

**Submission
No 49**

INQUIRY INTO CROWN LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Ms Merrill Witt

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I am concerned about the proposed legislation for the following reasons:

I don't think it makes sense to assign a commercial value to Crown land or to promote economic interests above environmental considerations when assessing the potential sale or development of Crown land.

Once Crown land or state-owned land is disposed of, it's typically lost to the community forever. In my area, for example, the state government owned Vaucluse High School was sold to a private developer after the school was merged with another high school in the area. This site has now been developed into a privately-run aged care facility. While I recognise that having an aged care facility in our area is meeting a community need, the state government's encouragement of high urban density means we will soon need more public high schools. Where will they go?

Even the private schools in our area struggle from lack of space. Many have to rely on council or NSW state-run parks and tennis courts, etc to conduct their sports programs. Few of the private schools have the financial means to buy up more land because of skyrocketing property prices.

Competition for space is also a big issue in our area for many of the community-run organisations. My children's ballet school, for example, has struggled to find a big enough venue. It relies on a number of church-run halls and community spaces to conduct its classes. If only we had an appropriate piece of Crown land in our area that could be appropriated to build a much-needed community centre with proper halls, public gym facilities and a public indoor pool. We need more Crown land, not less!

Also, higher urban density pressures in the eastern suburbs and beyond makes preserving green space more important than ever. My children and I regularly enjoy the facilities of the Vaucluse Bowling Club, for example, which I believe is on Crown land.

I read that a review of Crown land management by former banker Michael Carapiet suggested assigning a commercial value of \$300 million to Hyde Park in order to assess 'opportunity cost', or reduction in value, of reserving it for community use? How on earth does this type of calculation make sense? Who would want to live, or for that matter work, around Hyde Park if it was sold off for development? Undeveloped or environmentally-sensitive developed Crown land undoubtedly enhances the value of surrounding properties. Surely preserving Crown land is a win-win for the government and their local communities.

Thanks for listening to my concerns.