

CHAIR—While your submission is on behalf of Snowy River Shire, you do have some broader expertise in this area. Would you like to tell the committee what you did before you were General Manager of Snowy River Shire Council?

Mr McKinney—I came from the Rocky Mountains in Alberta for two weeks 33 years ago. I went into the National Parks and Wildlife Service and I was five years at Kosciuszko in search and rescue and stock work. I was two years at Armidale, Moree and Tamworth, on macropod management and research programs, and I was 11 years on the North Coast in the rainforest program and the heath land firefighting and endangered species programs. I was in charge of the South Coast, with the fires out at Montague Island and places there, and then I was five years in charge of Kosciuszko National Park, as the regional manager when Snowy Mountains was one actual region. I reported directly to the director-general and the minister for the environment, so the decision-making process was quick and direct, which was a considerably advantageous position to be in, not only in emergency management but also in terms of development applications or, indeed, mitigation programs. I was then five years in private industry, working as an environmental consultant on sustainable environmental works, including wilderness lodge constructions and so on. Then I took up a five-year contract with the Snowy River Shire Council, and I am probably at liberty to speak a bit more generally because I have fewer than 10 days left there before I take up a new position with the Game Council of New South Wales

CHAIR—Thank you, Ross. I just thought it would be useful to note that you make your comments with some experience in the region.

Mr SCHULTZ—Can I say, Ross, with some considerable knowledge, that not only were you a former employee of the National Parks and Wildlife Service but also you were highly respected by people inside and outside the service. That needs to be said in a public forum like this inquiry.

Mr McKinney—Thank you

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Mr SCHULTZ—I thank the chair for giving people the opportunity to understand the considerable experience that you have had as a former National Parks and Wildlife Service employee. Can you elaborate on what, if anything, has changed since you retired from the National Parks and Wildlife Service and is creating massive problems? I know that you have referred to the direct line of communication that you had with the director of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. As a person who was in state government at the time, I can attest to the way in which your representations on behalf of my constituents on issues related to the National Parks and Wildlife Service meant that those issues were resolved very quickly because of that scheme. That is the reason I am asking the question now.

Mr McKinney—I guess the short answer to that is that when I was at the National Parks and Wildlife Service I made a specific mandate to ensure that the National Parks and Wildlife Service people under my control never lost sight of who their customer was—who was paying them. It is the community. The community, therefore, has a legitimate and rightful input into the management of a piece of land that you are managing on their behalf and the next generation's behalf. I believe that the National Parks and Wildlife Service have lost the ability or the will to take on community feelings.

A good example, in my opinion, is when you look at Australia as the most highly urbanised country in the Western world—82 per cent of the population lives within 100 kilometres of the coastline, one-quarter of the population lies in the Sydney basin, and more and more areas are being locked up for access. The population is getting older, but the access is getting less. There is well-reasoned argument that people in a motor car see more from inside a window than a bushwalker does looking at their feet. It is that simple. To me it seems that that needs to be addressed. These areas belong to the community.

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<http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/reps/commttee/R6707.pdf>

Also very interesting reading is the Thredbo portion represented by Harry Huggett and Kim Clifford. It starts at Page 71.