

Submission  
No 329

## INQUIRY INTO CROWN LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES

**Organisation:** Caldera Environment Centre

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## UPPER HOUSE INQUIRY INTO CROWN LAND

25<sup>th</sup> July 2016

Caldera Environment Centre (CEC) has been established in Tweed Shire for the past 25 years to promote the protection of the environment. Tweed Shire has highly diverse Crown Land system which over the past years have been the subject of CEC campaigns. CEC support that all Crown lands remain in public ownership for the benefit of the community. In this shire Crown Land forms a major part of the Coastal Reserve, includes areas of high conservation value vegetation including EEC's and SEPP 14 and 26 vegetation communities, recreational areas, scenic areas, open space and linkages for movement of flora and fauna.

The remaining Crown Lands in this state and in Tweed Shire are under increasing pressure from proposed activities such as residential and industrial developments, major roads, caravan parks and an airport extension.

This submission addresses the terms of reference of the NSW Upper House is conducting an Inquiry into Crown land.

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

Crown land must be retained throughout the state for public access and use from active recreation through to minimal use in locations where conservation is a priority.

In northern NSW Crown Land extends along the coastline and is used for a range of activities such as beach access, walking, fishing, vegetation restoration by Dunecare groups and enjoyment of the natural environment.

Other areas of Crown Land contribute to the habitat of native flora and fauna and include wetlands, including SEPP 14 Wetlands, Littoral Rainforest including SEPP 26, Coastal Banksia woodlands and heathlands, connecting corridors of vegetation and contribute to the high biodiversity status of northern NSW.

Crown land should be retained and actively managed including control of weed and feral animal pests to ensure that the ecological value is not compromised. Where the land becomes degraded due to these impacts it has often paved the way for a false justification to convert the land for commercial purposes.

#### Example in Tweed Shire

Proposed caravan park at Bogangar on the Tweed Coast. This parcel of coastal Crown Land which in the 1950's had been sand mined but in the past years has significant regrowth of Banksia woodland



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which is an important resource of food for over wintering birds and bats and is also part of a coastal corridor of vegetation. The areas have had minimal management and is being invaded by weeds and likely feral animals. This degradation then is used as an argument to convert the land to a caravan park where it should be retained for public recreation and conservation.

### **b) the adequacy of community input and consultation regarding the commercial use and disposal of Crown land,**

CEC is concerned about the lack of public consultation in the commercial use and disposal of Crown Land.

There appears to currently be a rush on Crown Land, to sell, lease or allow for commercial uses. These activities are often unknown by the community and they have not had the opportunity to express concerns.

#### Examples in Tweed Shire

Expansion of the Gold Coast airport for navigation uses has proceeded even though there has been significant community opposition. Information was not released to the public until well into the development process. The extension is into an area of Crown Land which includes SEPP 14 wetlands which will be destroyed if the proposal proceeds. The area was also under a lease to the local pony club which has been altered to facilitate the proposal

A recent request to use Crown land at Jack Evans Boat Harbour for a commercial venture was not proceeded by any community consultation. The commercial use is not compatible with the intent of low key recreational use of the area. The request was supported by the local council and has been forwarded for assessment. There should be transparent opportunity and information provided for the community.

The Crown Lands Legislation White Paper provided the community the opportunity to comment on the proposals. This paper flagged concerns that there would be increased sale of and commercialisation of Crown Land. Community groups in Tweed Shire submitted concerns of such activities but they have proceeded. See previous examples.

It is unclear how Crown Land may be transferred to Councils, including whether Councils will be provided with funding for transferred land.

It is proposed to repeal the land management principles currently in the *Crown Lands Act 1989*. These require consideration of a number of factors including environmental matters before land can be sold or leased. It is essential that there is appropriate consideration of the social, cultural and environmental values of Crown land before land they are leased or licensed and sold to ensure that the public benefit of Crown land is preserved for future generations.



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

Crown Land was originally held by the State for a range of public uses. The remaining Crown Land should be retained for the public as it is an extremely valuable resource for a range of uses such as recreation and conservation.

Locations to the west the TSR system is an invaluable resource as these areas now support remnants of vegetation that are substantially reduced in the regions. Active management which may include grazing needs to be maintained to protect these corridors through the landscape.

Crown land must be administered in an open, transparent and accountable manner that increases public participation in their management.

Management of Crown land throughout the State must be based on the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

Crown land management must recognise the importance of and protect ecosystems and the services they provide such as clean water and air, carbon sequestration and biodiversity.

Agencies responsible for the administration of Crown land, including TSRs, must work co-operatively with other land managers including State Forests, NPWS and councils to promote conservation of biodiversity and protection of ecosystem services.

### **d) the extent of Aboriginal Land Claims over Crown land and opportunities to increase Aboriginal involvement in the management of Crown land.**

Increased Aboriginal involvement in the management of Crown land to conserve cultural and heritage values as well as environmental values is strongly supported.

It is essential that Crown land is properly managed to protect important environmental, social and cultural values pending the resolution of any outstanding land claims.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide recommendations.