

**Submission
No 289**

INQUIRY INTO CROWN LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Professor Helen Armstrong

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Hon Paul Green MLC,
Committee Chair
GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO.6
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SUBMISSION TO THE NSW UPPER HOUSE INQUIRY INTO CROWN

I am making this submission in the belief and wish that Crown Land should be retained in perpetuity in the hands of the public and for its free access and use. I raise a number of issues:-

THE ROLE AND MANAGEMENT OF CROWN LANDS

The public ownership of such places as Centennial Park and Moore Parklands; Bondi Beach; Hyde Park; Prince Alfred; Parsley Bay; Watsons Bay; Observatory Hill; Martin Place; Aboriginal lands; public beaches and reserves; sports and showgrounds and many more of the like in Australia should be respected and maintained for the public in Perpetuity as has been historically designated and continues to be understood and expected by the public. Parliament's e-brief news concludes that ...” *The management of Crown Land has a long and complex history, as does the relevant legislation. The latest reform proposals are substantial...*”

Reviewing the many changes proposed, it could be argued the renaming and apparent intentions of “Public Trading Enterprise” in contrast to “Crown Lands Division” seems to indicate a commercial land use intention rather than the stewardship and responsibility expected of Government. It is clear from the recent public outcry, the public's expectations are not being met by the administration and management of these lands.

My expectation of the Government is to provide the use and enjoyment of these open lands for the public and our children without appropriation and exclusion by private enterprise and commercial profits.

STEWARDSHIP OF CENTENNIAL PARK AND MOORE PARKLANDS

Recently these areas have been very much in the public eye because a State Government minister negotiated over their use with a sporting corporation. While it is acknowledged that this body seeks to bring sport to the public, such intentions have been compromised by leasing the grounds for commercial profit, inevitably resulting in restrictions of public use by imposing an exclusion zone on this Public land. We also note the SCG and the AJC exert similar exclusions on the public use of these lands. The latter has generated great local ill will in relation to the CBD and South East Light Rail addition involving the devastation of the Centennial Parklands and the public environment by the removal of significant trees and the exclusion of the public from these lands.

The lands of the Centennial and Moore Park are of particular significance as this land was bequeathed by the representative of the Crown when this colony was established ‘...for the free and open use, recreation and enjoyment of the public...’

THE NEED FOR AN INQUIRY

The Centennial and Moore Parklands trustees have allowed the felling of our heritage trees and other environmental degradation undertaken by the recent Ministry of Roads, Transport, & Infrastructure in the implementation of the CBD and South East Light Rail; clearly the trusted

guardianship expected of the Centennial and Moore Parklands Trust is in need of review. Likewise the State Government needs to explain why this was encouraged when the transport capacity is not met by the chosen mode of light rail. The failure of Transport and Roads to decrease the congestion with this plan but rather increase it and diminish heritage and environmental resources requires investigation. There are many aspects of the alienation of Centennial and Moore Parklands that need to be considered, including;

- The Moore Park “SuperCentre” occupation of Centennial and Moore Parkland grounds. How did this happen? When the areas across the road were cheap and available how did it end up on Moore Park Lands? This is in need of investigation.
- When the old tram line yards were dismantled, why were these lands not passed back to the public?
- The fact that the AJC has gained a licence from council to build a hotel on this land is not in the public best interest.
- Moves on Watsons Bay public land for private profit is yet another local issue in the South East, where this government has not shown accountability.
- The recent rearrangement of Moore Park soccer and netball fields due to the CBD and South East Light Rail impacts has resulted in fewer netball courts as soccer was said to bring more rental.
- Similar restrictions on public use of Crown Land has occurred with the recent 50 year lease to the Shooters at Malabar of Crown Land. This did not appear to have had community consultation and now restricts walkers on the New National Park to only enjoying the area during the week and the odd week-end when firing is not taking place.
- The Entertainment Quarter and former Show Grounds is yet another area of appropriation of public land. The selling to the Harvey/Singleton group of these lands for high rise housing raises similar issues about appropriate use, exclusivity and public exclusion. A public audit of funds on these lands is required.

These examples indicate that the guardianship and appropriate use of the lands is not being administered in a manner that is conducive to the public’s best interests; namely for the free public use for recreation and enjoyment in perpetuity.

I CALL FOR FULL AND COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC INVESTIGATIONS AND FOR AN IMMEDIATE MORATORIUM ON ANY CROWN AND PUBLIC LAND BEING LEASED; SOLD OR DEVELOPED OR APPROVALS GIVEN, UNTIL THE REPORTS FOR THIS INQUIRY ARE FINISHED, SEEN AND REVIEWED BY THE PUBLIC; AND THAT PUBLIC APPROVAL IS GIVEN IN RELATION TO:

- Appropriate Direction, use and administration;
- Audits on Administrated lands, practices and monies;
- Aboriginal and other significant protections included in administration process;
- Public input and voice assured in an appropriate process for the future of our Crown and Public Lands.

Yours Sincerely

Helen Armstrong