

INQUIRY INTO MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Lismore City Council

Name: Mr Gary Murphy

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*Tabled by Lindsay Walker
5/10/12*

All communication to:
GENERAL MANAGER

Our ref:

Your ref:

Contact:

2 October 2012

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No 5
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Sir,

Please find attached a submission to the Enquiry into the Management of Public Land in NSW from Lismore City Council.

Lismore City Council is pleased to be able to accept your offer to address the Committee on Friday the 5th of October at Grafton.

Yours faithfully

Gary Murphy
General Manager

SUBMISSION TO GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No 5 INQUIRY INTO THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LAND IN NSW

Background

Lismore City Council is located in the north eastern area of NSW and has the benefit of the Wilsons River running generally north south through the Local Government Area (LGA). The LGA has approximately 43,000 thousand residents and the major urban centre is the City Of Lismore.

The LGA has an area of 1267 Sq Km and already supports three large areas of public land managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

- The northern area is the Nightcap Range National Park. This park has an area of approximately 10,500 Hectares and receives in the order of 10,000 thousand visitations each year through the Lismore LGA. The most frequently asked questions are 'where are the waterfalls, where are the walks and where can we camp'. It is this park that receives the majority of National Parks and Wildlife Services resources in the Lismore LGA.
- In the north west of the LGA is Bungabee State Forest. This park has an approximate area of 1,640 Hectares, but does not receive many visitors each year. It is adjoined, on the east by several larger Crown agricultural leases to private land owners.
- In the south is Tuckean Nature reserve. This park has an area of approximately 940 Hectares. This area is primarily wet swampy land that has been, in part, drained to support surrounding agricultural purposes.

Crown Land Areas in the Lismore LGA

In the Lismore LGA the crown Land can be generally be categorised as being;

1. Crown Land in and around the urban areas of the City. These areas are generally developed and are under a Reserve Trust or Lease/license arrangement. These areas include various parks, the Police Citizens Youth Club, the court house, the golf club etc. It is presumed that these land use activities will remain in their current tenure and will not be the focus of the Standing Committee. The greatest risk that the Lismore City Council and the tenants face on these sites is that of the Crown seeking to move towards a more commercial rent for the sites. There will be some land uses, while being seen as entirely appropriate and desirable for the site, will not be able to afford any increase in rent and it is likely that the community will seek the additional payments from the Council budget.
2. There are a range of smaller Crown sites in the rural areas of the LGA. These are typically fragmented and occupied by rural halls, rural fire services and agriculture. It is considered that these areas of Crown Land would not be suitable for conversion to National Parks and the community is best served by their continuing in their current land use and tenure.
3. There are a number of intermediately sized areas of Crown Land scattered throughout the LGA. These areas are vacant and currently support agriculture, Flood Reserves and Nature Reserves. The current land use activity on these lands has evolved over some time and supports their surrounding and wider community expectations for the sites.

Key Issues

The key issues which would need to be addressed if the Crown were to convert its current land holdings to National Parks could be summarised as being;

1. Managed agricultural land uses on Flood Reserves and privately leased Crown Land leads to ongoing **weed management, maintenance of fire trails, pest**

control, site access and roadside fencing. All of these activities are currently undertaken at no cost to the Crown and would be placed in jeopardy if these areas were to be converted to National Parks.

2. In Council's experience the **National Parks and Wildlife Service is under resourced** to maintain the land areas it currently has under its control and the problem would only be exacerbated if more land were transferred to its control. As evidence Council would point to the Tucki Tucki Nature Reserve, the Wilson Nature Reserve and the Boatharbour Nature Reserve. All of these areas are within easy access from Lismore and are either so overgrown that they present a public safety risk or are closed.
3. Many of the smaller Crown Land areas support a 'private purpose' and as such contribute to the LGA rate base. If these areas were to be converted to National Parks they would no longer be rateable parcels and the **Community rate base would diminish.**
4. As the **management** of many areas of Crown Land has either been assigned to or devolved to the Council the Community, as whole, has an expectation that their 'local council' will be well placed to develop and manage the areas. Should that change the community will feel disenfranchised in their local area.
5. Most Council managed parks have the benefit of a Plan of Management to which the local community will have contributed. These documents and the process which lead to their inception has built community ownership of parks. **Socially** it would be irresponsible to remove the local community from the process which leads to the management of the park land.

Conclusion

No body is better placed than Lismore City Council to manage the Crown Land areas in its LGA and the Community has an expectation that it will continue to do so, in a consultative manner. There is no substitute for local knowledge. Should these Crown Lands be proposed to be converted to National Parks, **Lismore City Council is firmly of the view that to avoid operational, economic, social, adjoining land owner and environmental impacts there must be Local Government Consultation** at an early stage in the process.



