

**Submission  
No 166**

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

**Organisation:** Port Stephens Greens

**Date received:** 24 July 2016

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# Port Stephens Greens

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24 July 2016

General Purpose Standing Committee No 6

Legislative Council of NSW

## **Inquiry into Crown Land : Submission**

Port Stephens Greens are making this submission in light of experience in Port Stephens Local Government Area (PSLGA) of land use and management issues relating to Crown Land.

Many local community groups in PSLGA have to spent countless hours of volunteer time fighting proposals for change of use of public land, as a result of both the State government and our local Council failing to protect the public interest.

In summary, our main concerns are as follows:

- There should be an immediate moratorium on any Crown Land being sold, leased or privately developed until this Parliamentary Inquiry publishes its report.
- The Government should publish all of the more than 600 submissions to the 2014-15 Crown Land review (except where individuals have requested confidentiality) – the Community cannot rely on or trust the summary provided in the Government’s response.
- There needs to be a much clearer definition of ‘crown land’ – even after the White paper and subsequent documentation there is much confusion about what is covered – all publicly owned land, including National Parks, State Nature Reserves and Conservation areas, and all land owned by State agencies and Local Councils, or just a sub-set of parks and reserves?
- There should be a comprehensive register of all publicly owned lands, their permitted uses and constraints and their management arrangements – publicly available and searchable online. The ‘Inventory’ provisions of the Crown Lands Act 1989 have clearly failed to deliver a readily accessible and understandable public register.
- There is constant pressure from developers to reclassify and sell or lease publicly owned land for private development. Based on experience, the public has little confidence in the commitment of either State government or Local Councils to protect public land and not to give in to these private interests – sale, lease or development is too often seen as a short term financial benefit, without regard to the longer term public interest.



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- Legislation should provide for a triple safeguard involving approval by *both* the State government *and* relevant Local Council for any change in the status and use of public land, and only after full and open public consultation.
- The concept of special protection only for land of ‘State significance’ is flawed, because much crown land is of local significance but still needs protection.
- Legislation should include a default presumption that all public land should be preserved in public ownership and used for public purposes. Exceptions should be limited and only approved after extensive public consultation (and with the approval of both State and local government as proposed above).
- Arrangements between the State government and Local Councils for the management of crown land, and subsequent financial performance, need to be much more transparent.

Please acknowledge receipt of this submission

Nigel Waters  
Secretary, Port Stephens Greens



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**Port Stephens Greens**

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