

**Submission
No 100**

INQUIRY INTO CROWN LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Lane Cove Bushland and Conservation Society Inc

Date received: 22 July 2016



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**Submission to the Upper House Inquiry into Crown Land from the
Lane Cove Bushland and Conservation Society Inc**

22th July 2016

The Lane Cove Bushland and Conservation Society has been an active conservation/environmental group for over 45 years, educating the community and advocating for the protection of our natural environment for the whole of that time.

We did make a submission to the Crown Lands Legislation White Paper in June 2014. We would like to expand on some of the points that we made in that submission to this inquiry and would like that submission to also be considered in this inquiry (copy attached)

Crown Land makes up the majority of land ownership in this state – being over 40% of the land area – much of it in the western districts of the state. It includes a diverse mix of values and purposes. Much is occupied by leaseholders and some is under the management, care and control of local councils. It is too valuable an asset to be allowed to be sold off or otherwise disposed of.

Crown Land must remain in the ownership of the State and its people.

Below are key actions needed for decision making on the public ownership of Crown Land

One of the first tasks associated with any action on Crown Land should be **accurate mapping and data collation of the available information on the exact extent and use of all Crown Land**. This data should include the environmental, cultural and social values of the land. This information should then be open for the public to access enabling them to make considered judgement on the future of the land. **Without this information the community cannot make informed comment on its management.**

All Crown Land should have **plans of management which should be signed off by the Government and community as well as the any occupant of that parcel of land**. This should include obligations placed on the land which is subject to native title claims. These plans of management must be undertaken independently and not under the umbrella of any new biodiversity legislation being considered by the government. This latter legislation could result in wide scale land clearing if it was allowed to include Crown Land.

Crown Land has significant environmental values in the form of conservation of native vegetation, wildlife habitat and corridors, reduced carbon emissions and the ability to provide clean water to river catchments and flows. **The principle of Ecological Sustainability Development (ESD) must be paramount in all thinking and actions associated with Crown Land.**

At the moment **there is no transparency regarding monies raised from leases or licenses for the use of Crown Land** – how is the money used? There is also great community **concern about the extent of commercial use of open space and public recreational reserves** which impact on the environment, cultural and social values of the land and the communities using them. **There must be more transparency about these two issues.**

Proposals in the White Paper to hand control of some Crown Land to local councils is not supported, particularly in the present climate of rapid development where authorities are obliged to increase housing and employment opportunities in growth areas. Control under local councils could see a massive sell off of Crown Land for development, losing for ever otherwise important natural areas. **Any land handed to councils for their control must be categorised as “community land” and not “Operational Land”**. This would prohibit the sale of that land but keep it for public purposes.

Travelling Stock Routes have provided significant parcels of remnant vegetation including endangered ecological communities. They **need appropriate management** so that their importance for these provisions as well as wildlife corridors is maintained. **They should never be sold off.**

Similar concerns can be made about “paper roads”. Any consideration of closing these or disposing of them in some form must be given enormous consideration in relation to ESD Management of Crown Land throughout the State **must be based on ESD and must recognise the importance of protecting ecosystems and the service that they provide** such as clean water and air, carbon sequestration, biodiversity and wildlife habitat. Agencies responsible for the management of Crown Land must work together with other land managers including State Forests, NPWS and local Councils to protect the environmental, biodiversity and ecological values of the land.

We trust the points raised will be given serious consideration in the maintenance of public ownership in the Inquiry into Crown Lands.

Lane Cove Bushland and Conservation Society Inc.