

## The latest announcement about the Range

Shooters have nowhere to go with Malabar closure

By Ilya Gridneff

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The Shooters Party has condemned the federal government's proposed closure of the southern hemisphere's largest rifle range, on Malabar Headland in Sydney's east.

The 185 hectare Anzac Rifle Range opened in 1888 has been the training ground for thousands of Australian infantrymen serving in both world wars.

Thousands of shooters use the range and annually compete in the prestigious Queens Prize, the top shooting event in NSW that requires a large site up to 1,000 metres long.

Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett, whose Kingsford Smith seat is home to the range, made a pre-election promise as part of a \$100 million coastal regeneration scheme, that the Crown land would be handed over to the NSW government to become a national park.

It was recently confirmed by the NSW government's member for Maroubra, Michael Daley.

Mr Daley told NSW parliament last Friday: "The position of the local Labor representatives at Federal, State and local government levels indeed, councillors of all political persuasions on Randwick City Council are unanimous in their views that the rifle range activities currently conducted on the site must be relocated.

"We should then hand over the headland as open space, and possibly a national park," he told state parliament.

Mr Daley said the Malabar Headland was of national significance with the eastern and western sections listed on the National Estate and the NSW heritage register.

"It contains many bird and animal species, Aboriginal engravings ... burial sites of the Dharug-speaking Aboriginal people who used to inhabit the area, and significant World War II coastal defence historical sites," he said.

There has been talk and subsequent furore about closing the Anzac Rifle range since the 1990s.

At the time there were plans to close a number of ranges, often because of pressure from newcomers in nearby developments objecting to the noise from them.

Shooters Party chairman John Tingle said closure of the "sacred site" was "uncaring, unthinking, political arrogance, and a total denial of history".

"They haven't said when, they just said they were going to close it," he told AAP.

"They told us we would be transferred to Holsworthy (in Sydney's southwest) but Holsworthy is military land and the military doesn't want them," he said.

In 1998, the federal government put \$9 million aside in a relocation fund but this had been withdrawn, Mr Tingle said.

"To say they are making (the decision to close) it after consulting the shooters adds, in my book, to the deception that this is all over and done with," he said.

"There is nothing they can do with it (the site) because it's built on a rubbish tip. The land is inherently unstable and can't be developed as real estate," Mr Tingle added.

NSW Rifle Association president John Fitzgerald denied he or his association, which has been located at the range since 1907, were consulted or advised on the matter.

"I can assure you we had no consultation, we've never spoken to the State government," he told AAP.

Mr Tingle and Mr Fitzgerald both said the closure meant thousands of Sydney shooters who use the Malabar range would have nowhere to shoot.