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NSW Government  
Office of Environment and Heritage

## **Submission on the Draft NPWS Fossicking in Parks Policy**

I am writing to make submission to the Draft NPWS Fossicking in parks policy. I have been involved with fossicking in NSW for a number of years and I am also a member of NAPFA (NSW & ACT Prospectors and Fossickers Association). In recent years I have contacted various government departments in regards to fairer access arrangements in NSW and have also enquired in regards to access in some National Park areas with NPWS so welcome the chance to provide some feedback or comment on this draft policy.

For the most part of the Draft NPWS Fossicking in Parks Policy I agree with it and the need to manage any National Park activity to ensure the protection of nature reserves, historic sites, Aboriginal areas, karst conservation reserves, any threatened ecological communities and the habitat for threatened species, Special Catchment Areas, World Heritage Areas and Ramsar sites, Wilderness areas and catchments of Wild Rivers. There are though areas that do present an opportunity for further recreational use of some parks and state conservation areas for fossickers. I believe that fossicking can become part of a sustainable tourism and visitation activity and can especially provide a park experience that would support local communities in areas of past mining activity. These areas can provide a hands on educational experience into our past and also an opportunity for an increase in tourism for those that pursue the hobby of fossicking throughout Australia. Managed correctly with compliance from fossickers to the NSW Fossicking Guidelines and any additional NPWS requirements I can only see this as a win-win for all parties.

I do though have some concerns with wording and how we would comply in some instances. I have highlighted these and where applicable have made suggestions from a fossicker's point of view as follows:

**Fossicking is currently permitted in two parks** – my thoughts are that there needs to be some assurance that where fossicking is currently permitted in the two parks with consent provided by their plans of management; being Abercrombie Karst Conservation Reserve & Torrington State Conservation Area; that these remain unchanged with any implementation or not of this draft policy. Any changes to these areas should only occur with a review of the current plans of management, with community consultation, and using this draft policy as a guide only.

**Mechanical Sluicing** - the use of the wording "mechanical sluicing" needs to be removed and/or replaced with wording that better describes the activity not permitted if it has been misunderstood by NPWS. Mechanically operated sluicing or equipment is not allowable under the terms of NSW legislation and should hold no relevance to this policy.

**Former and Future State Forest or other Crown Lands being Acquired by NPWS** - although former State Forest Areas (and any other former Crown Lands), **where fossicking was once a permitted lawful activity**, are now covered by NPWS legislation and will need to have fossicking considered as part of this draft policy some thought needs to be given moving forward where any future State Forest acquisitions (or any other Crown Lands such as Commons, TSR's - Travelling Stock Routes, unmanaged Crown Lands etc.) **where fossicking is a current permitted lawful activity** that it be maintained after NPWS acquire them. This may need a multi-tiered management approach from NPWS for these areas by way of having nature reserves or other conservation areas that are off limits to fossickers within the boundaries of an otherwise allowable area? Currently it is grossly unfair to us as recreational users to have our right to enjoy our hobby removed even where it is an existing allowable activity and should be reflected as such in the future management plan/s for any of these acquired area/s.

**Exploration Lease/Mining Title Holder permission** - the requirement to get Exploration Lease holder permission needs to be reviewed as a whole in NSW and I believe the Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy has been looking at this already. Where public lands have allowable fossicking areas then these should automatically become fossicking districts/areas and have this imposition removed from the hobby fossicker. In many cases these companies don't even reply to requests & have no obligation to do so under NSW rules and regulations. They should not be allowed to dictate yes/no to otherwise allowable activities on any public land.

Where any other type of Mining Title is held then we would still need permission from the holder but most other Mining Titles would be and should be off limits to the hobby fossicker anyway.

**What is the process of considering fossicking in a park?** - There are some concerns around how we as hobbyists would prepare documents for this? I.e. reviews of environmental factors and visitor safety risk assessments. Are other users of National Parks required to have this documentation before entering a NPWS area? Fossicking is a low environmental impact activity and relatively safe activity that poses very few, if any, risks over other allowable activities such as bushwalking, 4wd, camping, swimming, fishing etc. If it's not a requirement of other users then why are we being imposed with it? Can generic documents be produced and used if required? Fossicking is not a form of mining which can be/is a high risk activity. We need to be considered without being defined as a form of mining which NPWS have done in my previous correspondence with them. Fossicking is a very safe, low impact and enjoyable hobby undertaken by thousands of people in this country. There are some areas such as deep mine shafts that may pose elevated risk but in a lot of cases this risk can be minimised or removed by barricades, signage, no go zones if particularly hazardous etc.

**Notify NPWS prior to commencing the activity?** How will this be done? Will there be a permit system whereby having a permit to fossick is considered prior notification or does this need to be done for each trip or each days fossicking? Who do you notify?

A permit system similar to what State Forests have in place may be a good option. A permit system could also provide assurance to NPWS that the holder of the permit has signed or accepted it saying that they understand any conditions, rules or their required obligations under the permit to fossick. Permits may also allow for the temporary or permanent prohibition of a non-compliant individual also rather than a blanket ban on fossicking as a whole in any park.

**Requiring fossicker's to sterilise equipment before entering or exiting a park?** What method of sterilisation is required? How? Do NPWS Rangers use a method for their equipment when moving between areas such as the equipment/tools seen here <http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/about-npws/what-we-do> that can be used or adapted by fossickers?

Regards

{NAME}