



The Hon Tony Kelly MLC  
Minister for Lands  
Minister for Rural Affairs  
Minister for Regional Development  
Vice President of the Executive Council  
Leader of the House – Legislative Council

Ms Karyn Paluzzano MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Natural  
Resource Management (Climate Change)  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

MIN07/3224

18 DEC 2007

Attention: Mrs Cheryl Samuels

Dear Ms Paluzzano

In response to your invitation, I am pleased to make this submission to the Standing Committee on Natural Resource Management (Climate Change) on likely consequences of human induced climate change; options for their consideration including approaches to land and water management; and an assessment of their effectiveness. I submit these comments from the perspective of the responsibilities of the Department of Lands in the ownership and custodianship of the Crown land estate across NSW.

The Crown land estate has particular significance in the coastal belt since it represents a natural interface between the coastal and estuarine environment which directly supports the built assets of coastal infrastructure (break walls, recreational parks and reserves), other commercial operations and facilities (eg marinas and minor ports, aquaculture), and adjoining high value residential and urban developments. On the other extreme, the Crown land estate also includes the fragile Western Division which has already undergone much economic and social transformation for a range of reasons, not the least of which includes land degradation and drought.

A strategic response by the Department of Lands to the issues and potential impact of climate change has seen a preliminary consideration of their quantification to enable appropriate response strategies. Initially, this consideration will consider the coastal environment only. It was considered that here is where expression of the impacts of climate change may be more immediately and significantly expressed. Identification of the assets most at risk due to predicted sea level rises and elevated storm activity is the first objective of this work.

The Department has also implemented a system of environmental covenants which are used in conjunction with both former Crown land tenures (eg Perpetual Leases which have been purchased by the lessee and converted to freehold title) and existing Crown land tenures, to provide extra protection to a range of conservation considerations. Any form of environmental protection (eg enhanced native vegetation structure, condition and connectivity) will be significant to a large range of threatened species which may be provided with an improved haven for survival against the impacts of climate change, especially drying and desertification.

The Western Division, which occupies 42% of the spatial area of the State is mainly tenured Crown land and historically, supports a significant grazing industry. Being an arid to semi arid and fragile environment, the Western Division remains extremely vulnerable to drying and potential desertification. An increase in this trend particularly within the more sensitive areas would be of great concern to government as it is likely to produce both elevated economic and social dislocation, as well as continued environmental degradation. This will manifest in areas of marginal soils and native vegetation, and rivers and streams of western catchments already suffering acute hydrological imbalances due to extended droughts and diversions.

Finally, I recently endorsed amendments to both the *Crown Lands Act 1989*, and the *Western Lands Act 1901* which creates some additional flexibility for Western Lands lease holders. An extra income stream is now possible due to the powers of the Minister for Lands to issue tenures which include an ability to sequester and trade in carbon through growing plants.

I trust that these comments are of some assistance to the Standing Committee. The Department of Lands is committed to further consideration on impacts, consequences and responses to climate change on the Crown estate and will be pleased to continue to assist in any further dialogue including further inquiries.

If further discussion is required on the matter at this time contact can be made with the Department's Mr Adrian Harte on telephone 4920 5063.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'T'.

Tony Kelly MLC  
Minister for Lands