

**Submission
No 244**

INQUIRY INTO CROWN LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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Stock reserves:

In our area, livestock are no longer moved on foot over long distances, so travelling stock reserves no longer fulfil the traditional requirement. Our local stock reserves are leased as grazing blocks while access must be granted to the anyone from the public.

Fences are always the responsibility of the lessee or in the event that there is no lessee, the adjoining land owners. There is no responsibility accepted by the state government to help support fencing maintenance financially. Thus adjoining land holders are encumbered.

As per the lease agreements, the public must be allowed into stock reserves. This very seldom happens, for which we are thankful, as not everyone cleans up after themselves. This "open door policy" means that lessees, that already carry the financial and public liability risks, also needs to clean up after impromptu picnickers to prevent waste ending up in water ways. Needless to say, injury to, or lost stock because a member of the public did not close gates, are also the lessee's risk.

Small crown land sections, eg such as traveling stock reserve R2407 Rossi are at most suitable as light grazing for only a few weeks per year. The greater portion of each year, the land lies fallow. In theory, it should thus be effective as habitat area. It is not, because it is a small space and fences restrict free movement for eg kangaroos and possums into adjoining land. We found that the required fences cause safety hazards for wildlife as they get caught on the fences when trying to jump from the road into the reserve and break either legs or their backs. Wildlife can also be cornered in the event that feral dogs enter the reserve, as opportunities to escape are limited. On the down side, for feral animals such as rabbits, fences are no impediments.

It can thus be said that large reserves can more easily be managed as wildlife sanctuaries than tiny pockets of fenced in land.

Weed control itself needs to be considered. If the stock reserve is leased, the lessee agrees to manage the weeds either by hand control or herbicides. I would like to suggest that in line with changing land management practices more consideration be given to mineral application as weed control. For example, we have had a major issue with Patterson's curse on one of our blocks, but an application of copper sulphate followed up by dolomite, controlled the plants so well, that a once off, very small quantity of herbicide was necessary to remove remnant plants. We also had no recurrent Patterson's curse regrowth the following year. Thus fixing the underlying soil health can have better long term weed control benefits. But this type of mineral application is not permitted in

stock reserves without express permission, whereas herbicides can be utilised without permission as long as a register is kept.

Crown Roads:

Crown roads are a major land management issue and a bigger headache than traveling stock reserves. Firstly they often run along property boundaries and have no correlation to the impositions of geography on people & vehicle movement so that in spite of crown roads being reserved for property access, the real access roads often follow different routes. This then means that crown roads again either have to be fenced out or leased by adjoining land owners. No matter your intent for the crown land use, eg creating a green corridor for wildlife movement or not, if you don't agree to lease the land, you must fence it out at your cost. Either way the adjoining land owners pay for an archaic administrative policy!

Fencing out is just a ludicrous option: it is costly and impedes wildlife movement as much as it keeps livestock out. Secondly, once a crown road is fenced out, it becomes a weed corridor that no-one takes responsibility for, so again the neighbouring farmers are stuck with dealing with the weed management fall-out created by these no-man's land boundaries.

As an aside, it is also useful to keep in mind that actual boundaries and spatial maps are not "synchronised". (Surveys have to be undertaken and paid for by the impacted land owners, not the government who stakes a crown land claim!) This we know from bitter experience after struggling for more than 3 years to resolve issues around crown lands that neighboured our then property in Boro NSW (lot 177, DP). After spending a lot of money in application fees to purchase the land, it eventually became known that the spatial maps were not accurately aligned with on the ground surveys and that neighbours were already leasing and had fenced in the land in question, although it appeared on the spatial maps to be fenced in on our land. So obviously, managing these lands correctly are as much a problem for government, than for the individuals living near them.

In our view, consideration should be given to holistic and practical management - from the financial implications for neighbouring properties, not just that of government's administration of it, right through to the needs of the eco system. There is little value in maintaining small reserves and crown roads as public holdings in trust when they would be better looked after and have more value for wildlife when included in a larger surrounding landscape.

It is idealistic to speak of holding land in trust when adjoining landowners are financially and practically impacted whether they agree to it or not, while government, other than taking

administrative responsibility, undertakes no practical labour or maintenance financial responsibility. Before deciding to keep these parcels of land in trust, it would be more respectful if adjoining landowners, people that in all likelihood understand the local geography and eco systems, were approached to air their views and capability to help manage these parcels of land. In some cases, it would make more sense to sell small reserves or strips of crown roads. Having said this, considering the aggravation sometimes caused by the historical financial impositions of these parcels of land, it is unrealistic to expect farmers to pay the equivalent of adjoining land prices when there is little if any commercial value in the land and no building entitlements.