

Submission  
No 290

## INQUIRY INTO CROWN LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

Hon Paul Green MLC

Committee Chair

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 6

I would like to make the following submission to the NSW Upper House Inquiry into Crown land.

I believe that state and local governments have a special responsibility to protect, maintain and enhance Crown land for the people of NSW.

Crown land is an invaluable community resource. Public ownership of crown land facilitates equitable access to essential community amenities like parks, beaches, camping grounds, cemeteries, bowling clubs, showgrounds, community halls, wharves and ports. Undeveloped Crown land, especially in rural areas, preserves green space and protects local habitats and ecosystems.

Below are my comments on the four points of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference:

**(a) the extent of Crown land and the benefits of active use and management of that land to New South Wales**

It is important that the people of NSW have access to a properly maintained register of Crown land.

The environmental, cultural, social uses of Crown land must outweigh the economic considerations. We live close to Housing Commission units (Fitzgerald Ave/Malabar Rd). It is important that people needing help are able to receive it without stigma. The hope is that this need will be temporary but it must be available. I'm proud to live in a society where the teenagers who may have become 'lost' have been helped. A community that once had too much crime is now a calm, safe place to live – everyone deserves that.

Where appropriate, public use and enjoyment of Crown land should be promoted.

Community organisations occupying Crown land (eg. sports clubs, showgrounds, camping grounds etc.) should be financially subsidised in order to guarantee affordable access and to avoid pressures to over-commercialise as has happened with the bowling club in Maroubra where we live.

Many scientific discoveries have been made as our scientists observe nature. Large tracts of green space allow for that as well as just the peace that comes from listening to the sounds of nature. Instead of being cranky automatons we have the chance to relax, refresh and then hopefully be regenerated to offer more of ourselves in our workplaces and families.

**(b) the adequacy of community input and consultation regarding the commercial use**

**and disposal of Crown land**

Commercial or market values should not be assigned to Crown land in order to assess the 'opportunity cost', or reduction in value, of reserving the land for community use. Marking up the value of Crown land to reflect its 'real' commercial value may unintentionally put pressure on state or local government to dispose of Crown land or advocate for its commercialisation.

Commercial assessments of Crown land don't necessarily take into account the importance to communities of preserving green space and accessible community oriented facilities on Crown land.

People enjoy important health and psychological benefits from having convenient access to green spaces and affordable recreational facilities on Crown land. Limiting these types of opportunities by commercialising or selling off Crown land is likely to lead to a less productive workforce and higher health costs. Much is made in the media of our overweight nation, having less green space can only exacerbate this.

The public need to be widely consulted (and listened to) before Crown lands are identified for sale, lease, change-of-use or transfer to local councils

**(c) the most appropriate and effective measures for protecting Crown land so that it is preserved and enhanced for future generations.**

Existing legislation regarding the protection of Crown land should be strengthened and adequate funding should be allocated to protect, enhance and, when necessary, acquire more Crown land.

Social, cultural and environmental concerns should always be placed above economic considerations when deciding the future of Crown land. The natural resources of the land should be conserved and sustained for future generations. Once sold off, they will not be replaced.

Any changes in the legislation should propose ecological sustainable development with respect to Crown land.

**(d) the extent of Aboriginal land claims over Crown lands and opportunities to increase Aboriginal involvement in the management of Crown land.**

Aboriginal people have a special relationship with the land and that should be respected.

The trend towards higher urban density living, especially in our cities, will only increase the demand for equitable access to quality passive natural environments and affordable sporting, recreational and cultural facilities on Crown land. In rural areas, Crown land serves as a buffer against the pressures of agricultural development, protecting natural resources and local ecosystems.

State and local governments must properly fund the maintenance of Crown land, acquire new Crown land when appropriate, and protect and enhance Crown land for the long-term benefit of the people of NSW. As taxpayers this is what we expect for our money.

Yours sincerely,