

**Submission
No 321**

INQUIRY INTO CROWN LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Ms Keelah Lam

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To whom it may concern: Much of the Crown land in NSW has social, cultural, environmental or heritage values especially for Aboriginal people. Millions of people each day use Crown reserves for recreation. Many parcels of Crown Land have high environmental value. They also protect unique landscapes and provide habitat for flora and fauna, also for many threatened species and endangered ecological communities. Crown lands provide vital habitat linkages between conservation reserves. In the Manly area, recently, the listed Endangered Duffys Forest Ecological Community, the vital wildlife corridor for all wildlife on the northern beaches, has been annihilated for the benefit of hugely unpopular private hospital operators at the expense of 2 popular and perfectly sited public hospitals, Manly and Mona Vale, whilst the adjacent Warringah Road corridor of large trees which provide vital shade and habitat is unnecessarily being mindlessly destroyed for car usage. Crown Lands also contain other significant ecosystems such as littoral rainforests and coastal wetlands. Crown Land, about 42% of the state, whether it is public parks, heritage sites, waterfront land, community halls, travelling stock routes recreational and sporting grounds is always precious especially when one considers the amount which has been lost so far and is now at risk with this Crown Land Review. Our publicly owned Crown Lands contain high environmental and conservation value and are important animal habitats, wetlands, wilderness, and old growth forests; they should remain in perpetuity for public purpose, not sold off to private interests for private profit. In the NSW state government review the community is most concerned that the State plans to: Establish a Crown Lands Division as part of a public trading enterprise Promote economic growth over social, cultural, local and environment concerns Overhaul the ownership of Crown lands that could result in their widespread sale and commercialisation by the government and/or transfer to local councils. Replace eight existing Acts applying to Crown lands with a single Act. There has been no evaluation of the social or environmental values of Crown lands during the review although this was required by the Review's terms of reference. Ecologically sustainable development (ESD) is not proposed as an object of the new legislation and current management principles in the Crown Lands Act will be omitted. Under the government's plans, a business-orientated model is proposed that would promote short term economic growth over good environmental practice. This is not appropriate for lands that are of high environmental, social, cultural or heritage value. Crown land assessed as having local significance, if transferred to councils, could then be sold or its use changed. For example, open space could become a parking lot or road. Carbon sequestration will be promoted without consideration to the effectiveness and environmental impacts of particular types of sequestration. The Government's position on issues such as forestry on Crown lands and identification of Crown land as wilderness is unknown. Further, the government has not made public, over 600 submissions to the Crown Lands Legislation White Paper. There must be a moratorium on any Crown Land being sold, leased or privately developed while this Parliamentary Inquiry is underway. Its final report must take into serious consideration the threat of climate change and resulting unpredictable weather patterns, droughts, storms and wildfires. 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. The Crown Lands Review and proposed legislation puts at risk the future management and use of public lands. Keelah Lam