



# NSW & ACT Prospectors and Fossickers Association Inc.

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## SUBMISSION: NSW TRAVELLING STOCK RESERVES REVIEW

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### Introduction

The NSW & ACT Prospectors and Fossickers Association (NAPFA) fights for fairer access to land in NSW to prospect and fossick for minerals (especially gold) and gemstones; as well as for coins and relics. Formed in December 2012, we aim to represent the needs and views of our community to government and others who manage access to land.

In the case of Crown Land classed as TSRs, we note that there are many additional uses identified in the review documentation beyond the establishment reason for TSRs. Although they are not identified in your document, fossickers as a group would fit into the following user categories:

- Economic: We spend money in local communities and any minerals recovered assist the state economy through the possible sale or hobby processing of the materials. This was noted recently by the NSW Minister for Resources and the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure in publicising new Fossicking Districts in NSW. <https://www.nsw.gov.au/news-and-events/news/strike-gold-in-regional-nsw/>
- Cultural: Many fossickers consider the activity of fossicking part of our cultural tradition of being in the bush, looking for rocks and appreciating the history of mining in NSW. Many of us have miners among our ancestors and in this sense, we are part of a living heritage around mining in NSW.
- Recreational: Fossickers enjoy being in the bush and consider fossicking to be a recreational activity, just the same as other groups go fishing, camping, horse riding, trail bike riding etc. We are not professional miners. We are simply people who enjoy getting out into the environment and having fun in our chosen hobby.

NAPFA appreciates this opportunity to comment on the NSW Travelling Stock Reserves review. We hope that when the review is completed that there will be even greater opportunities for recreational fossicking on TSR's, especially given that many TSR's have a known history of mining and fossicking, and the minimal impact of recreational fossicking on the values of such areas. Through this review, we seek to make it easier for recreational fossickers to access TSRs and to simplify the permission process for that. **(See our full recommendations at the end).**

## Present practice and a better way forward

At present people seeking to visit a TSR to fossick are required to have permission of the respective managers of the TSR in question. This is a cumbersome and bureaucratic process which can also be quite confusing for visitors who may not live in the area of the TSR concerned.

The excellent [online mapping tool](#) contained in the review document has identified for the first time for many people where in fact TSRs can be found, and we commend you on that mapping tool. It is a great asset to better use of TSRs.

There are many TSRs and NAPFA does not have the resources to go through all of them to identify which would have fossicking potential. However, we have identified a number of them (**Table 1**) to provide a strong example of why TSRs are important to fossickers.

We seek to have recreational fossicking recognised as a permissible, low impact activity on NSW Travelling Stock Reserves without the need for an onerous permission system.

This would put it on a par with other recreational user groups of TSRs and cut 'red tape' for fossickers and geo tourists who might seek to access TSRs with fossicking potential.

Recreational fossicking would fit into all Category 2 and Category 3 TSR's especially where the TSR is in an area of interest (gold or gem locality), contains old workings or is already used for fossicking.

## Characteristics of recreational fossicking

- People have been fossicking in NSW since the 1850s and this is a heritage cultural activity that should be encouraged and protected in its own right;
- There are known gold diggings and areas of gemstones/semi-precious stones on many NSW TSR's. A very small example from a mainly gold area is shown in **table 1**;
- Fossickers can be the eyes and ears on TSR's and be able to report illegal or suspicious activity;
- Fossicking is largely undertaken by older people who enjoy this healthy, outdoor recreational activity;
- Fossickers routinely take more than their own rubbish out of areas;
- Fossicking will have no lasting impact on the environment and is of a minimal environmental impact compared to other TSR issues such as blackberries, feral pests, rubbish dumping etc.
- The Department of Resources and Energy refers to fossicking in the following terms: "Fossicking offers an opportunity to discover the beauty and diversity of this state's mineral wealth. It combines leisure, pleasure and 'treasure' all in one."

Allowing fossicking to be more readily permissible on Category 2 and 3 TSR's in areas of interest, where mining has historically occurred or where fossicking is already taking place would bring the TSR's in-line with stated policies of the State Government to encourage more recreational use of public land in NSW.

- In some areas a lot of TSR's could be reserved for or approved for fossicking use without the need for the current onerous red tape permit system that places a burden on both fossickers and the TSR administrators.

**Table 1** shows a very small sample of the NSW Central West area TSR's that may either be in an area that has potential for recreational fossicking interest, has past mining activity/old workings (historical/cultural value) on the TSR and/or may already be used for recreational fossicking activities. This table is by no means comprehensive and there would be a great deal many more TSR's scattered throughout this region, and NSW, that would have a significant potential for both gold and gemstone fossicking.

Recreational fossickers use hand tools and metal detectors which involves only a very low impact, passing environmental effect. It cannot be compared with mining or exploration at any level. Fossicking involves only a very short term and an almost no impact activity, with a very low environmental risk.

There are significant regulations (NSW Fossicking Guidelines) governing how recreational fossickers can go about the hobby in NSW. Those regulations place strict limits on fossicking in NSW. <http://www.resourcesandenergy.nsw.gov.au/miners-and-explorers/fossicking-in-nsw>

Recreational fossicking on TSR's is subject to these regulations which list TSR's as allowable fossicking land in NSW with permission from the managing body i.e. Local Land Services.

**Table 1: Central West TSR's – sample of fossicking potential**

| Area      | Travelling Stock Reserve ID | Purpose                   | Fossicking Potential Use/Known Use   | Current Restrictions/ Access Issue       |
|-----------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--|--|
| Home Rule | R22312                      | Camping, Water            | Gold area – potential use  | None aware                               |
| Warrobil  | R22310                      | Camping, Water            | Gold area – potential use  | None aware                               |
| Gulgong   | R49474                      | Travelling Stock          | Gold area – known past gold mining activity (on 3 Mile Lead)   | None aware                               |
| Gulgong   | R45271                      | Camping, Travelling Stock | Gold area – known past gold mining activity (Brown Snake Mine)   | Gate locked                              |
| Piambong  | R29877                      | Travelling Stock          | Gold area – known past gold mining activity. Potential gemstones/semi-precious stones Cudgong River access | None aware – used by Model Airplane Club |
| Mudgee    | R67313                      | Travelling Stock          | Gold area – Potential/past gold mining in nearby area  | None aware                               |
| Werouera  | R22107                      | Camping, Water            | Gold area – known past gold mining activity  | None aware                               |
| Grattai   | R59849                      | Camping, Water            | Gold area – known past gold mining activity  | None aware                               |

|                   |        |   |   |            |
|-------------------|--------|---|---|------------|
| Warratra          | R64992 | Camping                                       | Gold area – known past gold mining activity   | None aware |
| Windeyer          | R71167 | Camping, Travelling Stock                     | Gold area – known past gold mining activity   | None aware |
| Hargraves         | R82359 | Travelling Stock                              | Gold area – potential use   | None aware |
| Hargraves         | R60297 | Travelling Stock                              | Gold area – potential use   | None aware |
| Hargraves         | R56503 | Camping, Travelling Stock                     | Gold area – known past gold mining activity   | None aware |
| Nanima            | R61574 | Travelling Stock                              | Gold area – known past gold mining activity (on Jawbone Lead)   | None aware |
| Warburton         | R2587  | Camping, Water                                | Gold area – Potential/past mining in nearby area. Potential gemstones/semi-precious stones Cudgegong River access | None aware |
| Tambaroora        | R22712 | Camping, Water                                | Gold area – potential use   | None aware |
| Lower Lewis Ponds | R90601 | Future Public Requirements – Travelling Stock | Gold area – potential use   | None aware |

## Advantages of Fossicking

- Increased visits by fossickers to areas containing allowable TSR's, including some near small villages, will provide a needed stimulus to regional tourism and business. The obvious potential for fossicking-based tourism has been recognised by NSW Resources with ten new fossicking districts being declared in regional NSW over the past year.
- Having TSR's available in these areas further enhances the regions' attractiveness to fossickers whose biggest issue is land access. Fossicking was also identified in Recommendations 17 and 19 of the 2013 NSW GSPC 3 Parliamentary Inquiry into tourism in local communities underscored the potential for Government to do more to encourage recreational fossicking to support regional tourism goals.
- <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/DBAssets/InquiryReport/ReportAcrobat/5931/GPSC%20No3%20Report%2030%20Tourism%20in%20local%20communities.pdf>
  - **Recommendation 17** That the NSW Government investigate further opportunities for tourism development in national parks including accommodation, camping, mountain bike trails and fossicking.
  - **Recommendation 19** That the NSW Government investigate opportunities for fossicking in national parks, a single access fee for state forests and linking information for fossicking activities on the Destination NSW website.
- Fossicking allows people to experience the time-honored practice of gold prospecting/fossicking as carried out by the early prospectors back in the 1850's. For many citizens this is 'living heritage'.

- Detectorists routinely remove harmful objects such as lead bullets, sharp and rusty pieces of iron, lead shot and rubbish left behind by generations of explorers before them.
- Fossickers are extra 'eyes and ears' on TSRs to report any wrongdoings to authorities.
- The NSW government has promulgated several initiatives to encourage outdoor recreation and fitness activities to combat obesity and other diseases. The healthy, outdoor physical activity encouraged by fossicking serves to reduce the demand for public health services and enhance the quality of life experiences for families and individuals. Fossickers enhance their own health and also furnish a community benefit by removing poisonous lead leaching into water courses and eventually into drinking water supplies.

## **Other Precedents**

There are precedents that demonstrate the co-existence of ecological protection with fossicking. NSW Forestry Corporation authorises, via an easy online permit system, fossicking activities in State Forests. A 12-month state-wide permit is available from Forestry Corporation online for \$27.50 including GST. This allows small-scale fossicking for recreational, tourism or educational purposes in State Forests:

<http://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/visit/activities/fossicking>

In addition, fossicking is also permitted at designated locations such as at Torrington SCA and the Abercrombie Karst Reserve, under National Parks and Wildlife Service control.

All these areas maintain healthy biodiversity that is unaffected by fossicking.

## **Proposal for Easier Fossicking Access to TSR's**

NAPFA understands the purpose of travelling stock reserves and that where TSR's are still used for travelling stock, access for stock should remain the primary purpose for the reserve.

However, in the interests of expanding the utility of Crown Land, such use should also be able to co-exist with reasonable use by recreational fossickers especially on Category 2 and 3 TSR's.

Recreational activities, such as bushwalking, horse riding, pedal cycling, are allowed, without permit, in TSR's that aren't an excluded reserve. All have the potential to have a minimal environmental impact whether it be through horse manure, track erosion through over use or the excavation work done to construct trails. And yet these activities are allowed without a permit. Why are fossickers different?

There is ample evidence in NSW and from other states proving that fossicking undertaken under Fossicking Guidelines does not adversely impact on the environment in those areas where fossicking is permitted.

What impact there is, is temporary, and pales in significance to the changes in the landscape that are wrought by the forces of nature, such as floods, fires, landslides, feral animals, and even including native animals – such as wombats that dig massive holes.

## **Recommendations**

NAPFA proposes that the NSW Travelling Stock Reserves review:

- Declare TSR's, identified by the review that are already used for fossicking or have a significant potential to be used for fossicking, permissible fossicking reserves without the need for singular activity permits;
- If permits are to remain, streamlining the current paper based permit system to make it easier for both fossickers and TSR administrators. NSW State Forests online fossicking permit system could serve as an example of a user friendly system;
- Further identify TSR's that have a significant potential to be used for fossicking to ensure these TSR's are not lost to recreational users if no longer required for travelling stock purposes.
- By the Department of Resources and Energy's own description in the Fossicking Guidelines:

“Fossicking offers an opportunity to discover the beauty and diversity of this state's mineral wealth. It combines leisure, pleasure and 'treasure' all in one.”

We encourage Crown Lands through the TSR review to support this activity.

Thank you.

**Stephen Dangaard**

**President**

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(Credit to Matthew Baskerville, NAPFA member, for identifying the areas in Table 1.)