

INQUIRY INTO CROWN LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Ms Robyn Charlton

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GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 6

Attention: The Chair, Hon. Paul Green MLC

I raise the following concerns:

- The Government is proposing to change the way crown land is managed. This includes the introduction of a business-orientated model and the transfer of crown land to councils. As a consequence, this will see land being reclassified as operational land, or alternately land commercialised or sold off.
- 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.
- By 2036, NSW's population is projected to increase by 2.2 million people. Yet Crown Land is increasingly being commercialised or sold off, when it needs to be retained and expanded.
- Inadequate consultation about the use and disposal of Crown Land and lack of readily access information about the sale, leasing and granting of other interests of Crown land
- Evidence showing the mismanagement of the public estate, e.g. turning crown land into operational land to facilitate major infrastructure projects, with no merit appeal process available for critical infrastructure projects, e.g. Sydney Light Rail and Westconnex projects
- The exhibition of the Crown Lands White Paper in 2014 was inadequate and not well understood. This is reflected by the low submission rate, with only 626 submissions made. The submissions were not made available for public scrutiny, instead they were summarised for the public record, with insufficient information provided.
- The government has indicated it will introduce legislation into parliament soon without making the legislation being available for public comment before its introduction. This is not acceptable.

Crown lands must be preserved for the benefit of the community and our future generations. These lands are fundamental to our social, economic and environmental well-being and their management must conform to ESD principles.

This includes the Crown lands such as the proposed Awaba Conservation Area in Lake Macquarie. It is an important wildlife corridor between the Watagan Mountains and the shores of Lake Macquarie. Lake Macquarie City Council is in favour of the conservation Area which is demonstrated in the their 2030 Lifestyle Strategy and their submission to the Draft Hunter Regional Plan.

I would also appreciate if the Committee could recommend to government that a Moratorium on the sell off or development of crown and public land be implemented immediately, until such time as the report is handed to Parliament with sufficient time to consider and review the committee's recommendations.