



Union vows to fight cuts to New South Wales National Parks staff and ranger pay

By Emily Laurence

Updated Fri 18 Mar 2016, 11:14am

The union representing New South Wales national parks rangers has vowed to fight any reduction in ranger numbers in the state's nature reserves.

The Public Service Association has told the ABC rangers fear their pay could be slashed by up to 17 per cent under a new award and the number of frontline staff in parks could be cut.

The Office of Environment and Heritage has confirmed rangers' awards are being reviewed, saying the move is to ensure parks are "managed within budget into the future".

But it insisted the changes would not affect frontline services, including emergency response, fire management, visitor services and important conservation work.

Staff base salaries would not be affected, but staff would be rostered on weekends and public holidays according to "local operational needs", said the department.

Depending on that need, staff would be paid by overtime, 8.5 per cent or 17 per cent loading, rather than the deemed payment of the current loadings, which are currently paid across the board, whether staff are working weekends or not.

The Public Service Association (PSA) has told the ABC any change was likely to result changes to the way rangers were rostered and their pay being downgraded.

"Effectively what it means is different rostering arrangements for staff in national parks, which would move away from staff and rangers being there all of the time," Steve Turner from the PSA said.

"That obviously affects the public and the users of parks, but it then affects the individuals and what they get paid doing the job," he said.

Management of parks at risk, union says

Mr Turner said rangers were not consulted about the changes, despite calling for a consultative process when the Carr government was in power.

"They are angry because they were obviously going to lose money and lose wages, and they are also angry that there hasn't been a consultative process put in place," he said.

"They recognise that there are some parks where there could probably be different arrangements, but that's we wanted to have: a fully consultative process and agreement on what would be appropriate."

He said the management of national parks was being put at risk.

"There's many many more square kilometres of national parks than there were 20 years ago and there hasn't been the increase in staffing to cover those parks and to properly look after those parks," he said.

"Any move now to cutback and restrict staff coverage of that expanded area would even be more of an attack on how those parks can be looked after."

The Office of Environment and Heritage has responded saying it was seeking to make changes to the national parks ranger awards, which were negotiated more than 15 years ago.



PHOTO: The current national park ranger award was negotiated more than 15 years ago and is set to expire June 30, 2016. (NSW National Parks)

MAP: Wollongong 2500



The current awards expire on 30 June 2016.

Formal discussions with the unions and direct discussions with staff about the award will continue.

Topics: forms-of-government, national-parks, industrial-relations, unions, wollongong-2500, bowral-2576, nsw, nowra-2541

First posted Fri 18 Mar 2016, 11:12am