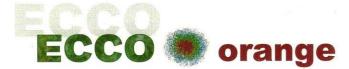
## INQUIRY INTO CROWN LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Date received: Environmentally Concerned Citizens of Orange 22 July 2016



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The Convenor. Crown land Upper House Inquiry NSW Parliament July 18, 2016

Dear Sir/Madam,

## **Re: Upper House inquiry into Crown Land**

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry. ECCO is a community based not-for -profit organisation made up of volunteers committed to promoting environmental values in Orange and the surrounding district. Our group has been involved in issues regarding the use and management of Crown lands and public land in general since our formation ten years ago.In providing input to the above inquiry we wish to make the following points.

- ▲ Our organisation is aware of the value of Crown land and the necessity for it to be appropriately managed. We are also strong supporters of the necessity to retain Crown land in public ownership, and opposes any efforts by Government to sell off valuable public land . We do not accept the excuse that it is not utilised. Public land must be retained for future use, perhaps in ways currently unthought of.
- ▲ We are a very concerned that any moves to change the management of such public land should be transparent and in the public interest. We oppose any management change which would allow public land to be accessed by a single use group such as hunters etc. to the exclusion of the general public. Crown land in our state is used for a myriad of passive recreation purposes which are compatible with the environmental values of the land and available to everyone. This type of use must be retained.
- ▲ We would like to be reassured that the environmental and social value of our Crown land should be given priority ahead of short term commercial gain. Where there is commercial gain to be had, it should benefit public, rather than private interests.
- ▲ If development is to occur, it must do so based on ecologically sound principles-designed to maintain and enhance the existing ecological value of the land in question.
- ▲ We would also like to see more publicly available up-to-date state wide mapping of Crown land. In the absence of information about the areas of Crown land and their environmental and social features, it is difficult for the public to independently verify the extent and ecological and/or social value of Crown land.
- Any Crown land of high conservation value requires active management ,including control of weeds and pest animals. It is important that no activity is permitted to undermine the ecological value of such an area. It is of concern to note the increasing

incursion of inappropriate activities on ecological sensitively Crown lands such as hunting and mountain bike riding, and that it is not mandatory that all Crown land should have a plan of management.

- ▲ We oppose the NSW State Government's proposed changes to the Native Vegetation Act which will see land clearing rules considerably weakened. We are concerned that the changes in the Act will have environmentally threatening implications for the management of Crown land.
- ▲ There are proposed changes to the management of Crown Land in the Western Division of NSW, which include conversion of some leasehold and to free hold land, and removing requirements that management be consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development. Such proposals threaten biodiversity and ecosystems and will affect carbon emissions through possible increased land clearing due to the proposed relaxation of land clearing legislation.

## Travelling stock routes and reserves are a vital resource

It is acknowledged that Crown land in the form of TSR's and travelling stock routes has been an important part of Australia's livestock industry for nearly two centuries. TSR's and travelling stock routes continue to be important to the pastoral industry, especially in times of such natural disasters as fire, flood or drought as a source of supplementary grazing.

They also play a vital conservation role as areas which support biodiversity. Because grazing is strictly controlled, there is a minimum of disturbance, resulting in stock reserves being rich repositories of diverse flora and fauna. The stock routes have the capacity to provide corridors for the movement of native fauna. This capacity is becoming increasingly important in the face of continued habitat destruction due to development, mining and the increasing pressures of agriculture and the effects of climate change.

Outside of national parks and state forests, TSRs and the routes that connect them make an important contribution to the linear connectivity of vegetation remnants, allowing for the movement of fauna across the landscape.

It is vital that TSRs and travelling stock routes be retained to fulfil the functions that they have done so well and for so long in our country, and that public access to them be retained. It is therefore of the utmost importance that these lands remain in public ownership and are funded and managed appropriately For this to happen Crown land must remain in Trust by the State on behalf of the public.

## We must work together to retain our Crown Land

Crown land is public land. It must be protected against sell off and poor management. We must preserve and maintain its social and ecological values in such a way that it remains a valuable resource for generations to come. This can only occur if we have clear, consistent transparent rules to promote and maintain the conservation of biodiversity and protection of ecosystems contained therein. This can only happen if State and local Governments work with other land managers such as the National Parks and Wildlife service, Local land Services to make it so .

Nick King President ECCO