

**Submission
No 249**

INQUIRY INTO CROWN LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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Submission to the Upper House Inquiry into Crown Land.

There needs to be transparency and public accountability in the management and administration of Crown land. Crown Land provides both short and long-term public benefits to the people of NSW including providing accessible recreational areas, valuable ecosystem services, landscape resilience and biodiversity corridors.

In the past Crown land has protected native vegetation and wildlife habitat from inappropriate land clearing. Proposed changes to laws in NSW and weakening of land clearing rules highlights the importance of retaining these areas in public ownership. These areas need to be identified, sensitively managed and protected including the active control of weeds and pest animals to maintain ecological value and community access. The management of TSRs may include appropriate grazing regimes that can protect remnant vegetation including endangered ecological communities and threatened species. Aboriginal groups should be given the opportunity to be involved in the management of Crown land to conserve the cultural and heritage values as well as environmental value.

Crown land areas along waterways in our local area support healthy riparian vegetation, and clean water. They provide local people and visitors with a place to picnic with family, walk the dog and generally enjoy nature plus environmental educational opportunities for local schools. These areas are under pressure from urban expansion, mining and other land uses while providing invaluable buffers and landscape resilience against these impacts. Crown land should remain in public ownership and preserved for future generations (e.g. held in Trust by the State on behalf of the people of NSW). Their many values to society recognised and appropriately managed.

In conclusion:

- Crown land must be administered in an open, transparent and accountable manner that increases public participation in their management.
- Before land can be sold or leased it is essential there is appropriate and transparent consideration of the social, cultural and environmental values of the Crown land.
- Management of Crown land throughout the State must be based on the principles of ecologically sustainable development.
- Crown land management must recognise the importance of protecting ecosystems and the services they provide such as clean water and air, carbon sequestration and biodiversity.
- Agencies responsible for the administration of Crown land, including TSRs, must work co-operatively with other land managers including State Forests, NPWS and councils to promote conservation of biodiversity and protection of ecosystem services.