



## National Parks And Wildlife Service Management.

### NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE MANAGEMENT

Page: 15392

Mr STONER (Oxley) [6.44 p.m.]: As honourable members would be aware, the electorate of Oxley has a substantial area of National Parks Estate. Issues regarding the management of national parks are, therefore, of great concern to my constituents and I. On 11 April I spoke in this Chamber about National Parks and Wildlife Service [NPWS] whistleblowers and about the investigation—including an investigation by the ICAC—of serious allegations. Since that time, a number of documents have come into my possession which indicate maladministration in the management of the NPWS, a lack of accountability, a culture of covering up and, even worse, a culture of attacking the credibility of and victimising those who have the courage to speak out.

Amongst the matters raised in the documents I have received are the issuing in 1998 of 3,157 NPWS annual passes with a value of \$226,170 when only \$199,091.70 in receipts was credited, a major unexplained loss of more than \$27,000; inadequate systems to prevent the forgery, via colour copiers, of annual passes such as K80250170, despite knowledge of the practice; the integrity of accounting procedures, such as annual pass No. K0133747, date stamped 5 October 2000, being recorded as having been sold on 29 October 2000; unfettered spending on offices and perks, including \$81,000 on refurbishment of offices at Parramatta, \$1,500 on a wallpaper consultant to advise on renovation of a post office, and \$339 on restaurant meals at Coffs Harbour on 27 November 2000; the lack of action on basic park problems such as blackberry infestations in Garigal National Park and deterioration of historic tracks such as Ensigers Track in the Blue Mountains; the sale to staff members at bargain basement prices of unwanted office furniture; and the sale at auction of computers containing sensitive information, including tender documents and submissions intended for the Minister.

Other issues contained in the documents I have received relate to the use of a corporate credit card by a senior officer to pay for expenses of his wife, who accompanied him on a business trip to Adelaide late last year; the use of a corporate credit card charged to NPWS Central Region at Parramatta in October 2000 to purchase alcohol and pizzas; procedures so lax that the Parramatta office paid registration renewal fees in 1999 on a vehicle that did not exist and on a number of vehicles that had previously been sold; vehicle inspection fees paid twice on the same day for the same vehicle from different inspectors, despite it being passed on both occasions; and extreme tardiness in paying accounts, to creditors including Telstra, one overdue account for more than \$35,000; Qantas; ANZ; Visa, resulting in substantial late payment fees and interest; Sydney Water, resulting in threats to disconnect; TNT; Link Communications; Gosford; Blacktown and Holroyd city councils; Cleanaway; Department of Public Works and Services, one overdue bill for more than \$118,000; Integral Energy; State Mail Service; Waterways Authority; Media Monitors—the list is endless. That many angry creditors cannot be wrong.

The seriousness of the financial ineptitude is evidenced by the fact that one government agency owed money by the NPWS was forced to go to the State Debt Recovery Office, which is under the control of the Minister who has responsibility for the NPWS, on three separate occasions to seek payment of \$491. That brings me to the role of Minister for the Environment. Surely a competent Minister would be aware of such serious problems in a statutory authority for which he is responsible. Perhaps he is not, because of the way he has been overloaded with portfolios since the Premier was not prepared to take on the factions of caucus when choosing a new Minister to replace the former Attorney General. These issues are of grave concern to the Oxley electorate, which has vast areas of National Park Estate. Of equal concern is the cover-up culture in some parts of the NPWS, about which I have previously spoken, concerning past whistleblowers John Kyte and Clive Bennett. The issues I have just described have been swept under the carpet by the management of the NPWS. I have an email from Industrial Relations Manager, Kate Molloy, to senior NPWS manager Bob Conroy, which she suggested he pass on to other staff:

All be assured that although there have been a lot of accusations made, the investigation has been thorough and found that there was no substance to those accusations. There will be no residual damage to your careers.

[Time expired.]