to the environment.

The consensus view is that Global Warming (or as the "True Believers" now term it, Climate Change) is the major environmental problem facing the Planet. The ORP disagrees. The Climate Change argument rests on two basic propositions:

- i) Industrial man, burning fossil fuels and creating Greenhouse Gases is the cause of climate change.
- ii) The resulting release of Greenhouse Gases is bringing about unprecedented rates of climate change.

Both these propositions are simply not true.

Climate Change/Global warming is something, which needs to be looked at on a geological time scale. If we consider this from the start of the Cambrian at around 570 million years ago, the cold periods have been at a minor one about 445 million years ago at the boundary of the Silurian and Ordovician age systems, a major one in the Permo-Carboniferous at about 290 million years ago and our current ice age, for we live in an interglacial period in an ice age. For the bulk of the time from the commencement of the Cambrian the Earth has been a warmer place than it is now and certainly over the

approximately 240 million years preceding the current cooling period, a much warmer place, with little or nothing in the way of ice caps.

The current ice age has been in place for somewhere between 2 and 3 million years and in that time the ice caps have periodically advanced and retreated, at least over the last 500,000 years on approximately a 100,000 year-cycle. Eighteen thousand years Before Present (BP) the ice caps were at a maximum advance with Minneapolis-St Paul in Minnesota covered by an estimated 1.5km of ice. New York was under hundreds of metres of ice.

A warming episode then commenced and the ice caps retreated over a 12,000-year period before stabilising at about existing levels approximately 6,000 years ago.

In that 12,000-year period the oceans rose approximately 120 metres. Note that in some of the previous interglacials the oceans have risen up to 5 to 10 metres above present levels.

These climate variations, that have occurred in the most recent geological times, are the subject of a number serious studies and theories; however, one that can be excluded is that they were caused by man.

Considering next accelerated climate change; the world's oceans are currently estimated to be rising at a rate in the range 0.05 to 2mm per year. If we divide 120 metres by 12,000 years we get an average rate of rise of 10mm per year over the 12,000-year period between 18,000 BP to 6,000 BP; that is about five times the current estimated rate of rise and it didn't happen uniformly rather than it happened in a step-wise fashion with rates at times being well in excess of 10 mm per year. What happened between 18,000 and 6,000 years BP was truly accelerated climate change.

This is not to say that man is not contributing to global warming, on the balance of probabilities he is.

However to say that man is the cause of Climate Change/Global Warming is simply untrue.

It is ironic to note Climate Change computer modeling, which is based on weather prediction modeling that cannot forecast next weeks weather, purports to predict the worlds climate in 10, 20, 30 or 40 years and even tens of thousands of years into the future. This same logic is predicting the extinction of species that we know have survived previous glaciations and interglacials periods.

The question of how much difference man is making in regard to Climate Change and how do you separate anthropogenic (man made) natural changes from natural changes is a subject largely ignored by the "True Believers" of the consensus view.

The ORP is all for energy efficiency, conservation of resources and recycling. We also believe that all mankind has a right to live life a reasonable standard; say Israeli kibbutz

standard as the minimum. We simply believe that it is madness for the First World countries to wreck their economies and so consign many of their citizens to lives of poverty and deprivation for a flawed concept; all the while ignoring the real problem, that is population. No matter how much you reduce green house gas emissions; rising population levels and rising living standards will overtake those gains.

For Australia:

1. Land Degradation

For Australia we see land degradation in all its forms (e.g. erosion, loss of topsoil, salinity, the silting up of most of our rivers since the advent of European man and the creation of a rank high fuel load understory in our bush) as Australia's major environmental issue.

We also see agriculture as having been the greatest contributor to land degradation in this country. However we recognize that fundamentally there are two industries, which pay for the standard of living to which most Australians enjoy. Those industries are agriculture and mining.

In addition the ORP recognizes city dwellers cannot divorce themselves from agriculturally induced land degradation since they have benefited from poor agricultural practices of the past by way of cheap produce and in fact may have been a significant driver of the process.

Solutions to agriculturally induced land degradation problems must involve farmers. They are vitally affected and must feel they have a high degree of "ownership" of the process. We support prioritized applied research into significant problems and finding solutions to them.

2. Water

For the driest continent on earth, we see water supply as important environmental problem. We advocate a multi-faceted approach:

- The ORP sees increased research into arid zone farming to achieve more efficient use of this precious resource.
- Industry is a major user of water and a carefully constructed pricing policy that encourages industrial water conservation is a must.
- Encourage councils and all the State government sponsored authorities to recycle sewage and grey water for both domestic and industrial purposes.
- Encourage domestic water conservation with incentives and subsidies to install water-conserving devices.
- In Sydney, Goulburn, and the Central Coast seek to build additional dams as opposed to building a desalination plants.

3. Hazard Reduction Burning

The ORP sees hazard reduction burning as the third most important environmental challenge facing Australia. The philosophical basis of our concerns have been stated

above and will not be repeated here. Also our concerns into hazard reduction burning in lands under the control of the NPWS.

However the bulk of the State lies outside of the National Parks estate and there has to be an adequate program of hazard reduction for the rest of NSW. The problem is that, in pandering to the Extreme Greens, the State Government has allowed the whole subject of bush fire fighting and hazard reduction burning to become politicised and the agenda to be largely driven by people opposed to the concept of hazard reduction burning.

The ORP believes that:

- The current green tape around hazard reduction burning must be removed.
- There should be an agreed, scientifically based, schedule for hazard reduction burning (years between burns) for the range of biota in NSW and that it be mandatory that the schedule be adhered to.
- That the volunteers who "Do the hard yards" and have the experience have a much greater say in the running of the Rural Fire Service.

Other Issues of focus

Public Transport

Transport needs to be approached on a multifaceted platform that recognizes the role of all elements of a possible solution including cars, buses, trains, ferries and bicycles.

In our major cities we have a hub and spoke arrangement providing good access to the centre but poor facilities to and between the spokes. The debate over motorcar vs. public transport is mute as both are essential, including the infrastructure needed to make them work. The motorcar is the most practical means to move to major transport hubs but for this to happen cheap and secure parking facilities are needed at these locations. Once concentrated into major hubs, sound public transport facilities can be planned.

Today we see the opposite with little or no parking at major rail hubs. Local councils encourage commercial development over rail stations, with little or no commuter parking while placing parking restrictions on residential streets near bus lanes. A sound transport hub strategy with park and ride system, needs to be adopted.

Power

The only logical, though currently expensive, alternate to fossil fuels for power generation is nuclear power. This option should be supported for 3 reasons:

1. Our fossil fuel reserves are limited.
2. Australia controls 38% of the world's low cost uranium.
3. The 442 atomic power stations operating in 63 countries around the world demonstrate that it is a clean and reliable alternate to fossil fuel stations.

While nuclear power generation gets panned by the Green movement it will, without a doubt, prove to be the safe, economic and reliable power source for the future.

Health

The Party favors placing Health care under the control of the Federal Government in order to eliminate the friction between State and Federal Agencies.

Housing, Planning And Development

Affordable housing has historically been a major issue for the ORP. A key ORP housing policy going into the 1999 State election was a stamp duty rebate for first home-buyers. This was so well received that the Carr Government later filched it, of course without acknowledgment.

One of the key drivers of housing costs in the Sydney basin and other areas is the lack of development land. Land availability is in turn driven by the State Governments lack of infrastructure development particularly, public transport. The State needs a long range transport infrastructure development plan, similar to that instituted in Victoria some years ago.

Without proper planning the State Government, in conjunction with local Councils and developers, have proceeded to impose high-density housing developments on all established urbane areas. These moves have been made with disregard, and much to the disgust, of the local residents.

Another major issue in regard to housing affordability is the cost imposts placed on home-buyers by State and local governments. The Housing Industry Association estimates average imposts at \$150,000 per house in the Greater Sydney metropolitan area.

The ORP will seek to remedy these restrictions on affordable housing.

Decentralisation and Rural Australia

Businesses will locate outside Sydney only if there is a logical economic reason to do so. The drivers for decentralization are lower costs (labour, land, rates and etc) and an economic transport system. As the cost of living is lower in a most country towns (mainly driven by lower housing and commuter costs) peoples living standards can be maintained at the same level as city dwellers, at a lower wage level. The new Federal legislation will encourage these changes in the future.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism in Australia works more profoundly than any other county in the world. Australia has embraced peoples from over 200 countries and has achieved a level of integration not seen in any other country.

The Republic

There is no doubt that in the future Australia will become a republic. When that time comes the ORP will support a minimalist approach whereby the head of state, the Queen, is replaced by an appointed titular head of state, with limited powers .

Indigenous People

It is important that we embrace the Indigenous People of our state and that we ensure that they are treated equally and with respect. Their traditions and culture should be embraced and they be encouraged to help manage and protect our land and it's flora and fauna.