

**Submission  
No 136**

## **INQUIRY INTO CROWN LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Organisation:** Port Macquarie Chamber of Commerce

**Date received:** 24 July 2016

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23 July 2016

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 6

**RE: Port Macquarie Chamber Submission for the 'Inquiry into Crown Land'**

Attention: The Chair, Hon. Paul Green MLC

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission regarding the 'Inquiry into Crown Land'.

The topic of Crown Lands remains a long standing interest of the Port Macquarie Chamber of Commerce. We have long advocated for the Port Macquarie Foreshore, a parcel of Crown Land; as a place that finds the balance of commercial and public activity managed under a newly established 'local authority'. Our objective is to ensure both the use for future generations complimented by the development of a sustainable business plan to implement the Plan of Management (POM) and to meet future needs of the site.

The Inquiry Terms of Reference are closely aligned to the Port Chambers current proposal. The Chamber has been lobbying on this issue with various levels and departments of Government to see a new management entity for the Port Macquarie Foreshore precinct. This 'local authority' would be tasked with a range of objectives and responsibilities; inclusion and consultation of relative stakeholders, to establish new revenue streams, manage revenues generated by the foreshore and to undertake decision making and implementation of Foreshore management. The entity would be tasked with establishing a sustainable plan of management and to resource the implementation and ongoing maintenance. Not only would such a structure benefit the implementation of POM's, but they would localise decision making; an important consideration for regional communities.

In response to the Terms of Reference in general, the Port Macquarie Chamber does hold concern regarding the adequacy of community input and consultation regarding the commercial use and disposal of Crown land. While discussions were held locally to retain the vision of the Port Macquarie Foreshore, our community was faced with the possibility of a large conglomerate purchasing a section of the Foreshore with little intention to develop it with public space and the greater vision of the Foreshore in mind. There was significant local backlash not only to the proposal, but to the process undertaken by Crown land with what appeared to be discussions 'behind closed doors' without public transparency. Any indication that the Government will introduce legislation into parliament without making the legislation available for public comment beforehand is also of concern.

The absence of up-to-date State-wide mapping of Crown land and recent changes to access information under the land title system has made it more difficult and costly to verify where Crown land is held. Often Crown Land is

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utilised for public and community benefit. It hosts our sporting grounds, racecourses, open spaces and so forth. It is in essence the heart of the community. Disposal of land while there is a lack of understanding of the extent of Crown Land is putting the cart before the horse and could be of grave detriment for future generations when these actions are irreversible. The Port Chamber urges further mapping to be undertaken.

In response to “the most appropriate and effective measures for protecting Crown land so that it is preserved and enhanced for future generations” and in regard to the Port Macquarie Foreshore Precinct, Chamber has lobbied for the establishment of an alternative to simply selling off Crown Land. This concept could be applied to other sites with local considerations applied as appropriate.

The solution proposed by the Port Macquarie Chamber offers a balance of public representation and decision making along with the development of commercial activities to enable sustainable business planning to bring development and control of the site into local hands while respecting all stakeholders in the process.

Currently there is an approved POM for the Port Macquarie Foreshore which cannot be implemented without additional funding and support. The local Council has funding limitations and State funding for the Foreshore POM implementation has not been designated. There is a range of commercial activities operating on the site however the funds are put into the state revenue and is not redirected back to the local community to implement the POM.

In summary, the Port Macquarie Chamber does not support a ‘sell off’ of Crown Lands but a process put in place to permit more local engagement in the decision making and development of sites, which would in essence reduce liability to the Department of Crown Lands. Further mapping should be undertaken to understand the extent and use of Crown Lands. Public transparency on this issue is essential and steps should be taken to review and improve the community consultation process to allow the community to be informed and have a say on community assets.

Yours sincerely,

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