

**Proforma B**

## **INQUIRY INTO CROWN LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Name:** Proforma B - Government should protect, maintain and enhance Crown land

**Number received:** 12

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To: Hon Paul Green MLC  
Committee Chair  
GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 6

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to make a submission to the NSW Upper House Inquiry into Crown land.

I believe that state and local governments have a special responsibility to protect, maintain and enhance Crown land for the people of NSW.

Crown land is an invaluable community resource. Public ownership of crown land facilitates equitable access to essential community amenities like parks, beaches, camping grounds, cemeteries, bowling clubs, showgrounds, community halls, wharves and ports. Undeveloped Crown land, especially in rural areas, protects local habitats, ecosystems and natural resources for the people of NSW.

Below are comments I would like to make on the four points of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference:

***(a) the extent of Crown land and the benefits of active use and management of that land to New South Wales***

- The people of NSW need access to a properly maintained register of Crown land in NSW in order to understand the extent of Crown land.
- When evaluating the benefits of active use and management of Crown land, the environmental, cultural, social and heritage values should be placed above economic considerations.
- Where appropriate, public use and enjoyment of Crown land should be promoted. Community organisations occupying Crown land (eg. sports clubs, showgrounds, camping grounds etc.) should be financially subsidised in order to guarantee affordable access for as many people as possible, and to avoid the pressure to over-commercialise.
- If responsibility for Crown land is devolved to local councils, appropriate funding and systems must be put in place to prevent change-of-use, lease or sale.

***(b) the adequacy of community input and consultation regarding the commercial use and disposal of Crown land***

- Commercial or market values should not be assigned to Crown land in order to assess the 'opportunity cost', or reduction in value, of reserving the land for community use. Marking up the value of Crown land to reflect its 'real' commercial value may unintentionally put pressure on state or local government to dispose of Crown land or advocate for its commercialisation.
- Commercial assessments of Crown land don't necessarily take into account the importance to communities of preserving green space and accessible community-oriented facilities on Crown land. People enjoy important health and psychological benefits from having convenient access to natural environments and affordable recreational facilities on Crown land. Limiting these types of opportunities by commercialising or selling off Crown land is likely to lead to mental health issues and higher health costs.
- The public needs to widely consulted before Crown lands are identified for sale, lease, change-of-use or transfer to local councils

***(c) the most appropriate and effective measures for protecting Crown land so that it is preserved and enhanced for future generations.***

- Existing legislation regarding the protection of Crown land should be strengthened and adequate funding should be allocated to protect, enhance and, when necessary, acquire more Crown land.
- Social, cultural and environmental concerns should always be placed above economic considerations when deciding the future of Crown land. The natural resources of the land should be conserved and sustained for future generations.
- Any changes in legislation should propose ecological sustainable development with respect to Crown land.

***(d) the extent of Aboriginal land claims over Crown lands and opportunities to increase Aboriginal involvement in the management of Crown land.***

- Mechanisms to identify and properly facilitate Aboriginal land claims over Crown land should be put in place. Aboriginal people have a special relationship with the land and their rights should be respected.

The trend towards higher urban density living, especially in our cities, will only increase the demand for equitable access to quality passive natural environments and affordable sporting, recreational and cultural facilities on Crown land. In rural areas, Crown land serves as a buffer against the pressures of agricultural development, protecting natural resources and local ecosystems.

State and local governments must properly fund the maintenance of Crown land, acquire new Crown land when appropriate, and protect and enhance Crown land for the long-term benefit of the people of NSW.

Thank you for considering my input and concerns.

Yours sincerely,