

**Submission  
No 73**

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

**Organisation:** Griffith City Council

**Date received:** 20 July 2016

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12 July 2016

The Director  
General Purpose Standing Committee No.6  
Legislative Council, Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Sir

**RE: INQUIRY - MANAGEMENT AND USE OF CROWN LAND IN NSW**

I refer to the inquiry into the management and use of Crown Land in NSW and provide the following submission.

Griffith City Council is the Trustee of a large number of Crown Land Reserves within the Griffith Local Government Area and recognises the significance, benefits and use of the land for the community. It is also the case that there are ongoing financial and liability issues for Council associated with the land.

Council has previously indicated, in a submission on the Crown Lands Legislative White Paper, the willingness to consider the transfer of Crown land to Council on an individual Reserve basis, with priority to those parcels of land for which we are currently the Trustee that are of local significance and would benefit our community.

Council, in parallel with the Crown Land Pilot Program, has undertaken an assessment of all Crown land within the local government area, in consultation with the regional Crown Lands Office, Wagga Wagga.

Crown land of State and Local Significance within Griffith has been identified by the Wagga Wagga office as part of this project. The future process was to determine the transfer of land as freehold land to Council, with an opportunity to sell those parcels that are surplus to community needs, after vigorous community consultation. This would allow Council to utilise the 'sanctioned' funds to prepare strategic plans (in consultation with the Crown and the community) on improvements of other higher valued Crown Reserves and reinvigorate Crown land locally, such as the iconic Griffith Showground.

There appears to now be a resistance to this concept from elsewhere in the state, which may in some cases be justified, but to identify local pockets of land which can/can't be rationalised would be of a benefit to our community.

Council is best placed to make strategic decisions regarding local land and the opportunity for transfer of Crown land as freehold land would reduce the administrative process and

allow Council to deal with the land as best suits the community whether that be by leasing, disposing of the land and reinvesting in other land, or alternative strategic use.

With the inability of the State Government to provide resources within the Crown Lands Division and the downsizing of local Crown Land staff to manage the land stock, Council has concerns as to the available resources within the Crown Lands Division to manage their current assets and in the future to undertake any transfer of land. The downsizing of the Lands Division has resulted in reduced progress, stagnated decision making and lack of staff to maintain the Crowns assets.

It is recognised, that reduction in staff numbers within the Department may have resulted in increased funding available through the Public Reserves Management Fund Program, providing increased dollars towards improving Crown land assets.

We do believe our community is ready and in a position to progress to the next stage of the Pilot Program, to consider the transfer of land to Council and its value to the community.

In reference to the extent of Aboriginal Land Claims, it is at the point where the claims will never be determined in their fullest extent. There is a lack of local Aboriginal community input to what land is claimed in the first instance, to the degree that the local Aboriginal community is not aware of a claim until it has been determined and thereafter having to find funds and people to maintain and preserve the land as it should be.

Council believes the claims should be dealt with at a local level. Consultation is proposed between Council and the Local Aboriginal Land Council to identify the importance and benefit to the local Aboriginal community in the land claimed, progress the claims and further facilitate negotiations between the Council, Crown and Aboriginal Land Councils on important projects. A combined effort between the Local Aboriginal Land Council and Council could result in a report on recommendations to the Aboriginal Investigation Unit and the ability to determine a land claim from this, eliminating unwanted claims and moving the process along, with potential to utilise any returns on the land to benefit the local Aboriginal community.

Further to the proposed hearing schedule, Council would request that a hearing be held in Griffith as we believe Griffith City Council is ready and willing to proceed with negotiations on the transfer of identified Crown land to the community and to progress Aboriginal Land Claims on a local level.

Please give consideration to holding a hearing at Griffith and should you wish to discuss this further, please contact me

Yours sincerely

**BRETT STONESTREET**  
**GENERAL MANAGER**