

Submission
No 323

INQUIRY INTO CROWN LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

Crown Land comprises 42% of NSW land and extends from Coastal Environments to arid lands of Western NSW. Some of it contains patches of remnant bushland as well as precious waterways. These provide habitat for native species of plants and animals. But they also provide important corridors for wildlife and are often intact refuge ecosystems in large cleared landscapes. As such, these areas of Crown Land have important environmental, social and cultural values and are meant to be held in trust for the people of NSW. CROWN LANDS MUST STAY IN PUBLIC HANDS and REMAIN PROTECTED for future generations. The inquiry shows a shift from Environmental Protection and Conservation of natural resources to management through business case development with an emphasis on economic outcomes. I request that after listening to the community, and having done robust and complete assessments of the environmental, cultural and social values of Crown Land, then existing objectives for environmental protection and conservation are retained and Crown Lands are managed to ensure ecologically sustainable development. Stock Routes are essential and must be retained as they provide farmers with an ability to keep stock alive in times of drought. Personal friends have followed this practice during drought and lived with their stock on the roads for several months at a time. As well as their biodiversity importance in their own right, Stock Routes also provide links between isolated conservation reserves and they allow species migration between reserves thus maintaining genetic variability. Crown Land as well as Stock Routes contribute to carbon capture. They provide an important seed bank for native plants and provide suitable land for Revegetation and Restoration programmes. In some areas, they provide important connections for Aboriginal Australians for traditional song lines - also many are significant Aboriginal sites. The proposed changes are not in the public interest as they undermine the key principles of Crown Land management as set out in Section 11 of the Crown Lands Act 1989. I urgently request that the Upper House ensures all Crown Land with important environmental, cultural and social values be maintained as PUBLIC LAND. Effective, genuine and meaningful community consultation must take place, together with a robust assessment of environmental, cultural and social values of Crown Lands and the findings be transparent and publicly available. Adequate funding must be guaranteed. Adequate monitoring and reporting will also be required that is also transparent and publicly available. Not only for current and future generations, but for special groups such as drovers, graziers, apiarists, tourists, bushwalkers, horse riders, bird watchers, recreational fishers, educators, academics, historians, artists, literature enthusiasts etc we need to retain the truly Australian landscape that Crown Lands provide. Let our Australian anthem not be just a reflection of what used to be :- "..... our land abounds in Nature's gifts of beauty rich and rare" but a statement of what Australia really is. Yours sincerely,